

Whom is Morality For?
edited by mks

Is morality individualist or collectivist? Both, of course; moral psychology of the 20th century was dominated by an emphasis on secular rights and the centrality of self-interest and autonomy, but contemporaneous evidence suggests humans and our moral concerns are also parochial and focus on belonging in tight-knit communities. Our evolution was subject to both individual and group selection, evidenced by the recent and rapid co-evolution of genes and culture, leading to the emergence of shared intentionality and hormonal bonding. Free riding was suppressed through reputation management and group cohesion, maintained through gossip and markers of belonging. Synchronized behavior produces feelings of oneness that transcend the everyday for in-group unity and out-group competition; religion likewise enforces better behavior by restraining selfishness with moralistic, collectively punishing higher powers.

The modern, Western mind, the individual is “a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distinctive whole.”¹ From this perspective, one “can understand most of moral psychology by viewing it as a form of enlightened self-interest [...] natural selection working at the level of the individual.”² At least, this had been the assumption of moral psychology in the 20th century, following the reason-centered moral philosophies of Kant and Bentham. “In the 1980s and 1990s, several anthropologists objected that Western moral psychology was essentially the psychology of modern cosmopolitan Westerners, and that it could not accommodate many of the moral concerns found in other cultures,”³ particularly those centered on groups. They viewed what moral psychologists like Lawrence Kohlberg dismissed as “social conventions,” values for group cohesion and following authority, as fundamental to morality.

To test this premise, Haidt ran experiments in Philadelphia, Brazil, and Buenos Aires, presenting upper- and lower-class people with “stories that pitted gut feelings about important cultural norms against reasoning about harmlessness, and then see which force was stronger.”⁴ He chose these varied locations to get a diversity of results, but “unexpectedly, the effect of social class was much larger than the effect of the city. In other words, well-educated people in all three cities were more similar to each

1 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 16.

2 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 220.

3 Haidt, Jonathan and Jesse Graham, “Planet of the Durkheimians,” 2009, 380.

4 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 22.

other than they were to their lower-class neighbors. [Haidt] had flown five thousand miles south to search for moral variation when in fact there was more to be found a few blocks west of campus, in the poor neighborhood surrounding my university.”⁵ His conclusions agreed with the anthropological criticism: “affluent social classes tend to be more individualistic,”⁶ as they are WEIRD people – “Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic. [...] WEIRD people are statistical outliers; they are the least typical, least representative people you could study if you want to make generalizations about human nature,”⁷ which moral psychology had been doing for decades.

“The WEIRDer you are, the more you see a world full of separate objects, rather than relationships. [...] Most people think holistically (seeing the whole context and the relationships among parts), but WEIRD people think more analytically (detaching the focal object from its context, assigning it to a category, and then assuming that what’s true about the category is true about the object).”⁸ Western philosophers have taken an “*individualizing* approach focuses on individuals as the locus of moral value”⁹ and made “moral systems that are individualistic, rule-based, and universalist,”¹⁰ In contrast, non-WEIRD people “are more likely to see relationships, contexts, groups, and institutions, [and therefore] won’t be so focused on protecting individuals.”¹¹ Their “cultures try to suppress selfishness by strengthening groups and institutions and by binding individuals into roles and duties in order to constrain their imperfect natures.”¹²

Haidt found it is most accurate to “see the United States and Western Europe as extraordinary historical exceptions [that] found a way to strip down and thin out the thick, all-encompassing moral orders that the anthropologists wrote about.”¹³ “In most cultures the social order is a moral order[, and even] a sacred order as well.”¹⁴ “When the domain of morality is narrowed [...] overly parsimonious theories of moral psychology flourish.”¹⁵ “It is important to begin the explanation of moral functioning by observing the individual and cultural facts about moral functioning not with a stipulative definition

5 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 25.

6 Jonathan Haidt, Silvia Helena Koller, and Maria G. Dias, “Affect, Culture, and Morality...” 1993, 616.

7 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 112.

8 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 113.

9 Graham, Jesse, Jonathan Haidt, and Brian Nosek, “Liberals and Conservatives...” 2009, 1030.

10 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 114.

11 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 114.

12 Graham, Jesse, Jonathan Haidt, and Brian Nosek, “Liberals and Conservatives...” 2009, 1030.

13 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 14.

