# *Human nature and the feasibility of inclusivist moral progress*

*Revisiting the social origins of human morality*

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## Introduction

The study of social, ethical, and political issues from a naturalistic perspective has been pervasive in social sciences and the humanities in the last decades. This articulation of empirical research with philosophical and normative reflection is increasingly getting attention in academic circles and the public spheres, given the prevalence of urgent needs and challenges that society is facing on a global scale.

The contemporary world is full of challenges or what some philosophers have called 'existential risks' to humanity. Nuclear wars, natural and/or engineered pandemics, climate change, global totalitarianism, and emergent technologies, are some of the challenges mentioned by many authors devoted to the study of long-term potential risks for the survival of the human species.

However, while there are many reasons to be a pessimist about the future of humanity, there is also a lot of ink wasted in showing that the world today is far better than we had in the past and also that there have been many instances of social and moral progress in the last centuries. Some authors have even claimed that "we have made more progress over the last 100 years than in the first 100,000"[1].

According to 'our world in data', some of the most relevant advances of humanity in the last centuries have to do with the reduction of poverty and/or inequality, better health and security, the decline of violence and war, and the development of democracy and institutional mechanisms to guarantee individual freedom and rights[2]. Yet, there is a more concrete concern that our world faces nowadays, and requires a particularly detailed analysis.

[1] Norberg (2016).
[2] https://ourworldindata.org/optimism-pessimism#individual-optimism-and-social-pessimism.

In a few words, the advance in information and communication technologies, the huge volume of people migration because of prevalent instances of global inequality, and the reality of an interconnected world that just mirrors an extensive history of massive human intergroup relations open the question about the feasibility of social and moral progress in the contexts of diverse, multicultural, and unequal societies.

This makes it crucial to reflect not only on whether human societies may keep advancing on a path of social progress, but how this can be achieved by addressing the challenges of inequality and potential intergroup conflict. This concern closely relates to the further consolidation of democratic values and the achievement of a more generalized consideration of the equal moral value of human individuals far from group, ethnic, or collective distinctions. This vision of progress follows the moral convictions that have been considered right and worthy to be pursued by most ethical theories explored by philosophers and social scientists so far.

This work aims to contribute to the study of the mechanisms and feasibility of social and moral progress grounded on the precept of human equality and is guided by the idea that social and moral progress in a plural world requires the accomplishment of a more democratic and tolerant society. These forms of progress have already been defined by philosophers Allen Buchanan and Russel Powell as inclusivist forms of moral progress. According to these authors, inclusivist moral progress is featured by the transformation of moral judgments, motivations, and norms guided by the rejection of “group-based restrictions on moral standing and moral status” (2018).

The work of Buchanan and Powell is fundamental for the argumentation developed in this work since they have pioneered a more complex debate in the field of evolutionary social sciences and philosophical anthropology. In brief, these authors have inquired how human nature, conceptualized by the advances in evolutionary thinking and the empirical sciences, is related to our moral

convictions and the possibilities that we have to establish certain forms of social and moral progress.

The work of Buchanan and Powell contributes to the debate on moral progress by incorporating empirically-informed concepts and arguments. With this objective in mind, they develop their discussion around a generalized tension between exclusivist and inclusivist forms of moral progress. This tension revolves around the question of whether and to what extent human moral concerns, motivations, and norms, are limited or bounded by social identities, group thinking, or collective values. This question is at the center of this work. In other words, I aim to answer whether and to what extent the nature of our social and moral cognition hinders or enables the development of inclusivist forms of morality and moral progress.

As I mentioned so far, the distinction between exclusivist and inclusivist forms of morality has a practical implication and facilitates the reflection on the mechanisms and feasibility of concrete forms of progress based on the precept of human equality, which is the road to progress that we should follow according to most ethical theories. The distinction between exclusivist and inclusivist morality is not used here as a form of summarizing highly divergent descriptive approaches to morality, but as a way to address the practical implications of morality research, particularly around the question of the feasibility of social forms of progress based on the precept of equality and tolerance.

My objective then has less to do with offering a conceptualization of human morality or with the proposition of a new ethical perspective. Instead, I aim to identify, from an empirically informed perspective, what enables the achievement of egalitarian forms of social progress, to subsequently offer a normative reflection about what we should do if we want to accomplish such inclusivist forms of progress.

This task is of great relevance, having in mind that some theoretical proposals on the matter have claimed that human prosocial behavior and morality are

constrained by *exclusivist* fixed tendencies as a product of our evolutionary history. According to these views, human morality is a group-centered cognitive and behavioral expression that has severe limits in its scope and extent, which hinders in the end the emergence of inclusivist forms of moral concerns and behaviors. These claims align with the philosophical intuition about the 'dissociation of empathy', or the fact that human individuals tend to express empathy and sympathy preferably for members of their group whereas their empathic and moral concern and recognition for outgroup individuals tend to be reduced or eliminated in real-life social interactions.

Multiple theorists have expressed, however, that these assumptions are wrong for empirical and philosophical reasons, which results in a serious challenge to the conception of human morality as exclusivist by nature. Furthermore, simple intuition and practical experience constantly show us that human individuals can develop and endorse a broad spectrum of moral considerations and adopt an arguably inclusivist stance concerning the kind of persons or agents that deserve moral concern.

Moreover, and adopting a historical perspective, the expansion of cultural and commercial exchanges, the consolidation of democracy, the development of welfare states, or the emergence of institutions based on the concept of universal human rights, have partially driven human progress based on the impartial concern for the well-being of persons. These historical instances of cultural evolution and institutional design have shown that it is feasible to promote behaviors and attitudes grounded in impersonal prosocial and inclusivist principles.

This optimistic perspective, however, still begs the question of the exact relationship between social, cultural, and historical contexts, and the emergence of certain behavioral expressions of inclusivist morality. This is crucial since a great number of human individuals around the world still do not make part of these instances of social progress, and some authors have suggested that such instances of social and moral progress are particularly favored by the contexts of

the WEIRD world, that is the world of Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic societies[3].

Some of these approaches consider moral inclusivity a ‘luxury good’ and follow the ‘dependency thesis’ according to which the expression of moral inclusivity depends on the presence of very concrete material conditions that trigger inclusivist and impersonal prosocial tendencies that human beings are not able to express in threatening contexts without physical security. This thesis is problematic for various reasons and has led to incomplete explanations about the enabling and causal factors of inclusivist moral progress, as well as unsatisfactory suggestions about what we should do to foster the accomplishment of more generalized instances of progress based on inclusivist concerns.

In an attempt to contribute to this debate, the main objective of this thesis is to offer an alternative proposal about the nature of human morality and a more detailed reflection on what we should do if we want to further accomplish such instances of progress. More precisely, this work adopts a particular developmental and constructivist vision of human morality to answer the question of how feasible it is to reach generalized forms of social progress based on the precepts of moral inclusivity. Furthermore, it offers some ideas about what are the most adequate and favorable conditions to foster such progress both at the individual and the collective level.

At this point, a preliminary clarification of some starting points is necessary. In the first place, and contrary to what other authors have proposed when debating moral progress from an empirically-based approach, my perspective adopts a radical developmental and constructivist perspective, following particularly the conceptual and empirical ideas of the social-domain theory in moral psychology.

From this perspective, morality is a domain of normative and social knowledge that develops and emerges in human interactions. Moral concerns, judgments, and norms are not only the result of the expression of innate adaptive intuitions,

[3] Henrich (2020).

nor the product of social conformity and a simple process of mirroring the normativity that communities have established to organize their social life. Human individuals, instead, construct moral concerns and judgments during their situated interactions.

More specifically, the constructivist tradition claims that we need to research how moral concerns, judgments, and reasons emerge in social interactions and how human beings construct the content of their moral knowledge in the first place. Based on these ideas, morality is defined here as the result of a constructive process through which human individuals, by the means of constant interactions on a background of mutual respect and recognition, develop evaluative concerns about how we ought to treat others, and how to 'care' and 'respect' others' well-being, needs, and vulnerabilities.

This developmental-constructivist theory of human psychology contributes to an alternative understanding of the origins of moral variability and informs a very particular normative stance about the most desirable contexts needed for the urgent accomplishment of inclusivist forms of morality in contemporary societies. This is so given that the very same definition of morality adopted presupposes the feature of inclusivity. The main objective of this work is then to argue, based on a developmental perspective, what are the most favorable conditions to foster the development of moral inclusivity and what we should do to accomplish concrete instances of moral progress that truly help us to overcome our most urgent moral challenges.

The whole thesis is organized as follows. In part I, I show how received visions about human social evolution have informed conceptions of morality as an adaptive function evolved to solve the challenges of cooperative life. Based on these assumptions, some theories argue that human morality is limited by the boundaries of group thinking, and always obeys the mandates of collective interests and the will of the majority. However, this conception has problematic implications from a normative and ethical perspective. The aim of Chapter 1 is to present this introductory debate in detail.

In chapter 2, I consider a relevant amount of scientific evidence that helps to consolidate a more optimistic and inclusivist perspective about the starting conditions of human prosocial behavior. Later, I will summarize some ideas offered to explain the possible evolutionary mechanisms that led to the consolidation of these inclusivist capacities. However, I will also show how evolutionary theories that share the same adaptationist foundations but initially seem relevant to explain the feasibility of moral inclusivity, result incomplete when considering the complexity of moral behavior and its ethical implications.

Part II is devoted to presenting a developmental alternative to the adaptationist versions around the starting conditions of morality. In this section, I first summarize the epistemological, conceptual, and empirical basis of a constructivist perspective already proposed by several authors in the last decades. This is the goal of chapter 3. More precisely, I adopt the conceptualization of morality established by the social-domain theory school and clarify its conception of the situated development of moral concerns, motivations, and norms. All these ideas are essential for my argumentation on the feasibility of inclusivist moral progress offered later. Chapter 4 provides a more detailed idea of constructivist thinking about moral development, by analyzing one particular dimension: the development of moral concerns for fairness and the sense of justice in distributive dilemmas.

In Part III, I assume a constructivist perspective on morality to contribute to the philosophy of moral progress. In particular, I discuss the implications of such a perspective for the conceptualization of human moral nature and discuss what are the most favorable conditions for moral inclusivity to emerge. Answering that question is of enormous relevance since favoring the transition of human societies towards more inclusivist forms of moral concern and behavior supposes a more generalized accomplishment of our most urgent moral convictions.

Previous developmental or culturally-sensible attempts to explore this issue are already on the market. As mentioned before, most authors have approached the

topic by situating the cultural evolution and development of (inclusivist) moral progress in the WEIRD world. For instance, some of these authors claim that very concrete material conditions (mostly present in the Western World) have been necessary for triggering inclusivist and impersonal prosocial tendencies that human beings are not able to express in threatening contexts without physical security.

Despite their interest in explaining inclusivist morality and the feasibility of inclusivist forms of progress following a naturalistic and culturally situated approach, these theories are problematic for two main reasons. In the first place, most of the authors that explain moral progress tend to focus exclusively on the consolidation of liberal values in the Western world and the underlying adoption of laws, social-epistemic practices, and public narratives about tolerance and inclusivity, as unequivocal signs of inclusivist morality. Nevertheless, there is an enormous distance between the institutional and public support of inclusivist moral values or the construction of public images of tolerance and inclusivity, and the real materialization of impersonal moralities in situated social interactions.

Secondly, the variability of human moral behavior is far bigger than most of the theories in moral psychology and moral progress tend to assume. Accordingly, inclusivist and exclusivist forms of morality may develop simultaneously in similar or divergent geographical and socio-ecological environments, including those with harsh conditions such as competition for scarce resources, potential intergroup conflict, and risks of disease transmission. In addition, harsh environmental conditions are usually present in almost all societies around the globe, and the presence of socio-ecological conditions such as physical security and prosperity, predominant in highly resourced populations, do not prevent the existence of exclusivist moral tendencies.

My model explores a different perspective on the relationships between cultural, institutional, and historical factors, and the situated development of human morality. This supposes a clear distinction from previous approaches to the

matter since it offers a different view on what we should do to pursue further instances of inclusivist social progress.

In the fifth chapter, I first analyze the proposals of some defenders of the 'dependency' theory. The attention is focused on the 'Evolutionary Developmental Model' proposed by Buchanan and Powell (2018). Based on a critique of this approach, I will argue that to explain the evolution and development of human morality in its multiple manifestations, it is essential to put focus on social interactions. This also involves a different perspective on human-environment relations that in line with a constructivist worldview makes an innovative contribution to the philosophy of moral behavior and moral progress.

Later, in the sixth chapter, I will define my alternative relational view of inclusivist morality and I will offer my view on how to establish favorable conditions that make inclusivist morality possible. Complementing the constructivist approach, my conception is based on the essential role of equality and individuality and on how moral inclusivity is favored if moral concerns do not develop driven by the accomplishment of group-centered, binding, and communitarian concerns and values. In brief, my relational model suggests that the accomplishment of moral inclusivity not only depends on the overall achievement of certain levels of physical security or economic prosperity. Instead, its development is favored by transforming the interactional contexts in which moral concerns towards autonomy and individuality emerge.

In arguing so, I will need to start with a critique of contemporary situated and embodied approaches in ethics. Then, I will show how societies guided by the accomplishment of group-centered values of power, dominance, and relational inequality tend to express exclusivist moral behaviors, while individualistic societies tend to be more inclusivist. Starting from this diagnosis, my final attempt is then to reflect on which are the best conditions for the moral valuation of individuality to emerge and what we should do to promote the accomplishment of moral inclusivity at the societal level.

## Zusammenfassung

Die Untersuchung sozialer, ethischer und politischer Fragen aus einer naturalistischen Perspektive ist in den letzten Jahrzehnten in den Sozial- und Geisteswissenschaften allgegenwärtig gewesen. Diese Verknüpfung von empirischer Forschung mit philosophischen und normativen Überlegungen findet in akademischen Kreisen und in der Öffentlichkeit zunehmend Beachtung, da die Gesellschaft weltweit mit dringenden Bedürfnissen und Herausforderungen konfrontiert ist, deren Lösung eine detaillierte und sorgfältige Untersuchung der menschlichen Sozialität und Moral erfordert.

Die heutige Welt ist voll von Herausforderungen oder dem, was einige Philosophen als "existenzielle Risiken" für die Menschheit bezeichnet haben. Atomkriege, natürliche und/oder künstlich herbeigeführte Pandemien, Klimawandel, globaler Totalitarismus und aufkommende Technologien sind nur einige der Herausforderungen, die von vielen Autoren genannt werden, die sich mit der Untersuchung langfristiger potenzieller Risiken für das Überleben der menschlichen Spezies befassen. Es gibt zwar viele Gründe, die Zukunft der Menschheit pessimistisch zu sehen, aber es wird auch viel Tinte darauf verschwendet, zu zeigen, dass die Welt heute viel besser ist als in der Vergangenheit und dass es in den letzten Jahrhunderten viele Beispiele für sozialen und moralischen Fortschritt gegeben hat. Einige Autoren haben sogar behauptet, dass "wir in den letzten 100 Jahren mehr Fortschritte gemacht haben als in den ersten 100.000 Jahren"[4].

“Our World in Data" zufolge haben einige der wichtigsten Fortschritte der Menschheit in den letzten Jahrhunderten mit der Verringerung von Armut und/oder Ungleichheit, besserer Gesundheit und Sicherheit, dem Rückgang von Gewalt und Krieg sowie der Entwicklung von Demokratie und institutionellen

[4] Norberg (2016).

Mechanismen zur Gewährleistung individueller Freiheit und Rechte zu tun[5]. Es gibt jedoch ein konkreteres Problem, mit dem unsere Welt heute konfrontiert ist und das eine besonders detaillierte Analyse erfordert.

Kurz gesagt, der Fortschritt in den Informations- und Kommunikationstechnologien, das enorme Ausmaß der Migration von Menschen aufgrund der vorherrschenden globalen Ungleichheit und die Realität einer vernetzten Welt, die eine lange Geschichte massiver menschlicher Beziehungen zwischen den Gruppen widerspiegelt, werfen die Frage nach der Machbarkeit von sozialem und moralischem Fortschritt im Kontext vielfältiger, multikultureller und ungleicher Gesellschaften auf.

Daher ist es von entscheidender Bedeutung, nicht nur darüber nachzudenken, ob die menschlichen Gesellschaften weiterhin auf dem Weg des sozialen Fortschritts voranschreiten können, sondern auch darüber, wie dies durch die Bewältigung der Herausforderungen potenzieller Konflikte zwischen den Gruppen erreicht werden kann. Dieses Anliegen steht in engem Zusammenhang mit der Konsolidierung demokratischer Werte und der Erreichung einer allgemeineren Betrachtung des gleichen moralischen Wertes menschlicher Individuen fernab von gruppenbezogenen, ethnischen oder kollektiven Unterscheidungen. Diese Vision des Fortschritts folgt den moralischen Überzeugungen, die von den meisten ethischen Theorien, die bisher von Philosophen und Sozialwissenschaftlern erforscht wurden, als richtig und erstrebenswert angesehen wurden.

Diese Arbeit zielt darauf ab, einen Beitrag zur Untersuchung der Mechanismen und der Machbarkeit von sozialem und moralischem Fortschritt zu leisten. Meine Forschung basiert auf dem Grundsatz der Gleichheit der Menschen und wird von der Idee geleitet, dass sozialer und moralischer Fortschritt in einer pluralistischen Welt die Verwirklichung einer demokratischeren und toleranteren Gesellschaft erfordert. Diese Formen des Fortschritts wurden bereits von den Philosophen Allen Buchanan und Russell Powell als inklusivistische Formen des moralischen Fortschritts definiert. Diesen Autoren zufolge zeichnet sich inklusivistischer

[5] https://ourworldindata.org/optimism-pessimism#individual-optimism-and-social-pessimism.

moralischer Fortschritt durch die Transformation moralischer Urteile, Motivationen und Normen aus, die durch die Ablehnung "gruppenbasierter Beschränkungen des moralischen Standes und des moralischen Status" geleitet werden (2018).

Die Arbeit von Buchanan und Powell ist für die in dieser Arbeit entwickelte Argumentation von grundlegender Bedeutung, da sie Pionierarbeit für eine komplexere Debatte im Bereich der evolutionären Sozialwissenschaften und der philosophischen Anthropologie geleistet haben. Kurz gesagt haben diese Autoren versucht zu erforschen, wie die menschliche Natur, die durch die Fortschritte im evolutionären Denken und in den empirischen Wissenschaften konzeptualisiert wurde, mit unseren moralischen Überzeugungen und den Möglichkeiten, die wir haben, um bestimmte Formen des sozialen und moralischen Fortschritts zu etablieren, zusammenhängt.

Mit anderen Worten: Die Arbeit von Buchanan und Powell trägt zur Debatte über den moralischen Fortschritt bei, indem sie empirisch fundierte Konzepte und Argumente einbezieht. Mit diesem Ziel vor Augen entwickeln sie ihre Diskussion um ein allgemeines Spannungsverhältnis zwischen exklusivistischen und inklusivistischen Formen des moralischen Fortschritts. Diese Spannung dreht sich um die Frage, ob und inwieweit menschliche moralische Anliegen, Motivationen und Normen durch soziale Identitäten, Gruppendenken oder kollektive Werte eingeschränkt oder begrenzt sind.

Diese Frage steht im Mittelpunkt der vorliegenden Arbeit. Mit anderen Worten: Ich möchte beantworten, ob und inwieweit die Natur unserer sozialen und moralischen Kognition die Entwicklung von inklusivistischen Formen der Moral und des moralischen Fortschritts behindert oder ermöglicht. Wie ich bereits erwähnt habe, hat die Unterscheidung zwischen exklusivistischen und inklusivistischen Formen der Moral eine praktische Bedeutung und erleichtert die Reflexion über die Mechanismen und die Durchführbarkeit konkreter Formen des Fortschritts auf der Grundlage des Gebots der Gleichheit der Menschen, dem Weg des Fortschritts, den wir nach den meisten ethischen Theorien beschreiten sollten.

Die Unterscheidung zwischen exklusivistischer und inklusivistischer Moral wird hier nicht als eine Zusammenfassung höchst unterschiedlicher deskriptiver Ansätze zur Moral verwendet, sondern als eine Möglichkeit, die praktischen Implikationen der Moralforschung anzusprechen, insbesondere im Hinblick auf die Frage der Durchführbarkeit sozialer Formen des Fortschritts auf der Grundlage des Gebots der Gleichheit und Toleranz. Mein Ziel besteht also weniger darin, eine Konzeptualisierung der menschlichen Moral anzubieten oder eine neue ethische Perspektive vorzuschlagen. Vielmehr möchte ich aus einer empirisch fundierten Perspektive heraus ermitteln, was die Verwirklichung egalitärer Formen des sozialen Fortschritts ermöglicht, um anschließend eine normative Reflexion darüber anzustellen, was wir tun sollten, wenn wir solche inklusivistischen Formen des Fortschritts erreichen wollen.

Diese Aufgabe ist von großer Bedeutung, wenn man bedenkt, dass in einigen theoretischen Vorschlägen zu diesem Thema bisher behauptet wurde, dass das menschliche prosoziale Verhalten und die Moral durch exklusivistische, festgelegte Tendenzen als Produkt unserer Evolutionsgeschichte eingeschränkt werden. Diesen Ansichten zufolge ist die menschliche Moral ein gruppenzentrierter kognitiver und verhaltensbezogener Ausdruck, der in seiner Reichweite und seinem Ausmaß stark begrenzt ist, was letztlich die Entstehung inklusivistischer Formen moralischer Anliegen und Verhaltensweisen verhindert. Diese Behauptungen stehen im Einklang mit der Einsicht der "Dissoziation der Empathie", d. h. der Tatsache, dass menschliche Individuen dazu neigen, Empathie und Sympathie vorzugsweise für Mitglieder ihrer Gruppe zu empfinden, während ihre empathische und moralische Anteilnahme und Anerkennung für Individuen, die nicht zur Gruppe gehören, in realen sozialen Interaktionen eher reduziert oder eliminiert wird.

Mehrere Theoretiker haben jedoch zum Ausdruck gebracht, dass diese Annahmen aus empirischen und philosophischen Gründen falsch sind, was zu einer ernsthaften Infragestellung der Auffassung führt, dass die menschliche Moral von Natur aus exklusivistisch ist. Darüber hinaus zeigen uns einfache Intuition und praktische Erfahrung immer wieder, dass menschliche Individuen ein breites Spektrum moralischer Erwägungen entwickeln und befürworten

können und eine wohl inklusivistische Haltung in Bezug auf die Art von Personen oder Akteuren einnehmen, die moralische Bedenken verdienen. In den ersten beiden Abschnitten dieser Arbeit soll diese Debatte im Detail dargestellt werden.

Aus historischer Sicht haben die Ausweitung des kulturellen und kommerziellen Austauschs, die Konsolidierung der Demokratie, die Entwicklung von Wohlfahrtsstaaten oder die Entstehung von Institutionen, die auf dem Konzept der universellen Menschenrechte beruhen, den menschlichen Fortschritt auf der Grundlage der unparteiischen Sorge um das Wohlergehen der Menschen teilweise vorangetrieben. Diese historischen Beispiele kultureller Entwicklung und institutioneller Gestaltung haben gezeigt, dass es möglich ist, Verhaltensweisen und Einstellungen zu fördern, die auf unpersönlichen, prosozialen und inklusiven Prinzipien beruhen.

Diese optimistische Perspektive wirft jedoch immer noch die Frage nach der genauen Beziehung zwischen sozialen, kulturellen und historischen Kontexten und der Entstehung bestimmter Verhaltensweisen einer inklusiven Moral auf. Dies ist von entscheidender Bedeutung, da eine große Anzahl von Menschen auf der ganzen Welt immer noch nicht an diesen Instanzen des sozialen Fortschritts teilnimmt, und einige Autoren haben vorgeschlagen, dass solche Instanzen des sozialen und moralischen Fortschritts durch die Kontexte der WEIRD-Welt[6].

Einige dieser Ansätze betrachten moralische Inklusivität als "Luxusgut" und folgen der "Abhängigkeitsthese", der zufolge die Ausprägung moralischer Inklusivität vom Vorhandensein sehr konkreter materieller Bedingungen abhängt, die inklusivistische und unpersönliche prosoziale Tendenzen auslösen, die der Mensch in bedrohlichen Kontexten ohne physische Sicherheit nicht zum Ausdruck bringen kann. Diese These ist aus verschiedenen Gründen problematisch und hat zu unvollständigen Erklärungen über die Ermöglichungs- und Kausalfaktoren des moralischen Fortschritts im Sinne der Inklusion und zu unbefriedigenden Vorschlägen darüber geführt, was wir tun sollten, um die

[6] Aus dem Englischen Weird, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic.

Verwirklichung allgemeinerer Formen des Fortschritts auf der Grundlage inklusiver Anliegen zu fördern.

In dem Versuch, einen Beitrag zu dieser Debatte zu leisten, besteht das Arbeit darin, einen alternativen Vorschlag über das Wesen der menschlichen Moral und eine detailliertere Reflexion darüber zu unterbreiten, was wir tun sollten, wenn wir solche Instanzen des Fortschritts weiter erreichen wollen. Genauer gesagt wird in dieser Arbeit eine besondere entwicklungs- und konstruktivistische Sichtweise der menschlichen Moral zugrunde gelegt, um die Frage zu beantworten, inwieweit es möglich ist, verallgemeinerte Formen des sozialen Fortschritts zu erreichen, die auf den Grundsätzen der moralischen Inklusivität basieren. Darüber hinaus werden einige Überlegungen darüber angestellt, welches die angemessensten und günstigsten Bedingungen sind, um einen solchen Fortschritt sowohl auf der individuellen als auch auf der kollektiven Ebene zu fördern.

An dieser Stelle ist es notwendig, vorab einige Ausgangspunkte zu klären. Im Gegensatz zu den Vorschlägen anderer Autoren, die den moralischen Fortschritt von einem empirisch basierten Ansatz aus erörtern, vertrete ich eine radikal entwicklungs- und konstruktivistische Perspektive, die sich insbesondere an den konzeptionellen und empirischen Ideen der ‘Social-Domain Theory’ in der Moralpsychologie orientiert. Aus dieser Perspektive ist Moral ein Bereich normativen und sozialen Wissens, das sich in menschlichen Interaktionen entwickelt und entsteht. Moralische Bedenken, Urteile und Normen sind weder das Ergebnis angeborener adaptiver Intuitionen noch das Produkt sozialer Konformität und eines einfachen Prozesses der Spiegelung der Normativität, die Gemeinschaften zur Organisation ihres sozialen Lebens geschaffen haben. Vielmehr konstruieren menschliche Individuen moralische Bedenken und Urteile während ihrer situierten Interaktionen.

Die konstruktivistische Tradition behauptet, dass wir erforschen müssen, wie moralische Bedenken, Urteile und Gründe in sozialen Interaktionen entstehen und wie Menschen den Inhalt ihres moralischen Wissens überhaupt erst konstruieren. Auf der Grundlage dieser Ideen wird Moral hier als das Ergebnis

eines konstruktiven Prozesses definiert, in dem menschliche Individuen durch ständige Interaktionen vor dem Hintergrund gegenseitigen Respekts und gegenseitiger Anerkennung bewertende Bedenken darüber entwickeln, wie wir andere behandeln sollten und wie wir uns um das Wohlergehen, die Bedürfnisse und die Verletzlichkeit anderer "kümmern" und sie "respektieren".

Diese entwicklungs-konstruktivistische Theorie der menschlichen Psychologie trägt zu einem alternativen Verständnis der Ursprünge moralischer Variabilität bei und vermittelt eine ganz bestimmte normative Haltung zu den wünschenswertesten Kontexten, die für die dringende Verwirklichung inklusiver Formen der Moral in heutigen Gesellschaften erforderlich sind. Dies ist möglich, wenn man bedenkt, dass dieselbe Definition von Moral, die verwendet wird, das Merkmal der Inklusivität voraussetzt. Das Hauptziel dieser Arbeit besteht also darin, auf der Grundlage einer Entwicklungsperspektive zu argumentieren, welches die günstigsten Bedingungen sind, um die Entwicklung moralischer Inklusivität zu fördern, und was wir tun sollten, um konkrete Beispiele moralischen Fortschritts zu erreichen, die uns wirklich helfen, unsere dringendsten moralischen Herausforderungen zu bewältigen.

Die gesamte Arbeit ist wie folgt gegliedert. In Teil I zeige ich, wie die gängigen Vorstellungen über die soziale Evolution des Menschen die Vorstellungen von Moral als einer adaptiven Funktion geprägt haben, die zur Lösung der Herausforderungen des kooperativen Lebens entwickelt wurde. Auf der Grundlage dieser Annahmen wird in einigen Theorien argumentiert, dass die menschliche Moral durch die Grenzen des Gruppendenkens begrenzt ist und stets dem Gebot der kollektiven Interessen und dem Willen der Mehrheit gehorcht. Diese Auffassung hat jedoch aus normativer und ethischer Sicht problematische Implikationen. Das Ziel von Kapitel 1 ist es, diese einleitende Debatte im Detail darzustellen.

In Kapitel 2 gehe ich auf eine Reihe von wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnissen ein, die dazu beitragen, eine optimistischere und inklusivistischere Sichtweise der Ausgangsbedingungen für menschliches prosoziales Verhalten zu festigen. Später werde ich einige Ideen zusammenfassen, die zur Erklärung der möglichen

evolutionären Mechanismen angeboten werden, die zur Konsolidierung dieser inklusiven Fähigkeiten geführt haben. Ich werde jedoch auch zeigen, wie evolutionäre Theorien, die auf denselben adaptionistischen Grundlagen beruhen, aber zunächst relevant erscheinen, um die Machbarkeit moralischer Inklusivität zu erklären, unvollständig sind, wenn man die Komplexität moralischen Verhaltens und seine ethischen Implikationen betrachtet.

