

The Lethal Gene

Book Review by Michael W. Masters

Perhaps no trait so uniquely characterizes Western peoples as that of altruism. We are, among the genuinely “diverse” peoples of the world, the most prone to feel compassion for those less fortunate and to act on those feelings. We provide food, medicine, disaster relief, education and even peacekeeping to all who ask — often to the detriment of our own kind. So relentlessly altruistic are we that Charles Dickens, in his book, *Bleak House*, coined the term “telescopic philanthropy” in parody of our propensity to coddle those who inhabit distant shores. Dickens’ archetypical do-gooder, Mrs. Jellyby, impatiently dismissed her own injured son in her frenzy to cater to the imagined needs of “the natives of Borrioboola-Gha on the left bank of the Niger.”

From the pulpits of Christianity to the drawing rooms of secular humanism, the simultaneously piteous and self-righteous plea for accommodation of all humanity — and with it a suspiciously insistent demand for sacrifice on the part of the altruists so importuned — never ceases. This raises the question: can anything so widely accepted be wrong? Or, to borrow a concept from Garret Hardin — who has written more persuasively on the subject of altruism than any other scientist — are there “unintended consequences” that accompany an altruism that compels universal fealty? It turns out that there are, and those consequences are the subject of Professor Hardin’s most recent book, *Creative Altruism*, a rewrite of a 1977 work, *The Limits of Altruism*.

In addition to Mrs. Jellyby’s delicate condition, *Creative Altruism* examines many subjects of vital importance in a finite world — among them carrying capacity, population control, resource depletion, the ethical foundations of political and social systems and

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many others. All merit careful study and reflection. But the subject of altruism, more than any other, motivates and illuminates not only these concerns but the ultimate question that dominates all others — that of survival.

Altruism, Survival and the Commons

Significantly, the subtitle of Professor Hardin’s earlier work was “An Ecologist’s View of Survival,” a phrase that spotlights the issue at stake with a remarkable economy of expression. In a world rendered increasingly inter-dependent by communication, transportation, natural resource use, environment degradation and carrying capacity concerns, survival has become a predominant issue — although less so for individuals than for historic peoples and cultures. The latter are under assault as never before, due in no small measure to efforts by political and economic elites to eradicate borders and traditional cultures as barriers to political consolidation and economic exploitation — a goal often hidden behind a pious rhetorical veneer of compulsory altruism. Dr.

Hardin writes,

The spectre of survival now haunts ethical thought. Attempts to settle the egoism versus altruism issue, to unsnarl population problems, and to lay out the grounds on which international relations can be rationalized all end up with the word survival —

In this climate, a healthy understanding of altruism is central to insuring the continued survival of peoples and nations — a subject that Hardin has written on for decades. He long ago secured his reputation within the scientific community with his 1968 essay, “The Tragedy of the Commons.” In this essay he introduced many of the ecological and ethical themes that have guided his work since. Among them: anything that is free invites exploitation (an apt description of welfare); the carrying capacity of any resource is a vital ethical consideration (a realistic justification for limiting immigration in a finite world); and voluntary acts of conscience, without regard

Creative Altruism: An Ecologist Questions Motives

by Garrett Hardin

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to the actions of others, can act as agent for the elimination of conscience (universal altruism is “selected against” in the struggle for survival).

“The Tragedy of the Commons” deals with the tendency of unowned resources (i.e. held in common) to be exploited to exhaustion — the world’s oceans, for

“Immigration [is] ...exploited by rapacious elites (‘managers’) who care nothing about the irreversible damage they cause.”

example. In a crowded world, only privatism provides a stable socio-political system. Socialism is also theoretically possible — but its Achilles’ Heel is the fact that it “gives managers first whack at the statistics, which they can alter or suppress to hide evidence of their incompetence.” Or their malfeasance. Managers under socialism bear no responsibility for their actions — and hold the power needed to insure this unhappy situation is never discovered.

Any system, natural or human, may constitute a commons. Immigration, for example, makes of the West a vast commons — to be exploited not only by the teeming billions of the Third World but also by rapacious elites (“managers”) who care nothing about the irreversible damage they cause.