14 Haidt, Jonathan and Craig Joseph, “The Moral Mind,” 2008, 371.

15 Haidt, Jonathan and Craig Joseph, “The Moral Mind,” 2008, 371.

of the moral domain inherited from moral philosophers.”¹⁶ A more complete picture shows “construals of the self vary on a dimension from collectivism/interdependence to individualism/independence,”¹⁷ or as “Brewer and Caporael posit[,] selfish and group-oriented motivations are ‘two separate, semiautonomous regulatory system that hold each other in check.’ [...] People are well-equipped to survive in social situations governed by ‘every man for himself,’ but they take just as readily, and a lot more joyfully, to situations in which it is ‘one-for-all, all-for-one.’”¹⁸

This individual-collective polarity is well-illustrated by Ferdinand Tonnies’s idea of *Gemeinschaft*, commonly translated as community, and *Gesellschaft*, known as the civil society. *Gemeinschaft* follows a “traditional pattern of social relations [and] rests on three pillars (whether real or imagined) of shared blood, shared place, and shared mind or belief. The prototype of *Gemeinschaft* is the family.”¹⁹ These views align with most conservatives, who “are typically united [...] by the belief that long-existing institutions, norms, and traditions embody the wisdom of many generations and should not be tampered with lightly. Combined with a view of human nature that is usually darker than that of liberals and a belief in the limits of human knowledge, conservatives tend to believe that strong institutions and social constraints are necessary for children's socialization, valuable for human welfare, and hard to replace once called into question or delegitimated.”²⁰

In contrast, *Gesellschaft* is “a new, more impersonal kind of relationship [and] what happens when the social restraints of community are weakened, mid-level institutions are eliminated, and people are largely free to pursue their own goals as they see fit,”²¹ “so long as they don’t harm or cheat others.”²² These societies have a “high degree of individualism, impersonality, [and] contractualism, and [they proceed] from volition or sheer interest rather than from the complex of affective states, habits, and traditions that underlies *Gemeinschaft*.”²³

How did this new civil society emerge? Robert Nisbets argues that the French Revolution and the Industrialism revolution “were the largest steps in the long transformation of European society from

16 Haidt, Jonathan and Craig Joseph, “The Moral Mind,” 2008, 372.

17 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 6.

18 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 37.

19 Haidt, Jonathan and Jesse Graham, “Planet of the Durkheimians,” 2009, 375.

20 Haidt, Jonathan and Jesse Graham, “Planet of the Durkheimians,” 2009, 385.

21 Haidt, Jonathan and Jesse Graham, “Planet of the Durkheimians,” 2009, 375.

22 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 6.

23 Haidt, Jonathan and Jesse Graham, “Planet of the Durkheimians,” 2009, 375.

medieval/feudal to modern/ democratic. During this transition, the individual took on much greater importance as the unit of society and the unit of value; the centralized state became ever more powerful; and there was a hollowing-out of everything in between.”²⁴ “This very rise in efficiency necessitated a loss of humanity [...] Weber consistently warned about the unexpected and alienating consequences of requiring all arrangements and actions to be justifiable with reference to efficiency, utility, and means-ends rationality,”²⁵ producing “not egalitarian liberty but anomic anarchy.”²⁶

“Real nations are a mixture of the two types,”²⁷ however, “liberals are trying to build the ideal *Gesellschaft*, an open, diverse, and cosmopolitan place in which the moral domain is limited to the issues described by Turiel: justice, rights, and welfare.”²⁸ As a consequence, “when thinking about why conservatives generally oppose gay marriage, immigration, and stem cell research, for example, liberals simply cannot see any moral reasons. They are therefore free to assume the worst – that conservatives are really motivated by homophobia, racism, xenophobia, and ignorant fear of new technologies. If conservatives are motivated by such immoral forces, it must therefore be the case that conservatives don’t care very much about moral concerns such as harm to innocent victims, the rights of oppressed people, or justice more generally.”²⁹

What are liberals missing? Consider Tonnies societal frameworks against “two basic modes of relationship, one warm and personal, exemplified most perfectly in closeness and lasting interdependence of family, the other cooler and more calculating, based on the mutual usefulness of the partners at a given time.”³⁰ “Traditional authority is embedded in personal relationships: people feel respect for the *people* in positions of authority; they owe loyalty and obedience to them, and in return can expect protection and guidance from them. [In] the transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*[,] this natural, interpersonal kind of authority is lost. When person relationships are replaced by administrative and bureaucratic entities backed by the force of law and threat of punishment, then traditional authority is replaced by something cold, impersonal, and weak.”³¹

24 Haidt, Jonathan and Jesse Graham, “Planet of the Durkheimians,” 2009, 373.

25 Haidt, Jonathan and Jesse Graham, “Planet of the Durkheimians,” 2009, 377.

26 Haidt, Jonathan and Jesse Graham, “Planet of the Durkheimians,” 2009, 377.

27 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 6.