Teil II beschäftigt sich mit der Vorstellung einer entwicklungspsychologischen Alternative zu den adaptionistischen Versionen über die Ausgangsbedingungen der Moral gewidmet. In diesem Abschnitt fasse ich zunächst die erkenntnistheoretischen, konzeptionellen und empirischen Grundlagen einer konstruktivistischen Perspektive zusammen, die bereits von mehreren Autoren in den letzten Jahrzehnten vorgeschlagen wurde. Dies ist das Ziel von Kapitel 3. Genauer gesagt, übernehme ich die Konzeptualisierung von Moral, die von der Schule der Social-Domain-Theory entwickelt wurde, und erläutere ihre Vorstellung von der situierten Entwicklung moralischer Anliegen, Motivationen und Normen. All diese Ideen sind für meine spätere Argumentation über die Machbarkeit eines inklusivistischen moralischen Fortschritts von wesentlicher Bedeutung. Kapitel 4 bietet eine detailliertere Vorstellung des konstruktivistischen Denkens über die moralische Entwicklung, indem es eine bestimmte Dimension analysiert: die Entwicklung moralischer Bedenken in Bezug auf Fairness und den Sinn für Gerechtigkeit in Verteilungsdilemmas.

In Teil III gehe ich davon aus, dass eine konstruktivistische Perspektive der Moral einen Beitrag zur Philosophie des moralischen Fortschritts leisten kann. Insbesondere erörtere ich die Implikationen einer solchen Perspektive für die Konzeptualisierung der menschlichen moralischen Natur und diskutiere günstige Bedingungen für die Entstehung moralischer Inklusivität sind. Die Beantwortung dieser Frage ist von enormer Bedeutung, da die Förderung des Übergangs menschlicher Gesellschaften zu inklusiveren Formen moralischen Interesses und Verhaltens eine allgemeinere Verwirklichung unserer dringendsten moralischen Überzeugungen voraussetzt.

Frühere entwicklungspsychologischen oder kulturell sinnvolle Versuche, diese Frage zu erforschen, sind bereits auf dem Markt. Wie bereits erwähnt, haben sich die meisten Autoren dem Thema genähert, indem sie die kulturelle Evolution und Entwicklung des (inklusivistischen) moralischen Fortschritts in der WEIRD-Welt verortet haben. Einige dieser Autoren behaupten zum Beispiel, dass sehr konkrete materielle Bedingungen (vor allem in der westlichen Welt) notwendig waren, um inklusivistische und unpersönliche prosoziale Tendenzen auszulösen, die der Mensch in bedrohlichen Kontexten ohne physische Sicherheit nicht zum Ausdruck bringen kann.

Trotz ihres Interesses an der Erklärung einer inklusivistischen Moral und der Machbarkeit inklusivistischer Formen des Fortschritts, die einem naturalistischen und kulturell situierten Ansatz folgen, sind diese Theorien aus zwei Hauptgründen problematisch. Erstens neigen die meisten Autoren, die den moralischen Fortschritt erklären, dazu, sich ausschließlich auf die Konsolidierung liberaler Werte in der westlichen Welt und die zugrundeliegende Annahme von Gesetzen, sozial-epistemischen Praktiken und öffentlichen Erzählungen über Toleranz und Inklusivität als eindeutige Anzeichen für eine inklusivistische Moral zu konzentrieren. Dennoch besteht eine enorme Distanz zwischen der institutionellen und öffentlichen Unterstützung inklusivistischer moralischer Werte oder der Konstruktion öffentlicher Bilder von Toleranz und Inklusivität und der realen Materialisierung unpersönlicher Moralvorstellungen in situierten sozialen Interaktionen.

Zweitens ist die Variabilität des menschlichen moralischen Verhaltens weitaus größer, als die meisten Theorien der Moralpsychologie und des moralischen Fortschritts annehmen. Dementsprechend können sich inklusivistische und exklusivistische Formen der Moral gleichzeitig in ähnlichen oder abweichenden geografischen und sozio-ökologischen Umgebungen entwickeln, einschließlich solcher mit harten Bedingungen wie Wettbewerb um knappe Ressourcen, potenziellen Konflikten zwischen Gruppen und Risiken der Krankheitsübertragung. Darüber hinaus sind raue Umweltbedingungen in der Regel in fast allen Gesellschaften rund um den Globus anzutreffen, und das Vorhandensein sozio-ökologischer Bedingungen wie physische Sicherheit und

Wohlstand, die in Bevölkerungsgruppen mit hohen Ressourcen vorherrschen, verhindert nicht die Existenz exklusivistischer moralischer Tendenzen.

Mein Modell erforscht eine andere Perspektive auf die Beziehungen zwischen kulturellen, institutionellen und historischen Faktoren und der situierten Entwicklung der menschlichen Moral. Dies stellt einen klaren Unterschied zu früheren Ansätzen dar, da es eine andere Sichtweise darauf bietet, was wir tun sollten, um weitere Instanzen des inklusiven sozialen Fortschritts zu verfolgen.

Im fünften Kapitel analysiere ich zunächst die Vorschläge einiger Verfechter der "Abhängigkeitstheorie". Das Hauptaugenmerk liegt dabei auf dem von Buchanan und Powell (2018) vorgeschlagenen "Evolutionären Entwicklungsmodell". Ausgehend von einer Kritik dieses Ansatzes werde ich argumentieren, dass es zur Erklärung der Evolution und Entwicklung der menschlichen Moral in ihren vielfältigen Erscheinungsformen unerlässlich ist, den Fokus auf soziale Interaktionen zu legen. Dies beinhaltet auch eine andere Perspektive auf die Beziehungen zwischen Mensch und Umwelt, die im Einklang mit einer konstruktivistischen Weltsicht einen innovativen Beitrag zur Philosophie des moralischen Verhaltens und des moralischen Fortschritts leistet.

Später, im sechsten Kapitel, werde ich meine alternative relationale Sichtweise einer inklusivistischen Moral definieren und meine Ansicht darüber darlegen, wie günstige Bedingungen geschaffen werden können, die eine inklusivistische Moral ermöglichen. In Ergänzung des konstruktivistischen Ansatzes basiert mein Konzept auf der wesentlichen Rolle der Individualität und darauf, wie moralische Inklusivität begünstigt wird, wenn moralische Anliegen nicht durch die Durchsetzung gruppenzentrierter, verbindlicher und gemeinschaftlicher Anliegen und Werte bestimmt werden. Kurz gesagt, mein relationales Modell legt nahe, dass die Verwirklichung von moralischer Inklusivität nicht nur vom Erreichen eines bestimmten Niveaus an physischer Sicherheit oder wirtschaftlichem Wohlstand abhängt. Vielmehr wird sie durch die Veränderung der interaktionellen Kontexte begünstigt, in denen sich moralische Bedenken gegenüber Autonomie und Individualität entwickeln.

Um dies zu begründen, muss ich mit einer Kritik der zeitgenössischen ‘Situated’ und ‘Embodied’ Ansätze in der Ethik beginnen. Dann werde ich zeigen, wie Gesellschaften, die sich an der Durchsetzung gruppenzentrierter Werte wie Macht, Dominanz und relationaler Ungleichheit orientieren, zu exklusivistischen moralischen Verhaltensweisen neigen, während individualistische Gesellschaften eher inklusivistisch sind. Ausgehend von dieser Diagnose versuche ich abschließend darüber nachzudenken, welches die besten Bedingungen für die Entstehung der moralischen Bewertung der Individualität sind und was wir tun sollten, um die Verwirklichung der moralischen Inklusivität auf gesellschaftlicher Ebene zu fördern.

# PART I

## Human Nature and Moral Behavior:

## An evolutionary perspective

*"At a certain bend in the path of evolution man refused to remain a four-footed creature, and the position, which he made his body to assume, carried in it a permanent gesture of insubordination."*

*Rabindranath Tagore*

Since Darwin, explanations in cognitive, behavioral, and social sciences have often resorted to evolutionary considerations. These explanations are frequently framed within the perspective of functionalism, which searches for the origins of morphological and behavioral traits of organisms in the role that these features played in the survival of species in ancestral environments. From the point of view of functionalism, most morphological and behavioral traits of organisms had fitness-enhancing effects during their evolutionary history, and have played a function in the adaptation of biological agents to their environments. These environments have naturally selected these features and have been inherited through evolutionary time.

The most relevant naturalistic approaches to the origins of human sociality and morality have had a lingering commitment to these assumptions. According to functionalist approaches, human morality is the natural outcome of some biological adaptations that played a role in the survival of humans during social evolution. More specifically, morality and human-specific forms of prosocial behavior would be the result of the evolution of cooperation and are adaptations designed to share the benefits of cooperative interactions and resolve the challenges and failures of altruism (Bowles & Gintis, 2011; Kitcher, 2011; Boehm, 2012; Haidt, 2012; Tomasello, 2016; Curry et al., 2019).

The functionalist perspective on the origins of human morality is also compatible with recent trends in cognitive sciences that have focused their interest on the embodied, emotional, and implicit nature of different cognitive processes from perception to social cognition (Varela et al., 1991/2017; Prinz, 2007; Gigerenzer, 2008; Chemero, 2011; Shapiro, 2014; Asma, 2019). These new proposals have renewed the interest in the 'intuitive' nature of our social and moral behavior (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1991; Varela, 1999; Prinz, 2007; Greene, 2007; Haidt, 2001,

2012), and claim that moral judgments and moral behavior are embodied in nature, built upon emotional and automatic processes, and always embedded in concrete social-ecological contexts.

As a consequence of these functionalist and intuitionist conceptual backgrounds, many *prima facie* morally questionable consequences that result from our cooperative nature are sometimes considered inescapable. For instance, some functionalist proposals have claimed that human prosocial behavior and morality are constrained by exclusivist adaptive intuitions since cooperative behavior evolved in our species as an adaptation for parochial forms of pro-sociality designed to benefit one's group and promote intergroup conflict (McDonald, Navarrete, & Van Vugt, 2012; Haidt, 2012; Persson & Savulescu, 2012; Tomasello, 2016; Sinn & Hayes, 2017). According to these views, human morality is a group-centered cognitive and behavioral expression that has considerable limits in its scope and extent.

Following these assumptions, some others have further claimed that the very nature of human morality hinders the emergence of stable forms of moral inclusivity driven by the rejection of group-based restrictions on moral standing and moral status (Goldsmith & Posner, 2005; Haidt, 2012; Asma, 2013;). Buchanan and Powell have described this perspective on human moral nature and progress as representatives of 'Evo-Conservatism'.

Scientific evidence suggests, however, a more complex picture for the study of the evolution and development of human morality than the one adopted by Evo-conservatives. In other words, human beings are naturally endowed with the capacities for developing both exclusivist and inclusivist moral tendencies, as some authors in evolutionary social sciences and philosophy have previously explored (Fry, 2013; Gat, 2019; Hames, 2019).

Concerning the starting conditions of human morality, recent evolutionary evidence shows that inclusivist moral concerns and the reaction to group-driven parochial and dominating motives could have been prevalent in the ancestral

environments of archaic humans. Our physiological configuration (Raghanti et al., 2018; Theofanopoulou, Andirkó, Boeckx, & Jarvis, 2022), self-domestication (Hare, Wobber, & Wrangham, 2012), and historical instances of prehistoric inter-group exchanges could have favored the expression of more inclusivist prosocial behavior in human ancestral environments than what is assumed by functionalist 'Evo-conservative' approaches (Pisor & Surbeck, 2019; Spikins et al., 2021).

Humans are social beings intrinsically motivated to act prosocially from a very early age (Hepach, Vaish, & Tomasello, 2012; Aknin, Van de Voondervort, & Hamlin, 2018; Hepach & Tomasello, 2020), and usually engage in altruistic behaviors toward in-group and out-group individuals equally (Killen & Verkuyten, 2017). Moreover, human agents perform actions to restore well-being inequalities and reject unjustified exclusions (Dahl & Killen, 2018a; Killen, Elenbaas & Rizzo, 2016).

Moreover, humans can develop with age a propensity for endorsing a broad spectrum of moral considerations and adopt an arguably inclusivist stance concerning the kind of persons or agents that deserve moral concern. It is not uncommon to hear people arguing in favor of universal moral norms centered on well-being, fairness, and the dignity of persons, and people also increasingly support the establishment of institutional laws to foster and defend human rights, animal rights, and even the rights of nature. This results in a serious challenge to the Evo-conservative claims about the nature of human morality (Segovia-Cuéllar & Del Savio, 2021).

As a consequence of these theoretical and empirical advances, recent functionalist accounts have offered alternatives to the 'Evo-conservative' rationale about the key role of group-centered motivations in the configuration of human cooperation and morality. These new perspectives, to which I refer as representatives of 'Evo-inclusivism', promote a slightly different story about the starting conditions for the evolution of human morality. This is the case of mutualistic models of morality that deserve attention at the end of this section (Baumard, 2016; Tomasello, 2016).

This first part aims to present these recent debates on the starting conditions of human social and moral behavior and develop some critiques of functionalism -in their 'Evo-conservative' and 'Evo-inclusivist' forms-. In chapter 1, I explore the ideas of some proponents of the functionalist 'Evo-conservative' movement. As mentioned, these theories claim that human prosocial behavior and morality are constrained by exclusivist and biased *adaptive intuitions* since cooperative behavior evolved in our species as an adaptation for group-based parochial forms of pro-sociality designed to benefit one's group and promote intergroup conflict. However, these theories on human nature are not value-neutral and support problematic descriptive hypotheses that conflict with certain normative convictions on the ethical dimension. I will argue on this matter using the 'moral foundations' theory of Jonathan Haidt as an example.

The second chapter is devoted to exploring an 'Evo-inclusivist' picture of the starting conditions of morality and fairness. I start the chapter by presenting the ideas of mutualistic approaches to morality (Baumard et al., 2013; Baumard, 2016; Tomasello, 2016; Engelmann & Tomasello, 2019). My focus on these theories has also a very important reason: they explore the evolution of morality along with the evolution of the human sense of fairness, which is a central topic in this work. Later, I explore some scientific evidence concerning the natural history of human inclusivist tendencies.

In the final part of this section, I argue that functionalist 'Evo-inclusivists' perspectives still result insufficient to properly account for the complexity of human morality and concerns for fairness. The 'mutualistic approach' of Baumard and colleagues, for instance, offers a problematic picture as a consequence of its strong nativist commitments and its consideration of human morality as an autonomous, domain-specific, universal, and innate capacity (Baumard, 2016)[7].

[7] The 'second-person morality' perspective of Tomasello and colleagues (Tomasello, 2016; Tomasello & Engelmann, 2019) does not strictly adhere to this robust nativist perspective and offers a more plausible developmental perspective on the origins of morality and fairness. The model defended later in this work aims to complement the initial proposal of Tomasello and colleagues.

According to Baumard's mutualistic approach, moral concerns and judgments are motivated by a universal and innate sense of fairness. In the domain of distributive justice, the 'mutualistic theory' claims that our moral sense evolved to be conferred just to those who can participate in cooperative exchanges led by the principles of productivity and maximization. From this point of view, it is profoundly elusive the role of social, cultural, and economical environments in the emergence of human concerns for fairness. In addition, Baumard's approach offers a descriptive perspective around the nature of human morality that may also conflict with normative convictions and considerations around social and moral progress. For instance, it promotes a vision of human moral nature that seems problematic for the accomplishment of a world devoid of huge social and economic inequalities.

My general objective with this reflection is to suggest that these theories still lack a more radical developmental perspective grounded on the relevance of social interactions, that better accounts for the flexibility and variability of human prosocial behavior and morality and informs a more adequate normative standpoint for evaluating some societal phenomena. This is a preliminary background for the presentation of such a developmental perspective in the second part of the work.

# 1. Human cooperation and the limits of morality

## *1. The evolution of human cooperation and group-based moralities*

Human beings are social beings and possess arguably unique complex forms of cooperation and morality. The natural history of our unusual types of thinking and cognition is undoubtedly related to how we started to engage in complex cooperative activities, and our cognitive complexity is by nature cooperative. Because of our cooperative nature, we humans have unique forms of communication and a disposition to engage in mutually beneficial social interactions (Tomasello, 2014).

It is thought, for instance, that human foraging practices started to differ from those of our ape ancestors because we were able to coordinate action by sharing goals, plans, and commitments. The set of capacities that allow us to engage with others' intentional mental states, is considered a key psychological factor in the evolution of these human forms of cooperation and collaboration (Tomasello, Melis, Tennie, Wyman, & Herrmann, 2012).

These capacities manifest very early in development and seem to support human-unique social-cognitive skills. For example, skills for joint attention, cooperative communication, collaboration, and instructed learning, are human-unique traits that are not present in other animals—at least not among primates. Non-Human great apes, instead, lack the capabilities of coordination and communication that facilitate group decision-making, especially in the context of risky coordination problems such as the stag hunt game (Melis & Warneken, 2016).

The context for the evolution of these capacities could appear around two mya. Recent archaeological record regarding cooperative foraging and social hunting strategies at Qesem Cave and the Iberian Peninsula in Sierra de Atapuerca confidently supports the idea that the Middle Pleistocene hominin groups displayed complex forms of cooperation (Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2017; Stiner, Barkai & Gopher, 2009; Spikins et al., 2021).

The demands for those capacities progressively increased when cooperative foraging and scavenging for safety became necessary during the Middle Pleistocene. According to Ben-Dor, Gopher, Hershkovitz, and Barkai (2011), the necessity of consuming fat and high amounts of calories in hominins to sustain their top energy-demanding brains was already present in *H. Erectus* who were in a state of big game dependence. However, this also led to a drastic reduction in the number of large animals such as the elephant in Eurasia, which pressured hominins to develop different foraging strategies to capture smaller and faster animals. Early hunting led to the disappearance of large mammals such as elephants, which created a new developmental niche for the acquisition of novel hunting strategies targeting smaller and faster animals (Agam & Barkai, 2016). These environmental circumstances led to the arrival of new hominin species around 500 kya.

The social capacities present in this ancestral environment were enhanced by highly cooperative rearing environments, allowed by cooperative breeding. Cooperative breeding is a form of social organization characterized by alloparental care. In extant great apes, childcare is provided mostly by the mother. However, childcare across many different cultures in humans is provided by individuals other than the mother, which are called the 'alloparents' (Hrdy, 2007, 2009). The cooperative breeding hypothesis suggests that alloparental care and a more extensive network for providing care in humans led to outstanding instances of cognitive sophistication (Burkart, Hrdy, & Van Schaik, 2009; Burkart & Van Schaik, 2016). For instance, cooperative breeding increased competition between siblings and peers since they needed to monitor the intentions of alloparents to secure their care and attention. This scenario generates a selective regime in which those infants who can solicit help via joint attention and essential skills for cooperative communication do best (Tomasello & Gonzalez-Cabrera, 2017).

Functionalist accounts have explained morality as the outcome of a process of adaptation to these ancestral highly social-demanding environments. In simple words, from the perspective of functionalism, morality is a behavioral trait with an adaptive function. A function in traditional biological and evolutionary terms is a morphological or behavioral trait that offers fitness-enhancing effects on a species that possesses it. A particular phenotypic trait that plays a concrete function is naturally selected by the environment and is later inherited through evolutionary time.

Philip Kitcher, for instance, has claimed that human morality is a "social technology" which evolved via biological and cultural selection to solve the problems humans had in cooperative activities and helped to deal with "altruism failures"; situations in which members of a group do not act in ways that acknowledge the interests of others (Kitcher, 2011). In the words of Scott Curry (2016), "morality turns out to be a collection of biological and cultural solutions to the problems of cooperation and conflict recurrent in human social life" (p. 29). Others have further proposed that morality increases the realization of collective coordinated action, suppresses the temptations of individuals to act selfishly, and fosters a motivation to share the benefits of cooperation in mutually advantageous ways (Kitcher, 2011; Baumard, 2016; Tomasello, 2016).

Other proposals have focused instead on the fact that the evolution of human unique forms of mutualistic cooperative activities and moral systems would have required the establishment of institutional punishment and systems of norms (i.e., signaling, reputation) as cultural mechanisms to suppress individuals' tendencies to act selfishly and promote large-scale cooperation (Henrich, 2020; Henrich & Muthukrishna, 2021; Sterelny, 2021).

Based on this narrative, some functionalist authors have claimed that human cooperation and morality are constrained by nature to exclusivist and in-group strategic dispositions since cooperative behavior evolved in our species as an adaptation based on group-centered parochial forms of pro-sociality designed to benefit one's group and promote intergroup competition.

To evolve in time, the argument goes, collective mechanisms of punishment and social control would have required not only the operation of selection mechanisms centered on individual traits but the evolutionary mechanisms of cultural group selection. Natural selection would have operated on the level of groups to stabilize and perpetuate these levels of cooperation and institutionalized cooperative norms (Buchanan and Powell, 2018).

This evolutionary scenario, "…would have imposed a fitness cost on extending 'evolutionary excessive' moral considerations to out-group members" (Buchanan & Powell, 2015, p. 42) making morality essentially an intragroup affair. As a consequence, a 'coalitional morality' based on ingroup favoritism and outgroup hostility would have been the idiosyncratic outcome of this specific form of social-cultural evolution (Haidt, 2012; Curry, 2016)[8].

Other supporters of this conflictive hypothesis about the evolution of human cooperation further claim that human ancestral environments would have also favored the appearance of dominating and authoritarian motives. For instance, Sinn & Hayes (2017, 2018) have claimed that the evolution of human beings in a highly competitive environment full of hostile inter-group relations favored group selection mechanisms that operated to select such authoritarian and dominating motives as adaptations for group survival. The highly conflictive environment of our forebears would have favored the emergence of such motivations for coalitional defense, aggression, and care for our groups (Wrangham & Peterson, 1996; Bowles & Gintis, 2011; Flinn, Geary, & Ward, 2005; McDonald, Navarrete, & Van Vugt, 2012; Blanc & Register, 2013).

[8] The early development of ingroup favoritism and out-group antagonism in human children (Aboud, 2003) as well as its automatic and ubiquitous nature (Tajfel et al., 1971; Van Bavel, Packer, & Cunningham, 2008; Romano, Sutter, Liu, Yamagishi, & Balliet, 2021), are sometimes considered unequivocal signs of the presence of a competitive environment during human evolution for which these dispositions were selected. However, the physiological, psychological, and sociological differences between ingroup favoritism and outgroup antagonism, or the distinction between these two tendencies and a more problematic motivation to exercise violence against outgroups, are possible counterevidence against these assumptions (Brock & Atkinson, 2008; Corr et al., 2015; Yamagishi & Mifune, 2016; Sapolsky, 2017).

Following this evolutionary rationale, recent scientists and philosophers have defended an 'Evo-conservative' stance (Buchanan & Powell, 2015, 2018) or 'tribal-instinct' (Sterelny, 2019) approach to morality. According to these views, human morality has severe limits in its scope and extent, which hinders the development of morality as based on universal concerns for well-being, fairness, and the dignity of persons. In the words of Sterleny (2019), these approaches adopt the idea that "evolved human nature limits true moral concern to members of our community, and so, the argument goes, various liberal normative projects about, for example, global justice are utopian" (p. 211).

To give some examples, according to Stephen Asma, our moral concerns "cannot stretch indefinitely to cover the massive domain of strangers and nonhuman animals", since our morality is limited by design to cover our close affective communities (Asma, 2013, p. 45-46). Similarly, Jack Goldsmith and Eric Posner, have proposed in their book '*The limits of international law'* that "we should not expect individual altruism to extend to people who are physically and culturally more distant" (2005, p. 212).

To sum up, for these approaches there exists a motivational deficiency that limits the possibility to extend our prosocial and moral behaviors beyond the borders of our groups. This leads to a serious challenge for inclusivist perspectives which foster a more optimistic perspective about the nature of human morality and the feasibility of inclusivist forms of moral progress. The descriptive assumptions of these Evo-conservative models, however, suggest that many *prima facie* morally questionable consequences for intergroup interaction that result from our cooperative nature are simply inescapable. To evaluate how problematic this narrative is about morality, I center my analysis in the next section on one specific Evo-conservative theory on the market, the 'moral foundations' theory of Jonathan Haidt and colleagues.

## *2. The 'moral foundations' theory*

The 'moral foundations' theory (MFT), proposed by psychologist Jonathan Haidt and colleagues (Haidt, 2012; Graham et al., 2013), is a highly influential theory on the evolution of human morality. According to the MFT, morality is the natural outcome of the existence of domain-specific intuitions or moral foundations that evolved as adaptations for the social complexities of ancestral environments (Haidt, 2012).

In the first place, human morality supposes the existence of a 'draft' that has been shaped by a process of evolution and natural selection. As Haidt and Bjorklund have claimed, "moral beliefs and motivations come from a small set of intuitions that evolution has prepared the human mind to develop" (2008, p. 181). Moral behavior in its full variability would be the expression of such automatic intuitions that were shaped by the (social) environment of our ancestors and that are currently triggered by new forms of social stimuli.

The MFT develops a model of morality taking into consideration two main theses: the 'automaticity thesis' and the 'anti-rationalist thesis' (Sauer, 2017). The thesis of 'automaticity' considers the fact that moral judgments "…are not based on critical reflection, but on uncontrolled, emotionally charged states of intuitive (dis)approval" (íbid, p. 52). This claim follows from the 'emotionist' thesis according to which emotional automatic reactions or intuitions are central to the emergence and realization of moral evaluations and judgments.

One of the most relevant contributions of the MFT to the field of moral psychology is precisely this focus on moral intuitions and the emotional basis of our moral judgments and behaviors. Human moral judgments have consistently been shown to be linked to automatic processes that just after being realized, pave the way to slow, conscious moral reasoning and justification (Haidt, 2001; Prinz, 2007; Gigerenzer, 2008; Greene, 2009).

The MFT has therefore claimed that moral judgments are made “quickly, effortlessly, and intuitively” (Haidt & Bjorklund, 2008, p. 188), and during the realization of moral evaluations and judgments “intuitions come first, strategic reason second” (Graham et al., 2013). From this perspective, moral reasoning is a subordinate process of confabulating justifications that come after embodied moral judgments or pre-reflective intuitions have been elicited (Haidt, 2012).

Haidt proposes that there exist at least five different moral intuitions or foundations (see Figure 1). In the first place, we have two basic foundations of *care/harm* and *fairness/reciprocity*. Humans are motivated to take care and feel sympathy toward kin and close relatives and to act on behalf of the well-being of those who are connected with us. Additionally, we have a complex disposition to strategic cooperation because of our evolutionary history as collaborative hominin foragers, which allows us to search for maximal mutual benefit in cooperative interactions and to exclude and punish those who do not contribute to collective endeavors. However, as Haidt claims, a morality based on principles of care and fairness would be a WEIRD morality exclusive to “western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic” contemporary societies.

Based on the cultural model of ‘three moralities’ proposed by Richard Shweder (Shweder & Haidt, 1993), Haidt defends the existence of three additional “binding” moral foundations: obedience to authority, loyalty to groups, and purity/sanctity. These binding foundations are the expression of sensitivity to out-group threat, signs of high and low rank, fear, disrespect, and disgust, which are adaptations for conflictive and competitive intergroup scenarios (Haidt, 2012; Graham et al., 2013).

These binding foundations are the building blocks of the ‘morality of community’ which “…is based on the idea that people are, first and foremost, members of larger entities such as families, teams, armies, companies, tribes, and nations. These larger entities are more than the sum of the people who compose them; they are real, they matter, and they must be protected. People must play their assigned roles in these entities. Many societies, therefore, develop moral concepts such as duty, hierarchy, respect, reputation, and patriotism. In such

societies, the Western insistence that people should design their own lives and pursue their own goals seems selfish and dangerous—a sure way to weaken the social fabric and destroy the institutions and collective entities upon which everyone depends" (Haidt, 2012, p. 113-114).

| | Care/Harm | Fairness/ Cheating | Loyalty/ Betrayal | Authority/ Subversion | Sanctity/ Degradation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adaptive Challenge | Protect and care for children | Reap benefits of two-way partnerships | Form cohesive coalitions | Forge beneficial relationships within hierarchies | Avoid contamination |
| Original Triggers | Suffering, distress, or neediness expressed by one's child | Cheating, cooperation, deception | Threat or challenge to group | Signs of dominance and submission | Waste products, diseased people |
| Current Triggers | Baby seals, cute cartoon characters | Marital fidelity, broken vending machines | Sports teams, nations | Bosses, respected professionals | Taboo ideas (communism, racism) |
| Characteristic Emotions | Compassion | Anger, gratitude, guilt | Group pride, rage at traitors | Respect, fear | Disgust |
| Relevant Virtues | Caring, kindness | Fairness, justice, trustworthiness | Loyalty, patriotism, self-sacrifice | Obedience, diference | Temperance, chastity, piety, cleanliness |

**Figure 1.** The five different moral foundations proposed by the MFT (Care/harm, Fairness/Cheating, Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation). Each one is presented with its supposed evolutionary function, the environmental features that originally triggered its emergence, the actual features of the environment that trigger each intuitive foundation, and the characteristic emotions connected to them. Taken from: Haidt, J. (2012). *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion*. Vintage.

It is important to note that according to the MFT our innate intuitions are the object of “assisted externalization” during development (Haidt & Bjorklund, 2008, p. 206). In brief, morality is shaped by the cultural milieu to develop in different forms, after a process of guidance over innate adaptive intuitions. This idea about the relationships between biological dispositions and variable environments allows the study of human morality from a broader pluralist perspective. This pluralism, Haidt argues, pretends to give justice to the diversity of human ethical and moral behavior (Haidt, 2012).

