

# ETHICAL CONSEQUENCES OF EVOLUTION

## Summary

paved the way for an integrated scientific and ethical world view. As an ethical doctrine, socialdarwinism is long dead ever since its defeat by E. G. Moore although the socialdarwinistic thought is a hard-die in the biological community. The accusations of sociobiology for being socialdarwinistic are unfounded and stem from the moralistic fallacy that is, a false assumption that morality is good by definition.

Both social and developmental psychology demonstrate that the moral agency is a motivational device for executing reciprocity that remains at the core of any morality across all studied societies and throughout the ontogeny of moral judgment. The level of true universalizing ethical reflection (Kohlberg's postconventional stages or Gibbs's existential phase) is achieved by a small minority of humans, thus showing that *Homo sapiens* is a moral but not an ethical animal.

While the origin of reciprocity has been perfectly explained by sociobiology, the evolutionary assembly of affective and cognitive elements that make up the moral agency is being successfully studied by the social/personality/developmental psychology as extended to non-human primates. As Darwin (1871) expected, the key innovation for the evolution of moral agency was the emergence of empa-

thy that evolved independently at least three times: in elephants, dolphins and primates. Empathy has a motivational power of its own; it is also necessary for moral agency that requires two cognitive abilities: reflective self-consciousness and understanding of causality; the two make possible the attribution of responsibility. All these requirements are met by the chimpanzees whose moral agency operates in dyads. In contrast, the human moral agency allows for a third party intervention that opens up vast opportunities for ideologies, especially religions, to use and misuse the moral agency to enforce a reciprocation that may be harmful to both individuals and the entire group. Also, the moral agency is known to enforce enhanced intragroup cohesion and loyalty in response to conflict and war, which suggests that the two *prima facie* opposed human universals, morality and warfare, may have coevolved. The most important ethical consequence that follows from the increasing understanding of the primate moral agency is that every received morality is ethically flawed, none can be taken as a paragon of goodness, and each needs corrections by science-informed ethics. In fact, Darwin pioneered the integration of science and ethics, an approach that has come to be appreciated only recently under the heading of consilience.