28 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 42.

29 Haidt, Jonathan and Jesse Graham, “Planet of the Durkheimians,” 2009, 388.

30 Haidt, Jonathan and Jesse Graham, “Planet of the Durkheimians,” 2009, 374.

31 Haidt, Jonathan and Jesse Graham, “Planet of the Durkheimians,” 2009, 376-377.

For all the benefits of liberty, justice, and material abundance, “Western culture may be failing to do well what cultures do: provide a web or matrix of stories, beliefs, and values that holds a society together, allows individuals to make sense of their lives and sustains them through the trouble and strife of normal existence.”³² Modernity has forgotten that humans “want to live in a thick social world full of shared meanings, symbols, traditions, and communal goals. These are basic human needs, not products of social learning or unconscious conflict resolution,”³³ nor “just an ‘inside-the-head’ trait that expresses itself in cooperative behavior; [collective cohesion] requires ‘outside-the-head’ environmental restraints and triggers to work properly.”³⁴ The social fabric must provide a sense of belonging, or it cannot hold.

The Evolution of Collective Morality

The move from small bands of related foragers to larger, more anonymous forms of human cooperation was revolutionary. “What ‘inside the head’ mechanisms were already in place in pre-agricultural minds such that when early agriculturalists created the right ‘outside the head’ products ultra-large-scale cooperation materialized so quickly?”³⁵ Charles Darwin proposed some amount of group selection; though he “focused on competition among individual organisms, [he also] recognized the generality of his theory and [believed] that human tribes are higher-level entities subject to natural selection.”³⁶ In other words, “humanity’s moral nature was shaped not just by the competition of individuals within groups, but also by the competition of groups with other groups,”³⁷ as “cohesive tribes began to function like individual organisms, competing with other organisms.”³⁸

Group selection theories remained popular until 1966, when George “Williams wrote a devastating critique [that argued] nothing is gained by talking about groups as emergent entities,”³⁹ “warn[ing] readers not to look to higher levels (such as groups) when selection effects at lower levels (such as individuals) can fully explain a trait.”⁴⁰ He pointed to the “prevailing [assumptions of the time]

32 Haidt, Jonathan and Jesse Graham, “Planet of the Durkheimians,” 2009, 392.

33 Haidt, Jonathan and Jesse Graham, “Planet of the Durkheimians,” 2009, 393.

34 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 21.

35 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 22.

36 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 31.

37 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 30.

38 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 223.

39 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 31.

40 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 227.

about the slowness of genetic change, the porousness of groups, and the difficulty of suppressing free-riding, [arguing] that the math just does not work out to enable group-level selection to have any appreciable effect on genes.”⁴¹ “Dawkins cemented this idea in the popular and scientific imaginations with his metaphor of the ‘selfish gene’”⁴² “By the late 1970s there was a strong consensus that anyone who said that a behavior occurred ‘for the good of the group’ was a fool who could be safely ignored.”⁴³ Under this new paradigm, “all acts of apparent altruism, cooperation, and even simple fairness had to be explained, ultimately, as covert forms of self-interest.”⁴⁴ To Williams in particular, morality was merely “an accidental capability produced, in its boundless stupidity, by a biological process that is normally opposed to the expression of such a capability.”⁴⁵

With group selection dismissed, “kin selection and reciprocal altruism are presented as the evolutionary foundations of morality.”⁴⁶ “Kin selection refers to the process in which genes spread to the extent that they cause organisms to confer benefits on others who share the same gene. [...] Evidence for the extraordinary degree to which resources and cooperation are channeled toward kin can be found throughout the animal kingdom.”⁴⁷ To explain non-kin cooperation, Robert Trivers “proposed reciprocal altruism as a mechanism that could promote the spread of genes for altruism, if those genes led their bearers to restrict cooperation to individuals likely to return the favor.”⁴⁸ These one-on-one interactions allow individuals to ensure their exchanges are fair and prevent exploitation when kin relations can’t guarantee good behavior.