Genes, Kinship and Survival

Altruism does serve a positive role in fostering survival. But it has never had universal applicability, and it cannot be extended beyond the circumstances for which it was designed by “Nature and Nature’s God” — to adapt Thomas Jefferson’s evocative phrase. Its origin is biological and its principles are timeless — despite the shrill ranting of liberals, who seem determined to replace science with ideology. As one writer put it, liberals would “burn biologists at the stake” if they could.

The key factor is *kin altruism*, a contributor to natural selection recognized by Darwin. In this century William D. Hamilton formulated the theory in scientific terms. He observed that in the animal world the degree of altruism shown by one individual to another is directly related to the degree of kinship between them — that is

to say, the extent to which they share genes. Sacrifices on behalf of one’s close kin may preserve more shared genes for the future. Blood is indeed thicker than water.

The concept of survival is sometimes confusing because people often do not bother to define it. Professor Hardin describes three forms of survival: self-preservation, species survival and germ line survival — preservation of one’s genes. It is certainly the case that no animal can long survive without an instinct for self-preservation — humans included. However, as seen earlier, self-sacrifice on behalf of kin is a more powerful selective force than simple self-preservation because it enables the genes shared by benefactor and beneficiary to enter succeeding generations in larger numbers.

Natural selection is often mistakenly thought to favor survival of the species. But germ line survival is in reality the most important factor in the survival of peoples and societies. In his poem, “In Memoriam,” Tennyson wrote of Mother Nature, “So careful of the type she seems, so careless of the single life...” But this view inverts cause and effect. Selection favors germ lines that win the competition for life and reproduction. Competition among germ lines — a competition often bloody in its workings — defines the character of succeeding generations. Species survive only because the genes that define them survive.

Morality, Discrimination and Tribes

As important as the principle of kin altruism is, there is another contributor that provides a powerful explanation for not only why the world of humans is the way it is, but why it must remain that way if historic peoples, societies and cultures are to survive. This additional factor is closely related to kin altruism but takes into account the additional consideration that humans gather in societies rather than live as solitary, atomized individuals.

To understand how kin altruism, germ line survival and mankind’s social nature have shaped humanity, one must examine how humans arose during prehistoric times — a time when embryonic human societies were necessarily tribal in nature. The pioneering work in this area was done by Arthur Keith, R.D. Alexander and Robert Bigelow. Hardin writes:

Their model is tribalistic; selection distinguishes not so much between individuals as it does between tribes. “The essential

characteristic of a tribe is that it should follow a double standard of morality—one kind of behavior for in-group relations, another for out-group.” The model is also a highly sanguinary one; it assumes that conflict between tribes was often resolved by the extermination of the loser.

The tribal nature of early human societies — characterized by a high percentage of shared genes — helped forge the fundamental character of modern humans. In order for tribal groups to survive, members of the tribe had to cooperate closely with each other while repelling the depredations of other tribes. They necessarily maintained a different standard of conduct toward those within the group than toward outsiders. In short, they *discriminated* against outsiders. It is this dual code of morality that created the human race in all its “diverse” forms. Although Prof. Hardin does not emphasize the point — perhaps in deference to political correctness — little has changed. Outsiders are no different that they ever were; they are the genetically distant members of other ethnic groups.

Tribal fitness rests on a bipolar virtue: cooperation with tribal brothers coupled with antagonism toward all others. Altruism is selected for, but it is strictly tribal altruism. Until about ten thousand years ago hunting and gathering was the only mode of existence and tribes were small; genetic relations among the members made kin altruism an important selective factor, for the members of a small tribe would possess a considerable degree of genetic relationship.

Tribes, Proletariats and Empires

In order to eradicate this natural order, today’s empire builders turn their most powerful rhetorical weapons to the task of discrediting the efficacy of genetic factors. Those who have the courage to insist on truth rather than Orwellian doublespeak draw a firestorm of vituperation from the pitchmen of universal altruism. Defenders of nature’s order endure epithets ranging from “mean-spirited,” “isolationist” and “bigot” to “racist,” “fascist,” “Nazi” and the ultimate malediction, “hater.” (We note without comment the odd fact that “Marxist” and “Bolshevik,” two overwhelmingly malevolent forces behind a century of unparalleled human tragedy, seem

curiously absent from the accusers’ vocabulary.) But is this “hate” smear really the evil it is made out to be?

