

## MAKING SENSE OF DARWIN THROUGH LENSES OF DEWEY

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### ABSTRACT

One of the most important debates in moral philosophy is about sources or foundations of human moral behavior. Different moral theories give us different explanations for human moral behavior. A considerable number of such theories argue that human moral behavior can be reduced to a set of founding principles. For these traditional accounts of morality, human conduct should be examined from a strictly foundationalist perspective. However, there is another and hardly a traditional line in which human moral behavior is a necessary by-product of and should be considered in reference to socialization. John Dewey, one of the important philosophers of this second line, defines the boundaries for this anti-foundationalist side of human morality. For him, morality does not have universal rules or sources and it is not something completely different from habit or custom. Keeping all this in mind, this study aims to employ Dewey's ethical framework and his conception of morality to understand and evaluate current discussion in moral philosophy. The view evolutionary morality in general has some problems caused by the foundationalist attitude towards morality. It can be argued that a different reading of Darwinian evolutionary morality can help us to avoid taking human moral behavior as a direct consequence of biological determination and unpersuasive results of sociobiological account. In order to achieve this; this study reconsiders the notion of altruistic behavior, which is one of the frequently revisited concepts of Darwinian evolutionary morality, in communication with Dewey's ethical framework.

**Keywords:** evolution, morality, altruistic behavior, habit, society

## DEWEY'NİN GÖZÜNDEN DARWIN'İ ANLAMAK

### ÖZET

Ahlak felsefesi'nin en önemli tartışmalarından biri insanın ahlaki davranışının kaynağı veya temelleri hakkındadır. Farklı ahlak teorileri insanın ahlaki davranışı için farklı açıklamalar sunmaktadırlar. Bu teorilerin pek çoğu, insanın ahlaki davranışının bir takım kurucu ilkelere indirgenebileceğini iddia etmektedirler. Bu geleneksel ahlak açıklamalarına göre, insanın davranışları katı bir şekilde temelci bir bakış açısından incelenmelidir. Ancak, insanın ahlaki davranışının zorunlu bir ürün olarak insanın sosyalleşmesine göre düşünüldüğü başka bir geleneksel çizgi de vardır. Bu ikinci çizginin önemli filozoflarından John Dewey, bu temelci görüşe karşı taraftaki ahlak anlayışı için sınırlar tanımlamaktadır. Dewey için ahlak, evrensel kurallara ve kaynaklara sahip değildir ve alışkanlık ya da gelenekten tamamen farklı değildir. Bütün bunları düşünerek, bu çalışma ahlak felsefesinin bu güncel tartışmasını anlamak ve değerlendirmek amacıyla Dewey'nin ahlaki çerçevesini ve ahlak anlayışını sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Genel olarak evrimsel ahlak, ahlaka yönelik temelci tavırdan kaynaklanan bazı problemlere sahiptir. Darwinci evrimsel ahlakın farklı bir okumasının, insanın ahlaki davranışının biyolojik belirlenimin doğrudan bir sonucu olarak görülmesinden ve sosyobiolojik yaklaşımın ikna edici olmayan sonuçlarından kaçınmamıza yardımcı olacağı iddia edilebilir. Bu amaçla, bu çalışma Darwinci evrimsel ahlakın sıkça yinelenen kavramlarından biri olan özgeci davranış nosyonunu Dewey'nin ahlaki çerçevesi ile iletişim içinde yeniden ele almaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** evrim, ahlak, özgeci davranış, alışkanlık, toplum

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## INTRODUCTION

The strength of Dewey's philosophy lies in its anti-foundationalist character. Yet, neither the claim that Dewey's philosophy is anti-foundationalist, nor that this feature gives Deweyian philosophy the strongest instrument are within the scope of this paper.

Instead of this, I try to show how this character of Dewey's philosophy is crucial in current debates in the field of morality, evolution and philosophy. I want to argue that the recent tension between radical sociobiological account and exaggerated hopes for humanist morality can only be overcome by reconsidering Darwin but from a Deweyian perspective. I want to suggest a Deweyian way of looking at Darwinian evolutionary ethics, which does not separate nature and society, nor does it consider the biological facts as the foundation of morality. I believe that the moral conception of Darwinian evolutionary theory can best be understood within the Deweyian ethical framework.