While useful for explaining cooperation in small bands, these theories can’t account for cooperation in large groups. “People share 50% of their variable genes with full siblings, 12.5% with first cousins, and just 3% with second cousins, [and yet there is] intense cooperation found among extended families and clans in many cultures,”⁴⁹ far beyond what kin selection would suggest. Similarly, “even if reciprocal altruism can create hundreds of cooperative dyads, it is powerless to

41 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 31.

42 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 32.

43 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 228.

44 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 229.

45 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 229.

46 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 21.

47 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 21-22.

48 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 21.

49 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 21.

create small cooperative groups,”⁵⁰ where interactions and exchanges may be more ambiguous and free-riding exploitation may occur.

A careful revisiting of group selection can account for the deficits of an individualist explanation for morality, putting to rest “the old and deep prejudice that genes change too slowly, groups are too porous and similar to each other, and free-riding is too profitable to have permitted group-level selection to influence human genes.”⁵¹

To begin, it seems that for *any* complex life to emerge, group-level selection must occur. Consider the “major transitions” theory of John Smith and Eörs Szathmáry: “at several points in the history of life, mechanisms emerged that solved the free-rider problem and created larger emergent entities. Replicating molecules joined together to form chromosomes; prokaryotes merged together to become the cooperative organelles of eukaryotic cells; single-cell eukaryotes stayed together after division to form multi-cellular organisms; and some multi-cellular organisms stayed together after birth to form hives, colonies, and societies. In each of these cases, the evolution of a mechanism for suppressing free-riding at one level led to cooperation by entities at that level, which produced enormous gains from the emergent group, largely through division of labor.”⁵² “In a sense, all life forms are now understood to be groups, or even groups of groups.”⁵³ “Whenever a way is found to suppress free riding so that individual units can cooperate, work as a team, and divide labor, selection at the lower level becomes less important, selection at the higher level becomes more powerful, and that higher-level selection favors the most cohesive superorganisms.”⁵⁴ In essence, “the simple rules of Darwinian evolution never change, but the complex game of life changes when radically new kinds of players take the field.”⁵⁵

Like ant, bee, or termite colonies, human groups are emergent entities that are greater than the sum of multi-organism parts, producing what is called “ultrasociality.” “One of the key features that has helped all the nonhuman ultrasocials to cross over appears to be the need to defend a shared nest.”⁵⁶

50 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 21.

51 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 34.

52 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 32.

53 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 32.

54 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 233.

55 Haidt, Jonathan. “The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology,” 2007, 1000.

56 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 235.

“Their behavior protects a persistent, defensible resource from predators, parasites, or competitors. The resource is invariably a nest plus dependable food within foraging range for the nest inhabitants.”⁵⁷

Similarly, “our ancestors were (1) territorial creatures with a fondness for defensible nests (such as caves) who (2) gave birth to needy offspring that required enormous amounts of care, which had to be given while (3) the group was under threat from neighboring groups.”⁵⁸

Unlike other ultrasocial organisms, humans aren’t centered around single reproductive queens, but our “tribal instincts are a kind of overlap, a set of groupish emotions and mental mechanisms laid down over older and more selfish primate nature.”⁵⁹ These newer abilities point to “a moral Rubicon that only *Homo sapiens* appear to have crossed: widespread third-party norm enforcement”⁶⁰ that began when “human cognition veered away from that of other primates [and] our ancestors developed shared intentionality.”⁶¹ Michael Tomasello observes that “it is inconceivable that you would ever see two chimpanzees carrying a log together;”⁶² even chimp hunting parties show no coordination, suggesting they are narrowly concerned with themselves. What changed with humans?

Shared intentionality and in-group coordination is likely related to mirror neurons, which fire “not when [one sees] a specific physical movement but when [one sees] an action that indicates a more general goal or intention.”⁶³ For monkeys, “mirror neurons seem designed for the monkey’s own private use, either to help them learn from others or to help them predict what another monkey will do next.”⁶⁴ In contrast, they “are much more numerous in human beings,”⁶⁵ and “have a much stronger connection to emotion-related areas in the brain. [...] People feel each other’s pain and joy to a much greater degree than do any other primates.”⁶⁶ At the same time, “we are more likely to mirror and then empathize with others when they have conformed to our moral matrix than when they have violated it,”⁶⁷ suggesting the group-favoring limits of our morality discussed more below.

57 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 235.

58 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 236.

59 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 226.

60 Haidt, Jonathan, “The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail...” 2001, 826.

61 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 238.

62 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 237.