### *3. Descriptive theories and ethical implications*

Haidt has claimed that the science of human morality has suffered from a ‘rationalist delusion’ (2012, p.103). For instance, he argues, early researchers in moral psychology such as Piaget (1932/2013) and Kohlberg (1981)[9] strongly influenced moral psychological research with an emphasis on the relevance of reasoning and role-taking in the elaboration of moral judgments. This perspective contributed to reduce the study of morality to an issue of ‘well-being’ and ‘justice’, cultural values of the “liberal western world”.

However, the pluralist motivation of the MFT is problematic when dealing with concrete ethical considerations. In what comes, I suggest that Haidt’s theory and other similar pluralist accounts are inadequately oriented to the revindication of any system of social norms and conventional practices as legitimate moral systems. This is the result of a wrong presupposition, namely, that everything that is established as social norms or cooperative-based norms in a given society is morally relevant. This is also a problem for most cooperation-based theories of morality (Curry, 2016; Curry et al., 2019).

[9] As it will be later argued, most critiques of the cognitive-developmental approach of Piaget, Kohlberg, and others have wrongly attributed to these theories a dichotomous perspective that disposes of the role of intuitions, emotions, or social interactions for explaining moral development. I will show in which sense this assumption is simply misguided.

For instance, most people would not deny the fact that one of the best ways to characterize what society considers morally 'correct' or 'right' is to consider the entire set of norms and conventions that such a society endorses. However, the extent to which the concept of 'right' or 'wrong' relates to morally relevant actions in a given context is not always that clear. Following the perspective of Haidt, the moral intuitions associated with the adoption of social conventions, the maintaining of alliances and coalitions, or the respect for authorities, could conflict with more relevant moral concerns norms.

In a few words, the MFT and most Evo-conservative approaches, define morality as a 'group affair'. This makes it difficult to dissociate in which sense morality differs from social normativity and the accomplishment of social conventions more generally. As it has been pointed out by Nucci (2016), if we assume, for instance, that 'obedience', 'divinity' or 'purity' represent legitimate moral foundations, "…we would have no criteria for calling into question the moral validity of any rule offered as divine" (Nucci, 2016, p. 293). Moreover, doing harm or acting unfairly because of religious or ethnic reasons, are not necessary instances that deserve moral condemnation if we assume that they are the concrete materialization of genuine group-centered moral motivations tied to obedience to authority, loyalty to ingroups, or sanctity.

Naturally, Haidt and other 'Evo-conservatives' have stated that their main scientific objective has been just to describe what people believe is moral, not to inquire about what morality is (or should be) in the first place. However, their use of concepts such as 'moral truth', 'moral virtues', and 'moral knowledge', certainly suggest a normative position and a prescriptive view of social and moral norms.

Moreover, we have reasons to argue that the descriptive stance of the MFT (and 'Evo-conservative' proposals in general) does imply certain problematic ethical and normative considerations. To put it briefly, according to Evo-inclusivist proposals any human conflict, the propensities to unfair exclusion, prejudice, and/or hostile intergroup relations, would be the natural consequences of human-like forms of cooperation and moral concern that evolved in our ancestral competitive environments.

Following a critique established by Kohlberg against cultural relativism (1981), I suggest that the followers of MFT and other Evo-Conservative proposals are not ethically neutral because they "prejudge the facts" when assuming that there are no moral values or norms that should be applied universally, or that our morality is severely constrained by nature. As an example, Haidt has clearly stated that "Parochial love- love within groups- amplified by similarity, a sense of shared fate, and the suppression of free riders, maybe the most we can accomplish" (Haidt, 2012, supra note 3, p. 245).

What makes MFT a good example of an 'Evo-conservative' approach to human morality is precisely the conflict that arises when its pluralist standpoint on morality seems to imply that certain p*rima facie* questionable social attitudes and behaviors are morally valid. This is the case, given that binding foundations and group-centered forms of morality may conflict in some cases with moral concerns oriented to care for preserving others' rights, needs, and vulnerabilities. My entire proposal in the third section will expand this claim.

For instance, the endorsement of "binding" foundations is an essential feature of authoritarian and/or dominating personalities, materialized in the constructs of right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO) (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). The authoritarian motive, reflected by the construct of *Right-wing authoritarianism* (RWA), is grounded on highly biased in-group moral considerations, ethnocentrism, and views of the world as a threatening place. The dominating motive, reflected by the construct of *Social-dominance orientation* (SDO), is oriented to the legitimation of hierarchies, exploitation, power distance, and social inequalities among humans[10].

Moreover, Kugler, Jost & Noorbaloochi (2014) demonstrated that a higher valuation of loyalty to in-groups, authority, and purity, is attributable to higher degrees of authoritarianism (measured by the RWA scale), and higher levels of

[10] People with high scores on scales of SDO show a predilection for relational and economic inequality and social hierarchies when evaluating these sorts of sentences: *"Some groups of people are just more worthy than others", "We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups", "No one group should dominate in society"* and *"group equality should be our ideal"* (Pratto et al., 1994; Jost & Thompson, 2000).

social dominance (measured by the SDO scale). The authors proved that this higher valuation of loyalty, authority, and purity, is correlated with intergroup hostility and support for discrimination, as was observed on an independent scale within the study.

In another work, Sinn & Hayes (2017) showed that binding orientations are also related to higher threat sensitivity and great antagonism toward outgroups. Finally, recent research has also shown that the explicit endorsement of binding foundations is correlated with a diminished concern with expanding the circle of moral consideration (Waytz, Iyer, Young, Haidt, & Graham, 2019).

To sum up, the “binding” foundations of MFT (i.e., authority/subversion, loyalty/betrayal, and sanctity/degradation) are intrinsically correlated with the endorsement of hostile intergroup relations, global inequalities, and religious and ethnic fundamentalism. The problem is precisely that group-centered normative evaluations, essential for pluralist and Evo-conservative narratives of human morality, conflict with the moral convictions of most contemporary ethical theories, which are based on the relevance of subject-centered concerns and a more decided commitment to the accomplishment of inclusivist instances of social progress.

The purpose of the second part of this work is to offer an alternative developmental perspective of morality that grounds a different argumentation on the feasibility of moral progress based particularly on moral inclusivity. In what comes I consider a relevant amount of scientific evidence that helps to consolidate a more optimistic and inclusivist perspective about the starting conditions of human prosocial behavior. Later, I will summarize some ideas offered to explain the possible evolutionary mechanisms that led to the consolidation of these inclusivist capacities. However, I will also show how evolutionary theories that share the same adaptationist foundations but initially seem relevant to explain the feasibility of moral inclusivity, result incomplete when considering the complexity of moral behavior and its ethical implications.

## 2. A natural history of inclusivist moral tendencies

Human beings do express what some authors have referred to as inclusivist morality (Buchanan & Powell, 2018), impersonal prosociality (Henrich, 2020), or impartial prosociality (Kahane et al., 2018). We can develop and endorse a broad spectrum of moral concern and also adopt an arguably Universalist stance concerning the kind of persons or agents that deserve moral concern. Consequently, it is not uncommon to hear people arguing in favor of universal moral norms centered on well-being, fairness, and the dignity of persons, and people also increasingly support the establishment of institutional laws to foster and defend human rights, animal rights, and even the rights of nature.

This circumstance is also explained by the fact that humans, from a very early age, seem to be intrinsically motivated to perform impartial prosocial acts (Hepach, Vaish, & Tomasello, 2012; Aknin, Van de Voondervort, & Hamlin, 2018; Hepach & Tomasello, 2020), do usually engage in altruistic behaviors toward in-group and out-group individuals (Killen & Verkuyten, 2017), and restore inequalities of well-being grounded on unjustified exclusions (Dahl & Killen, 2018a; Elenbaas et al., 2016).

This is crucial since empirical evidence suggests that our normative convictions can still be fulfilled and it is misleading to say that humans are limited by an exclusivist 'moral nature' that constrains our capacity to behave in a morally correct way (Brock & Atkinson, 2008). In brief, if there exists a motivational failure that still makes the realization of inclusivist values and institutional arrangements difficult, that is not precisely because we are unable to develop them (Erez, 2020).

Traditional functionalist approaches, especially in the form of '*Evo-conservative'* perspectives, seem to be unable to explain this flexibility of human moral concerns, since they, according to Sterelny, "…underrate the plasticity of norm psychology, understate the importance of institutional structures, and understate

the relative independence of those structures from individual normative profiles of the individuals in the societies housing those institutions" (2019, p. 211).

In current circumstances, we have plenty of reasons to believe that the exercise and realization of inclusivist moralities are far from anomalous from a biological, evolutionary, and psychological perspective (Buchanan and Powell, 2018). Several instances of social progress in the last centuries have materialized such expansion of the circle of our moral concerns and the emergence of inclusivist moralities (see Table 1, p. 109). This is a challenge to the 'Evo-conservative' perspective since the starting conditions and the concrete development of human prosocial and moral motivations show a different story about the limits and possibilities of our moral convictions.

The attempts to analyze and encourage such an expansion of our circle of moral concern have been prevalent in the history of philosophy and science. As is nicely summarized by Nussbaum (2013), several authors in the last five hundred years have advanced theories on the feasibility of a 'Universal Sympathy', a 'religion of humanity', or the development of certain political emotions based on extended sentiments of empathy and moral consideration, that would be the base for the consolidation of more equal and prosperous societies.

However, most of these approaches have lacked adequate scientific knowledge about human social and moral psychology, and have not advanced an evolutionary-informed perspective concerning the origins of inclusivist moralities. In this chapter, I consider recent empirical evidence that could contribute to better explaining the starting conditions of moral inclusivist tendencies. I later summarize the arguments of some theories that offer a 'functionalist' narrative on moral inclusivity or an 'Evo-inclusivist' approach. Nevertheless, since this work offers an alternative developmental perspective in subsequent chapters, I will finish by pointing out some problematic issues of this view.

## 1. *Inclusivist morality: Archaeological and anthropological evidence*

To begin with, it has been usually argued that the human species did live in egalitarian societies during their evolution in the Pleistocene, and this feature was a drastic departure from the highly hierarchical and dominant structures of chimpanzee societies that could have favored the persistence of authoritarian and dominating motives. As has been suggested by Rosas and Bermúdez (2018), typical hierarchical and dominant primate social organizations arguably hinder the capacities for sharing intentional states, and therefore the evolution of shared intentionality and human-like cooperative interactions.

Human morality and concerns for fairness could have had their ultimate cause in this early practical sense of equality. Rosas (2007) has proposed that an egalitarian investment in parental care, as a consequence of cooperative breeding, led to the implementation of this broader general egalitarian practical attitude, which ended in the abolition of dominant and hierarchical structures. An egalitarian investment in parental care could have come along with an anti-patriarchy motivation since male dominance and strategic control of females would have obstructed our cognitive and social evolution.

Following anthropologist Camilla Power: "…features of our biology, life history, and evolved psychology provide evidence of an egalitarian past during our evolution: our large brain size, cooperative eyes, menopause, intersubjectivity, and Machiavellian counter dominance. These are underpinned by women evolved sexual physiology increasing equality of reproductive opportunities among men, compared with their great ape cousins". (Power, 2019).

This egalitarian shift to sex equality could have had an enormous influence on the social structure of archaic hominin societies, which adopted ultra-cooperative practices and started to inherit cumulative culture. Moreover, as suggested by Dyble et al. (2015) when male and female individuals have equal influence in selecting partners for cooperation (i.e., partner choice), within-group relatedness

decreases in favor of extensive cooperation with unrelated and distant individuals (see Figure 2).

Moreover, hunter-gatherer societies around the world currently exhibit the structure expected for an egalitarian system of relations in which the exchanges with unrelated and distant individuals increase with the size of camps or spaces inhabited. In non-egalitarian organizations, the exchanges with unrelated and distant individuals stay at the minimum, irrespective of the size of the space inhabited (Bird, Bird, Codding & Zeanah, 2019). This recent evidence complements classical arguments in paleoanthropological research that highlighted the wide presence of egalitarian social organizations in hunter-gatherer groups and prehistoric humans (Gimbutas & Marler, 1991; Boehm, 1999; Cashdan, 1980; Erdal & Whiten, 1996; Woodburn, 1982).

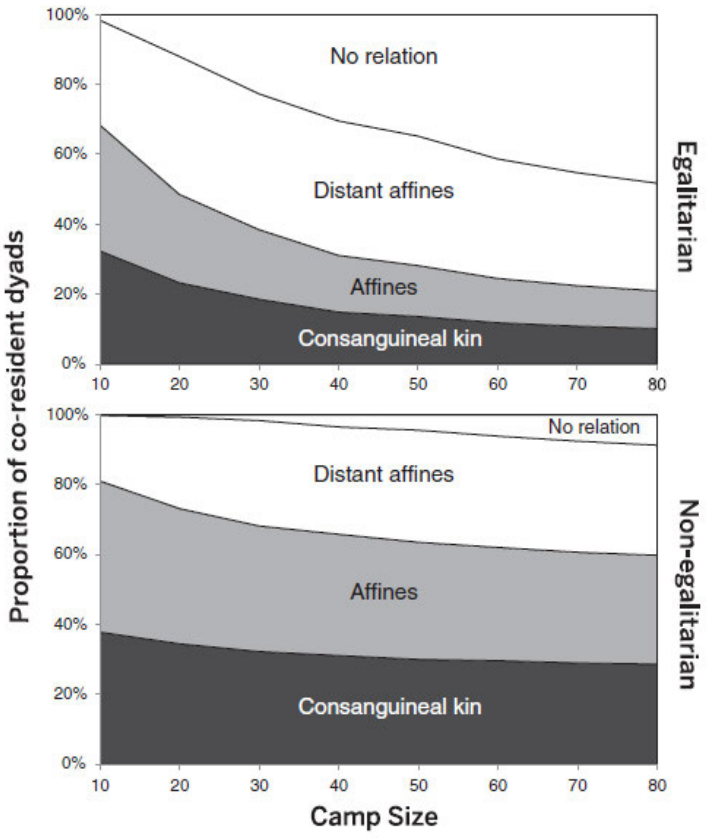


**Figure 2.** The percentage of exchanges with non-related and distant individuals in egalitarian and non-egalitarian social organizations. Taken from: Dyble, M., Salali, G. D., Chaudhary, N., Page, A., Smith, D., Thompson, J., & Migliano, A. B. (2015). Sex equality can explain the unique social structure of hunter-gatherer bands. *Science*, *348*(6236), 796-798.

Consequently, relevant scientific evidence supports the prevalence of intergroup mobility and contact during the Pleistocene. For instance, archaeological studies show high transfer distances of raw materials in Africa from 300,000 to BP – 30,000 years ago (Spikins et al., 2021). According to Brooks et al. (2018), there are cases of movements of up to 95 km in the transportation of obsidian, and Nash and colleagues have pointed out that there were transfer distances of up to 295 km in the Kalahari Desert during the Middle Stone Age (Nash et al., 2016). This evidence arguably suggests cases of interactions between neighboring groups of humans during ancient times.

Moreover, recent paleoanthropological and genomic evidence is also showing that the propensity for exchanges between unrelated individuals could be traced back even to times when different human species were living on the planet. It is important to note that this interbreeding, I argue, could not have been possible without an inclusivist inter-group cooperative and egalitarian disposition in ancient human populations.

This hypothesis would have sounded absurd in the past century, but scientific archaeological, archaeogenetical, and paleoanthropological evidence provides reasons to adopt the vision of prehistoric human communities as highly dependent on interbreeding. For instance, early physically modern *homo sapiens* cohabit and interbred with Neanderthals in the Middle East and Europe, and our close relatives interbred with a third archaic human species named *Homo Denisova,* around 50 kyo, with whom we also interbred around 45 kyo in the geography of South Asia and Oceania.

Anatomically modern humans finally interbred again with Neanderthals around the same time (40 kyo) in western Europe (Ackermann, Mackay, & Arnold, 2016; Sankararaman, Mallick, Patterson, & Reich, 2016; Wolf & Akey, 2018; Prüfer et al., 2014; Lohse & Frantz, 2014; Slimak et al., 2022). Additional archaeological evidence finally suggests a possible interbreed between Denisovans and an unknown hominin species in Europe and Asia, as well as between modern sapiens and an unknown previous ‘ghost’ hominin (Mondal, Bertranpetit, & Lao, 2019; Rogers, Harris, & Achenbach, 2020).

This evidence is intriguing and even could lead to a more surprising panorama if we recall that *Homo sapiens, Homo Neanderthals* and *Homo Denisova,* shared time and geographical space with other archaic hominin species such as *Homo heidelbergensis, Homo erectus, Homo Luzonensis,* and even more to be discovered. It is then a scientific possibility that at least six different species of hominins interbreed between them during the middle paleolithic (see Figure 3).

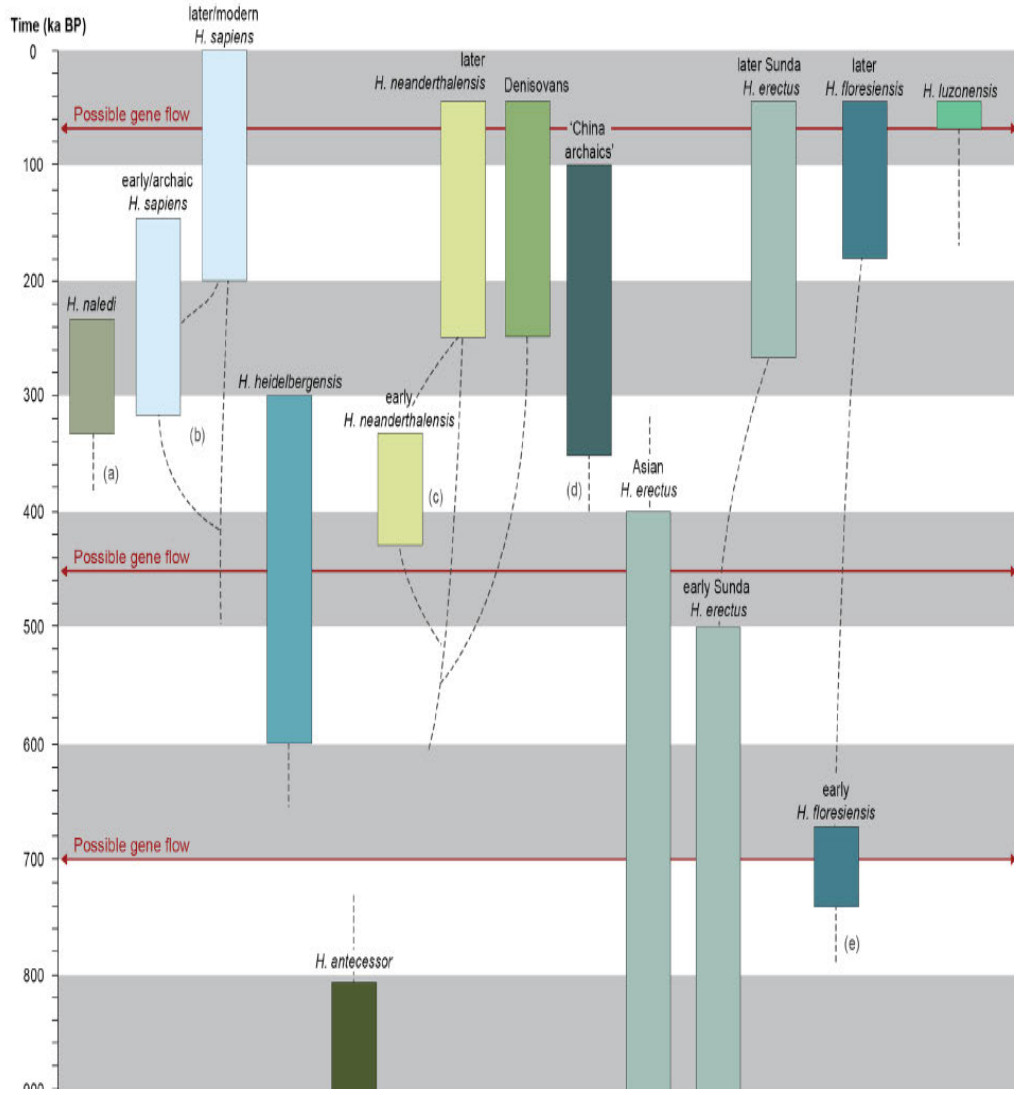


**Figure 3.** Phylogeny of the hominin species during the Pleistocene. Possible gene flow is depicted by a red line crossing distinct species transversally. There is indisputable scientific evidence on the fact that 100k years ago, at least six (6) different species of homo coexisted, and even interbred between them (modern H. Sapiens, later H. Neanderthalensis, Denisovans, later H. Erectus, later H. Floresiensis, and the recently discovered H. Luzonensis). Taken from: Galway-Witham, J., Cole, J., & Stringer, C. (2019). Aspects of human physical and behavioral evolution during the last 1 million years. *Journal of Quaternary Science*, *34*(6), 355-378.

In brief, I claim that we humans are constituted as hybrid species that have moved beyond the limits of our communities and groups for around a million years, interbreeding with biological relatives or distant communities over and over for millennia. The 'parochial' nature of our prosociality had to confront, at some point in our evolutionary history, the social-ecological pressure of permanent intergroup contact. This occurred not only during the Pleistocene when human groups interbred with each other but as well in subsequent times after notable instances of constant migration and mixtures between geographically distant human populations.

As a constituted hybrid species, we have been in further intergroup contact and mixture from the Neolithic to the modern times, passing through the origins of civilization, antiquity, the axial age, and the Middle Ages. Human evolution specialist Maria Martinon-Torres summarizes it this way:

> "Despite being from species who probably recognized each other as different, humans and others now extinct crossbred, producing offspring and caring for them. This inevitably leads us to reflect on current society and its fondness for establishing borders and marking limits among individuals of the same species that are far more insurmountable than those dictated by biology itself. Our culture and social norms frequently take paths that seem to contradict our genetic legacy. How would we treat other human species today? Why are we the only ones that survived? Would there even be room for a different form of humans?"[11].

[11] https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/articles/anthropology-what-we-have-learned-over-the-last-decade/.

## 2. *Inclusivist morality: Biological evidence*

Evidence coming from other scientific disciplines is offering more clues around the question of why the human species can be more collaborative, tolerant, and egalitarian than previously thought. For instance, evolutionary anthropologist Brian Hare has argued that the main driver of human psychological evolution was the selection of increased pro-sociality over aggression in human groups. Hare argues that this is so because the human species possesses similar traits to those of the syndrome of domesticated animals, and these traits have enhanced our cooperative capacities.

Domestication syndrome is evident in several animal species and includes very particular physiological, morphological, and behavioral features. In physiological terms, domesticated species show hormonal profiles that favor prosocial behavior and social tolerance over aggression and social stress. On the morphological level, domesticated species show reduced cranial capacities, feminized faces, and depigmentation. Finally, the behavior of domesticated species is more socially tolerant, with more sensitivity to social clues and enhanced cooperative communication (Hare, 2017).

Human beings would show the syndrome of domestication as the result of self-domestication. This self-domestication process would have been the result of culture-gene coevolution since new forms of peaceful cooperation marked transformation in the genotype of our species (Henrich & Muthukrishna, 2021). This led to the increased presence of socially-related hormonal profiles, expanded developmental windows, feminized morphologies, and improved communication abilities which end in the emergence of language (Hare, 2017; Cieri et al., 2014; Thomas & Kirby, 2018; Wrangham, 2018). In neurobiological terms, a process of domestication could have led to the constitution of our particular brain profiles characterized by enhanced body cognition, visuospatial integration, technological extension, and the evolution of the parietal cortex (Bruner & Gleeson, 2019).

Hare and colleagues also argue that the implications of (self) domestication are evident in similar ways when comparing wolves and dogs, and chimpanzees and bonobos. For instance, Bonobos differ from chimpanzees in their aggressive behavior, showing reduced levels of intergroup aggression, not coercing females, not committing infanticides, and not forming coalitions, lethal raids, or border patrols. In brief, as well as humans, bonobos show several instances of 'xenophilia', displaying prosociality with unfamiliar people. (Hare et al., 2012).

Accordingly, some authors have proposed that hominid evolution could involve more instances of extended pro-sociality, social tolerance, and peacefulness than previously thought, and have suggested the use of other hominid species like the bonobo or orangutans as a comparatively better model of the social behavior of our last common ancestor (González-Cabrera, 2020). Moreover, other authors have emphasized the role of self-control, or "socially mediated emotional control and plasticity" instead of self-domestication, as the main drivers of prosocial evolution (Shilton, Breski, Dor & Jablonka, 2020).

Aside from this debate, physiological evidence is offering a more positive picture concerning the social nature of our ancient hominid ancestors. For instance, Raghanti and colleagues (2018) have argued that humans have a subcortical hormonal profile in the basal ganglia dominated by elevated levels of dopamine (DA), serotonin (5HT), and neuropeptide Y (NPY), which along with lower levels of acetylcholine (ACh) favors externally driven behaviors and enhances the sensitivity for social clues, promoting social conformity and tolerance, empathy, and altruism.

The natural selection of this 'DA-dominated striatum personality profile' (DDS) started with early hominids, who showed high levels of social affiliation, whereas they advanced in their bipedalism and the elimination of the sectorial canine. Moreover, the selection of this prosocial neurochemistry would have been the main driving force behind our split from extant African apes. In brief, the DDS would have been the main driver of our social evolution, along with the appearance of social monogamy and cooperative breeding. Complex forms of human social cooperation would be the result of the convergence of enhanced

social cognitive skills, a DA-dominated striatum personality profile, and unique prosocial motivations emerging in the developmental niches of alloparental care.

The presence of a “DA-dominated striatum” is not possible to confirm in the absence of conserved brain fossils, but its influence on the social behavior of extinct species and personality traits derived from it can be deduced from morphological and ecological considerations. Raghanti and colleagues suggest that a peaceful profile of human phylogeny, reasonably linked with the presence of a DDS, can be correctly traced back to 4.4 million years ago in *Ardipithecus Ramidus*. This extinct ancestral hominid species shows reduced canine teeth, low body size dimorphism, and a feminized face, features of a highly socially tolerant and peaceful sort of primate (González-Cabrera, 2020).

Other lines of research suggest that variations in other hormones were responsible for the physiological changes and evolutionary transformations required to sustain more inclusive social interactions and intergroup tolerance broadly conceived. Some authors have proposed that Oxytocin or Vasopressin fulfilled that role, given its role in food sharing, social learning, shared infant care, collaborative emotional dispositions, and language (Spikins et al., 2019, 2021; Theofanopoulou et al., 2022; Wittig et al., 2014).

The evolution of intergroup tolerance among primates and human species is a widely debated topic, and there are good reasons to think that intergroup relations and broad social tolerance could have had evolutionary advantages for human ancestral groups. Spikins et al., for instance, claim that “…changes in intergroup tolerance are a more parsimonious explanation for the emergence of what has been seen as ‘modern human behavior’ than changes in hard aspects of cognition or other factors such as cognitive adaptability or population size” (2021). These changes would have been the result of environmental conditions that had selection pressures on new forms of social tolerance and could have played a role in the survival of archaic humans since they presumably facilitated access to resources and other benefits.

Some authors have therefore claimed that much of the work in evolutionary anthropology regarding the peaceful or conflictive nature of the human species has focused primarily on environmental conditions that favor or promote intergroup conflict (Pisor and Surbeck, 2019; Segovia-Cuéllar and Del Savio 2021). However, there are instances of ecological pressures that favor intergroup tolerant encounters and involve disincentives for aggression. Pisor & Surbeck have hypothesized that some evolutionary advances such as enhanced benefits in transfer, mating, and food acquisition, as well as social learning, may incentivize tolerance towards out-group individuals in humans and non-human primates. In particular, for the case of humans, spatial and temporal fluctuations in resource availability could have favored tolerant relations between communities, or human individuals living in close spatial proximity.

Moreover, as they express: "…humans' reliance on resources with extensive spatial and temporal variability has necessitated flexible interest in between community relationships as a means of managing the risks of resource shortfalls and ensuring access to non-locally available resources. When and where the benefits of between-community resource access have been high, cultural institutions and social status have also enhanced and reinforced these benefits.

This is not to say that humans do not engage in intergroup aggression—the ethnographic, archaeological, and contemporary records provide ample evidence of parochialism and warfare—but rather that human intergroup behavior can be both more tolerant and more aggressive than what we have observed in our closest relatives and that this flexibility in intergroup behavior is functional" (Pisor & Surbeck, 2019, p. 219).

Finally, developmental studies with human infants have contributed to this complex picture about the evolutionary starting conditions and the biological dispositions that make possible human prosocial behavior. This has led some authors to support the controversial hypothesis that there exists a 'natural' motivation to act prosocially. According to this hypothesis, human prosocial motivations are intrinsic and natural in the way that human individuals genuinely

expect others to be assisted and helped in everyday situations (Hepach & Tomasello, 2020) or tend to prefer prosocial agents in experimental situations (Van de Vondervoort & Hamlin, 2016).

Tomasello (2016) summarizes three assumptions commonly used by defendants of this nativist position. In the first place, humans are highly motivated to help others from a very early age, regularly at 12 or 14 months when infants start to reach objects or open doors (Warneken & Tomasello, 2006, 2007; Svetlova et al., 2010). Second, human individuals at this early age do not need external rewards to perform these actions. In brief, early prosocial acts are not dependent on the mother's encouragement (Warneken & Tomasello, 2013), recipient awareness (Warneken, 2013), or material rewards (Warneken & Tomasello, 2008). Finally, there is an emotional background for these prosocial acts, which is commonly defined as a sympathetic or empathic concern (Vaish et al., 2009).