Thus, first of all I will try to outline basic tenets of the sociobiological view and demonstrate its engagement with finding so-called biological foundations of human morality. Arguing for the possibility for altruistic predisposition but against sociobiological perception on the relationship between biological facts and moral value will be main strategy in this first part. Second, I will describe what constitute an altruistic behavior and give a justification for socially fertilized altruistic behavior patterns. Third, I will expand Dewey's reading of the theory of evolution and then I want to show the conceptual similarity between Darwin and Dewey with regard to morality. And fourth, according to this conceptual similarity, I will attempt to read the notion of altruistic behavior practice in accord with what I call the strongest feature of Dewey's philosophy of moral thinking. By this way, the possibility for altruistic behavior, I believe, can be re-established based on human practices and habitual modes of socialization. Finally, from this point of view, I will go through an alternative moral perspective that is constituted on the unity of fact and value and also unity of nature and society, without sacrificing facts and findings of biology.

### **A Comment on Sociobiological Approach to Human Morality**

Darwinian evolutionary theory has been accepted by biologists as the dominant paradigm for the contemporary biology. Some evolutionists and social scientists, however, attempt to apply Darwinian theory not only to biological processes, but also to human social affairs. Though this too might be possible to some extent, attempts to reduce social convention to rough biology have always been controversial. They use the idea of evolution in order to explain human moral behavior, and even try to give a natural justification for the existing moral norms. They argue that morality is not just a matter of personal beliefs and opinions, it is based on "laws" applying to all people (Ruse, 1998, pp. 67-68).

The view of evolutionary ethics encounters with many objections both from philosophical and political perspectives. From the philosophical perspective, evolution in itself and the paths of evolution are not sufficient to account for moral normativity, for they only tell us what has happened biologically, while morality is about what subjects ought or not to do. So deriving moral obligations from non-moral facts is an important problem (called naturalistic fallacy). Furthermore, especially sociobiological accounts of ethics have gained bad political reputation and been accused of favoring biological or genetic determinism. Some sociologists argue that this type of determinism can lead to political and social problems, such as racism, discrimination, or irresponsibility in the sense of escaping from social and individual duties (Thompson, 1999, p. 473).

Sociobiological account of morality seeks an answer to the question whether evolution can explain, or perhaps even justify ethics or not. Sociobiologists argue that moral behavior can be grounded on basic instincts such as survival and reproduction. Their explanation is based on selective advantages of the individual, because "the moral human has more chance of surviving and reproducing than the immoral person. The immoral person fails to help relatives and does not get help from non-relatives, because they, in turn, can expect no help from him or her" (Ruse, 1982, p. 197).

Put briefly, sociobiologists make a connection between genes and human thoughts, and finally actions by explaining altruism in terms of selfishness or selfish genes. For this account, altruism should only be defined by its biological origins. According to sociobiological definition, "the altruistic behavior is only superficially "altruistic", because the origin and maintenance of the behavior labeled "altruistic" is really selfishness" (Thompson, 1999, p. 480).

According to sociobiologists, we have certain dispositions which are based on genes and are leading us to approve or disapprove certain actions. But these dispositions are not just simple feelings of like and dislike, because these dispositions have a deeper cause, namely “struggle for existence” (Ruse, 1998, p. 221). In addition, sociobiologists believe in a common morality because every human shares the same genetic code. “Besides having some differences, people share all properties that make them human and that is necessary for a common morality” (Ibid., p. 255).

On the other hand, Edward Wilson, one of the most popular sociobiologists, argues that ethics is an issue that should no longer be studied by philosophy, but by biology. He suggests that biological statements should be taken as necessary foundations for ethical inquiry. According to him, philosophers try to constitute the standards of good and evil and they consult our emotions for this constitution. However, emotional control takes place in the hypothalamus and limbic system of brain and they simply evolved by natural selection. For this reason, according to him, biological statement can legitimately be employed and should in fact be made so by philosophers if they want to explain foundations of ethics (Wilson, 2000, p. 563).