63 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 273.

64 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 273.

65 Haidt, Jonathan. “The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology,” 2007, 1001.

66 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 273.

67 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 274.

Oxytocin, popularly thought of as a “love drug [or] cuddle hormone,”⁶⁸ appears to have also been instrumental for gluing people together into groups. It is “widely used among vertebrates to prepare females for motherhood [as it is involved in] uterine contractions [...] milk let down [and creating] motivation to touch and care for one’s children”⁶⁹ But as with humans, “evolution has often reused oxytocin to forge other kinds of bonds[;] in species in which males stick by their mates or protect their own offspring, it’s because male brains were slightly modified to be more responsive to oxytocin.”⁷⁰ Oxytocin doesn’t “bond us to humanity in general,”⁷¹ however; instead, it bonds “us to our partners and our groups, so that we can more effectively compete with other groups.”⁷² In other words, it doesn’t produce a universal altruism or unconditional love, but a parochial altruism; for example, studies find “men who received oxytocin made less selfish decisions – they cares more about helping their group, but they showed no concern at all for improving the outcomes of men in the other groups.”⁷³ Likewise, “intergroup competition increases love of the in-group far more than it increases dislike of the out-group.”⁷⁴ While we may not be prewired for universal love, we at least are not inclined towards hating outsiders.

These neurological and hormonal changes likely helped build the bridge towards human ultrasociality, but as Darwin noted, they are insufficient to explain “internal conflicts people feel between the ‘instincts of preservation’ such as hunger and lust, and the ‘social instincts’ such as sympathy and the desire for others to think well of us.”⁷⁵ Richard Alexander proposed a concept that helps suppress selfish instincts called ‘indirect reciprocity.’ It “occurs when people help others in order to develop a good reputation, which elicits further cooperation from others.”⁷⁶ “Indirect reciprocity can solve the problem of free-riders in moderately large groups, as long as people have access to information about reputations and can then engage in low-cost punishment such as shunning;”⁷⁷ unsurprisingly, “gossip, then, has emerged as a crucial catalyst for cooperation.”⁷⁸ “When people have the capacity to do more than shun – when they have the ability to punish defectors at some cost to

68 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 271.

69 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 270.

70 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 270.

71 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 271.

72 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 271.

73 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 271.

74 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 278.

75 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 22.

76 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 22.

77 Haidt, Jonathan. “The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology,” 2007, 1000.

78 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 23.

themselves – cooperation rates rise particularly quickly.”⁷⁹ Studies suggests humans are naturally inclined towards finding cheaters and defending their behavior, as discussed in Essay 2 on intuitive prosecutors, politicians, and press secretaries. “In economic games, people often punish defectors even if they have to pay for it themselves. Moreover, when people punish free-riders, brain areas related to the processing of rewards are activated, suggesting that such punishment feels good.”⁸⁰ Tracking genetic relatedness and one-on-one interactions need not constrain our ability to cooperate; “in a gossipy world where norms are clear and are carefully and collectively monitored, the possession of a conscience is prerequisite for survival.”⁸¹

In addition to reputation management helping forge successful groups, “culture was a biological adaptation that made it possible for humans to find many new solutions to the free rider problem.”⁸² “Anthropologists Peter Richerson and Rob Boyd have argued that cultural innovations (such as spears, cooking techniques, and religions) evolve in much the same way that biological innovations evolve, and the two streams of evolution are so intertwined that you can’t study one without studying both.”⁸³ They proposed a ‘dual inheritance theory,’ “which posited that the gene pool of a population and the cultural pool of a population are two separate pools of information that undergo natural selection across many generations.”⁸⁴ For example, “any individual whose mutated genes delayed the shutdown of lactase production had an advantage. Over time, such people left more milk-drinking descents [and] groups with the new lactase gene then kept even larger herds [and] found more ways to use and process milk.”⁸⁵ Biology and culture likely played off of each other this way and accelerated the rate of human evolution, reflected in the surprising results of the Human Genome Project, completed in 2003. It showed that “hundreds and perhaps thousands of genes have changed in response to selection pressures within local populations during the Holocene era – the last ten thousand years. The human genome has not been changing at a glacial pace; in fact, the rate of change accelerated rapidly throughout the last fifty thousand years.”⁸⁶

79 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 23.

80 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 38.

81 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 23.

82 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 32.

83 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 242.

84 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 32.

85 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 244.

86 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 33.