Moreover, recent behavioral experiments have explored these supposed intrinsic and innate motivations with the methods of psychophysiology. These studies have shown that human infants show increased arousal (i.e., physiological reactions such as pupil dilation or elevated body posture) when seeing someone in need of help, that the degree of arousal predicts the speed with which children help, and that the arousal diminishes when the agent has been helped (Hepach et al., 2016, 2017; Hepach, 2017; Hepach et al., 2019)[12]. Contrary to these results, Chimpanzees have been shown to express a similar physiological reaction to instances of helping others, but their arousal remains upon watching a third party provide the needed help instead of them (Hepach et al., 2020).

[12] This evidence and a nativist interpretation of the data have been confronted by Pletti, Scheel, & Paulus (2017), who consider that this evidence just suggests that human children show an intrinsic 'social' motivation that is not inherently prosocial.

## 3. *Mutualism and the origins of moral inclusivity*

Multiple evolutionary models have tried to explain the origins of inclusivist prosocial concerns and motivations by elaborating alternative pictures of the starting conditions of human cooperation and prosocial behavior. According to some of these models, human morality evolved in a context of intensive and interdependent collaborative activities, where the development of an *impartial* or *impersonal* sense of moral consideration, fairness, and respect for individual rights, was the best solution to the challenges of social life (Baumard et al., 2013; Tomasello, 2016).

Michael Tomasello, for instance, has claimed that "…Interdependent collaborative activities structured by joint intentionality fostered in participants a new kind of cooperative rationality. (Humans) came to understand that particular collaborative activities had role ideals – socially normative standards-, that applied to either of them indifferently, which implies a kind of self-other equivalence. Based on the recognition of self-other equivalence, there arose mutual respect between partners, thus creating second-personal agents" (2016, p. 40).

On the other hand, Baumard and colleagues (Baumard et al., 2013; Baumard, 2016) have claimed that human morality and the sense of fairness are capacities designed to share the benefits of cooperation in mutually advantageous ways providing the best compromise between over-generosity and over-selfishness (Baumard et al., 2013).

As Baumard explains "On one hand, selfish individuals who systematically put their own interests first have trouble finding allies. On the other hand, altruists who put the interests of others before their own will be exploited by their partners. The cooperation market thus leads naturally to the selection of individuals who respect both their own and their partners' interests. In short, the cooperation market leads to the selection of a mutualistic morality". (Baumard, 2016, p. 62).

According to these mutualistic or second-personal models, our moral judgments have the function of guaranteeing equal respect for the interests of others in social situations. This perspective avoids the descriptive vision of morality as an altruistic device designed for the performance of strategic decisions on behalf of groups. For instance, Baumard and colleagues contradict the thesis that utility calculation and utilitarian decisions are the main motives of our moral judgments since they consistently oppose the idea that group selection could have played a crucial role in the evolution of morality (Baumard & Sheskin, 2015; Baumard, 2016)[13].

From a mutualistic or second-personal perspective, moral concerns and judgments are more related to "proportioning our interests and others' interests, (…) proportioning duties and rights, torts and compensations, or contributions and distributions" (Baumard & Sheskin, 2015, p. 37-28). This genuine moral capacity would represent the best way to sustain successful long-term cooperative interactions, and it is grounded on an impartial concern for individual interests.

Accordingly, we are capable to apply our moral concerns and the sense of justice beyond groups or 'proper' domains of moral concern[14]. For instance, we may be motivated by the sense of fairness when facing extensive domains of potential cooperators which could include not only out-groups but also past and future generations, plants, animals, and even aliens, who might be considered the object of our moral consideration (Baumard, 2016, p. 123).

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[13] Baumard and colleagues assume that group-selection-based theories of moral evolution are necessarily followed by a utilitarian normative morality that seeks the maximization of the well-being of the group as a whole, instead of the respect of individual rights. I disagree with this picture since classical proposals within the Utilitarian tradition are compatible with subject-centered or second-personal approaches to moral psychology, and ethical projects committed with moral inclusivism (Nussbaum, 2013). In brief, the 'positive' core of utilitarianism is compatible with the ideas of impersonal, inclusivist, or universal moralities (Kahane et al., 2018).

[14] Within a proper domain the mutualistic theorists refer to the concrete and present circumstances in which certain physical or behavioral capacities have their opportunity to be realized by an organism. For example, we have evolved a capacity to activate survival mechanisms when facing perceptual signals of threat. However, we can experience false positives, in which those mechanisms are activated in the face of nonthreatening perceptual signals.

The evolution of such an impartial sense of moral concern and fairness did suppose a departure from the mainly selfish environment of our hominid ancestors. The ancestral context for the evolution of morality considered by these theories was a highly cooperative scenario where humans had to face the continuous challenge of selecting good cooperators and acting themselves as good cooperators to others.

This interactive environment represents a biological market of 'partner choice'. In this environment, mostly selfish human individuals compete to attract partners that "could freely choose amongst potential cooperators" (Baumard, 2012). These social environments led to the evolution of a genuine moral capacity for sharing the costs and benefits of cooperation in impartial ways, respecting everyone's interests in cooperative scenarios.

Tomasello has also considered that our ancestral social environment favored the evolution of a "…system of partner choice and control that made everyone accountable to everyone else for treating collaborative partners with respect they deserved" (p. 40). In this scenario, "…sympathetic concern and helping extended beyond kin and friends to collaborative partners in general, independent of any personal relatedness or personal history of cooperation" (p.46).

### *4. The limits of nativism*

Yet, some problematic issues come when these theoretical insights about moral inclusivity are grounded on the adoption of nativist conceptions about human social and moral behavior. Moreover, the adoption of these naïve nativist conceptions is problematic when engaging in some ethical or normative reflections, even if these nativist insights aim to build a more optimistic picture of human nature. This is the case, for instance, of the model of mutualistic morality proposed by Baumard and colleagues.

Put it briefly, the 'mutualistic approach' to morality is a good example of a theory committed to offering a non-parochial explanation of morality but still grounded

on strong nativist commitments. According to this approach, morality is the outcome of moral “intuitions” or “modules” that are autonomous, domain-specific, universal, and innate (Baumard, 2016). From this picture, our moral sense is ‘prepared by nature’ as an adaptation selected by evolution, not necessarily present at birth, but developed naturally “without effort or explicit instruction” (ibid, p. 32).

According to Baumard “the content of our moral judgments does not change with age, although children’s moral sense improves as they grow up, like any other capacity” (ibid, p. 34). The susceptibility of the moral sense to show different profiles during ontogeny comes then from the fact that “as children come to better understand their environment and acquire experience in the world, their judgments take more subtle parameters into account. Like any natural psychological disposition, the moral sense relies on the information that is available about the environment.” (Ibid, p. 35).

The nativist assumptions of the mutualistic theory are evident in one particular dimension studied: distributive justice. For the mutualistic theory, the diversity of motivating principles of humans in distributive dilemmas and resource allocation tasks (such as distributing resources according to equality, need, or individual contributions) can be explained with one single logic: equal respect for the interests of all. In brief, our sense of justice evolved to foster mutually advantageous cooperative relations by taking into account the interests of agents involved in collaborative activities and can take different forms depending on the interests of individuals in distributive scenarios (Baumard, 2016).

According to Baumard, “Equality is, in some way, the default position (in terms of contributions), then the only thing to do is distribute goods equally. If their contributions differ, then equity is necessary to maintain mutually advantageous relationships. In short, rather than two principles, a single logic is enough” (2016, p. 101-102). Moreover, talking about the distribution of resources according to need would be the result of individuals’ rejection of the idea of certain individuals falling below the poverty line, and the favoring of a certain level of solidarity. In brief, “it is mutually advantageous to be part of an insurance scheme” (p. 102).

Strictly according to a mutualistic rationale, our sense of justice emerges to foster mutually advantageous cooperative relations by taking into account the interests of all agents involved in collaborative activities and can take different forms depending on the interests of individuals in distributive scenarios. However, the proponents of mutualistic theories about morality have been simplistic when describing how the human sense of fairness relates to decision-making in cooperative interactions involving the distribution of resources.

Contrary to what a mutualistic narrative should imply, I claim that the 'mutualistic theory' of morality assumes that our moral sense of fairness evolved as a mechanism that enables mutualistic cooperation just by fostering 'equity' or the sharing of the costs and benefits of cooperation exclusively on the logic of contribution and proportionality. More importantly, our moral sense would have evolved to be conferred just to those who can participate in cooperative exchanges led by the principles of productivity and maximization. As a consequence, this theory promotes a vision of human moral nature that may conflict with normative convictions associated with the accomplishment of a world devoid of huge social and economic inequalities.

For instance, Baumard, Mascaro & Chevallier (2012) have claimed explicitly that "…distributing resources according to merit is the best way to share the benefits of cooperation in a mutually advantageous way" (2012, p. 493). Baumard et al. (2013) have also stated that "…those who contribute more, be it thanks to greater efforts or greater skills, are more desirable as partners and hence their greater contribution should entitle them to greater benefits" (p. 72), and that individuals "…should be rewarded as a function of the effort and talent they invest into each interaction (…) and in exact proportion to the effort they invest in each interaction", since otherwise, "they are better off interacting with other partners" (2013, p. 63).

In the same line of thought, Debove, Baumard & André (2016) have expressed that "when individuals can choose whom to cooperate with, equity emerges as the best strategy, and the offers that maximize fitness are those that are proportional to the individual's relative contribution to the production of the good"

(p. 3). According to this evolutionary rationale, to act and judge others' behavior according to the logic of contribution, proportionality, merit, and deservingness would have the most salient adaptive value.

Finally, in an article entitled "*Why people prefer unequal societies?"*, Starmans, Sheskin, and Bloom (2017) have argued, based on the narrative of the mutualistic theory, that human beings are not concerned at all by large inequalities and that the only concerns that we take into account when thinking about socio-economic issues are equity and proportionality ('economic unfairness'). These authors claim there has been a wrong interpretation of the empirical behavioral data of distributive justice studies since human beings are concerned with equality just in cases when there are no opportunities to apply fairness as the rule of equity.

This perspective resembles the basic foundations of the 'equity theory' in social psychology (Homans, 1961; Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973; Folger, 1983; Deutsch, 1985). The 'equity' theory is based on the idea that distributive justice exists among partners in cooperative exchanges when the profits of each (i.e., reward obtained less cost incurred) are proportional to their investments (Homans, 1961). More precisely, "At the heart of equity theory lies the 'contribution rule' that states that justice judgments reflect the relative ratio of one's contributions (or inputs) to one's receipts (or outcomes). Justice is achieved when this ratio appears equal for all the individuals involved in a given distribution or exchange" (Furby, 1986, p. 155).

The 'mutualistic theory' then offers an evolutionary background for the equity theory, proposing that an innate adaptive ability to share the benefits and costs of cooperation following the rule of contribution or proportionality is the most efficient pathway to the establishment of human mutualistic cooperative interactions. The philosophical implications of this narrative about human fairness are problematic. It seems that according to these authors, human fairness evolved as an adaptation for cooperative interactions in which productivity and maximization are the unique goals of attainment. Moreover, this 'productivity' scenario would have configured a moral sense designed to be conferred just to

those agents that contribute to maximizing the products of cooperative interactions.

This assumption is implicit in the explanation that Baumard and colleagues made when presenting the results of one of their studies about the capacity of preschoolers to take merit into account when distributing goods (Baumard, Mascaro & Chevallier, 2012). In this article, they evaluate the capacity of children as young as three years old to take merit into account when distributing a resource between two agents who contributed differently to the realization of a task.

The authors do confirm that children as young as three years old do understand and take merit into account, favoring a hard-working agent in their distributions. However, this happened in a forced-choice scenario where there was no space for children to be egalitarian (they had to distribute a big cookie and a small one between the characters). When children had the option to be egalitarian, they showed a preference for equality, choosing to distribute three same-sized cookies giving one to each character. Naturally, some children favor one of the characters, and logically, it was the hard-working agent. Yet, these children showed a spontaneous preference for egalitarian distributions when they had the opportunity.

In the general discussion of the study, Baumard and colleagues claim that children can take merit into account very early in development, and this observation might be an indication of the innateness of that capacity. However, when they tried as well to give some explanations on why children do prefer egalitarian distributions in experimental settings, none of the potential explanations include a correspondent nativist interpretation favoring equality or other rules different from ‘equity’ in the context of fairness decisions. They propose, conversely, that children 1) “may find the egalitarian solution more salient” 2), “they may be trying to demonstrate that they have good counting skills and that they can split tokens equally”, and 3) “they may be assuming that the experimenter expects them to produce an egalitarian distribution” (2012, p.497).

Baumard and colleagues recognize the limitations of the study and encourage research on characterizing which contexts favor a spontaneous preference for equality. The authors, however, consider the possibility of a preference for equality to be constituted by ontogenetic contexts but do not apply the same logic for the capacity for taking merit into account in distributive tasks. These assumptions derive from their intention to show fairness as an innate and universal capacity to take merit into account in distributive scenarios. In the end, from the perspective of mutualistic theory, other factors for resolving cooperative and distributive dilemmas such as the needs of others or giving equal opportunities to all are not essential components of our innate sense of fairness.

The proponents of the mutualistic theory have expressed that the scientific aim of the 'mutualistic' approach is to describe morality, not to engage in arguments about the normative dimension of ethics or how people *ought* to act in the real world. Accordingly, they have stated that the theory centers on a descriptive endeavor, focusing on the content of our moral judgments and not on normative considerations on how we *must* act. However, the restrictive vision of the mutualistic approach concerning human moral concerns for fairness is not value-neutral from an ethical or normative perspective.

As it happens with 'Evo-conservative' models (see Chapter 1), the mutualistic perspective prejudges the facts about the limits of our natural sense of fairness and promotes a vision of human moral nature that may conflict with normative convictions associated with the accomplishment of a world devoid of huge social and economic inequalities. Finally, it is still elusive the role of social, cultural, and economical environments in the conceptualization of this theoretical model.

At this point, I follow this reflection made by Michael Tomasello:

> "Simplistic nativism – where the goal is simply to claim 'it's innate' and be done with it – is antithetical to an evolutionary approach. Biological adaptations always come into being in an individual through ontogenetic processes. A given ontogenetic pathway may be more plastic and open, or more fixed and closed, to individual experience. (…) The fact that

> something is a biological adaptation tells us precisely nothing about the relative plasticity and openness to experience of the ontogenetic pathway by which it comes into being. (…) Of special importance in the current context, many of children's most complex competencies come into being as they interact with other people, and indeed such interactions are necessary for normal development. (…) then it is the experiences themselves that are the proximate causes of moral development. Said another way: what matures is capacities for certain kinds of social experience – as an enabling cause – but the actual proximate causes are the experiences themselves. A child coming to maturity on a desert island would not develop a moral sense". (Tomasello, 2018, p. 259).

Starting from this critique to functionalist Evo-conservative and Evo-inclusivist proposals, the next Part is devoted to offering a different perspective of the nature and situated development of human morality. Chapter 4 in particular, will be dedicated to offering an alternative picture of the sense of human fairness by adopting the lens of a developmental and culturally-situated approach.

# PART II

## A Developmental approach

*"Morality presupposes the existence of rules which transcend the individual, and these rules could only develop through contact with other people (…) whether the child's moral judgments are heteronomous or autonomous, accepted under pressure or worked out in freedom, this morality is social"*

*(Piaget, 1932, p. 344)*

The factual existence of inclusivist forms of moral concern, as we can intuitively think, represents a challenge to 'Evo-conservative' perspectives on human morality and progress. Moreover, the variability of human behavior and the ethical implications of some nativist approaches to human nature may be carefully assessed if we want to pursue a fruitful dialogue between evolutionary social sciences and empirically-informed approaches to moral behavior, and normative reflections about contemporary ethical challenges (Segovia-Cuéllar & Del Savio, 2021; Singh & Glowacki, 2022).

Any naturalistic perspective on human morality needs to account for a general 'open-ended normativity of the ethical' or the capacity that we humans have to "…reflect on and revise our moral norms and modify our behavior accordingly, even when doing so is not only not fitness-enhancing but even fitness-reducing" (Buchanan and Powell, 2018, p. 180). This is fundamental since the empirical evidence suggests that our normative convictions can still be fulfilled and it is misleading to believe that humans are limited by an exclusivist 'moral nature' that constrains our capacity to behave in a morally correct way (Erez, 2020).

In this part, I defend a developmental alternative to the adaptationist versions around the starting conditions of morality. In the third chapter, I start by describing a different evolutionary perspective than the one traditionally adopted by functionalist accounts in psychology. This is the 'developmental-systems' approach, which pretends to explain the origins of phenotypical and behavioral traits in organisms as the result of a complex interaction between multiple causal factors. This theoretical introduction to a different paradigm in evolutionary biology paves the way for explaining morality according to the radical framework

of constructivist and cognitive-evolutionary traditions in moral psychology, which is the goal of the other sections of the chapter.

From a constructivist perspective, and contrary to what is proposed by 'functionalist approaches and the EDM model, human morality is not just the expression of innate adaptive intuitions, neither the product of social conformity and a simple process of mirroring the normativity that communities have established to organize their social life. Instead, human individuals construct moral concerns and judgments during social interactions (Mead, 1934; Piaget, 1932/2013; Kohlberg, 1981; Turiel, 1983; Carpendale, Hammond & Atwood, 2013; Dahl & Killen, 2018b).

Furthermore, as it is proposed by the social-domain approach, the moral domain is grounded on prescriptive norms of behavior based on evaluative concerns and judgments about how we ought to treat others and how to establish personal interactions promoting others' welfare, rights, fairness, and justice (Turiel, 1983; Dahl & Killen, 2018a; 2018b). In this line of thought, the human moral domain is constituted by *inclusivist* concerns, evaluations, and norms that transcend and sometimes oppose social rules and the general normativity that groups have established to organize social life.

The constructivist perspective adopted is also grounded on the idea that the development of these inclusivist moral concerns does require the intricate relation between emotional/intuitive and cognitive/rational elements, as well as the exercise of individual autonomy in social relations. This section then adopts the general idea that moral intuitions and moral reasoning are just two sides of a unique process of formation and education of moral concerns and judgments (Sauer, 2017). Accordingly, human reasoning is characterized as the flexible capacity for the elaboration of judgments and arguments (Mammen, Domberg & Köymen, 2019; Paulus, 2020), required for a complex interpretation of the multiple interests involved in social interactions, and the consolidation of judgments according to principles concerning others' welfare and rights (Dahl & Killen, 2018a).

Philosophically speaking, human reasoning is also explored as the process through which we reach ‘better’ or ‘correct’ moral judgments, these are judgments that are justifiable to all (Hindriks & Sauer, 2020). This makes reasoning a necessary element in the acquisition, education, and revision of adequate moral evaluations, principles, and judgments, and moral rationalism a necessary stance towards the *normative quality* of our moral systems.

To adopt this rationalist perspective concerning the process through which human individuals reach more equilibrated levels of consensus in social dilemmas and moral considerations, does not exclude the role of emotions and intuitions as constituent components for the realization of our moral judgments and actions. This rationale will be essential for the later reflection on the favorable conditions for moral inclusivity to emerge, and it will also be further developed in subsequent chapters.

In the fourth chapter, I explore the empirical evidence associated with the development of the human sense of fairness, which was mentioned in the last part of the previous chapter when criticizing the nativist perspective of the mutualistic theory of morality. In this chapter, my purpose is to analyze a concrete case study of moral development adopting a constructivist narrative. At the end of this section, it will be clearer what it means to adopt a developmental and constructivist approach to the nature of human moral concerns.

## 3. Redefining human morality

### *1. A developmental-systems perspective*

Taking into consideration the problematic conceptual and ethical implications of some adaptationist and functionalist approaches reviewed in the previous part, I start this section by suggesting that a different picture of human nature may be developed if we start our conceptualization from a different evolutionary perspective. This perspective is the 'developmental-systems' approach in evolutionary biology.

The developmental-systems perspective complements the received view adopted by functionalist thinking: the traditional 'modern synthesis' of evolution (MS). Put it briefly, the MS explains the origin of current organic forms, both in morphological and behavioral terms, as the result of two main processes: genetic variation and the inheritance of adaptive features, and natural selection of these capacities by ancestral environments (Amundson, 2005). From this perspective, biological information is packaged in genetic programs and the development of organisms is proposed as the result of a receipt "programmed in the genes" (Mayr, 1988).

As it has been suggested by many authors, the MS rationale diminishes the relevance of ontogenetic development, the active role of organisms in the construction of their ecological niches, the inclusive heritage of epigenetic and environmental factors, and the role of environment and learning as sources of morphological and behavioral variation (Lewontin, 2001; Oyama, Griffiths & Gray, 2001; Wereha & Racine, 2012).

A crucial element in the narrative of the MS is the concept of adaptation, which has also been firmly criticized since its inception. For instance, Gould and Lewontin (1979) characterized the adaptationist paradigm as a "Panglossian

paradigm". According to this critique, a particular trait in an organism will always have an explanation in adaptive terms for there will always be a way to justify the relationship between the feature and the environmental pressure that originated it.

Yet, there is now increasing support for a new paradigm in evolutionary biology, established with the name of "the extended synthesis of evolution" (ES) (Laland et al., 2015). From the perspective of the ES, evolutionary processes in the organic world are not solely driven by the mechanisms of random genetic variation, adaptation, and natural selection. Instead, biological evolution involves the reciprocal causation between phylogenetic and ontogenetic factors, inclusive inheritance, and complex dynamics of interactions between organisms and their environments (Laland et al., 2015; Griffiths & Tabery, 2013; Oyama, 2000; Oyama, Griffiths & Gray, 2003; Pigliucci & Müller, 2010).

In the case of human evolution, an extended perspective has led to the recent inclusion of profound reflections about the role of cultural processes in the configuration of human morphological and behavioral complexity. Henrich and Muthukrishna (2021), for instance, have claimed that "Unlike other animals, we are entirely dependent on learning from other people for our very survival, even for our survival as foragers; as a species, we are addicted to culture –that is, to acquiring a substantial proportion of our phenotype by tapping into a large body of nongenetic information that has been filtered and accumulated over generations" (24.4).

Consequently, it is now claimed that cultural processes have also shaped the environments that humans faced during their evolution, and those culturally modified environments have driven the development of uniquely human aspects, in a process called 'culture-gene coevolution' or 'cultural evolution of genetic heritability' (Wrangham, 2009; Moya & Henrich, 2016; Henrich, 2020; Uchiyama, Spicer, & Muthukrishna, 2021)[15]. In brief, culture did affect the

[15] The dimensions of cultural evolution, cultural group selection and culture-gene co-evolution, are essential for a developmental-systems approach in evolutionary biology and evolutionary social sciences. However, most of the proponents of these processes still explain biological

motivations, preferences, attitudes, and behaviors of the human species (Henrich & Muthukrishna, 2020).

The historical development of extended thinking about evolution goes back to the work of James Baldwin and his concept of ontogenetic evolution (1896). Baldwin, for instance, had already explored the inheritance of learning mechanisms as derived from experience and interaction with the environment (the '*Baldwin effect').* Another relevant precursor of extended thinking in biology and behavioral sciences was Conrad Waddington (Baedke, 2013). Waddington proposed that organic and behavioral development always suppose the presence of "epigenetic landscapes". An 'epigenetic landscape', implies that there are no predetermined forms of biological development, in which specific genotypes lead to particular phenotypes, but variable outcomes of physical and behavioral possibilities.

The epistemological basis which supports extended thinking in evolutionary science is offered by the "developmental systems theory" (DST), initially developed by psychologist and philosopher of science Susan Oyama (2000). The primary purpose of a developmental systems approach is to avoid dichotomies in evolutionary thinking and to propose evolution and development as systemic networks of causes affecting each other. In short, the DST proposes a causal parity in evolutionary processes.

At this point, it is important to note that explaining the development of organisms as just the result of the interaction between genes and a given environment still reduces organic evolution and development to some transduction of information in a biological space. This is the case of explanations based on the concept of 'Adaptive plasticity', such as the 'Evolutionary Developmental Model' of moral inclusivity proposed by Buchanan and Powell (2018) (I offer a critique to this model in the final III part).

phenomena with the lens of adaptationism and functionalism.

Lewens (2019) has already argued against the evolutionary assumptions of these theories from a developmental-systems perspective. He claims that developmental plasticity is not fully circumscribed by those adult traits that would have been beneficial in past environments, and that novel environments have the potential to produce alternative phenotypes depending on how development is canalized. In brief, "…the ability to learn confers on the organism a form of open-ended plasticity (…) that enables forms of adaptive developmental re-organization that need not have been 'pre-screened by their performance with respect to earlier environments" (Lewens, 2019, p. 268).

Contrary to this idea, a DST suggests that organisms are not just genetic programs selected by the action of the environment, but a network of interactions that should be reliably reproduced over time to persist. These 'developmental systems' are constituted by different causes interacting in a complex and non-linear form. As suggested by Gilbert Gottlieb, organic evolution and development are products of *probabilistic epigenesis,* which includes the influence of cultural, symbolic, and institutional dimensions in the case of human beings (see Figure 4):

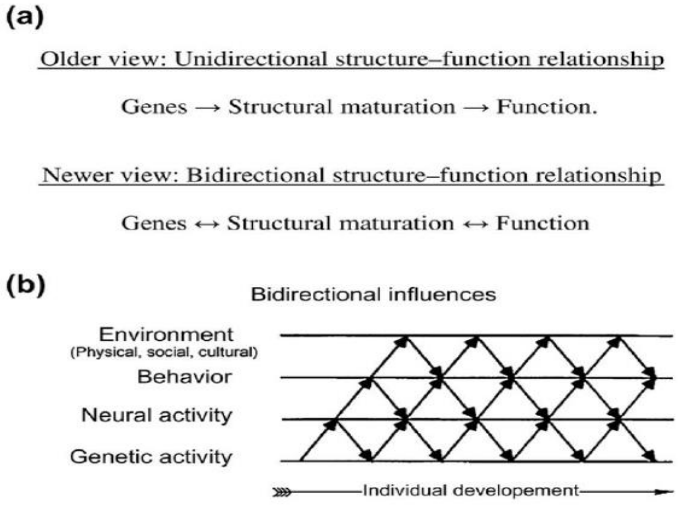


**Figure 4.** The process of organic development, in morphological and behavioral dimensions, implies multiple causal interactions between genes, physiological configurations, and the environment. These causal interactions lead to the establishment of organisms' structure and function as the result of probabilistic development. Taken from: Gottlieb, G. (2007). Probabilistic epigenesis. *Developmental Science*, *10*(1), 1-11.

The theoretical insights of a DST are based on a relational meta-theory. A meta-theory is a general framework of conceptual and epistemic suppositions that imply particular ways to see the world. Meta-theories are built on epistemological ideas (the nature of knowledge and the relation between epistemic subjects and the world that it is known) and ontological ideas (what does exist and what it is real) (Overton, 2013).

For a relational meta-theory, the distinctions between what is internal or external, innate or acquired, or between nature and nurture are completely eschewed. In brief, there is no commitment to dualist pictures of physical, biological, or psychological processes. Organic forms and their behavior are the results of interconnected processes that cannot be reduced to simple components.

This perspective differs then from dualist approaches in classical biology and psychology, based on a '*Cartesian split dualism'*. (Overton, 2013; Witherington et al., 2018). Such a dualist meta-theory has been dominant in biology, exemplified in the distinction between genes and environment or nature and nurture. In psychology and cognitive sciences, the Cartesian paradigm supposes a radical separation between mind and body, mind and society, or mind and world.

The basic conceptual insights of a developmental-systems alternative help us to advance on a different evolutionary perspective than the one adopted by functionalist approaches, in 'Evo-conservative' and 'Evo-inclusivist' versions. Moreover, it further complements recent developmental theories (such as the EDM) that aim to explain moral behavior, and moral inclusivity, from an alternative evolutionary approach.

To sum up, it has been commonly assumed that organic evolution is the product of 'natural selection' over morphological, behavioral, and cognitive adaptations, which were established as genetic programs during our evolutionary history. From a developmental systems approach, conversely, it is necessary to

overcome false dichotomies and to assume biological and psychological processes as relational and interactional.

A relational meta-theory and the developmental systems approach to evolution and ontogeny are crucial to accommodate recent scientific evidence around the issues of human nature, and to defend alternative proposals to moral evolution. A developmental-systems perspective on human social and moral behavior, suggests the consideration of a developmental dimension which is essential for the proper understanding of psychological phenomena. In the next sections, I will turn to explore a constructivist approach to morality, taking insights from different theoretical and empirical proposals in moral psychology.

## *2. The construction of our moral domain: Concerns, judgments, and norms*

Following a developmental systems rationale, and taking insights from empirical developmental science, the constructivist perspective in psychology has claimed that moral concerns, judgments, and norms are not the result of the expression of innate adaptive intuitions, nor the product of social conformity and a simple process of mirroring the normativity that communities have established to organize their social life. Instead, according to a constructivist perspective, human individuals develop moral concerns and judgments during social interactions (Piaget, 1932/1965; Kohlberg, 1981; Turiel, 1983; Smetana, 1984, 1989; Carpendale, Hammond & Atwood, 2013; Dahl & Killen, 2018a, 2018b; Dahl, Waltzer & Gross, 2017; Dahl, 2019)[16].

[16] From an arguably similar perspective, the relational approach to morality (Mascolo & DiBianca Fasoli, 2020) argues that "…moral values are neither universal reflections of a biological, social or spiritual world, nor are they relativistic creations of particular cultures or social groups or individuals. Instead, moral values and beliefs are *emergent properties of relational experience"* (p. 392).