Sociobiology, without question, have a very important role in evolutionary ethics. This way of seeing helps us think different possibilities concerning the relation between biological evolution and morality. However, sociobiology has some obvious difficulties in conceptualizing morality. Two quick objections can be made: First, I think that sociobiology tends to ignore “is-ought” gap or naturalistic fallacy. I argue that there is an explanatory gap in the transition from biological facts to moral values. This problem cannot be resolved by sociobiology, simply because it does not succeed to re-define what “is” is in sociobiological sense, nor does it attempt to re-conceptualize what else can be understood by “ought”. What I suggest for consideration is an attempt to achieve both goals; re-conceptualization of “is” and “ought” in such a way that the former will no longer be “biologically given” and the latter will no longer be “transcendent ought”. Statically given “is” should be replaced with the dynamically shaped and re-shaped “is”. In much less the same way, the “transcendent ought” is to be replaced with socially encouraged practices and approved habits. Secondly, sociobiological account leads to some misunderstanding about evolutionary ethics, which is the case for instance in most of the debates on biological determinism. Their insistence on the strict determinism between biology and morality eventually invites objections against evolutionary accounts of morality. I think, quite the opposite, that evolutionary ethics should not necessarily be deterministic.

I want to argue that these two main problems of sociobiological account are originated from the foundationalist perspective on human morality. I believe that such perspective is taking us directly to biological determinism, a position which is harder to defend. Biological evidences should not be seen as the original ground of the human moral behavior. Rather, the evidences of evolutionary theory should only be seen as the traces of the dispositions of human behavior which are to be understood only in reference to social life. In this respect, altruistic behavior should best be seen as a biological disposition to behave socially, rather than something contradictory to so-called biological foundations of morality. I claim that this disposition can best be understood when we take other constitutive social experiences of human life into consideration.

## **Understanding Altruistic Behavior Patterns**

I want to read the concept of altruism from a different perspective, one that is, I think, promising to remove many difficulties we have seen so far as regards the notion of altruism. This perspective is based on two main motivations of altruism; empathy and sympathy. According to this perspective, our altruistic behavior can be seen as norms, habits and repeated actions that provide the sustainability of society. I argue that when altruistic behavior patterns are accepted and endorsed by the society in consistent fashion, it will likely be circulated as a set of habitual practices in the same society. I call this practice ‘altruistic behavior practice’ and will endeavor to show how altruistic motivations of human beings turn into practices in social life. I think I should remind here John Dewey’s concepts ‘habit’ and ‘social practice’ in explaining and developing the idea of ‘altruistic behavior practice’.

In general, altruism can be said to be the sacrificing of one’s benefit for the benefit of other(s). However, the definition of altruism has been a controversial issue in psychology, and also in philosophy and biology. Psychologists, in particular, are far from agreement about the definition of altruistic behavior. The main reason for this disagreement is the uncertainty about the knowledge of the

source of the motivation. Some theorists call it as “intentional positive behavior” (Eisenberg, 1982, p. 6) and some use it interchangeably with the term prosocial behavior. Prosocial behavior, on the other hand, is defined as “helping, sharing, and other seemingly intentional and voluntary positive behaviors for which the motive is unspecified, unknown, or not altruistic” (Ibid.).

I take altruistic behavior as a positive social behavior and do not consider this notion as a rational process, nor I think is it necessary to relate with cognitive components of the human behavior. Altruistic behavior as a positive prosocial behavior should be seen as an important component of human morality and socialization. The important point here is that altruistic behavior should be considered as a biological drive for socialization and cooperation, as a set of biologically driven behaviors that are also encouraged by society and a unity of genetically and historically connected individual organisms.

Let me draw attention to the point concerning “biological disposition” to eliminate some possible misunderstandings; that is, saying this does not mean that altruism is innate. I see biological roots of altruistic behavior as *a disposition or tendency for living together with others* and as a motivation that provide this togetherness. I do not want to argue that altruism is innate, because I believe this argument might lead us to another variant of biological determinism. I think that there is altruistic disposition in humans but its appearance depends on social and environmental factors, social encouragement or avoidance. If it were not so, we would not observe different ethical standards or different social behavior. What is innate is not that of ‘altruism’, but rather a drive for togetherness. Out of this predisposition and certainly under relevant and appropriate social-historical conditions certain effects as altruistic behaviors might spring.

