

# Morality evolution explain human nature?" john templeton

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



Morality is one principle that applies in both human beings and animals alike especially considering the evolution theory. Morality covers a broad perspective made of several elements/virtues like empathy. In their work, Martin Nowak and Frans de Waal address the issue of empathy in relation to human evolution. Of the two scientists, Martin Nowak addresses the issue of empathy better in relation to human evolution. Nowak's explanation of empathy fits well in evolution.

Elementary, evolution is based on natural selection, which in turn is based on competition. Therefore, if humans have evolved through competition and survival for the best, it means that there has to be a change of rules to contain competition prevalent in natural selection to accommodate empathy. Empathy calls for cooperation, which is non-existence in competition; therefore, "Cooperation means that one individual pays a cost for another individual to receive a benefit" (Nowak 12). This explains how empathy fits in this selfish nature of evolution as facilitated by natural selection. The rules change when the 'cost' for another individual is fully paid. There has to be mechanisms therefore, to facilitate paying this cost. To this Nowak posits, "The fundamental mechanisms encouraging cooperation are direct and indirect reciprocity" (Nowak 12).

Direct reciprocity results from interaction of two same individuals; what one individual has done to the other, determines how the other individual will treat the former. On the other hand, indirect reciprocity insinuates that what an individual has done to others, will determine how she/he will be treated. This means that, even in presence of competition, two competing sides may

have empathy towards each other and cooperate. This is why Nowak says that, “ Cooperation...is another, fundamental force of evolution” (13).

Therefore, just like natural selection, cooperation becomes part of evolution bringing in the element of empathy existing amidst competing and evolving beings. Frans de Waal on his side views empathy from a perspective that does not withhold the competing nature of natural selection that brings about evolution. According to Waal, “ Human morality must be quite a bit older than religion and civilization. It may in fact, be older than humanity itself” (12). This argument may be true; however, it does not address the issue of competitive nature of evolution. It excludes the issue of survival for the fittest. While the principle cardinal rule of doing unto others as you wish them to do to you may hold true, it fails to explain how basic components of evolution apply.

Waal argues that, “ Other primates live in highly structured cooperative groups in which rules and inhibitions apply and mutual aid is a daily occurrence” (12). The only thing he fails to address here is how these cooperative groups come to be in a scenario where everyone is competing to survive. He holds that empathy and reciprocity support human morality; however, the big question remains, how does empathy prevail in competition grounds. Looking at the two works of these scientists, Nowak seems to explain empathy better in relation to evolution. Without changing core principles of evolution like natural selection, empathy could only occur at a cost but not based on morality. Nowak expounds the process of paying the cost through reciprocity adding that cooperation is a basic element of

evolution. Along evolution, competing individuals learn to empathize with those who empathize with them, hence cooperating in the process. Waal's argument that human morality preceded humanity itself does not address the issue of competition in evolution.

## **Works Cited**

Nowak, Martin. "Does Evolution Explain Human Nature?" John Templeton Foundation. N.

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