More precisely, the constructivist tradition claims that we need to research how moral concerns, judgments, and reasons emerge in social interactions and how human beings construct the content of their moral knowledge in the first place. The central story in the study of morality is then "… how morality develops during early childhood and beyond through social interactions with others", and "…how children build on early predispositions and social experiences to develop an understanding of morality as a distinctive form of social knowledge" (Smetana, Jambon, & Ball, 2018, p. 2).

It is important to highlight that this perspective profoundly differs from current nativist and/or socialization approaches in moral psychology. The nativist alternative in developmental psychology, for instance, claims that human beings come with a natural capacity or innate social preferences to evaluate prosocial and antisocial agents (Hamlin, Wynn, & Bloom, 2007; Bloom, 2013; Hamlin, 2013). However, as is noted by Paulus (2020), "…a social preference is logically different from a moral evaluation, an appreciation of rules and principles, and a feeling of normative obligations" (p. 163). In brief, it is necessary to evaluate when in development human children express normative stances which are the outcome of different forms of social knowledge, including morality. These normative stances are commonly associated with affective reactions but are mostly present in explicit judgments, justifications, and behavioral interventions (i.e., protest, punishments, rewards). These assumptions are especially relevant, for communication and language are essential components of morality, and unequivocal empirical indicators of moral stances.

On the other hand, for socialization theories "…the child is assumed to passively adopt and follow local social norms, and thus morality is equated to conformity. Such accounts are problematic because they do not explain how moral norms initially develop. This position also entails relativism because morality is reduced to conforming to current local beliefs with no way to evaluate the moral beliefs of different collectives." (Carpendale, 2009, p. 271).

Contrary to these ideas, the constructivist approach has suggested a focus on social interactions. Given that children construct and follow different kinds of norms during their social interactions with parents and peers (Turiel & Dahl, 2019), the social-domain approach has also claimed that the study of human moral behavior requires a clear definition in morality in the first place. According to the 'social-domain' perspective - a branch of the cognitive-evolutionary tradition-, morality is defined as a set of evaluative concerns and prescriptive norms of behavior regarding how we ought to treat others and how we ought to establish personal relations promoting others' welfare, rights, fairness, and justice (Dahl & Killen, 2018a, 2018b; Turiel 2015).

As Dahl, Campos & Witherington (2011) claim: "Our lives are organized around concerns. By concerns, we mean whatever is important to us, whatever we are interested in, and whatever engages us. Moral concerns constitute a subset of our concerns, namely those that are oriented to justice, rights, and welfare –in short, our concerns for the well-being of others". These evaluative concerns are configured through interpersonal relations during development and are later reflected in an individual's judgments, reasoning, protests, and emotional reactions to social events (Dahl, 2019).

In this work, I adopt both the constructivist assumptions and the definition of morality offered by the Social-Domain theory. Accordingly, I define moral development as the constructive process through which human individuals, by the means of constant interactions on a background of mutual respect and recognition, develop evaluative concerns about how we ought to treat others, and how to 'care' and 'respect' others' well-being, needs, and vulnerabilities (Segovia-Cuéllar, 2022).

This definition implies perhaps the most essential rationale of the social-domain theory in moral development. In a few words, the process of moral development is, therefore, different from the process of learning social-conventional rules (i.e., concerns and norms about traditions, conventions, and narratives about group functioning), since it describes the emergence of unique forms of normativity

that emerge from interpersonal encounters on a background of autonomy, reciprocity, and mutual respect (Turiel, 1983; Dahl & Killen, 2018a, b).

As a consequence, the moral domain is mostly experienced as “universalizing and binding” (Mascolo & DiBianca Fasoli, 2020), and moral norms are assumed as prescriptive and generalizable, which means that they do not depend on the context, on the defense of a particular group identity, do not rely on a figure of authority, and the commitment to these norms has no relation to avoidance of punishment (Killen, 2018).

This distinction is essential for further argumentation. In pure socialization theories, moralization is seen as the result of the asymmetrical adoption of values and norms from parents or social institutions. This is also the case of Evo-conservative approaches that define morality as a group-affair, taking the adoption of social normativity in general as the mark of moral behavior. However, these conceptions disregard the role of individuality in moral development and leaves unexplained what differentiates moral norms from other types of normativity. My reflection on the favorable conditions for moral inclusivity to emerge, included in Chapter 6, start from this point.

### *3. The ontogeny of (inclusivist) morality*

In what comes, I will summarize and evaluate some basic ideas about the development of moral concerns and evaluations following a constructivist and social-domain perspective. To begin with, the constructive process that shapes social knowledge (and different domains of normativity) starts in the first two years of human development (Turiel & Dahl, 2019). This development is guided by an extraordinary impulse of children to be involved in the activities of adults and social interactions through genuine social motivation (Paulus, 2014a; Pletti, Scheel & Paulus, 2017).

This social motivation could be explained as a product of our cooperative niches where human children need the attention of parents and conspecifics to survive, which leads to the development of enhanced capacities of intersubjectivity and shared intentionality (Tomasello & González-Cabrera, 2017). This social motivation allows the emergence of dyadic interactions between infants and adults during the first months of life and also is causally correlated with the appearance of shared intentional scenarios and behaviors like shared attention, gaze-following, social reference, and declarative gestural communication (Tomasello, 2014). Moreover, it is the primary source of positive and reciprocal family interactions, it is crucial for responding to the distress of others, and it is linked to the capacity to engage in simple instrumental helping as a form of social interaction (Brownell, 2016).

Just before reaching two years, it starts a stage of pre-altruistic behaviors when children begin to engage in instrumental helping, because of their capacities for goal completion and action fulfillment (Dahl & Paulus, 2018). These behaviors are the result of enhanced social understanding, which allows children to understand the actions of others and their intentions (Carpendale & Lewis, 2015; Paulus, 2014a). However, until this stage, human children still engage in constant transgressions that involve the infliction of harm onto others (Dahl et al., 2017; Smetana, Jambon, & Ball, 2018).

It is not until the end of the second year that children start to consolidate the different domains of social knowledge through their social interactions, and develop moral, conventional, and personal concerns independently (Smetana, 1984, 1989; Smetana & Braeges, 1990; Smetana, Jambon, & Ball, 2018). Children start to show empathic concern for others, relieve others' distress, and act upon the emotional signals of harm or sadness in others, something that is the result of emotional communication and interaction during the first years of life (Zahn-Waxler et al., 1992; Dahl & Campos, 2013; Dahl, Campos & Witherington, 2011).

These concerns for the well-being of others come along with parents' encouragement and bidirectional social interactions and scaffolding (Recchia & Wainryb, 2014; Wainryb & Recchia, 2014; Dahl & Brownell, 2019). For instance, some studies have found that caregivers provide domain-specific justifications in their interactions with children during the first two years of development (Smetana, 1984; Dahl & Campos, 2013).

Moreover, the responses of parents to children's transgression are different depending on the consequences of the actions performed, or the type and content of the norm transgressed. Parents react with anger to harmful acts performed by children (morally relevant actions), fear or worry to dangerous transgressions for the children themselves (prudential norms), and warmth or laughter to conventional rules (Dahl & Kim, 2014). However, the effect of these social contingencies is not sufficient for the consolidation of the moral domain of social knowledge and it is always essential for the children to "critically evaluate" parental prohibitions (Turiel and Dahl, 2019).

All these social dynamics are essential for the configuration of different domains of social knowledge, including morality. Around three years, children finally consolidate, apply, and endorse concerns for others' welfare, and they start to understand that harming others is morally wrong (Hardecker et al., 2016; Mammen, Köymen, & Tomasello, 2019). The moral domain is then constituted as a set of 'strong evaluations' and prescriptive norms characterized as obligatory, generalizable, and impersonal, due to their relation to welfare, justice, and rights (Turiel, 1983; Mascolo & DiBianca Fasoli, 2020).

By three and four years of age, children finally reach the stage of a normative stance toward moral actions, establish a clear distinction between prescriptive moral norms and conventional rules, and also engage in reasons and judgments for evaluating the social world (Turiel, 1983; Smetana, Jambon, & Ball, 2018). From this point, the differentiation of moral and conventional rules is even materialized in different physiological reactions, such as pupil dilation, towards instances of these norm transgressions (Yucel, Hepach, & Vaish, 2020).

What does this developmental perspective say about the possibilities of inclusivist moral concerns and judgments to emerge? To start with, it is necessary to clarify that human beings can develop both exclusivist and inclusivist forms of moral behavior as a consequence of having certain basic psychological and social capacities. In other words, human beings are constantly exposed to 'centripetal' and 'centrifugal' social forces that constantly reduce or expand the 'moral circle' (Graham et al., 2017, see Figure 5).

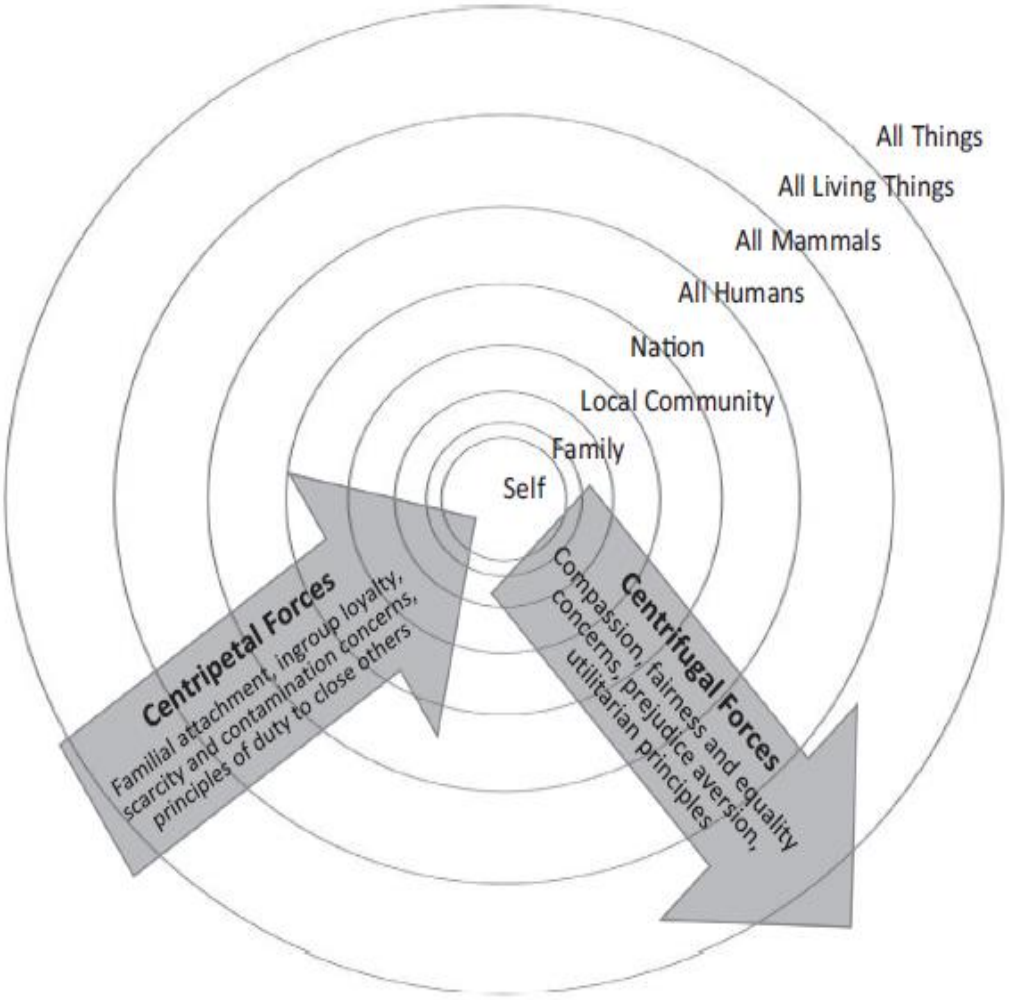


**Figure 5.** Centripetal and centrifugal forces in the development of the 'moral circle'. Taken from: Graham, J., Waytz, A., Meindl, P., Iyer, R., & Young, L. (2017). Centripetal and centrifugal forces in the moral circle: Competing constraints on moral learning. *Cognition*, *167*, 58-65.

Human beings are indeed inclined to express biased prosocial sentiments and motivations that limit the expression of moral concerns to members of the same group from the very beginning. Humans tend to be group-minded creatures, and group affiliation is even "the foundation for the emergence of culture in development" (Killen et al., 2002), grounded on unique forms of social learning and social conformity that appear very early in development.

Humans show a pattern called 'in-group' favoritism or 'in-group' bias from very early in development. Children do consistently show a preference for people of their gender (Shutts, Roben, & Spelke, 2013), race (Baron & Banaji, 2006), and language group (Kinzler, Dupoux, & Spelke, 2007). Moreover, children use to exclude out-group members (Verkuyten, 2021), tend to present their best image to peer groups (Rutland, Cameron, Milne, & McGeorge, 2005), and prefer members of their social groups across a variety of social situations (Killen, Hitti, Cooley, & Elenbaas, 2015).

These developmental instances of group affiliation confirm the seminal theory of social identity proposed by Tajfel and colleagues (Tajfel et al., 1971; Billig & Tajfel, 1973). According to these authors, people tend to sympathize and rate the members of their group as more likable and trustworthy and tend to cooperate with in-group partners even if their assignment to groups follows an arbitrary decision. Several authors have taken insights from social identity theory and recent scientific evidence to propose that in-group favoritism is always combined with out-group antagonism and antipathy, which explains why it is so difficult to overcome instances of ethnocentrism, and out-group hostility, discrimination, and exclusion (Aboud, 2003)[17].

However, recent scientific evidence has challenged this idea (Brock & Atkinson, 2008). For instance, Corr et al. (2015) and Yamagishi and Mifune (2015) found

[17] The fact that in-group attachment and outgroup hostility are part of the same phenomenon was initially proposed by Sumner (1906). According to this author, social identity and group affiliation are organized around four simultaneous principles: social categorization, ingroup positivity, intergroup comparison, and outgroup hostility.

no evidence of a correlation between in-group cooperation and out-group hostility, and Robert Sapolsky (2017) has claimed that in-group biases can be mitigated through various strategies and can be interpreted biologically without appealing a fixed orientation for inter-group competition.

Developmental evidence also consistently shows that humans can develop inclusivist forms of prosocial behavior, and group affiliation does not always come attached with out-group hostility and derogation. Children do not automatically dislike out-group members, and their affiliation depends on social knowledge and their social-cognitive abilities. Out-group exclusion and hostility depend entirely on their degree of identification, their feelings of threat, or the expectation of the group around expressing prejudice (Killen et al., 2015).

Psychologists Melanie Killen and Adam Rutland have proposed the "social reasoning developmental model" (SRD) to explore these conflicts from a social-domain perspective and accommodate empirical evidence on the matter. This model assumes that human beings tend to affiliate with groups but also pay attention to the fact that group membership can be an obstacle to morality when it expresses itself in the form of out-group derogation and exclusion (Rutland & Killen, 2015).

The studies performed by the proponents of the SRD have consistently shown that children likely tend to conform to groups when dealing with conventional norms, but this turns different when moral norms are involved. For instance, they reject overt forms of intergroup exclusion in many contexts if they are grounded on moral transgressions such as race, gender, ethnicity, or nationality-based exclusions (Killen et al., 2015).

In other words, children do not view all norms in the same way and how they adopt the norms from their groups depends on several factors. Children and adolescents critically evaluate loyalty to group norms depending on the type of norms involved (moral or conventional dimensions) (Killen, Elenbaas, Rizzo, & Rutland, 2017). Additionally, human children are motivated to include out-group

members if they advocate a moral norm, for instance, an equal norm for resource allocation (Mulvey, Hitti, Rutland, Abrams, & Killen, 2014).

The impartial extension of our moral concern is grounded on basic psychological processes such as sympathy and role-taking, and it is also feasible if the contextual and institutional arrangements that foster egalitarian relations and democratic rational deliberation for the extension of our moral concerns are present. The reflection on the circumstances that better foster the emergence of inclusivist moralities and what we should do to advance on this task is part of the argumentation developed in the third and last part of this work. Before taking that step further, it is necessary to clarify additional conceptual (and empirical) assumptions of a constructivist alternative in moral psychology. The most relevant for the sake of my argument has to do with the intricate relationship between intuitions, reasoning, and deliberation, and the relevance that the latter has in the processes involved in moral development.

### *4. Moral development, emotion, and reasoning*

An essential reflection for the construction of a theory of morality as a developmental system is the intricate relation between the emotional and the cognitive dimensions, or between intuitions and reasoning. This is even more relevant when a recent turn in the cognitive sciences has deepened the interest in embodied, emotional and non-conscious dynamics for explaining different cognitive processes from perception to social cognition (Varela et al., 1991/2017; Prinz, 2007; Gigerenzer, 2008; Haidt, 2012; Colombetti, 2014; Shapiro, 2014; Asma, 2019).

These proposals have fostered a renewed interest in the ‘intuitive’ nature of our moral behavior, as a way to overcome the limitations of ‘rationalist’ approaches in moral psychology. Traditional moral psychology, the argument goes, focused so far almost exclusively on the role of individual reasoning, cognitive control, and artificial moral problems in explaining the nature of moral concerns and

judgments (Varela, 1999; Prinz, 2007; Haidt, 2012; Colombetti & Torrance, 2009; Bergmann & Wagner, 2020).

These perspectives seek to develop a plausible theory of human morality taking into consideration two main theses, summarized by Sauer (2017) as the 'automaticity thesis' and the 'anti-rationalist thesis' (Sauer, 2017). The thesis of automaticity considers that moral judgments "…are not based on critical reflection, but on uncontrolled, emotionally charged states of intuitive (dis)approval" (íbid, p. 52). This claim follows the results of some empirical findings that seem to show that moral judgements are the result of automatic processes that just after being realized, pave the way to slow, conscious moral reasoning and justification (Haidt, 2001; Greene, 2009).

Consequently, the 'anti-rationalist' thesis has it that reasoning plays no significant role in morality and moral judgment. Moral reasoning would be just a subordinate process of confabulating justifications that come after embodied moral judgments or pre-reflective intuitions have been elicited. In this picture, moral reasoning is a kind of "post-hoc" justification that supports "intuitive" judgments. (Haidt, 2012)[18].

From an arguably more conciliatory perspective, the enactive tradition has proposed that human intentional deliberation and reasoning exist in the domain of ethics and they play a role in the configuration of moral habits (Varela, 1999). For instance, deliberation and analysis are important processes for the acquisition and revision of moral intuitions in moments of breakdown, this is, "when we are not experts of our microworld anymore, that we deliberate and analyze, that we become like beginners seeking to feel at ease with the task at hand" (Varela, 1999, p. 18). Likewise, Colombetti and Torrance (2009), the

[18] The intuitionist approach to morality could be traced back to the proposals of classical philosophers, in the west and the eastern tradition, who proposed that human reasoning is just a slave of the passions and that we are always embedded in habitual behaviors that do not need a constant cognitive control or reasoned planning. Accordingly, ethical expertise would be the result of embodied, intuitive, and concrete situated processes, and not the outcome of rational deliberation and the manipulation of abstract information. This is the line of thought of 'wisdom' traditions like Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism (Varela, 1999; McCarthy, 2010), and also the view of morality proposed by the Scottish enlightenment philosophers (Hindriks, 2014).

proponents of an (inter)- enactive approach to emotion and ethics, also say that “No one should deny the importance of reason in ethics; nor indeed could there be any adequate account of emotions which did not take account of how emotions can be subject to various dimensions of rational scrutiny and criticism” (p. 515).

The model presented in this work follows the same conciliatory purpose of enactivist approaches and considers morality as the outcome of a complex developmental process that requires emotions and reasoning in order to occur. The adoption of a constructivist and social-domain perspective helps to conceptualize and understand this conjunction in a more detailed manner.

According to the social-domain theory, human reasoning is a flexible process of evaluation and elaboration of judgments and arguments with an irreducible social origin and function. Moreover, moral reasoning is the process through which people initiate, preserve, revise, and realize evaluations and judgments based on concerns about others’ welfare, rights, fairness, or justice. (Piaget, 1932/1965, Kohlberg, 1981; Dahl & Killen, 2018; Mammen, Köymen & Tomasello, 2019; Mammen, Domberg & Köymen, 2020; Killen & Dahl, 2021).

During development, human reasoning and deliberation become essential elements for the acquisition, consolidation, and revision of moral concerns, judgments, and principles of behavior. This assumption is complemented by the idea that communication and language are fundamental to constitute a normative stance in social interactions, which makes morality entirely dependent on language-based interactive processes. As is explained by Li and Tomasello (2021), language facilitates all aspects of morality, including the initiation, preservation, revision, and materialization of moral judgments and actions. More importantly, language allows engaging in moral reason-giving, which is a central aspect of moral development (Paulus, 2020).

In this characterization I follow the enactive claim that these processes (i.e., language, reasoning, and deliberation) should be understood as forms of social action, this is, as dynamic processes of interaction between individuals (Di Paolo, Cuffari, De Jaegher, 2018). In other words, when humans communicate through language, when we engage in processes of reason-giving, or when we deliberate, what is at play is between-mind interactions that require a socially externalist perspective to be explored, instead of a 'within minds' perspective (Li & Tomasello, 2021).

The mentioned relevance of reasoning and deliberation does not exclude whatsoever the fact that ethical expertise involves intuitive embodied judgments or the emergent realization of automatic and habitual patterns of behavior that are the outcome of an agent's situated perspective in her world. Moral reasoning and deliberation depend on a background of moral evaluations and concerns that have an irreducible affective dimension. These interactions between affective, cognitive, and linguistic dimensions in moral development may be reconsidered with a brief look into psychological evidence.

As have been summarized by Turiel and Killen (2010) and Dahl & Killen (2018a, b), many forms of moral reasoning may develop into intuitive and automatic patterns of behavior, which are fast, effortless, and instances of expertise. Moreover, and contrary to what is assumed by most intuitionist perspectives in moral psychology, to which emotions seem to be inflexible reactions to environmental stimuli, emotions usually involve evaluative appraisals.

According to Turiel and Killen, "By saying that they are evaluative, emotions are not conceived as forces that are simply there, or standing alone, in ways humans react to situations. It is not that our system, physiologically in-born or learned, reacts with a lack of control to experiences. Nor emotions are the sole motivational force in driving cognitions or the attainment of goals. Instead, emotions are complex, and emotional reactions entail appraisals of the situation" (2010, p. 37).

Furthermore, the precursors of moral reasoning in the first years of life are emotional. As it has been noted by Dahl & Killen (2018a, b) and Ball, Smetana, & Sturge-Apple (2016), the very bases for the development of our moral concerns are emotional processes such as empathic responsiveness to distress, early social understanding, and moral emotions such as guilt and shame. These emotional processes constitute the background for moral reasoning and deliberation to occur in scenarios of cooperation and conflict.

Finally, the development of moral concerns, evaluations, judgments, and norms through social interactions, presents multiple challenges. Moral concerns, judgments, and norms may conflict with other domains of social knowledge, and even they may conflict with each other. For instance, concerns for equality and fairness can be subordinated to considerations of group identity and parochial prosociality, and moral concerns for well-being might conflict with moral concerns for fairness.

At this point, moral reasoning and deliberation acquire special relevance, since they foster more adequate ways to apply principles about welfare, justice, and rights, especially when they conflict with each other in contexts of extreme inequalities of power and influence between individuals. That's the reason why moral reasoning has been claimed to enable not only moral development but also societal change (Killen & Dahl, 2021).

Consequently, the appeal to reasoning also has a philosophical justification. Normatively speaking, human reasoning is conceived as the process through which we reach 'better' or 'correct' moral judgments, these are judgments that are justifiable to all (Kohlberg, 1981; Hindriks & Sauer, 2020). This makes reasoning a necessary element in the acquisition, education, and revision of the most adequate moral concerns, judgments, and principles, and moral rationalism a necessary stance towards the normative quality of our moral systems (Hindriks & Sauer, 2020).

To sum up, to think morally in social environments requires the capacity to be affected by morally relevant scenarios, identify moral transgressions, be concerned about morally divergent issues, and make judgments and decisions with morally relevant consequences. Our moral life, also, involves the flexible application of moral principles since concerns about welfare, justice, and rights, are sensitive and contingent on social and contextual factors. Moral motivation, thinking, and reasoning are situated and embedded phenomena, and the result of a very complex developmental process.

Moreover, reasoned deliberation is essential for the development and education of moral concerns, moral principles, and morally relevant norms of behavior. This appeal to reasoning does not exclude whatsoever the role of emotions, intuitions, social interactions, and expertise, as constituent components for the realization of our moral actions.

Human morality demands the occurrence of factors that go beyond the simple automatic reaction to environmental stimuli or the conformity to concrete patterns of social normativity. Moreover, rationality is also involved in the process through which human individuals reach more equilibrated levels of consensus in social dilemmas and moral considerations. The alternative presented here precisely defends the role of reasoning and deliberation, as necessary complementary factors for the configuration of a domain of moral concerns, judgments, and reasonable principles that are justifiable to all persons of a given community if the presence of egalitarian relations is guaranteed. These reflections are fundamental since our moral domain requires, to be developed properly, a persistent reaction to the general normativity that sustains the social life of communities. The third part, especially Chapter 6, is devoted to further inquire on this particular issue.

## 4. The developmental origins of moral concerns for fairness

In the previous chapter I have exposed the core ideas of a constructivist approach to morality, adopting the conceptual and empirical insights offered by the social-domain approach in moral psychology. Before engaging in a fruitful reflection about what this perspective offers for the philosophy of moral progress, which is the aim of Part III, this chapter shows how a constructivist and social-domain narrative explains and conceptualizes moral development in one particular dimension: the sense of fairness and distributive justice.

For that purpose, I adopt the definition offered by William Damon who claims that fairness is "…a means of resolving conflicts between various interpersonal claims, such that the proposed resolution is acceptable or 'fair' to all significant persons" (Damon, 1975, p. 302). Furthermore, I conceptualize 'distributive justice' following the definition of Deutsch (1975, 1985), who claims that distributive justice means the evaluative concerns, beliefs, and judgments that people have about how the outcomes of human cooperation (i.e., resources, well-being) should be distributed among individuals.

The sense of fairness and distributive justice in resource allocations is one of the first moral issues to emerge in early childhood and it has enormous relevance for the understanding of human moral behavior since it is closely related with how we humans think about the distribution of necessary and unconditional resources at the societal level (Essler, Lepach, Petermann & Paulus, 2020).

In Chapter 4 I suggested that some evolutionary theories that initially help to explain the origins of inclusivist forms of moral behavior yet may incur in problematic ethical assumptions as a consequence of their nativist commitments. This is the concrete case of the 'mutualistic theory' of morality which, following a rigid approach to morality and fairness as evolutionary and adaptive mechanisms, has incurred in problematic ideas about the expression of human moral concerns in the distributive dimension.

More precisely, I previously claimed that the ‘mutualistic theory’ of morality assumes that our moral sense of fairness evolved as a mechanism that enables mutualistic cooperation just by fostering ‘equity’ or the sharing of the costs and benefits of cooperation exclusively on the logic of contribution and proportionality. In other words, the moral sense would have evolved to be conferred just to those who can participate in cooperative exchanges led by the principles of productivity and maximization. As a consequence, this theory promotes a vision of human moral nature that may conflict with normative convictions associated with the accomplishment of a world devoid of huge social and economic inequalities.

In what comes, and aiming to contribute to a constructivist and social-domain perspective on the matter, I will sketch an alternative picture of the sense of human fairness in distributive dilemmas. According to this approach, our moral concerns for fairness and distributive justice belong to the moral domain of social knowledge, and are grounded on concerns for the well-being of others and the respect of everyone's interests in cooperative interactions.

Nevertheless, the sense of fairness is the outcome of social and cooperative interactions between human individuals, and social and cultural environments may shape its expression as a consequence. For instance, concrete forms of social interaction and cultural values may foster and/or hinder the emergence of considerations, judgments, and reasons about what it means to establish just solutions in cooperative interactions. The aim of this chapter is to delineate this developmental perspective.

1. *Do People prefer unequal societies?*

In an article entitled “*Why people prefer unequal societies?”*, Starmans, Sheskin, and Bloom (2017) have argued -based on the narrative of the mutualistic theory reviewed in Part I-, that human beings are not concerned at all by large inequalities and that the only concerns that we take into account when thinking about socio-economic issues are equity and proportionality (i.e., ‘economic unfairness’).

These authors claim there has been a wrong interpretation of the empirical behavioral data of distributive justice studies since human beings are concerned with equality just in cases when there are no opportunities to apply fairness as the rule of equity. However, “when fairness and equality clash, people prefer fair inequality over unfair equality”.

Based on the logic of equity and proportionality as the source of our universal fairness concerns, the authors state that “if one believes that (a) people in the real-world exhibit variation in effort, ability, moral deservingness, and so on, and (b) a fair system takes these considerations into account, then a preference for fairness will dictate that one should prefer unequal outcomes in actual societies” (ibid, p.3).

For supporting these claims, the authors make use of a study performed by Norton and Ariely (2011). In brief, the study shows that young people tend to underestimate the level of socio-economic inequality in US society, but when asked to provide an ideal alternative, they prefer an unequal distribution of wealth (see Figure 6).