In this respect, altruistic behavior is a basic prosocial behavior corresponding to individual’s disposition to behave socially. Justin Aronfreed’s arguments on the socialization of altruism and sympathy must be revisited here. Aronfreed (1970) considers altruism and sympathy as dispositions to behave socially. According to him, “certain forms of human social behavior are widely interpreted as the expression of altruistic and sympathetic dispositions. ... [P]sychological conception of altruism and sympathy cannot be mounted without a developmental perspective into the process of socialization” (p. 103). I want to say that this type of altruistic behavior that I call *habitual behavior* coheres with positive social behavior and can be called the basic norm of society which means “help other individuals in distress” (Darley & Latane, 1970, p. 83).

I now want to employ altruistic behavior as an unreflective, repeated and habitual action in a different moral perspective. Nevertheless, this perspective should not be associated with normative accounts and normative notions such as ‘moral good’ and ‘moral bad’. I think human social and moral behaviors are not determined by norms, but they rather arise spontaneously in the social environment. In our social life, we exhibit many unreflective social behaviors. We respond to needs and distress of others with an unreflective or perhaps instinctive behavior. We cannot explain these types of behaviors by certain norms. Some of these behaviors are learned in family, some of them are learned or approved in society and some of them exist as good or bad dispositions in us.

Moreover, it can be clearly said that many social relations in our life improve in habitual repetitions. I want to suggest that the disposition of behaving altruistically can be considered as habitual output. Altruistic behavior can change into habitual behavior by continuous repetition and insisting practices. Of course, any behavior of this kind must be approved, encouraged or at least allowed by the society, if it is to be observed in repeating and sustainable fashion. I argue that our moral behaviors consist of different variations of these repeated habitual behaviors. Positive habits are approved, and these approvals are displayed in society by means of consistent encouragement to be resulted in frequent occurrence, while negative habits are condemned by consistent discouragement. The social encouragement and social avoidance, in this sense, appear in fairly long course of time as moral norms. We should note that the norms that appear in this vein are not in any sense “good” or “bad” as moral reflective judgments. Perhaps, quite the opposite what we call good or bad are derivations of this appearances.

I suggest that altruistic behavior can be considered as a disposition or motivation, in order to define and explain morality. Altruistic behavior can be considered as virtuous motivation which involves benevolence and caring about the goodness of others. Altruistic behavior is a character that refers to positive social behavior and improves with social practices in society. In this respect, Dewey’s moral view can supply a place in which altruism can provide a new perspective to moral inquiry.



## In Search of Darwinian Morality Through Dewey

In *Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin defines morality in terms of the notion of social instincts. He explains his moral view in four steps; first, the social instincts provide moral relations by feelings of sympathy towards the members of the community. Second, when mental faculties of individual develop, some instinctive desires, such as hunger, arise. These desires are short in duration and “after being satisfied, are not readily or vividly recalled” (p. 304). Third, by acquiring language, the ideas of common opinion and the public good arise. Then human begin to behave in accordance with the public good and their regard for the approbation and disapprobation of the members of community depends on sympathy. Finally, habit plays an important role for the strengthening of social instincts with sympathy in the community (Ibid., pp. 304-305).

According to Darwin, many animal species are social and have sympathetic feelings towards other members of their community, especially when in distress or danger. He argues that “certain social instincts have been acquired through natural selection or... are the indirect result of long-continued habit.” (Ibid., p. 309) Darwin suggests natural selection rather than habits for the cause of acquiring certain social instincts. However, some social instincts can originate from habits or can be indirect results of faculties “such as sympathy, reason, experience and a tendency to imitation” (Ibid.).