The total selective value of intratribal altruism was a function of the degree to which a winning tribe was willing and able to exterminate — that is, genetically exterminate — losing tribes. This tribal goal was served by the two-faced virtue of altruism and aggression, intratribal altruism coupled with intertribal aggression. The inward feelings accompanying these orientations may be what we call love and hate. We tend to think of these sentiments as being in opposition to each other, but they are merely two sides of the same coin. It is questionable whether we can have one without the other.

In reality, the corrosive ideology of universal altruism serves the interests of three distinct groups. The first are those who lack the inherent ability to secure for themselves the blessings of civilization — a deficiency that is itself largely genetic in origin. For these, the recipients of altruism’s bounty, coalition membership provides a means to exploit the commons created by Western peoples. This group’s contribution is vital because there are enough of them to be politically significant when properly mobilized. The lure of free access to the treasury is irresistible to a rabble that has no prospects for betterment on the basis of its own abilities.

The second group is comprised of those genuinely compassionate people who, like Mrs. Jellyby, receive emotional fulfillment from their sincere belief in the dictates of philanthropy. Lenin slyly called such people “useful idiots.” These useful idiots constitute a subversive fifth column inside the walls of communities of people susceptible to altruism’s siren call. They undermine group loyalty and cohesion with their demands that the gates of the city be opened to all.

Finally, there is a third group that benefits from the altruism scam — economic and political elites. They are well aware that in order to obtain and hold power they must assemble a large enough base of support to suppress cultures based on group unity. Universal altruism serves this need well; it is the bait with which a revolutionary proletariat of have-nots can be created, a proletariat capable of tearing power away from peoples

bound together by older, genetically-based loyalties.

Perhaps it is this third group that inspired the subtitle to Professor Hardin's latest work: "An Ecologist Questions Motives."

Passive Genocide

The contrast between the bloody nature of tribal warfare and the relatively tranquil nature of modern life should not mislead people into believing that the rules of natural selection have changed. Invasion of the homeland of one group by another group — combined with high differential birth rates and amalgamation through intermixing — are ultimately just as destructive as overt tribal massacres. Only the West permits massive immigration. And yet European-descended peoples already constitute no more than about 15 percent of the world's population. Our current birth rate of 1.7 children per woman insures that the next generation will contain only about half that percentage.

Since the various races and ethnic groups of mankind constitute distinct germ lines the disastrous consequences of Western open-borders immigration policies should be obvious. Over time, immigration will bring dispossession, submergence and, ultimately, genetic disappearance. Hardin has elsewhere called this phenomenon "passive genocide," a term that should be inserted into the political debate far more often than it is. The significance of this word has not been lost on blacks, Indians and Jews — who have, wittingly or not, exploited our compassion with admonitions concerning their own putative fears of genocide.

If we extend altruism beyond its rightful (tribal and genetic) bounds to encompass all of humanity in One World it will be our undoing. In the most supreme of ironies, its exercise will bring its own disappearance. Only we are sacrificing our culture, our homelands and our genetic future to the Moloch of multiracialism. But it is a futile gesture. When we are gone, the world will then be inhabited only by those who do not possess our flawed outlook. The endpoint is inescapable; the gene that impels universal altruism is a lethal one.

In the absence of competition between tribes the survival value of altruism in a crowded world is zero because what ego gives up necessarily (by definition of the rules of One World) goes into the commons. What is in the commons cannot favor survival of the sharing

impulses that put it there — unless limits are placed on sharing. To place limits on sharing is to create a tribe — which means a rejection of One World. So if we desire a world in which altruism can persist we must reject the ideal of One World and consciously seek to retain a world of more or less separate, more or less antagonistic units called (most generally) tribes. ...A state of One World, if achieved, would soon redissolve into an assembly of tribes.

The only exception to the last sentence in the above passage is a condition of One World enforced "out of the barrel of a gun," to use Mao's quaint description of the true source of political power. Tribal conflict may be minimized, but it is the peace of slavery. The current manifestation of this malevolent design is the looming abyss called the New World Order — a thoroughly Marxist venture in origin and execution. Not by accident have other Marxist regimes, all of whom spew universalist cant by the bucket, herded disparate peoples into multiethnic societies by force — as they did in Yugoslavia and the late Soviet Union, and more recently in Bosnia and Kosovo.

But then the New World Order is in reality not an exception to the law of tribes at all. It merely limits the number of tribes to two: the monied tribe and everyone else. TSC