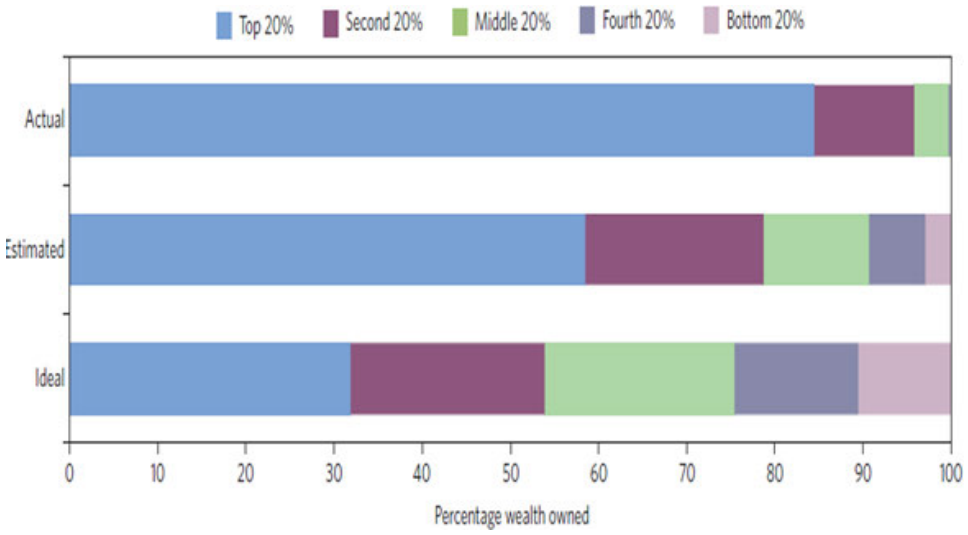


**Figure 6.** The actual, estimated, and ideal distribution of wealth in the U.S. according to young people (Norton and Ariely, 2011). Taken from: Starmans, C., Sheskin, M., & Bloom, P. (2017). Why do people prefer unequal societies? *Nature Human Behaviour*, *1*(4), 0082.

However, Starman and colleagues carelessly ignore the most overwhelming fact disclosed by the study of Norton and Ariely (2011): people all around the world and across ages tend to underestimate the actual level of economic inequality and propose a much more egalitarian distribution of wealth when they are asked to propose an alternative. A second study performed by Norton and Ariely precisely shows this (see Figure 7).

Accordingly, people prefer *fair inequality,* depicted in the upper left part of Figure 7 as 'Sweden', instead of *unfair equality,* depicted in the upper-right part. However, the most relevant fact in this study is that 90% of adolescents expressed a preference for being introduced to a society with an equal (43%) or an almost- equal (47%) distribution of wealth, in contrast to just 10% who expressed a preference for a completely unequal society.

In brief, the results did not consistently support the claim that people prefer *fair* inequality over perfect equality (the difference between these options is just two percentual points: 51% vs. 49%). Instead, they prefer both fair inequality and perfect equality over unfair large inequality (92% vs. 8% and 77% vs. 23%). In the end, what was considered unfair by most participants was the large unequal alternative supported just by 10% of the participants. Their claim that people are not particularly worried about large inequalities is therefore not correct in the light of the data they used.

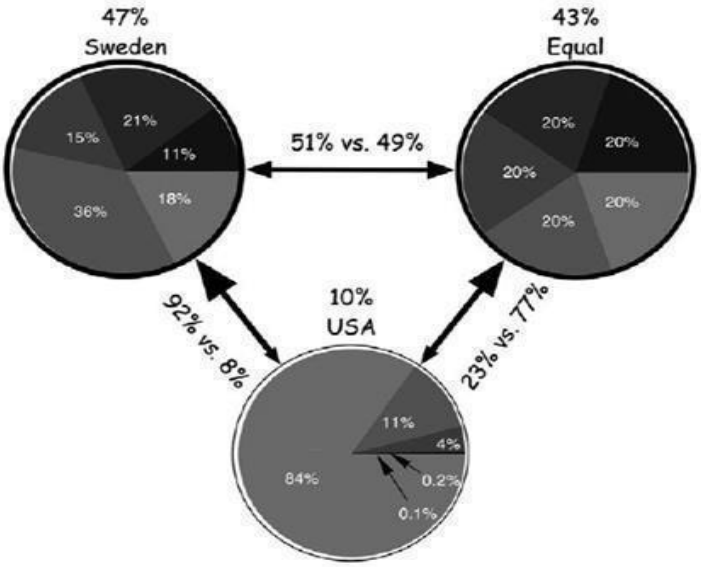


**Figure 7.** Preferences of subjects in the study of Norton and Ariely (2011). Taken from: Norton, M. I., & Ariely, D. (2011). Building a better America—One wealth quintile at a time. *Perspectives on psychological science*, *6*(1), 9-12.

Following the premises of a nativist approach, Starmans and colleagues suggest that an 'indifference' of human beings with large social-economical inequalities is an expectable consequence of our moral nature and our sense of fairness[19]. However, these descriptive claims about human moral nature are not value-neutral, since they prejudge some facts about human concerns for fairness, such that human individuals "prefer unequal societies" and "are not particularly worried about large inequalities". This narrative about human fairness is problematic since it promotes a vision of human moral nature that may conflict with normative convictions associated with the accomplishment of a world devoid of huge social and economic inequalities.

[19] Other researchers have proposed the existence of an innate sense of fairness without engaging in conflictive ethical descriptive claims. These authors researched preverbal infants' social-cognitive abilities, such as moral evaluations and preferences (Hamlin, Wynn, & Bloom, 2007; Hamlin & Wynn, 2011). For instance, Geraci and Surian (2011), Schmidt and Sommerville (2011), Sloane et al., (2012), and Surian and Franchin (2017a, b), among others, have proposed that a rudimentary sense of fairness is expressed as early as 15 or 20 months old. Some of these studies have assessed the capacity of babies to react to unequal or inequitable distributions (Surian, Ueno, Itakura, & Meristo, 2018), the tendency to spontaneously prefer equal distributors (Geraci & Di Nuovo, 2018), and the expectancy for equal resource allocations (Buyukozer Dawkins, Sloane, & Baillargeon, 2019).

## 2. *Fairness as a dimension of morality: A social-domain approach*

Decades of research in social and developmental psychology have shown the complexity of distributive justice concerns including equity and merit, equality, and need (Deutsch, 1975; Lerner, 1977; Furby, 1986; Wagstaff, 1994). In brief, human individuals seem to prefer egalitarian distributions during the first years of life, but later start to develop and understand "legitimate reasons for allocating resources unequally" (Schmidt et al., 2016). This is the case of merit (Baumard et al., 2012; Hamman, Bender, & Tomasello, 2014; Kanngiesser & Warneken, 2012) [20] and 'need' (Schwinger & Lamm, 1981; Lamm & Schwinger, 1980, 1983; Paulus & Moore, 2017; Paulus, 2014b).

Even though this is an empirical question yet to be fully resolved, evidence from the social sciences shows instead a high prevalence of a '*particular worry'* about large inequalities or a propensity for favoring distributive schemas based on the fulfillment of individual needs. For instance, taking into consideration the results of the European Social Survey (ESS), Adriaans et al. (2019) showed that the perception of fairness of earned income from 18 European countries is based on a concern for need and equity as principles of fair distribution (80%), above equality (50%) or entitlement (10%). Hülle et al. (2018) also confirmed that need is also the most preferred justice principle among the German adult population, and other authors have shown how human individuals in distributive dilemmas tend to follow a 'maximin' principle that shifts the focus to the fate of the least well-off (Ueshima, Mercier, & Kameda, 2021; Ueshima & Kameda, 2021).

[20] Some cultural and circumstantial factors do affect the consideration of certain rules in distributive tasks. For instance, some studies have not found the presence of merit concerns in certain rural and indigenous groups in Africa during resource allocation scenarios (Schäfer, Haun, & Tomasello, 2015).

Moreover, developmental studies have explored how complex are the reactions to social inequalities in the context of distributive decisions and resource allocation. In a study performed by Rizzo et al. (2016), children from 3 to 8 years old had to allocate necessary and luxury resources to recipients who were either rich or poor. With age, children allocated more resources to the poor recipient, rectified existing inequalities, and showed concern for disadvantaged individuals. Likewise, other studies have shown that children take into consideration a previous history of disadvantage and inequality to allocate resources. Elenbaas et al., (2016), for instance, found that children take disadvantaged histories into account to give more resources to groups that have been historically affected.

The crucial issue here is the fact that humans are especially worried about the unfair distribution of resources or the fulfillment of the needs of other individuals. In brief, the empirical data seem to contradict the claims of Starman and colleagues and suggest a more complex dynamic in the expression of the human sense of fairness. This opens the way to adopt a developmental and social-domain alternative to human fairness, complementing the exploration made in the previous chapter.

Accordingly, I consider human fairness as a dimension of the moral domain of social knowledge, that develops in human cooperative interactions and allows the consideration and respect of others' interests in collaborative and sometimes conflictive interactions. Human morality and an impartial sense of respect and fairness emerges in human cooperative encounters when a background of reciprocity and mutual respect exists (Engelmann & Tomasello, 2019). This position was defended long ago by Piaget (1932/1965), who claimed that "…the sense of justice, though naturally capable of being reinforced by the precepts and the practical example of the adult, is largely independent of these influences, and requires nothing more for its development than the mutual respect and solidarity which holds among children themselves. (…) the rule of justice is a sort of immanent condition of social relationships or a law governing their equilibrium" (p. 195, 196).

This mutual respect would have had a strategic component but “it would also have had a non-strategic component, based on the genuine sense of partner (self-other) equivalence that all individuals recognized as a result of their participation in and adaptation to joint intentional activities” (Tomasello, 2016, p.60). The application of our moral sense of fairness implies then the expression of different concerns in situated social complex situations, that include concerns for other contributions, other needs, and equal respect. This is the reason behind the variability of multiple principles of fairness applied in distributive scenarios.

### 3. *Culture, social interactions, and distributive justice*

At this point, it is worth recalling that human individuals do not always have a coherent and constant way to think in distributive justice dilemmas. I claim that this diversity is a consequence of different developmental systems that gradually shape the ways how human adults consolidate their fairness concerns. The cultural heterogeneity in terms of moral concerns, evaluations, and norms, is partially explained by processes of social conformity and group affiliation which have driven the mechanisms of cultural evolution during human history (Henrich & Muthukrishna, 2021).

As it was recently explored by House et al. (2020), human children coming from different social groups tend to diverge in their development of social preferences in dilemmas involving prosocial actions, but what seems to be a ‘universal’ psychological fact is that they tend to move with age toward the behaviors and normative judgments of adults in their communities (see Figure 8).

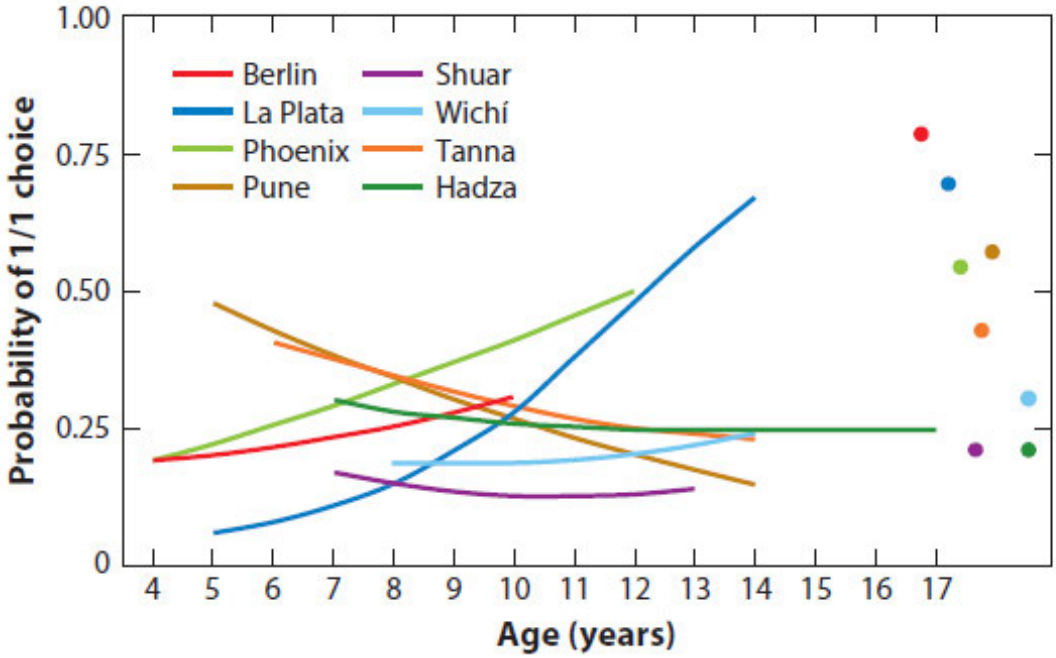


**Figure 8.** Proportion of children who choose an egalitarian option in an economic game during different ages and eight (8) different cultural groups. Children of each culture tend to move with age towards the normative standard of adults in their communities. Taken from: House, B. R., Kanngiesser, P., Barrett, H. C., Broesch, T., Cebioglu, S., Crittenden, A. N., Erut, A., Lew-Levy, S., Sebastian-Enesco, C., & Smith, A. M. (2020). Universal norm psychology leads to societal diversity in prosocial behavior and development. *Nature Human Behaviour*, *4*(1), 36-44.

The explanation of the divergence in fairness concerns around the world has to take these issues into consideration. In brief, culture, the reproduction and emergence of values and attitudes during social interactions, and the subsequent moral experiences of individuals, shape the way how fairness and distributive justice concerns are expressed by people.

In brief, human beings develop in a social world full of cultural meanings, institutions, and social norms that determine ethical prescriptions or considerations of the correct way to live and how to distribute the benefits of cooperation. This is crucial since the sense of fairness, initially developed to foster mutually advantageous cooperative interactions and the impartial respect for everyone involved in collaborative activities (moral domain), may conflict with norms centered on the preservation of group-based values or hierarchies (conventional domain).

In a similar description, Tomasello has claimed that “Younger preschool children from different cultures (…) differ little in their sense of fairness because they are all operating with a natural, second-personal morality. But later, especially during school age, children begin subscribing to the social norms that their culture has worked out for distributing resources in fair ways” (2016, p. 117). Moreover, “…exigencies in the lifeways of different cultures have necessitated that these different motives be combined and weighted in different ways in their respective social norms, and this is not just between cultures but sometimes in different situations within the same culture” (ibid). In the end, “…even in the most basic domain of distributive justice, as well as other social domains, all normally functioning human beings possess a universal second-personal morality, with a cultural morality of social norms layered on top” (ibid).

Social psychologist Morton Deutsch had already suggested that different contextual configurations on the level of social relations can configure different forms of justice principles among equity, equality, and need (1975). According to him, an economic and power-based orientation in social relationships has strong links with values such as neutrality, impartiality, and competition. Conversely, a solidarity orientation in social relationships would have links with group loyalty, mutual respect, personal equality, and cooperation. Based on these ideas, Deutsch suggested three different forms of social organization as well as different justice values related to each.

For instance, in cooperative relations where *economic productivity* is a primary goal, *equity* rather than equality or need will be the dominant principle of distributive justice. If a cooperative system is oriented toward increasing its economic productivity, its rational tendency will be to allocate its economic functions and goods (resources, roles, and means of production) to those able to use them effectively. Equity is the principle endorsed by economically-oriented groups.

Instead, in cooperative relations where the fostering or maintenance of *enjoyable social relations* is a primary emphasis, *equality* will be the dominant principle of

distributive justice. In these circumstances, the most critical conditions for justice are mutual esteem and respect. Equality is the principle endorsed by solidarity-oriented groups. Finally, in cooperative relations where the fostering of personal development and personal welfare is the primary goal, '*need'* will be the dominant principle of distributive justice. Need is the principle endorsed by care-oriented groups.

These ideas have been recently explored by other authors. For instance, Ali Kazemi, Eek, & Garling (2017), found that when the goal established in a cooperative interaction was productivity, people tended to prefer equitable allocations. However, when the goal was harmony and social concern, they preferred equal outcomes. In a similar vein, Meindl, Iyer, and Graham (2019) confirmed the existence of at least two main distributive justice principles that follow the beliefs people have concerning the ultimate goals of society. When people think that the ultimate goal of a society is well-being, they show a distributive justice belief based on the principle of equality/need. When people think that the ultimate goal of a society is societal power, they show a distributive justice belief based on equity/merit.

Finally, according to Cappelen, Falch & Tungodden (2020), there are three salient fairness views around which humans determine what is the fairest distribution of the costs and benefits of cooperation, taking into account the role of luck and personal responsibility in the result. In the first place, there is an 'Egalitarian fairness' view, according to which income inequalities that derive from luck and performance should be eliminated. The meritocratic fairness view has it that inequalities coming from the performance are fair and acceptable, whereas inequalities resulting from luck are unfair. Finally, according to the libertarian fairness view, income inequalities due to luck and performance are fair and should be accepted.

Several recent studies in the fields of social psychology and political psychology have also explored how ideologies, narratives, and informational assumptions, drive the consolidation of moral concerns, motivations, evaluations, and attitudes, especially in the domain of fairness and distributive justice (Baron, Sheehy-

Skeffington, & Kteily, 2018). Part of these studies have approached the topic by studying social inequality, and how people think, reflect, and adopt attitudes towards different degrees of inequality in material and social conditions, which is an expression of distributive justice and fairness considerations.

As much of the literature shows, political orientation has been commonly studied as ranging from liberalism to conservatism in economic and cultural dimensions. For instance, traditional conservatism opposes societal change, whereas social liberalism endorses progressive societal changes and transformation. Conservatism, therefore, has proven to be linked with a motivation to perpetuate hierarchies, inequalities, and traditional communitarian values. In the economic realm, economic liberalism defends market economies and individual financial liberties, while economic conservatism proposes moderate protectionism (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2013).

Perceptions of social and intergroup inequality come from the same sources as ideological attitudes and beliefs in general: experience, narratives (for instance, media framing), and the immediate social context (Baron, Sheehy-Skeffington, & Kteily, 2018). Moreover, there is a motivational link between political attitudes and perceptions or justifications of social inequalities. For instance, the support for inequality between groups and a motivation to perpetuate social hierarchies has been labeled in psychology as a 'Social Dominance Orientation' (SDO) (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Ho et al., 2015).

According to Kteily et al. (2017), the more individuals support hierarchy and inequality between groups the less they perceive inequality in the social world. Moreover, these individuals disapprove of social policies and initiatives that aim to rectify these inequalities. Moreover, people who benefit from inequality and support anti-egalitarianism tend to downplay its existence and emphasize it as a result of fairness and the role of merit in the economic organization (Mijs, 2021).

As we see, different considerations make human individuals diverge when evaluating a certain distribution as fair or unfair. In general, people disagree to a huge extent about where fairness or unfairness starts. In line with the assumptions of a constructivist perspective, different systems of social interaction

and different systems of beliefs about how social organization '*ought to be'* might have a substantial influence on how individuals' structure moral concerns about cooperative encounters. As a consequence, there is a huge variation in distributive justice beliefs – the way people think about how to distribute goods of their society- which is influenced not only by what people think should be the ultimate goal of a social group, but also by peoples' social and political attitudes and the way how people understand themselves and their relation with other members of their communities.

# PART III

# The feasibility of inclusivist moral progress

*"Whatever crushes individuality is despotism, by whatever name it may be called, and whether it professes to be the will of God or the injunctions of men […]. The despotism of custom is everywhere the standing hindrance to human advancement".*

*John Stuart Mill*

In the previous section, I explored the theoretical and empirical foundations of a developmental (constructivist) perspective on human morality. According to this approach, and contrary to what is assumed by functionalist approaches to the origins of morality (see Part I), the expression of moral behavior does not solely depend on the existence of a built-in moral nature but is the outcome of a complex interaction between natural dispositions, situated social relationships, and cultural backgrounds.

Following this rationale, we can think that inclusivist forms of human morality are feasible and stable if adequate circumstances are present. The objective of this last part of the work is precisely to reflect on what exactly we can consider the optimal circumstances for moral inclusivity to emerge, and what are the most adequate forms to promote moral progress based on the establishment of moral inclusivity in contemporary societies.

As it was mentioned previously in the introduction and Part I, inclusivist morality refers to systems of norms, moral motivations, and judgments that "reject group-based restrictions on moral standing and moral status" (Buchanan & Powell, 2018). These inclusivist moralities are expressed in the form of universal concerns for well-being, fairness, and the dignity of persons, and the psychology behind its materialization is grounded on a concern for equality in relational and political terms.

The relevance of inclusivist morality lies in the fact that most ethical theories advanced so far agree with the claim that an inclusivist moral stance represents the most adequate and correct normative perspective, based on an impartial and objective idea of which are the correct ways of behaving in plural societies. In

brief, from utilitarianism and Kantian deontology to contractualism and the ethics of virtue, all ethical proposals consider that moral principles must be applied universally to morally-relevant agents regardless of group identities or demarcations.

The crucial point for my purpose is the fact that human beings can develop an arguably inclusivist stance concerning the kind of persons or agents that deserve moral concern. It is not uncommon to hear people arguing in favor of universal moral norms centered on well-being, fairness, and the dignity of persons, and people also increasingly support the establishment of institutional laws to foster and defend human rights, animal rights, and even the rights of nature.

As a consequence, several instances of moral progress in the last centuries have successfully materialized an expansion of the circle of our moral concerns and the emergence of inclusivist moralities (see Table 1).

| **Instances of Inclusivist Moral Progress** |
| --- |
| ● The reduction of the incidence of the most extreme forms of slavery among human populations |
| ● Reductions in the incidence of the most serious forms of racial and ethnic discrimination in many countries |
| ● The extension of political participation rights to all adult citizens, and the establishment of institutional changes that foster the materialization of democracy |
| ● The increasing recognition and institutionalization of the equal rights of women in most countries |
| ● Better treatment of some non-human animals |

| |
|---|
| ● The abolition of at least the cruelest punishments |
| ● The spread of the rule of law |
| ● The dramatic reduction of homicide rates since the Middle Ages in many countries |
| ● The emergence of international norms prohibiting aggressive war, apartheid, and colonialism |
| ● Increased freedom of religious persecution and greater freedom of expression |

**Table 1.** Adapted from: Buchanan, A., & Powell, R. (2018). *The evolution of moral progress: A biocultural theory*. Oxford University Press.

In brief, moral inclusivity is feasible in the light of what we know about human social and moral nature and the mechanisms of cultural evolution. Traditional functionalist approaches, especially in the form of '*Evo-conservative'* perspectives, seem to be unable to explain this flexibility of human moral concerns. Alternatively, a developmental perspective such as the one presented in the previous part helps to explain the variability of human morality and invites us to reflect on which are the most adequate conditions for inclusivist morality to emerge and what we should do in order to promote moral inclusivist and tolerant societies.

To advance on these ideas, it is crucial to acknowledge that the situated development of human morality is deeply shaped by the mechanisms of cultural evolution, historical transformations, and institutional factors. Some contemporary authors have already called attention to the fact that historical instances of inclusivist moral improvement have been supported by mechanisms of cultural evolution and institutional development.

For instance, the expansion of cultural and commercial exchanges, the consolidation of democracy, the development of welfare states, or the

emergence of institutions based on the concept of universal human rights, have partially driven human progress based on equality and the impartial concern for the well-being of persons (Buchanan & Powell, 2018; Easterbrook, 2018; Inglehart, 2018; Cohen & Zenko, 2019; Piketty, 2022). These historical instances of cultural evolution and institutional design have shown that it is feasible to promote behaviors and attitudes grounded in impersonal prosocial and inclusivist principles (Welzel, 2013; Henrich, 2020; Luco, 2021).

Yet, this optimistic perspective still requires a reflection on the exact relationship between social, cultural, and historical contexts, and the emergence of certain inclusivist behavioral expressions of morality. Answering that question gives us an idea about how we can foster the expression of inclusivist moralities by identifying the most adequate circumstances and contexts that favor their expression. This is of enormous relevance since favoring the transition of human societies towards more inclusivist forms of moral concern and behavior supposes a more generalized accomplishment of our most urgent moral convictions.

Previous attempts to explore this issue are already on the market, and most authors have approached the topic by situating the cultural evolution and development of (inclusivist) moral progress in the WEIRD world, that is the world of Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic societies. Some of these approaches consider moral inclusivity a ‘luxury good’ and follow the ‘dependency thesis’ according to which the expression of moral inclusivity depends on the presence of very concrete material conditions that trigger inclusivist and impersonal prosocial tendencies that human beings are not able to express in threatening contexts without physical security (Welzel, 2013; Buchanan and Powell, 2018; Baumard, 2019).

The ’dependency’ thesis is problematic for various reasons. In the first place, the variability of human moral behavior is far bigger than these theories assume. For instance, inclusivist and exclusivist forms of morality may develop simultaneously in similar or divergent geographical and socio-ecological environments. Secondly, these approaches tend to focus exclusively on the consolidation of

liberal values in the Western world and the underlying adoption of laws, social-epistemic practices, and public narratives about tolerance and inclusivity, as unequivocal signs of inclusivist morality.

Nevertheless, it is reasonable to doubt that the institutional and public support of inclusivist moral values or the construction of public images of tolerance and inclusivity does not always come along with the materialization of impersonal moralities in situated social interactions. These assumptions make the dependency thesis an unsatisfactory alternative for considering the best possible mechanisms to foster the expression of moral inclusivity in contemporary societies.

A developmental-constructivist theory of human psychology such as the one mentioned in the previous section is at this point a valuable theoretical and empirical resource for the philosophy of morality and moral progress since it contributes to an alternative understanding of the origins of moral variability and informs a different normative stance about the most desirable contexts needed for the urgent accomplishment of inclusivist forms of morality in contemporary societies.

My approach to inclusivist morality and the feasibility of inclusivist moral progress is based then on the claim that the favorable conditions for inclusivist morality to emerge are related to the way social relationships are established in a given context, and not precisely to the physical features of the physical environment or the existence of certain public narratives. This perspective involves a different conception of the relationship between human agents and their environment, it better accommodates the empirical data around the variability of human moral behavior, and also contributes to the philosophy of inclusivist morality by incorporating a reflection on the role of relational equality and individuality in the development of moral inclusivity.

More precisely, I claim that the accomplishment of moral inclusivist forms of behavior, individually and collectively, are favored by the transition from group-centered to individually centered moral concerns, in a process that I call 'the moral valuation of individuality'. In brief, moral inclusivity is favored when social interactions develop in the background of relational equality that motivates the valuation of individuality and autonomy independently from parochial and conventional concerns shaped by groups and collective identities.

This last part is organized as follows. In the fifth chapter, I first analyze the proposals of some defenders of the 'dependency' theory. The attention is focused on the 'Evolutionary Developmental Model' proposed by Buchanan and Powell (2018). Based on a critique of this approach, I will argue that to explain the evolution and development of human morality in its multiple manifestations, it is essential to put a focus on social interactions. This also involves a different perspective about human-environment relations that in line with a constructivist worldview makes an innovative contribution to the philosophy of moral behavior and moral progress.

Later, in the sixth chapter, I will define my alternative relational view of inclusivist morality and I will offer my view on how to establish favorable conditions that make inclusivist morality possible. Complementing the constructivist approach, my conception is based on the essential role of individuality and how moral inclusivity is favored if moral concerns do not develop driven by the accomplishment of group-centered, binding, and communitarian concerns and values. In brief, my relational model suggests that the accomplishment of moral inclusivity not only depends on the overall achievement of certain levels of physical security or economic prosperity. Instead, it is favored by transforming the interactional contexts in which moral concerns towards autonomy and individuality develop.

In arguing so, I will need to start with a critique of contemporary situated and embodied approaches in ethics. Then, I will show how societies guided by the accomplishment of group-centered values of power, dominance, and relational

inequality tend to express exclusivist moral behaviors, while individualistic societies tend to be more inclusivist. Starting from this diagnosis, my final attempt is then to reflect on which are the best conditions for the moral valuation of individuality to emerge and what we should do to promote the accomplishment of moral inclusivity at the societal level.

## *5. Is inclusivist morality a luxury good?*

### *1. The dependency thesis*

According to some authors, moral inclusivity is a 'luxury good' for its expression depends on the presence of material conditions that trigger inclusivist and impersonal prosocial tendencies that human beings are not able to express in threatening contexts without physical security (Welzel, 2013; Buchanan and Powell, 2018; Baumard, 2019). The followers of this dependency thesis usually adopt developmental and culturally oriented visions on the origins of human morality, which demands careful analysis for the purposes of this work.

One example of this approach is the theory of 'human empowerment' of Michael Welzel. Welzel suggests that the emergence of inclusivist values is common in 'Emancipative Societies'[21] that have advanced to the accomplishment of freedom of choice and equality of opportunity. These emancipative societies do show a very concrete form of prosocial behavior that may be called 'Bening Individualism', marked by: "1) an unselfish orientation toward others and the environment, 2) a trustful orientation that bridges group boundaries, and 3) a humanistic orientation that welcomes people's diversity" (Welzel, 2013, p. 192).

Emancipative societies base their economies on knowledge and are fully developed democracies, which leads to a prosperous context. Conversely, non-

[21] According to Welzel, examples of emancipative societies are Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Austria, Polonia, Belgium, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. All of them belong to the cultural zones of the 'Old West', 'Reformed West', 'New West', and 'Returned West'.

emancipative societies are still in the process of developing democracy and sustain themselves based on traditional or industrial economies, which produces contexts of struggling or suffering.

Welzel's theory of 'human empowerment' states that the evolution of emancipative societies and bening individualism obeys the presence of three different factors: Action Resources, Emancipative Values, and Civic Entitlements. When these factors are present, the natural human desire for freedom and self-realization is finally materialized, and this leads to the construction of better societies in which more autonomous and free individuals can cooperate. In brief, the feasibility of moral inclusivity depends on the presence of concrete material conditions that prevent the expression of exclusivist and parochial moral motivations in human agents.