Of course, a passing understanding of artificial selection reflects this; consider the wide variety of dogs humans have created since humans domesticated the wolf. This process need not operate on the level of individuals; geneticist William Muir demonstrated group level selection with egg-laying hens. “He worked with cages containing twelve hens each, and he simply picked the cages that produces the most eggs in each generation. Then he bred all of the hens in those cages to produce the next generation. Within just three generations, aggression levels plummeted [...] the group-selected hens were more productive than were those subjected to individual-level selection.”⁸⁷

Returning to our self-domestication: “when culture accumulates, it means that people are learning from each other, adding their own innovations, and then passing their ideas on to later generations.”⁸⁸ Over time, “cultural groups promote uniformity in dress, food choice, ritual practice, and other behaviors used as markers of group membership. [...] These effects of culture make human groups more like single entities or organisms [...] and therefore better candidates for group selection.”⁸⁹ Similarly, Donald Campbell’s work on groups-as-entities finds “groups that move together, share the ups and downs of fortune together, come together periodically, mark and patrol their borders (physical and social), and mark their group membership with clothing, hair styles, bodily alterations, or other badges, are more likely to be perceived as entities.”⁹⁰

Cohesive groups don’t merely seek out and punish cheating behavior, but ‘victimless’ deviant behaviors as well. “The more people identify with a group, the more they like others who follow the group’s norms, and this effect is larger for moral norms than for non-moral norms. [...] According to the ‘black sheep effect,’ people are generally less tolerant towards an ingroup member who transgresses social norms than they are toward an equally transgressive outgroup member.”⁹¹ “This is a more traditional morality of patriotism, fidelity, obedience, and solidarity. This is a morality that binds individuals together, suppresses selfishness, and directs people’s strongest moral passions toward the heroes and martyrs who die for the group, and toward the traitors and apostates who must be put to death in the name of the group.”⁹²

87 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 249.

88 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 241.

89 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 33.

90 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 35.

91 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 37-38.

92 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 35.

This isn't to suggest that "the coevolution of tribal minds and tribal cultures [just prepared] us for war; it also prepared us for far more peaceful coexistence within our groups, and, in modern times, for cooperation on a vast scale as well."⁹³ "We-ness helps to solve cooperative problems too; higher identification with the group leads to higher investment in a public good dilemma and higher self-restraint in consuming the group's resources,"⁹⁴ showing how "people sometimes adopt the interests of their group as their own, even when doing so compromises their self-interest."⁹⁵

In summary, "when groups compete, the cohesive, cooperative group usually wins. But within each group, selfish individuals (free riders) come out ahead. They share in the group's gains while contributing little to its efforts."⁹⁶ Therefore, "the nature of group selection is to suppress selfishness within groups to make them more effective at competing with other groups"⁹⁷ through the evolutionary development of biologically and culturally-enforced collectivist moralities. In turn, "morality binds and builds [...] groups that are emergent entities with new properties"⁹⁸ that help us "transcend self-interest and devote ourselves to helping others, or our groups."⁹⁹ "Even if groups vary little or not at all genetically, groups that develop norms, practices, and institutions that elicit more group-beneficial behavior can grow, attract new members, and replace less cooperative groups."¹⁰⁰

Transcendental and Religious Unity

Above and beyond the biological and cultural mechanisms that underlie everyday group coherence, selection, and evolution, there is evidence that "we are prepared, neurologically, psychologically, and culturally, to link our consciousness, our emotions, and our motor movements with those of other people,"¹⁰¹ often experiencing transcendence in the process. For instance, William McNeill argues that "the process of 'muscular bonding' - moving together in time - was a mechanism that evolved long before the beginning of recorded history for shutting down the self and creating a

93 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 246.

94 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, "Morality," 2009, 37.

95 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, "Morality," 2009, 36.

96 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 224.

97 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 281.

98 Haidt, Jonathan. "The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology," 2007, 1000.

99 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 313.