As a result, for Darwin “people act impulsively that is from instinct or long habit” (Ibid., p. 316). Especially beneficial actions are defined as “instinctive impulses” (Ibid., p. 310). Dewey would happily agree with this. According to him, our actions have a habitual disposition behind, and these dispositions have certain biological impulses behind as well. This may suggest that both Darwin’s and Dewey’s ethical views are closely related. In addition, the notion of ‘altruistic behavior practice’ does certainly have a place in Darwin’s moral theory. He tends to understand altruism or behaving altruistically in terms of social instincts. And, he also argues that some social instincts are indirect results of habits. In this respect, ‘altruistic behavior practice’ can be seen as Darwinian social instincts that in themselves are result of habit. As I propose for ‘altruistic behavior practice’, Darwin also recognizes the habitual domain for social instincts. Moreover, Dewey also relates habitual domain to our sphere of moral activities. Dewey argues that habitual disposition dominate all human practices. In this respect, it can be said that ‘altruistic behavior practice’ is represented by both social instincts that are acquired habitually and human practices that are improved and embodied by habitual repetitions.

As I said before, Dewey conceives morality as closely linked with biological phenomena. According to him, Darwinian Theory shows us the constantly changing biological nature of human life and this is an evidence for us to save morality from unchangeable rules and goods. According to him, neither ethical life nor ethical concepts can be considered separately from natural process and evolutionary concepts, respectively. The cosmic processes, the principles of which are struggle and strive, and the ethical process, the principles of which are sympathy and co-operation, are not in opposition; rather the ethical process is a part of the cosmic process (Dewey, 1993, pp. 96-97). Nature “includes the organism interacting with its environment, which means that each of them affects and is affected by the other... [T]he human organism is not separate from the natural world, but included within the natural processes of life” (Carden, 2006, p. 29). In addition, “the natural process, the so-called inherited animal instincts and promptings, are not only the stimuli, but also the materials, of moral conduct” (Dewey, 1993, p. 103).

Dewey argues that the notion of the struggle for existence should not be considered as opposite to the ethical process, since “the nature of struggle for existence is constantly modifying itself... because as the conditions of life change, the modes of living must change also” (Ibid., p. 101). In this sense, the struggle for existence and self-assertion does not have negative meanings for human morality (Ibid.). In addition, Dewey seems to object to the classical view regarding the relationship between evolution and ethics. He argues that the struggle for existence does not necessarily imply selfish behavior as an extremity in which there is no place for others at all. Since he does not conceive ethics independently of natural processes he does not consider evolutionary ethics as derived from biology. For Dewey, experience is the key concept in the talk of morality, and morality and all human experience cannot be considered apart from nature and natural processes. His other objection is to the idea that separates experience and nature and also the organism and the environment. Since “they are never wholly

distinct... experience is experience of nature [and] there is one world, one nature and one experience in the process” (Carden, 2006, p. 29).

As is seen, Dewey’s outlook on Darwinian evolutionary theory eliminates problems of evolutionary ethics which are originated from foundationalist perspective of sociobiologists. I believe that Dewey’s reading of evolution, nature and morality provides us to see all components of nature and morality as one and the same expressions of nature. Since I believe in fertility of reading Darwin through Dewey’s ethical framework, I suggest reconsidering altruistic behavior deeply through Dewey’s ethical conception.

### **Deweyian Paths to Altruistic Behavior**

The main vocabulary of Dewey’s moral philosophy contains habits, emotions, experiences of virtues and human practices. At the beginning of his examination of the notion of habit, he defines needs satisfaction as the primary activity of human life in natural process. “All life forms have fundamental requirements which they must fulfill in order to survive; thus human conduct also begins from needs which are to be met through interaction with the environment” (Carden, 2006, p. 30). Moreover, satisfying the needs is maintained by habitual activity so that in similar situations people act with a small effort in new situations. In addition, habits involve all natural or environmental conditions for satisfying needs. “Habitual activity can be seen to dominate all life process, from the simple to complex, including human behavior” (Ibid.).

In *Human Nature and Conduct and The Nature of Moral Theory* (1957), Dewey defines habit as an acquired human character. All human moral actions and “all virtues and vices are habits” (p. 16). “Habit covers in other words the very make-up of desire, intent, choice, disposition which gives an act its voluntary quality” (Dewey, 1960, p. 13). According to him, habits are, as functions, acquired in the process of socialization from the earliest age and they involve physical, natural and social human environment. So, people do also learn habits rather naturally from each other in their society. “Dewey argues that the main source of our habits is other people. We learn them through imitation and repetition of the actions of those closest to us” (Carden, 2006, p. 31). Habits are represented by both possessions of organisms and products of social relations of organisms. He writes that “The social environment acts through native impulses and speech and moral habitudes manifest themselves. ... [F]unctions and habits are ways of using and incorporating the environment in which the latter has its say as surely as the former” (Dewey, 1957, p. 15).