Allen Buchanan and Russell Powell offer an innovative developmental perspective of moral inclusivity in their book *'The evolution of moral progress. A biocultural theory'* (2018), following yet the same dependency thesis. The evolutionary developmental model of morality (EDM) is based on the idea that human morality evolved as an adaptively plastic trait that shows different patterns of 'exclusivist' and 'inclusivist' tendencies depending on the presence of certain features in the social-ecological environment.

According to these authors, "…evolved human nature is both an obstacle to moral progress and an enabler of it, depending upon the environment and the degree to which it resembles certain conditions that were prevalent in the environment of evolutionary adaptation (EEA)" (2018, p. 187). In brief, the expression of exclusivist moral tendencies (i.e., parochial prosociality, ingroup biases, and different forms of out-group stigmatization and exclusion) would be a response to environmental features in the developmental niche of human individuals that resemble the conditions of the ancestral environment of human evolution, filled with signs of out-group threat, competition for scarce resources, and disease transmission.

More precisely, the expression (or suppression) of exclusivist and inclusivist moral tendencies would depend on (a) the concrete physical 'presence' or 'absence' of the harsh conditions that usually trigger exclusivist responses in humans, or (b) the social manipulation of beliefs, that makes people think that these features are present or absent in the environment. In the end, exclusivist morality would be a reaction to physical features of the social-ecological environment and socially constructed beliefs about out-groups.

Buchanan and Powell based their argument on three main claims:

H1: Inclusivist morality is a luxury good in the sense that it is **only**[22] likely to be widespread and stable in highly favorable conditions—namely, those in which the harsh environmental conditions of the EEA have been overcome.

H2: Inclusivist gains can be eroded if these harsh conditions reappear or if significant numbers of people come to believe that they exist.

H3: A combination of normal cognitive biases and defective social-epistemic practices can cause people wrongly to believe that such harsh conditions exist, especially if there are individuals in positions of power and prestige who have an interest in spreading this false belief (2018, p. 188).

Based on these premises Buchanan and Powell argue that inclusivist or impersonal moralities are unfeasible in societies where harsh environmental conditions (i.e., intergroup conflict, competition for scarce resources, risks of disease transmission) are still present or someone in positions of power makes people believe that they exist. Alternatively, societies that have overcome these conditions or have individuals in positions of power and prestige that spread the false belief that this is so, would be the most inclusivist.

[22] The emphasis in mine.

Despite Buchanan and Powell making a great work opposing the hard-wired hypothesis of Evo-conservative models (see Part I), their plasticity hypothesis requires further evaluation. In other passages of their work, they claim that “conditions amenable to the exercise of open-ended normativity and hence to the development of more inclusivist moralities “seem to be connected to a range of recent socio-political developments that have taken place predominantly in highly resourced populations” (p. 210). They later insist on this saying that “inclusivity-advancing cultural innovations are only likely to arise, become pervasive, and take root under highly favorable socioeconomic conditions'' (p. 215).

Buchanan and Powell make an effort to take distance from the determinist implications of their theory. For instance, they state that the theory “is no more an environmental determinist view than it is a genetic determinist view” and specify that their claim has it that a favorable environment “creates a space for the development of inclusivist responses but does not ensure it” (p. 207). Moreover, when considering the necessary cultural factors that make the emergence of inclusivist morality possible, Buchanan and Powell mention what they call ‘social moral epistemology’. In brief, the cultural innovations that make inclusivist moral tendencies possible do also depend on the social promulgation of beliefs that make people believe that harsh environmental conditions do not exist. However, despite the EDM following a developmental narrative of inclusivist morality and the feasibility of inclusivist progress, there are problematic issues with this approach given the adoption of the dependency thesis. This invites the adoption of a different developmental perspective on the matter.

### *2. A new look at human-environment interactions*

Despite B&P agreement with the claim that it is misleading to consider exclusivist (or inclusivist) dispositions as invariant behavioral expressions, the variability of human moral behavior is far bigger than they assume. Common intuition and empirical evidence suggest that inclusivist and exclusivist forms of morality may develop simultaneously in similar or divergent geographical and socio-ecological

environments, including those with harsh conditions such as competition for scarce resources, potential intergroup conflict, and risks of disease transmission. In brief, harsh environmental conditions are usually present in almost all societies around the globe -including WEIRD ones-, and the presence of socio-ecological conditions such as physical security and prosperity, predominant in highly resourced populations, do not prevent the existence of exclusivist moral tendencies.

Contrary to this evidence, the EDM centers its focus on the physical conditions of the environment that configures the perception of a threatening, dangerous, and infectious environment to explain the variability in the expression of moral attitudes. Even when it mentions social-epistemic practices or narratives, the model follows an adaptationist perspective since these practices are conceived as connected to physical features that once perceived trigger exclusivist moral expressions as a result of evolved mechanisms. The theory is then problematic for its conception of agent-environment interactions focuses predominantly on the role of physical conditions or narrative public practices that being modified may lead to the perception of such physical conditions.

Following a constructivist-developmental approach, I argue that for inquiring about the optimal conditions for inclusivist morality to emerge it is needed to consider the dimension of social interactions and they are constitutive of moral development and its expression. This is even more relevant when these authors tend to focus exclusively on the adoption of laws, social-epistemic practices, and public narratives about tolerance and inclusivity, as unequivocal signs of inclusivist morality. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to doubt that the institutional and public support of inclusivist moral values or the construction of public images of tolerance and inclusivity do not always come along with the materialization of impersonal moralities in situated social interactions.

Taking these ideas into account, my purpose is to offer an alternative and more radical developmental approach to inclusivist morality and the feasibility of inclusivist moral progress, *the relational view of inclusivist morality*. This account

is based on the idea that the favorable conditions for inclusivist morality to emerge are related to the way social relationships are established in a given context, and not precisely to the physical features of the physical environment.

My conception is innovative since other developmental proposals centered on the relevance of physical conditions of the environment, such those ones committed to the dependency thesis, imply very divergent conceptions about how to promote inclusivist moralities in contemporary societies. In brief, my relational model suggests that fostering moral inclusivity is favored by a focus on the interactional contexts in which moral concerns towards autonomy and individuality develop.

Moreover, this approach is based on the idea that inclusivist and exclusivist forms of moral behavior are the results of different structures of social interaction and social relationships that humans can develop in dynamic socio-ecological circumstances. These different structures of interaction do constantly transform the perception that human agents have of the immediate natural and social milieu and determine a highly variable set of implicit perceptions, attitudes, and skills that configure a complex relationship between human agents and the environment.

The relational perspective adopts a relational meta-theory that focuses on social interactions and human relations and on the role human agents have in configuring their environments through the active construction of their developmental niches (Overton, 2013). For a relational meta-theory, the distinctions between what is internal or external, innate or acquired, or between nature and nurture are completely eschewed. Moreover, there is no commitment to dualist and mechanical pictures that explains physical or psychological phenomena as linear events in which certain causes determine consequences in associative and inflexible manners.

For instance, from a relational perspective, the unit of evolution is not an atomic element such as the gene but developmental systems as interactive networks of

multiple causes that do not reduce evolutionary processes to the logic of adaptation and functionality. In the realm of cognitive sciences, the process-relational metatheory is against viewing cognitive agents as computational machines that process information and react accordingly following an associationist stimulus-response scheme. It opposes the traditional conceptions of behaviorism, computational cognitive science, and traditional evolutionary psychology.

Moreover, a relational paradigm focuses on processes and not on the notion of substance and concerning causality, as is formulated by Pepper (1942, reviewed by Overton, 2013), the object of study from a process-relational worldview is events that are alive in their present, in their actuality, and "might be called an act so long as it is not thought of as an isolated act, but an act in and with its settings: an act in context" (p. 232).

Accordingly, social behavior and human morality are not conceived as isolated phenomena consisting merely of a set of (evolved) adaptive reactions to the presence of certain stimuli in a fixed environment. Instead, human morality in its multiple forms is a concrete, dynamic, and embodied process that has a life on its own and is permanently emerging during social interactions. Following the principles of a relational metatheory, the role of social interactions is therefore crucial for understanding the emergence of the moral dimension of human behavior both in phylogenetic and ontogenetic terms.

A relational perspective, as a consequence, leads to a radically different notion of what an 'environment' means. Contrary to what is assumed by theories such as the EDM, biological agents constantly modify the environment in which they develop and evolve. This process has been called 'niche construction' (Odling-Smee, Laland, & Feldman, 1996; Laland, Matthews, & Feldman, 2016). Moreover, in the case of the human species, it is particularly relevant to understand how human individuals modify their environments through social interactions, social learning, and cultural agency, in a process of cognitive-developmental niche construction (Stotz, 2010).

The concept of affordance coming from ecological psychology is very useful to understand this process. According to Gibson (1979/2014), the essential unit of analysis when studying behavior is the relationship between the organism and the environment. The environment, according to ecological psychology, is constantly defined by the organism in the process of interaction. Moreover, the perception and possibilities for action that an organism has in a certain environment are determined by the particular history of coupling of an agent with that environment. These possibilities for action are called 'Affordances', and each individual or group of individuals within a species may have constituted different affordances according to their interaction with their immediate external milieu.

As has been mentioned by different authors (Costall, 1995; Ingold, 2021; Heft, 2007; Ramstead et al., 2016; Heras-Escribano & de Pinedo-García, 2018), human environments, in particular, are constituted during development by the active involvement of individuals that configure 'transcultural' and 'sociocultural' affordances by the means of social interactions and human-ecological interactions. That is the reason why the conception of 'environment' for the study of moral behavior must include the dimension of social interactions and cultural practices that allow the emergence of meaning in morally-relevant situations.

In brief, it is important to include the domain of social encounters and social interactions in our understanding of how a certain human-environment interaction has developed in a concrete ecological context. Human moral agents do not react intuitively and automatically to environmental stimuli without active involvement in the constitution of a historical relationship with that environment.

As a consequence, according to these conceptual insights, if a social environment appears threatening or conflictive for a human individual, this is the result of a historical process of cognitive-developmental niche construction mediated by social interactions. The crucial point here is that the same physical and social environment may be perceived differently by different groups of persons, depending on how these agents have configured their relationships,

perceptions, and attitudes towards that milieu. To sum up, certain systems of interactions between agents in the same ecological and physical context may lead to different perceptions of the social world, and these dynamic shapes the expression of exclusivist or inclusivist moral concerns.

Starting from the perspective of a relational meta-theory, and adopting a different perspective on human-environment interactions, I will proceed in the next section to define what are the most favorable conditions in social interactions for the emergence of moral inclusivity. This reflection also invites the adoption of a very concrete set of cultural and institutional mechanisms seeking to accomplish inclusivist instances of moral progress aligned with the urgent materialization of our moral convictions.

My relational account of moral inclusivity has it that inclusivist forms of moral development result from the emergence of impersonal and individually-centered moral concerns, judgments, and reasons by the means of a process that I call moral valuation of individuality. This process is favored by a background of relational equality and the detachment from group-based concerns and dominance-oriented relations that configure the experience of the social environment as an always threatening and competitive space of living.

Accordingly, and contrary to what is claimed by the followers of the dependency thesis, inclusivist morality is not a luxury good since it is an emergent expression of human interactions on a background of equality, not marked by the accomplishment of hierarchical differences in concern, respect, and esteem, that lead to the perception of the environment as a competitive and threatening social space of living. Fostering these egalitarian interactions and the particular relationship with the social environment that comes from them is feasible, even if harsh material and ecological conditions such as competition for scarce resources, material inequalities, or potential intergroup conflict have not been overcome.

Following these assumptions, my purpose in this work is not to explain exclusivist and inclusivist morality by appealing to a certain set of physical causal variables that could be present or absent in the proximate environment. Rather, I attempt to turn the attention to describing the essential interactional dimension that distinguishes the development of exclusivist morality from inclusivist morality: the constant reproduction and perpetuation of inequalities of value, esteem, and autonomy between individuals or groups that configure the perception of the social and intergroup world as a threatening, competitive, or peaceful space of living.

My view then expands on the evolutionary-developmental model of moral progress proposed by Buchanan and Powell (2018). Unlike the EDM, my proposal focuses on social interactions, it follows a relational metatheory and a different conception of the environment, it recognizes the heterogeneity and diversity of human societies and it suggests the most favorable conditions for the expression of inclusivist morality in contexts where they are needed the most, this is contexts where constant competition for scarce resources, material inequalities, and potential intergroup conflict are more pervasive.

## 6. From group-centered to subject-centered concerns: Moral inclusivity and the moral valuation of individuality

*1. Revisiting the social origins of human morality*

This relational view of moral inclusivity takes insights from the constructivist approach in moral psychology, not only when considering morality as an emergent dimension of social interactions, but especially analyzing how differences in the structure of social interactions lead to different dynamics of moral behavior and the establishment of divergent moral concerns, judgments, and norms.

Complementing these ideas, I claim that the accomplishment of moral inclusivist forms of behavior, individually and collectively, are favored by the transition from group-centered to individually centered moral concerns, in a process that I call 'the moral valuation of individuality'. In other words, moral inclusivity is favored when social interactions develop in the background of relational equality that motivates the valuation of individuality and autonomy independently from parochial and conventional concerns shaped by groups and collective identities.

This proposal must be differentiated from current relational and interactive approaches to morality that focus on the relevance of social encounters to explain moral behavior but still adopts a problematic conception on the social origins of the moral domain. This is the case of the enactive perspective in cognitive sciences, which has recently deepened the interest on the relevance of second-person interactions and intersubjectivity for explaining human morality (Varela, 1999; Colombetti & Torrance, 2009; Di Paolo, Cuffari, & De Jaegher, 2018; Bergmann & Wagner, 2020).

This perspective defends the idea that all human forms of cognition have a social origin. For explaining this, they have proposed the concept of '*Participatory sense-making',* which is defined as "the coordination of intentional activity in

interaction, whereby individual sense-making processes are affected and new domains of social sense-making can be generated that were not available to each individual on her own" (De Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007, p. 497).

Enactivism explains social normativity and human morality as the result of 'participatory sense-making' or the process through which cognitive agents jointly generate new meanings and make sense of the world through coordinated interactions. The most fundamental contribution of these situated theories is precisely their attention to the social nature of human morality and the adoption of a relational theory of moral normativity.

However, this 'intersubjective' or 'social' turn has led to ambiguous considerations around the social origins of moral behavior and an unclear definition of the moral domain or the process of moral sense-making. In a recent article, Bergmann and Wagner (2020, henceforth B&W) have claimed that "…we have specific repertoires of interaction possibilities in specific relational contexts, and, thus the concrete occurrence of an embodied judgment depends on how an agent relates to a specific state of affairs, as well as which embodied judgments this agent has cultivated in this specific relational context" (2020, p. 2).

The previous idea is pervasive in most enactivist proposals around the nature of human morality. For instance, Di Paolo, Cuffari, and De Jaegher (2018) have stated that "the ethical stance is a practical one, a type of ethical know-how. We should think of it as a form of expertise, like riding a bicycle, with the double implication that we can be more or less ethically skillful and that our ethical attitudes are often pre-reflective" (p. 310). This is also the perspective defended by Francisco Varela, who claimed that: "...we acquire our ethical behavior in much the same way we acquire all other modes of behavior: they become transparent to us as we grow up in society. This is because learning is, as we know, circular: we learn what we are supposed to be in order to be accepted as learners. (...) it is clear that an ethical expert is nothing more or less than a full participant in a community: we are all experts because we all belong to a fully textured tradition in which we move at ease." (1999, p. 24).

As it happens with the concept of 'participatory sense-making' (De Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007), these sentences sound a plausible explanation of the embodied nature of human social relationships, or how human individuals establish different domains of normativity and divergent ideas of what does it mean to live a 'right' and 'virtuous life'. However, there is no clear definition of which kinds of interaction are morally relevant from a particular ethical point of view. This makes elusive the consideration of what would differentiate, if possible, morality from other domains of social normativity. In the end, their attempts result in ambiguous considerations about the social nature of human moral psychology that demand a clearer definition of what morality is in the first place.

In the case of B&W, they seem to approach the question by claiming that "the experience of the rightness of an action that drives a person to act depends on the sensorimotor interactions that have cultivated an agent's perspective on the world" (2020, p.1), that "people experience the permissibility of their actions depending on their specific repertoire of sensorimotor expertise" (ibid, p. 7), or that "a cognitively adequate ethical analysis has to focus on the appropriateness of a judgment in a relational context and the appropriateness of the relational context established" (ibid, p. 9).

The problem with this perspective was mentioned in Chapter 1 as a part of my critique to group-based functionalist accounts in evolutionary ethics, and it was also presented in Chapter 3 when defending the social-domain approach to moral development. In brief, it is ethically relevant to specify to what extent the domain of moral concerns, judgments, and behaviors is considered as the mere outcome of mirroring the conventions and norms that a given society has established, or more precisely, what distinguishes the moral domain from other domains of social normativity.

In brief, when talking about the moral domain, these approaches seem to take into consideration the broad domain of values, norms, and ideals that are worthy of adoption and adherence in a given community depending on how they conceive of the good life (Hindriks & Sauer, 2020, p. 10). However, it is not clear so far what features of the relational context or which type of the 'sensorimotor

interactions', 'participation', or 'expertise' that have cultivated a "subject's perspective of the world" would be morally relevant (or even morally correct) according to these perspectives.

To make this clear, consider these different ethically relevant actions that owed to the sensorimotor interactions, expertise, and narratives that have cultivated a 'subject's perspective of the world', might be considered "permissible" or "appropriate" to perform in a given context:

(1) In a community, women are condemned to punishment and isolation when they menstruate because of a religious mandate.

(2) Multiple immigrants are excluded from formal education in a nationalistic bilingual community that prohibits formal teaching in one of its languages.

(3) A group of individuals coming from a poor neighborhood is excluded from being in a public space because of the way they dress and speak.

(4) In a certain society, there is less access to quality healthcare or education in poorer neighborhoods.

(5) A crowd of people lynches to death a young adult who has stolen a bicycle.

(6) A person kills someone who attempts to steal his mobile phone.

(7) In a given society, most of the people in power tend to distribute the wealth of a nation following the principles of particularism, always favoring the ones who belong to their immediate group affecting at the same time the entire population.

All these are instances of morally relevant actions if we adopt a definition of moral action as an action that is considered appropriate or permissible in a concrete context of interpersonal and communitarian relations. Strictly following the definitions of some enactivist proposals, these actions might be considered

‘permissible’ or ‘appropriate’ according to different worldviews that persons might have cultivated through their sensorimotor interactions and social expertise. The conception of morality as a socially situated and relational phenomenon is then problematic when moral concerns are delineated as imposed by the will of the majority or just a product of social conformity.

However, each one of these examples represents exclusivist forms of moral behavior that deny the equal moral status of individuals (impersonal morality) as a consequence of conventional or communitarian practices guided by group-centered or binding ethical concerns. In most of these cases, values, attitudes, and ethical concerns are determined by inegalitarian expectations and the accomplishment of hierarchical and dominant social relations.

Moreover, a social situationist perspective is not a *normative impartial* ethical theory if it says nothing about what distinguishes the moral domain from other domains of social normativity that may conflict with certain moral convictions, or it leaves unexplained the relevance of individuality and non-conformity in the configuration of justifiable moral concerns and evaluations.

This is not an unfounded concern, for most embodied, situated, and enactive perspectives so far tend to sympathize with ‘communitarian’ approaches in political philosophy, in western (MacIntyre, 1981/2013), and eastern traditions (Varela, 1999). These communitarian approaches endorse a collectivistic narrative that arguably calls attention to the relevance of conformity, obedience, and attachment to social and conventional normativity in the development of morality, as a way to react to the ‘atomistic’, ‘individualistic’, and ‘disembodied’ perspective of liberal political philosophy and the ideology of the western culture.

In this same line of thought, embodied and enactivist approaches have argued for the necessity to overcome the limitations of ‘rationalist’ and ‘individualist’ approaches in moral psychology, traditionally associated with classical evolutionary and developmental models (Piaget, 1932/2013; Kohlberg, 1981). Following Haidt (2013), most embodied and enactive theories on morality agree with the claim that the science of human morality in the west suffers from a

‘rationalist delusion’ that narrowed down the moral domain to an issue of ‘well-being’ and ‘justice’, individualistic cultural values of the “liberal western world”.

Haidt’s argument is based on the idea of ‘three moralities’ of ‘autonomy’, ‘community’, and ‘divinity’ proposed by Richard Shweder (Shweder & Haidt, 1993) who was himself a supporter of the communitarian approach of MacIntyre (1981/2013). Shweder is also well-known for his critiques of the constructivist tradition proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg (1981), since for Kohlberg “the history of the world and the history of childhood (in all societies) is the story of the progressive discovery of the principles of the American Revolution” (1982, p. 421). Furthermore, based on the work of MacIntyre, Shweder once claimed that “the modern secular individualist, having lost his concept of the ends (the telos) of life and having conceived of the self as either prior to or outside society and community, is left with no fixed reference point for constructing a rational moral code” (1982, p. 422).

Contrary to what these ‘relational’ and ‘situated’ approaches suggest, I claim that a theory of morality as a socially situated phenomenon and a normative perspective about moral inclusivity need to move their focus from group-centered concerns to subject-centered concerns that are originated in human social encounters. Following anthropologist Nigel Rapport (2010; 2012), I consider the human subject ‘freed’ from culture, custom, and community, as the ontological basis of morality as a domain of social knowledge. Moreover, I strongly endorse the ideas that persons are the ultimate unit of moral concern (normative individualism), that this status applies to every person equally (all-inclusiveness), and that the moral status of persons has a global force and generates obligations to all (generality) (Pierik and Werner, 2010; Delanty, 2012).

Multiple critiques have been raised against classical proposals focused on these normative principles of individualism. Most of them have been already defended by the proponents of embodied, situated, and enactive approaches when claiming that normative individualism considers human individuals as isolated agents abstracted from social relations. In normative individualist approaches, the argument goes, the exercise of freedom only requires non-interference, and

their moral agency is disconnected from social relationships (Gädeke, 2018, 2020).

A descriptive perspective that recognizes the relevance of moral individualism is, however, not incompatible at the explanatory level with the role of interpersonal bonds or social interactions in moral development and learning. Different relational approaches in political philosophy have tried to overcome this problematic dichotomy between the self and the community when studying the social origins of morality. This is the case of the tradition of neo-republicanism or the African philosophy of Ubuntu (Gädeke, 2018, 2020), and I pretend to do the same by proposing a relational view of inclusivist morality.

In the next section, I suggest that the attachment to group-based concerns and strong social identities usually lead to the perpetuation of exclusivist moral values. Conversely, the adoption of more individually-centered values has proven to be favorable for the emergence of inclusivist moral concerns at the societal level. In the last section, I will suggest that this transition, a process that I call the moral valuation of individuality, fosters the development of inclusivist morality in human individuals and also suggests the most adequate mechanisms to be adopted if we pursue the accomplishment of more generalized instances of inclusivist moral progress.

## *2. The moral valuation of individuality: A path towards moral inclusivity*

Why did certain societies transit to more stable forms of inclusivist moral progress? In line with my relational account of morality, the evidence in social sciences shows that inclusivist societies around the world have fostered a more generalized transition from group-based concerns to individual-centered concerns. This evidence helps to conceptualize the most favorable conditions for inclusivist moral progress to occur in the first place.

According to anthropologist Joe Henrich, “Throughout most of human history, people grew up enmeshed in dense family networks that knitted together distant cousins and in-laws. In these regulated-relational worlds, people’s survival, identity, security, marriages, and success depended on the health and prosperity of kin-based networks, which often formed discrete institutions known as clans, lineages, houses, or tribes” (2020).

In other words, for most of our history, the human species has followed a collectivistic logic of organization, grounded on the interdependent and committed interaction of single agents who are tied to their groups by kin relationships and inherited responsibilities and obligations. In the language of some relational-communitarian approaches to morality, this truly intersubjective and interdependent network of relations would be the golden age of human ethical history.

However, following the conceptual distinctions made in this work, most of these traditional human societies have also shown a proclivity to an exclusivist morality, based on a concrete domain of psychological dispositions toward a parochial and group-oriented prosociality. As is noted by Henrich, such societies are organized around tribal relations with high levels of social conformity, deferring to authorities, ingroup bias, and a tendency to preserve the well-being of own groups to the detriment of strangers and individuals coming from distant groups. Indeed, most collectivistic societies are characterized by high levels of social stratification and hierarchical organization.

The more a society shows collectivistic values and group-centered concerns, the more it is present in them a strong distinction between different social classes and the power they have. This results in the adoption of deep-rooted values of authoritarianism, social-dominance orientations, and exclusivist moral tendencies. These paradoxical relations have been well studied in social psychology. For instance, social psychologist Harry Triandis and colleagues (Singelis et al., 1995) suggested that horizontal collectivism, or the presence of emotional interdependence, a sense of commitment to the interests of

communities, and an identification of the self with the collective, is commonly associated to vertical collectivism or the acceptance of inequalities within the collectives.

In a similar vein, social psychologist Geert Hofstede has profoundly explored these relations as a part of his global research on organizational psychology and cultural values. Hofstede created an individualism scale to study people's orientation towards self-oriented and group-oriented values in labor settings and helped to identify global differences in these values among several countries and societies across the globe.

These differences are described as a part of a continuum between individualism and collectivism. According to Hofstede and colleagues (2001), individualism is high in societies in which "ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him- or herself and his or her immediate family" (p. 92). On the contrary, there exists collectivism when people "…from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (íbid).

What is quite interesting about this research, is the close association between collectivistic attitudes and values and the presence of what Hofstede and colleagues have called 'power distance', or social and relational inequalities sustained on the expectation and acceptance of an unequal distribution of power within different contexts. This correlation between collectivistic attitudes and power distance in a given society is the natural result of social relations oriented to conformity, obedience, duty, and group attachment. All of this comes along with a strong refusal of personal autonomy and independence.

The next figure (Figure 9) shows the overall scores on collectivism (i.e., reversed individualism) and power distance in four different countries: Colombia, Turkey, Germany, and the Netherlands.

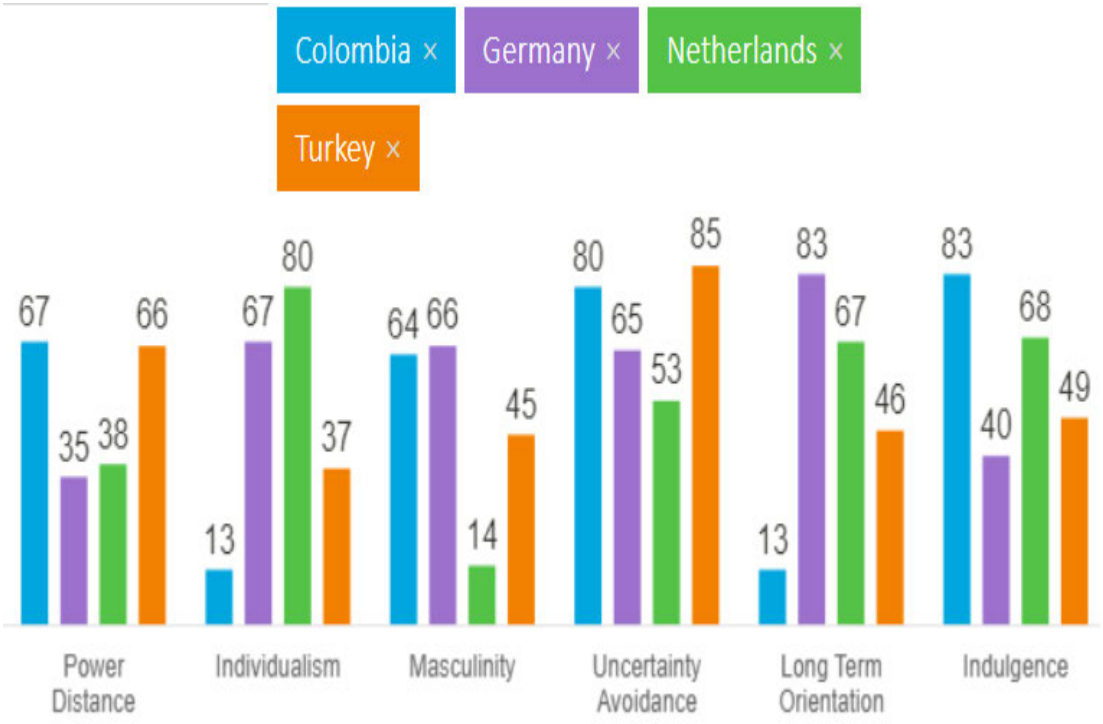


**Figure 9.** *Taken from: Hofstede Insights. https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/*

What is easily observable in this figure is the strong correlation between collectivism (or low individualism) and the presence of power distance and uncertainty avoidance within countries. For instance, Colombia and Turkey show similarly high values of power distance and uncertainty avoidance: 67-66 and 80-85 respectively, whereas Germany and the Netherlands have scores of 35-38 and 65-53 in the same dimensions. In brief, when we interpret these results in the light of individualism, it results that the countries with high values in this dimension show lower levels of power distance and uncertainty avoidance.

Another source of empirical testing that serves to complement this insight comes from social sciences and the study of corruption. More precisely, there is a strong correlation between collectivistic or individualistic tendencies, the support of group-based inequalities and power distance, and the levels of corruption in a country. Accordingly, Mungiu-Pippidi (2015) has shown that collectivistic countries are generally characterized by higher levels of political corruption

compared to individualistic ones, given their focus on group-based hierarchies and inequalities.