100 Haidt, Jonathan. "The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology," 2007, 1001.

101 Haidt, Jonathan. "The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology," 2007, 1001.

temporary superorganism.”¹⁰² While he focused on its relevance in war, dancing with wild abandon around fire and synchronized drums produces similar results. Barbara Ehrenreich argues “collective and ecstatic dancing is a nearly universal ‘biotechnology’ for binding groups together,”¹⁰³ as “synchrony builds trust.”¹⁰⁴ Emile Durkheim observed that “once the individuals are gathered together, a sort of electricity is generated from their closeness and quickly launches them to an extraordinary height of exaltation. [...] Vital energies become hyperexcited, the passions more intense, the sensations more powerful,”¹⁰⁵ leading to “a strange sense of personal enlargement.”¹⁰⁶ Andrew Newberg provides a neurological explanation: “religious experiences often involve decreased activity in brain areas that maintain maps of the self’s boundaries and position, consistent with widespread reports that mystical experiences involve feelings of merging with God or the universe.”¹⁰⁷

Unsurprisingly then, “from a multi-level selection perspective, religions are generally well-suited for solving the free-rider problem within groups, increasing their levels of cohesion, cooperation, and coordination, and improving their chances of outcompeting less religious groups.”¹⁰⁸ Indeed, “the world’s major religions generally include a well-developed set of practices and beliefs for suppressing not just selfishness but also the discomfort of self-consciousness.”¹⁰⁹ “Studies of ritual, particularly those involving the sort of synchronized motor movements common in religious rites, indicate that such rituals serve to bind participants together in what is often report to be an ecstatic state of union,”¹¹⁰ the ultimate suppression of self-consciousness.

New Atheists see things differently; they argue religious belief is “against the tide of adaptation, [which should] eliminate costly and wasteful behaviors from an animal’s repertoire.”¹¹¹ They blame hypersensitive mental modules like agency detection and submission to authority as the source of religious “parasitic memes.”¹¹² “The selection [of these religious memes] occurs not on the basis of the benefits religions confer upon individuals or groups but on the basis of [the meme’s] ability to survive

102 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 257.

103 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 257.

104 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 276.

105 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 262.

106 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 256.

107 Haidt, Jonathan. “The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology,” 2007, 1001.

108 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 39.

109 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 40.

110 Haidt, Jonathan. “The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology,” 2007, 1001.

111 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 292.

112 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 292.

and reproduce themselves.”¹¹³ But as the above evidence suggests, “the very ritual practices that the New Atheists dismiss as costly, inefficient, and irrational turn out to be a solution to one of the hardest problems humans face: cooperation without kinship.”¹¹⁴ “Trying to understand the persistence and passion of religion by studying beliefs about God is like trying to understand the persistence and passion of college football by studying the movements of the ball. You’ve got to broaden your inquiry. You’ve got to look at the ways that religious beliefs work with religious practices to create a religious community.”¹¹⁵

So what do religions add beyond the biologically extant drives discussed above? A reference to a higher power, of course, as creating “gods who can see everything, and who hate cheaters and oath breakers, turns out to be a good way to reduce cheating and oath breaking.”¹¹⁶ From the capricious gods of foraging to moralizing agricultural gods, “a review of the historical and cross-cultural evidence indicates that gods seem to become more powerful, moralistic, and punitive as group size grows. [...] People who believed in an angry, punishing god cheated less; people who believed in a loving, forgiving god cheated the most.”¹¹⁷ Further, “gods who administer collective punishment [...] make shame more effective as a mean of social control.”¹¹⁸

With control that transcends the limits of community members and leaders, riskier relationships of cooperation and trust can form. This explains the “interaction of God, trust, and trade [as] temples often served an important commercial functions. [...] Markets that require very high trust to function efficiently are often dominated by religiously bound ethnic groups.”¹¹⁹ Religiosity has its limits, however; “the only thing that [is] reliably and powerfully associated with the moral benefits of religion [s] how enmeshed people [are] in relationships with their co-religionists. It’s the friendships and group activities, carried out within a moral matrix that emphasizes selflessness. That’s what brings out the best in people.”¹²⁰ This shouldn’t be surprising. Since “multi-level selection [i.e. individual and group selection, genetic and cultural selection] shaped human beings, then we can expect that parochialism is,

113 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 295.

114 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 299.

115 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 290.

116 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 297.

117 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 40.

118 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 297.

119 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 309-310.

120 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 311.

descriptively, the normal, default, evolutionarily prepared form of human sociality,”¹²¹ as it is with religion, as well. But without religion, without the thick moral fabrics it can provide, we need to take the finding of substitute serious – or else we will be left with anomie, a normlessness that leaves us alienated. On some level, humans require “‘group-mindedness’ - the ability to learn and conform to social norms, feel and share group-related emotions, and, ultimately, to create and obey social institutions, including religion.”¹²²

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121 Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir, “Morality,” 2009, 36.

122 Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind*, 2012, 240.