For Dewey, our moral and social actions are embodied as habits, and society conserves these habits by mechanisms of approval or disapproval. Society is a condition that determines survival of a habitual action and reminds social responsibility to humans. “Liability is the beginning of responsibility. We are held accountable by others for the consequences of our acts. They visit their like and dislike of these consequences upon us” (Ibid., p. 217). The individual and his social environment interact with each other. There is a transformation between them continuously and moral goods are the result of this interaction. Both environment and organism are active, and habits are the product of their interaction. “According to Dewey, the self is constituted by habits, which are given a biological foundation as the function between organism and environment by means of which needs are satisfied and life is furthered” (Carden, 2006, p. 72). In addition, values of the individual cannot be considered apart from values of society or nature because values are produced by “local conditions of the natural world” (Ibid., p. 41). The individual, social and natural forces create values together, and they conduct human activity toward a greater well-being. (Ibid.)

According to Dewey, certain habits are characterized as virtues that constitute human well-being. These are experienced continuously, approved by society and are also effective in satisfying needs in different conditions of natural and social environment. These habits are stronger than other habits in human practices. “All virtues and vices are habits which incorporate objective forces. ... They can be studied as objectively as physiological functions, and they can be modified by change of either personal or social elements” (Ibid., p. 16).

It seems that Dewey does not distinguish moral behavior from all other human activities. He considers all human activities that include moral activity in terms of habits. Human constitute their moral actions on the basis of their habitual disposition like their other activities. Morally relevant actions are those that, most of the time; derive from those habits that are what society calls good practice. People learn

moral action in society with interacting and communicating with other people and then they transform this action to habitual activity. For my current purpose, now I want to consider the notion of ‘altruistic behavior practice’ in terms of Dewey’s moral conception. Dewey does not directly mention altruism. In other words, he does not use the notion of altruism, as the central problematic as it appears in modern debates on ethics. However, I think altruistic behavior or what I call ‘altruistic behavior practice’ can be brought up to surface through deeper reading. For Dewey ‘altruistic behavior practice’ is something, in moral context, like a biological disposition or as a virtue. In a broad sense ‘altruistic behavior practice’ is one of the most important ingredients of or building blocks for many virtues. And habits, in the same broad sense, are no less than necessary and sufficient condition for these virtues to be exercised recognized and memorized in society. He is consistent in his approach to biology, obviously not to justify our social-moral values by relying on biological facts, but rather to help us see how these two can never come apart.

‘Altruistic behavior practice’ or being habitually altruistic should be considered as a moral character. Altruistic behavior as a prosocial behavior cannot be seen without society. In other words, altruistic behavior is possible only in a society. In addition, the emergence, growth and sustainability of altruistic behavior depend on somehow ritualistic practices. In this respect, the view of Dewey, who constitutes morality in social life and practices, is in accordance with moral view in which altruistic behavior practice can flourish as a moral character.

‘Altruistic behavior practice’, as habit, in Dewey’s view cannot be considered independently of social and natural environment of the individual. It can exist in society or nature as habitual disposition of the individuals. In addition, ‘altruistic behavior practice’ should be considered for all species, since in general definition “concern for others” is valid for all species. In this respect, like definition of habitual activity for all species and all human activities in Dewey, ‘altruistic behavior practice’ should be considered for all species and all activities that represent helping and caring for others.

Furthermore, we can consider ‘altruistic behavior practice’ as satisfying a need of the individual, as Dewey says for habit. I tempt to read this need or desire or biological impulse as “being social”. If we consider altruistic behavior as the Darwinian social instinct, or inner strength, or the virtues of giving and receiving, or biological disposition to behave socially in general, we can say that altruistic behavior is a biological impulse that provide the individual to being social.