For instance, collectivistic societies are characterized by governance regimes in which the distribution of power is hierarchical, stratified, and monopolized; the state and the institutions are ‘captured’ by a certain political group that uses power to benefit their members; there is little separation between the public and the private, and there is a poor rule of law. In brief, these societies follow the principle of ‘particularism’, or the allocation of public resources according to particular group ties, interests, or affiliations.

Conversely, individualistic societies are characterized by ‘Ethical Universalism’, or the idea that equal treatment applies to everyone regardless of the group to which one belongs. As a consequence, individualistic societies use to establish governance regimes where citizenship equality is more pervasive, the state is more autonomous from private interests, there is a broader separation of the public from the private, and there exists a more generalized rule of law. (See Figure 10). Moreover, ethical universalism in these sorts of regimes has been expressed in economic and institutional structures that generally favor relational equality between the individuals.

**Table 1** Governance regimes and their main features

| Governance regimes | Limited access order | | | Open access order (Universalism) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Patrimonialism* | *Competitive particularism* | *Borderline* | |
| Power distribution | Hierarchical with monopoly of central power | Stratified with power disputed competitively | Competitive with less stratification | Citizenship Equality |
| State autonomy | State captured by ruler | State captured in turn by winners of elections | Archipelago of autonomy and captured 'islands' | State autonomous from private interest (legal lobby, etc.) |
| Public resources | Particular and predicable | Particular but unpredictable | Particular and universal | Ethical universalism |
| Separation private–public | No | No | Poor | Sharp |
| Relation formal/informal institutions | Informal institutions substitutive of formal ones | Informal institutions substitutive of formal ones | Competitive and substitutive | Complementary |
| Mentality | Collectivistic | Collectivistic | Mixed | Individualistic |
| Government accountability | No | Only when no longer in power | Occasional | Permanent |
| Rule of law | No; sometimes 'thin' | No | Elites only | General; 'thick' |

**Figure 10**. Governance regimes and their main features. Taken from: Mungiu-Pippidi, A. (2015). Corruption: Political and Public Aspects. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (pp. 12-20). Elsevier.

According to Henrich (2020), what this empirical data shows not only represents big differences in political culture concerning group-centered attitudes and the expectation and acceptance of inequalities of power. Instead, these differences reveal a greater psychological distance between individualistic countries such as Germany or the Netherlands and collectivistic countries such as Colombia, Turkey, Brazil, or Korea. Henrich's theory claims those individualistic countries are driven by a sort of individualistic WEIRD psychology that profoundly diverges from the average psychology of people coming from collectivistic non-WEIRD societies[23].

[23] According to the initial approach of Henrich and colleagues (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010) the differences between these societies obeyed to their level of schooling, industrialization, wealth, and democracy, as well how 'western' they can be considered. That explains the acronym

This psychological divergence is expressed by cognitive and motivational tendencies, but also by social and intersubjective motivations and behaviors. Individualistic psychology is characterized by self–focus and self-enhancement, low conformity and deference, and even a strong ability for patience, self-regulation, and self-control (Henrich, 2020). Moreover, what is most intriguing about this 'WEIRD' psychology, are its social and moral features:

- Reduced in-group favoritism
- Trust, fairness, honesty, and cooperation with anonymous others, strangers, and impersonal institutions
- Belief in free will: individuals make their choices and choices matter
- Impartial principles over contextual particularism
- Moral universalism: thinking that moral truths exist

Henrich has explored the hypothesis that the origins of WEIRD psychology lie in the prohibition that the European Western Church made on the marital union of members of the same families during the Middle Ages. This abolition of kin-based institutions allowed the emergence of broader networks of interaction between societies. In the end, wider mechanisms of interaction derived from this societal change, such as massive migration and commerce, led to the configuration of 'WEIRD' individualistic psychology and its impersonal and inclusivist moral features.

It is not my purpose to analyze this hypothesis. Against Henrich, it is reasonable to point out two claims. First, it is hard to prove that individualistic psychology or impersonal prosociality characterized European peoples during medieval times, despite the efforts Henrich has made to empirically prove that kinship-related institutional transformations led by the catholic church are responsible for

WEIRD (Western, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic). However, recent advances in the theory have suggested that what lies behind these differences is the presence of a very concrete individualistic psychology (still labeled as 'WEIRD' psychology), that would be asymmetrically distributed across the globe. For instance, Colombia, Turkey, Brazil, and Korea, hardly classify as non-democratic, non-Industrialized, or non-educated societies, even acknowledging some differences with respect to European societies. However, they indeed lack most of the features of WEIRD individualistic psychology.

western individualistic psychology. Secondly, it is simply incorrect to assume that all societies that belong to the global north and the Western world, are homogeneously characterized by some sort of WEIRD psychology. This is also false on the contrary case of all the countries that do possess a catholic identity but hardly classify as individualistic societies with an orientation to impersonal forms of prosociality. Countries in Latin America are the paradigmatic example against Henrich. It is fair to say that Henrich himself recognizes this. However, his theory misrepresents and leaves entirely unexplored the degree of social and behavioral diversity in these countries.

Contrary to the ideas presented by Henrich, Welzel, Buchanan, and Powell, I suggest that inclusivist moral progress in inclusivist societies has been favored by a more generalized transition to favorable relational conditions that foster the moral valuation of individuality in social interactions. In the first place, these societies have partially fostered the suppression of heteronomous social relations where values and attitudes are developed around hierarchy, power distance, and exclusion. As a consequence, the increase in human interactions and encounters without domination and constraint has promoted the adoption of more subject-centered or inclusivist moral concerns[24].

In the next section, I will finish this work by reflecting on the most favorable context for the moral valuation of individuality and moral inclusivity to emerge, suggesting some of the mechanisms that we should pursue in order to accomplish more stable instances of social progress grounded on the precepts of human equality and tolerance.

[24] This has been similarly conceptualized by Luco (2021), who based on Welzel's theory of human emancipation, claims that individualistic or emancipative societies evolved due to "the gradual increase in the control that ordinary people exercise over their own lives, along with the dismantling of institutions that restrict such autonomous control" (Luco, 2021).

*3. How to promote moral inclusivity*

To begin with, and following a developmental and relational perspective, moral behavioral tendencies of large-scale social groups are to be considered the average expression of concrete relations between individual agents that are originated in micro-contexts of interaction. These micro contexts of interaction in which social and moral normativity emerges are to be found in the family, the school, or the workplace, and the extent to which a certain large-scale society (i.e., a nation) shows inclusivist or exclusivist moral concerns critically depend on how social relationships are established in these micro contexts. Moreover, I also suggest that the institutional and cultural mechanisms that have configured the concrete ethos of inclusivist societies have done precisely so by altering the relational and interactional features of the social life of human individuals.

Based on these assumptions, I claim that inclusivist forms of moral behavior are the result of the moral valuation of individuality that develops from social interactions occurring on a background of relational equality. With relational equality, I refer to the concrete conditions of social interactions that some philosophers have already considered necessary for the accomplishment of justice in society. According to David Miller, "where there is social equality, people feel that each member of the community enjoys an equal standing with all the rest that overrides their unequal rankings along particular dimensions" (1997, p. 232)[25].

In the same line, Carina Fourie has claimed that social or relational equality exists when social relationships happen in opposition to status hierarchies (2012). According to Fourie (2012), status hierarchy "…occurs when a behavior, social practice or policy expresses a particular kind of unequal relationship between a person or group of people, and others. More specifically, it is a relationship

[25] Relational equality is considered a different ideal than distributive equality (Marion Young, 1990/2011; Anderson, 1999; Fraser, Honneth, & Golb, 2003; Fourie, Schuppert, & Wallimann-Helmer, 2015) and focuses on how people interact and recognize the moral status of others during social encounters.

between inferiors and superiors. In this relationship, one person is deemed to be an inferior to another person, who is either directly deemed to be a superior or who, by virtue of their relationship to an inferior person, automatically becomes the superior" (p. 111)[26].

Contexts of relational equality, or social interactions occurring on a background of equal standing, favor the moral valuation of individuality. The moral valuation of individuality describes the process through which human agents develop a moral concern for others as autonomous, independent, and valuable sources of reasons and justifications. I have previously defined this process as 'moral sense-making', or "…the constructive process through which human individuals, by the means of constant interactions on a background of mutual respect and recognition, develop evaluative concerns about how we ought to treat others, and how to 'care' and 'respect' others' well-being, needs, and vulnerabilities" (Segovia-Cuéllar, 2022, p. 7).

A society based on the principles of relational equality grounds its social interactions on a practical attitude of equality and attempts to eradicate hierarchical and exclusivist expectations coming from group-centered values. In this step forward, the relational view considers exclusivist morality beyond ethnic or racial distinctions and includes different forms of classism, domination, and oppression that are reproduced in social encounters and institutionalized in ethnic and cultural heterogeneous contexts (Marion Young, 1990).

When different forms of structural and relational inequalities shape human encounters, the moral valuation of individuality cannot take place, for the other appear constantly as someone of less esteem that does not stand as a valuable source of reasons and justifications. Exclusivist morality is then the expected

[26] As it is noted by Fabian Schuppert (2015), not all social relationships marked by differences of power and authority are to be considered objectionable. The most basic examples are the relationships between a parent and her son, or an expert teacher and an amateur apprentice. However, differences in status and esteem are the bases of domination and the arbitrary interference and affection between individuals or groups when there exists a hierarchical oriented interaction.

outcome of such heteronomous interactions and social encounters in which the development of our moral concern for others is constrained by the accomplishment of group-based, hierarchical and unequal status between persons. Furthermore, these inegalitarian relations shape the perception of the social environment as a threatening and competitive space of living.

Inclusivist morality, on the contrary, is based on egalitarian and reciprocal encounters in which the other appears from the very beginning as an autonomous agent that has the same status as me. When this happens, the perception of the social environment is less driven by group-based threatening or competitive concerns. According to this rationale, I suggest that the accomplishment of inclusivist morality is favored by more egalitarian relationships between persons and also by the movement from group-based concerns and dominance-oriented relationships to individually-centered moral concerns.

This transition, which I called the moral valuation of individuality, was similarly conceptualized by pioneers of the constructivist tradition in moral developmental psychology, such as Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. For instance, Piaget's work was driven by the idea that children showed a development from a heteronomous to an autonomous type of morality[27]. In Piaget's words: "The collective rule is at first something external to the individual and consequently sacred to him; then, as he gradually makes it his own, it comes to that extent to be felt like the free product of mutual agreement and an autonomous conscience" (1932, p. 18)[28].

[27] Two important issues need to be clarified here. First of all, the subjects studied by Piaget represent a small sample of human children that reasonably cast doubt on their conclusions about the universal features of human morality. Multiple authors have challenged the theoretical and empirical assumptions of Piaget and colleagues, primarily because of their lack of contextual and cultural sensibility. Moreover, the idea of universal stages of development, commonly associated with Piaget's model, has also been challenged by recent psychological research. As a consequence, I make no reference to the details of Piaget's theory concerning the progression of the practice and the consciousness of the rules. Instead, my aim is to explore the foundations behind the idea of two different moralities, the morality of heteronomy and the morality of autonomy, assuming a radical constructivist approach that acknowledges the cultural sensitivity of moral development, but considering the divergent ethical implications of these two types of moral normativity and social interaction.

[28] According to his initial assumption, Piaget concluded that the transition from one of these moralities to the other has a relation to a departure from adults' instruction about the practice and consciousness of rules, and the consolidation of consciousness of rules as the outcome of mutual

What is most interesting for my purpose, is the fact that Piaget's morality of autonomy is considered 'superior' and normatively more adequate than the morality of heteronomy. For instance, it is just in the context of autonomous morality, that humans develop a sense of moral normativity based on mutual respect and reciprocity. From a normative perspective, moral autonomy, or the practice and consciousness of rules on a background of mutual respect and recognition (cooperation), is the most adequate context for the development of right or correct moral prescriptions since it is only in this case that norms can fulfill the requirement of being justifiable to all parts involved. In brief, it is in the context of moral autonomy that moral norms can be elaborated, revisited, and consolidated through equal respect, democratic deliberation, and consensus.

These ideas were enriched by the work of Lawrence Kohlberg in the second half of the twentieth century. In particular, Kohlberg suggested that the difference between moral heteronomy and autonomy is both developmental and normative, and the transition towards moral autonomy represents the advance towards the highest stage of moral development in which the motivation of moral behavior and the content of our moral judgments is always driven by a universal concern for the preservation of individual wellbeing.

Reaching this stage of moral development requires a movement from group-centered to individually-centered moral concerns. In brief, the model of stages in Kohlberg's development reflects the idea of a progression in human morality from heteronomy or social constraint to autonomy or cooperation; this is, from a normativity that is imposed by others to one that emerges from contexts of interaction based on mutual respect and recognition.

The highest stage of moral autonomy and consciousness (post-conventional level in Kohlberg's terms) consolidates impersonal and universal principles of

respectful cooperative interactions with peers. However, these two types of morality are not 'developmental stages' or 'steps', but different configurations of moral normativity coming from different types of social relationships.

interpersonal treatment that sometimes conflict and need to be distinguished from rules and norms that belong to other domains of normativity or have been imposed by constraint. That is the reason why the progression of moral development in Kohlberg's model is also a progression in the distinction between conventionality and morality, and the consolidation of a practical sense of equality.

In other words, the highest stage of moral judgment refers to a concrete context of social interaction in which human individuals can develop moral evaluations, principles, and norms that are justifiable to all. This moral normativity is grounded on mutual respect and recognition and is not constrained by domination or hierarchically structured relations. This makes it possible to consider it a desirable context for the development of morality according to impersonal and inclusivist principles.

Following these ideas, and establishing a more committed approach to the feasibility of inclusivist forms of moral progress, I suggest that the development of moral inclusivity is favored when adequate contexts of relational equality are settled making the consolidation of moral concerns centered on autonomy and individuality easier to accomplish. In this process, it is significant a departure from group-centered dominating concerns that end up in exclusivist tendencies and the perception of the social environment as a threatening and conflictive space.

To understand this idea, it is necessary to keep in mind that the boundaries that establish who belongs to the 'same' group are naturally malleable, starting with the family first and extending later to different groups such as the neighborhood, the school, the nation, the religious community, the people who follow the same soccer team, or the ones who listen to the same style of music. As a consequence, social life consists of acting and participating with others in different spheres of group affiliation, and the boundaries that determine who belongs or not to our groups are constantly changing during our daily life.

That is precisely the reason why some authors have previously suggested that the existence of any plural ‘we’ presupposes the ontological primacy of the individual subject, and group identification comes as a fictional process that depends on the universal and grounding dimension of human subjectivity (Rapport, 2010, 2012, 2018).

The problematic issue comes when as a consequence of group-based inegalitarian concerns, human individuals start to perceive the social world as a battle camp full of threats and competition between groups, and other individuals are considered less valuable in terms of moral concern, esteem, and respect. In these cases, social behavior is driven by status hierarchies and the accomplishment of power distance.

In other words, human individuals can experience social encounters with others on a background of equal concern or can instead interact with others considering the members of the other ‘group’ as adversaries or threatening agents who do not stand as a valuable source of reasons and justifications and do not deserve equal moral concern. When the latter happens, exclusivist morality emerges. These two different forms of relationship with others and the social environment are the result of a developmental process that configures a complex set of perceptions, implicit attitudes, gestures, and behaviors.

The ideas presented so far may be criticized because they entail a methodological problem. In brief, it might be claimed that the contexts suggested as relevant for the development of more inclusivist expressions of moral behavior already presuppose the existence of such inclusivist moral tendencies. However, I am not willing to give a causal explanation. More precisely, my interest here is to offer a normative and practical reflection on how to promote moral inclusivity in the current circumstances of society.

The question that arises here is then how to promote the development of moral inclusivity according to a situated developmental rationale based on the precepts of relational equality, individuality, and the avoidance of status hierarchies. My

proposal concludes that educational interventions and public policies that aim to promote social interactions on a background of equality are favorable for the emergence of inclusivist moral concerns and moral inclusivity. These interventions and policies should be adopted if we want to pursue more stable instances of moral progress in diverse and unequal societies.

In the first place, we should promote the establishment of educational initiatives at the family and school levels based on the concept of relational equality. In these contexts, it is easier to develop individually-centered moral concerns oriented to care and respect for autonomy and individuality. These moral concerns are detached from group-based concerns that favor the perception of the environment through the lens of dominance, hierarchy, and exclusion.

The process of political socialization acquires special relevance to build these innovative initiatives towards moral inclusivity. Political socialization refers to the situated process of formation of attitudes, motivations, beliefs, narratives, values, and behaviors, shaped by the agents of society in a given political context (Nasie, Reifen Tagar, & Bar-Tal, 2021). In the first place, political socialization is the source of exclusivist moral tendencies according to a relational approach. Multiple developmental evidence has confirmed how political socialization has a crucial role in the emergence of exclusivist moral attitudes or the perception of the social world as a threatening context of conflict and competition. For instance, political attitudes of parents and family members grounded on authoritarian motivations and orientation to social dominance are at the base of the development of exclusivist moral attitudes (Duriez & Soenens, 2009; Fraley et al., 2012; Dennis et al., 2015; Guidetti, Carraro, & Castelli, 2017; Reifen Tagar et al., 2014, 2017)[29].

[29] As it was mentioned in Part I, the authoritarian motive, reflected by the construct of *Right-wing authoritarianism* (RWA), relates to highly biased in-group moral considerations, ethnocentrism, and a view of the world as a threatening place. The dominating motive, reflected by the construct of *Social-dominance orientation* (SDO), relates to a competitive worldview and the legitimation of social hierarchies, exploitation, power distance, and social inequalities among humans.

Following these ideas, perceiving other individuals as threatening agents for the unity of my group is not precisely the *cause* of exclusivist moral attitudes as is suggested by environmental determinist models that put the focus on adaptive intuitions, but the *consequence* of acquired exclusivist concerns, attitudes, and behaviors that have been shaped in a developmental process. This relational hypothesis was recently tested by Hadarics (2022).

As the first micro context of interaction during social learning, the family shapes implicit reactions, language use, and conceptions and categorizations about intergroup conflicts that are later expressed in online social interactions by children. Accordingly, exclusivist attitudes coming from authoritarian and dominating motives are acquired as habits in contexts where implicit attitudes, discriminatory gestures, actions, and beliefs, constantly undermine the moral value of others' individuality and agency in social encounters.

Exclusivist morality just changes its form depending on the nature of the other who is excluded and considered inferior: racism when ethnic origins determine the conditions of interaction, classism when a social class does it, and sexism when people reproduce structures of domination according to gender features. These different forms of exclusivist moral behavior just correlate with each other during development (Costello & Hodson, 2010, 2014; Roylance et al., 2016).

More importantly, when a person has learned to interact with others with the expectation of fulfilling certain status hierarchies according to 'group' values, the moral concern is asymmetrically applied and different forms of exclusion are perpetuated. These ideas explain better the reluctance to acquire inclusivist moral attitudes when certain political attitudes exist in people.

Recent research has precisely shown that the presence of dominating personalities is correlated with a diminished concern for expanding the circle of moral consideration (Waytz, Iyer, Young, Haidt, & Graham, 2019). As a consequence, some individuals show less empathy and moral concern for humanity in general and 'the Nonhuman' domain than others, which means that their moral circle is more constrained (see Figures 11 & 12).

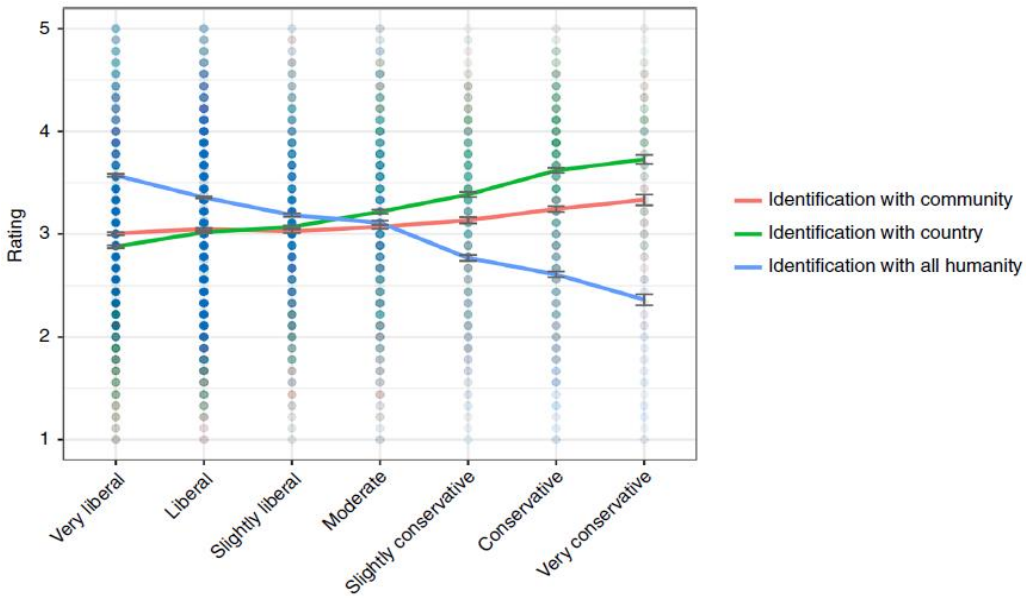


**Figure 11.** The relation between political ideology and identification with the community, 'the country' or all humanity. Conservatives are less concerned with all humanity as an object of moral concern. Taken from: Waytz, A., Iyer, R., Young, L., Haidt, J., & Graham, J. (2019). Ideological differences in the expanse of the moral circle. *Nature Communications*, *10*(1), 1-12.

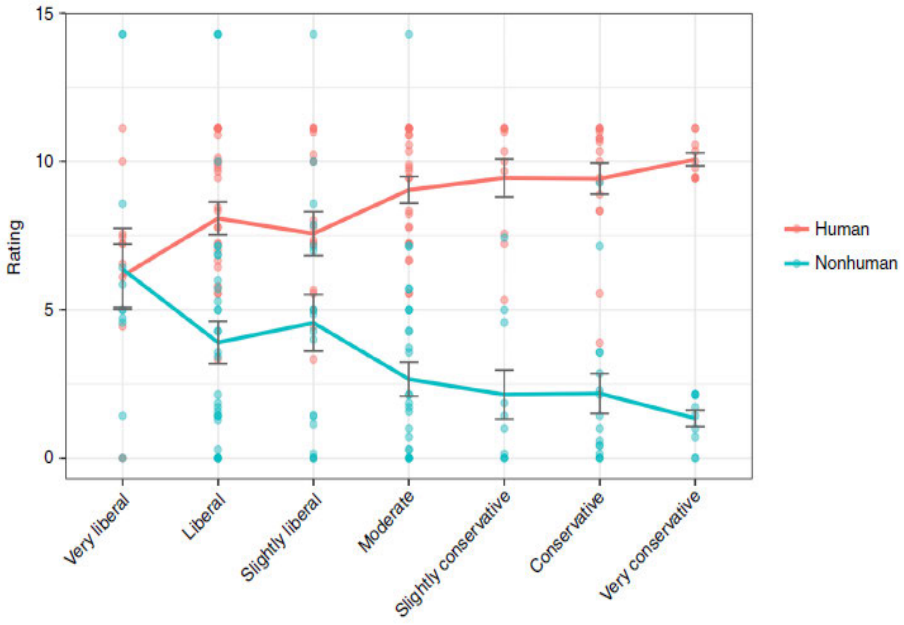


**Figure 12.** The relation between political ideology and identification with 'the Nonhuman'. Conservatives are less concerned with 'the Nonhuman' as an object of moral concern. Taken from: Waytz, A., Iyer, R., Young, L., Haidt, J., & Graham, J. (2019). Ideological differences in the expanse of the moral circle. *Nature Communications*, *10*(1), 1-12.

This conceptualization has a relevant practical implication since the set of attitudes and beliefs about others in intergroup contexts are considered the result of a process of political socialization that shapes the perception of the social world independently of the immediate physical and ecological conditions of the surrounding context. Accordingly, and following what I suggest in chapter 5, the very same physical and ecological context may be perceived differently by individuals depending on the particular patterns of political socialization in their micro-contexts.

The previous description of exclusivist morality puts the center on social interactions and suggests that the accomplishment of group-based hierarchical and unequal relationships is at the center of any exclusivist expression of moral concern. This invites a reflection on the relevance of establishing alternative relational settings in which the political socialization of inclusivist moral concerns centered on the precepts of equality and individuality are more feasible. More precisely, we should promote relational settings that can overcome the reproduction of authoritarian and dominating motives.

Given that sometimes the family circle is reluctant to change certain political and social attitudes, educational initiatives at the school level acquire special relevance since they can directly influence the early development of moral concerns and the process of political socialization. These educational initiatives may encourage egalitarian and cooperative situated encounters that foster the perception of others as autonomous agents and valuable sources of reasons and justifications. This leads as a consequence to a more generalized decrease in intergroup conflictive attitudes.

For instance, these initiatives may be informed by the study of intergroup contact and intergroup friendships (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). These studies have found that personal, vicarious, and imagined intergroup contact enhances particular worries about social inequalities, by fostering more empathy, perspective-taking, and humanization (Vezzali et al., 2012; Turner & Cameron, 2016; Tropp et al., 2018; Nasie et al., 2021). One contemporary example of these initiatives is the school-based ‘Inclusive Youth’ initiative (Killen et al., 2022).

Moreover, given my interests in different manifestations of exclusivist morality, it is worth mentioning how intergroup contact in settings grounded on inequalities beyond racial or ethnic characteristics has also shown to be effective in promoting inclusivist moral concerns. This is the case of 'Inter-wealth' contact experiments (2019) that have shown that wealth preferences and concerns for equity and resource allocation can change when individuals from high-income backgrounds interact with individuals of low-income backgrounds.

Another relevant dimension in which society can focus in order to foster more inclusivist moral concerns is the public sphere. My perspective here is complemented by the work of Thomas Piketty (2022) who has shown that conditions of life in the world are better now than in the past mainly because certain human societies have assisted an imperfect but existent overall tendency to equality. This transition, fueled by massive reactions towards injustice and traditional relations of power, has been supported by institutional mechanisms and new social, political, and economical rules that have prevented the perpetuation of dominance and extreme inequalities between social groups.

According to Piketty, the institutional mechanisms that have grounded this transition to equality are, among others, equality before the law; universal suffrage and parliamentary democracy; free and compulsory education; progressive taxation of income, wealth, and inheritance; labor and trade union rights; freedom of speech and expression; and international law (2022, p. 20).

The transition to better states of social and moral conditions is explained by the fact that relational and interactional dimensions of social life have been directly affected by such institutional mechanisms. In brief, institutional measures have naturally affected the way how people relate to each other and how they perceive the social world around them during situated interactions.

To sum up, the overall emergence of impersonal and individually-centered moral concerns in certain societies has been favored by the establishment of a more stable context in which social interactions are marked by relational equality and the suppression of hierarchical structures of interaction according to differences

in esteem, and respect or dignity. In these contexts, the moral valuation of individuality has been favored making more feasible the transition to inclusivist forms of moral progress.

According to these ideas, we can establish three main principles that should be follow when considering the most suitable contexts for the development of moral inclusivity. In the first place, the development of moral inclusivity is favored when adequate contexts of relational equality are settled making the consolidation of moral concerns centered on autonomy and individuality easier to accomplish. Secondly, these contexts require a departure from group-centered concerns and authoritarian and dominating motives that end up in exclusivist tendencies and the perception of the social environment as a threatening and conflictive space. Such backgrounds of equality require overcoming differences in esteem, respect, or value for group-based reasons. Finally, the accomplishment of moral inclusivity is strengthened by the relational and situated affirmation of each individual freedom, dignity, and self-realization. This affirmation is grounded on the perception of others as autonomous agents and valuable sources of reasons and justifications.

These principles could inform valuable interventions in at least three dimensions, and their application should be further evaluated by researchers and professionals working on these spaces, with the aim of establishing more promising advances in the achievement of inclusivist forms of social and moral progress.

- **Parental practices** less centered on the accomplishment of group-oriented goals (respect for authority, loyalty to groups, social conformity) favor the overall emergence of inclusivist moral concerns.

- **Educational interventions** that promote social interactions on a background of equality are favorable for the emergence of inclusivist moral concerns and moral inclusivity in diverse societies. These initiatives should be oriented to consolidate perspective-taking and

humanization in scenarios of Intergroup Contact (personal, vicarious, and imagined).

- **Institutional mechanisms and public policies** (social, political, and economical rules) aimed to establish more egalitarian interactions are essential to prevent the perpetuation of hierarchical and dominating relationships between social groups. These mechanisms prevent the development of a less threatening, conflictive, and competitive perception of their social environment and favor the development of more inclusivist moral concerns.

To conclude, it is reasonable to think that inclusivist morality emerges when human individuals interact on a background of equality and there is no difference in esteem, respect, or value to be perpetuated. In these cases, human interactions are based on the mutual recognition of the other as a valuable source of reasons and justifications, and moral concern is oriented to preserving individual well-being and other's integrity. In this case, there are no group-based hierarchies or differences in esteem to be perpetuated.

The mechanisms for fostering the transition to inclusivist morality at individual and societal levels have to do with the consolidation of such micro contexts where social interactions are based on mutual respect and relational equality. These contexts favor the development of universalist moral concerns, attitudes, and beliefs that are not bounded by group limitations and do not configure the perception of the environment as a competitive or threatening space of living. In contexts marked by relational equality human individuals are conceptualized as equal deserving subjects of moral concern and fully autonomous agents that exceed group-based limitations. The encouragement of these contexts of relational equality is essential for establishing more stable instances of moral progress that, according to an inclusivist perspective, may help us to reach our more urgent moral needs and convictions.

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