Against this background, I think, the best way to think about altruistic behavior practice is to bring it back to society, a realm which is not only “given as such” but where ethical thinking is shaped and reshaped – in and by – for Dewey. I think that this view is sufficient in giving us an ethical framework in order to explain altruistic behavior as a moral character. This moral character is important for evolutionary ethics and I argue that with the ethical framework that is proposed by Dewey, evolutionary ethics can be given a different agenda that is less problematic and clearer.

## CONCLUSION

There is, in fact, one ultimate concern underlying this piece of work: It is about evolutionary ethics, an interdisciplinary field of study, which has been at the center of recent philosophical debates and around which important biological and philosophical controversies exist. One of the philosophical controversies lies in the question “what does evolution tell us, if it tells us anything at all, about human beings and their moral expectations?” From one perspective, the debate is established, in fact, between two sides. On one hand, there are those who argue that biological evolution supports or is even responsible for our moral norms. On the other hand, there are others who maintain that our moral norms exist simply because we are more than what biology “determines” us to be.

However, from another point of view, one that I want to argue for, the real tension is not between those believers who think evolution is the source of morality and others who think it is barrier to morality, because of their believe on morality that is more than evolution. A real tension exists between the view that “nature” and “human moral systems” are two separate things, the “fact-world” and the “value-world”, and others who conceive these as that which can be distinguished, but cannot and should not be separated. What I have tried to show in this work is that sociobiological reading in evolutionary ethics seems to represent the first manner in which biological “grammar” of human life is different and separate from cultural “grammar” of human moral life. Thus, I think they commit a naturalistic fallacy.

If we want to find good reasons why we follow certain moral norms but not others then we should look for them in the laboratories of evolution.

I think there is another approach for which biological evolution and human moral norms are no longer two separate things, isolated from each other. As I referred frequently there are other philosophical reserves by means of which we can think what is morally possible is one and the same with what is evolutionarily given. In other words, morality is in accord with evolution as any other thing regardless of whether they emerge in human or non-human societies. Altruistic behavior as experienced in human societies, for instance, is not more than selected habitual practices occurred in the long history of evolution of human societies. There is no real gap between “is” in the sense of biologically given and “ought” in the sense of socially favored norm embodied in the repetitive practices of society. Therefore, it no longer makes sense to ask if our altruistic behaviors are compatible with our biological make up or if such altruistic expressions are really altruistic or just disguised selfish actions. Simply because, altruism, in this Deweyian sense, is not a cause in itself, but rather an effect of our habitual nature that persisted, being selected and identified in the long run of human bio-cultural history.

Biology in my entire treatment of the problem is not a foundation on which we should justify our true moral nature. Biology in this sense is only responsible for the first drive, the drive to be in groups or live as members of society. Biology is “is” or “given” only in this narrow sense. Once we accept that we are determined biologically at this level, then we can also accept that our biological disposition to be within groups go hand in hand with our being habitual creatures. We are equally, in the same biological sense, habitually interacting creatures. Our habitual engagements with others bring further repetitive circles that will emerge in the long run as social practices. Human societies, as with all other biologically and genetically formed groups, are inclined to select, prefer or approve certain practices, while dismissing others. Virtues are no more than habits of participating in what we select as socially approved practices, and altruistic tendencies are example to these constructive habits.

In conclusion, I suggest a reading to evolutionary ethics in terms of altruism as a habitual practice and Deweyian moral philosophy. From this view, I think that if we have habits of expressing some of our social approvals in the form of moral obligations, the reason is no more biological than our being biologically habitual creatures. There is no transition from “is” to “ought” here, since there is no identification of such separate two things at all. So that evolutionary ethics needs such interpretation or vision in order to overcome current problems and to be an alternative to modern moral philosophical views.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

This study is partially derived from my unpublished M.A. thesis entitled; “A Different Approach to Evolutionary Ethics: From Biology to Society” (Aydın, A. (2008). *A Different Approach to Evolutionary Ethics: From Biology to Society*, Ankara: METU.) and it was presented with the same title at “John Dewey's 150th Birthday Celebration: An International Conference on Dewey's Impact on America and the World”, Center for Inquiry, Amherst, New York, 2009.

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