INTRODUCTION

The question of what people did in the Holocaust to protect Jews and why—how individuals reacted altruistically to that horror—contains vital information for our survival as a species. What I wish to do in this chapter is to ask whether, as so many argue, this feature is an inbuilt quality of our genetic heritage. If it is, we have little to worry about. The “selfish genes” can be depended upon for behavioral instructions that predetermine our ennobling and sacrificial choices in order that the gene pool be provided with the most efficient stochastic search for biochemical durability through natural selection.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, things are not so simple. What I will argue is that altruism is based on both genetic and sociocultural evolution. These intertwined forces work together to produce a more humane and civil sociocultural life for the species as a whole. In this view the genetic basis of altruism is not simply a capacity for sacrifice that somehow increases fitness, but includes as well restraint, which in turn fosters morality, understanding, and criticism that constrains egoistic behavior. And these qualities create the opportunity for a more civil, more universalistic morality in both belief and practice—if we choose, individually and collectively, to make it so.
Culture and Altruism

Some years ago I argued (Cohen 1978) that the standard wisdom of the sociobiologists on altruism was oversimplified. Human altruism is learned, not innate. Simply put, I viewed it as part of sociocultural evolution, its primary features being the way individuals and groups are coached to empathize, sympathize with, even sacrifice for others, thereby counteracting the dominantly hedonic nature provided by genetic inheritance. Culture constrains this force, asking us instead to interfere with these genetic instructions for the adaptive rewards of group life. To illustrate the point, I first showed how altruistic cultural rules can, and very often are, translated into self-serving ends when actually performed by individuals and institutions. Thus among hunters and gatherers cultural norms require that individuals sacrifice the proceeds of their own hunting for the welfare of the group through customs that prescribe obligatory food sharing. The practice is reciprocal, but better hunters give away much more food than they receive. This enables hunters to use altruistic regulations to enhance individual prestige, heighten interpersonal competition, and enable power seeking (Cohen 1978). Individuals seek rewards, social life demands cooperation, and culture provides symbols and values that allow people to internalize altruism. Once internalized (variously in the population), norms provide for genuinely experienced optimization by individuals through conformity to the learned goals (cf. Margolis 1984). I also argued that cultures vary the degree of altruism they demand from members, as well as the degree to which altruistic regulations are highly valued aspects of custom and character development.

The argument is based firmly on the Darwinian assumption that individual actors are predominantly hedonistic. Given scarcity and variation, organisms with greater capacity for capturing scarce requirements possess greater “fitness” — that is, they have a greater potentiality to succeed reproductively. Those who strive harder and more skillfully do better. Logically, then, genetically endorsed dominance striving is the inevitable outcome of competition amidst scarcity. This provides a motor or energizing force for action but no necessary basis in genetic inheritance for the evolution of altruism. As we know it in our culture, altruism (empathy, sympathy, and gratuitous generosity) is the cultural evolution of compensatory rules of behaviors, which offset the effects of indi-
viduated reward seeking and dominance striving when the latter drive decreases the competitive position of a group in relation to other groups seeking to exploit the same resources.

Campbell (1978) added an elegant feature by showing that the original theorizing on altruism is based upon life among social insects. These genera first evolve sterile castes. Only when this development is accomplished does it become possible to evolve fully sacrificial genetic instructions. More precisely, only when reproductive competition between individual members of an insect community has been first set aside because of the prior evolution of an entire caste of steriles (Campbell 1978, 45–46), then and only then can a species move through a “narrow window” (E. O. Wilson’s term) of evolutionary potential to a genetically induced and fully sacrificial (i.e., altruistic) set of behaviors. Even though many animals have some of this, it is universally accepted that the “higher social insects greatly exceed (in [biological] ‘altruism’) that of any nonhuman vertebrate” (ibid., 49–50). On their part, humans are extremely interdependent as a species, while the individual is an optimizer whose collective life requires more cooperation than almost any other organism except insects (ibid., 51 ff.). Unlike with impersonally intimate insects, the competition among humans remains; but there are no sterile castes whose reproductive sacrifice provides increased survival potential for the group as a whole. In order therefore to achieve the necessary level of cooperation, humanity has a highly evolved set of social systems that “scold… selfishness and cowardice” even though human individual action “is often destructive of the collective good” (ibid., 51, 53).

To his credit, and characteristically, Campbell asked a new question. Namely, in how many species and among which ones can we find how various is the genetic basis for self-sacrifice and cooperativeness, and what triggers its evolutionary intensification? The sociobiologists assumed that once modeled in general terms and applied successfully to any species or genus, their theory could be used to explain any and all cooperative or sacrificially interpreted behavior almost always attributed heretofore to culture and learning. Contrarily, but actually in agreement, I assumed that if I took the opposite tack, starting with an hedonic actor, and then showed how individuals and groups behave selfishly even under conditions of regulated altruism, I would then demonstrate the lack of genetic etiology for altruistic norms and behaviors. If I then demonstrated variation in altruistic behaviors across cultures—associated with
an assumedly constant genetic feature—I would weaken or dismiss altruism's biological basis. Campbell went to the interstices between the two paradigms and found the sociobiological argument wanting. This brought his argument and my own to the same point—the defense of sociocultural as opposed to genetic evolution to explain human altruism. And that's where it stands.

But intellectual styles change. Those of us who had an initial "knee-jerk" reaction to sociobiological reasoning have become less uncomfortable with the notion of biologically and socioculturally intertwined causal models. On the other hand, much of my earlier argument about the sociocultural basis for altruism remains valid. Nothing written since leads me to reject the sociocultural determination of altruism observable in human behavior. Nevertheless, in the interim a number of interrelations among biological and behavioral features at the species level have shown the way to a more integrated logic. Clearly, human altruism does have some biological bases. And, even more importantly, in the interim social scientists have begun to accept the need for normative or critical theorizing, not only about the causes of evolution but also about how to influence its direction—in a world worth the effort if we choose to make it so.

The Dual Inheritance Model

The most important fusion of biological and sociocultural reasoning in the past few decades is that of the "dual inheritance model" (Boyd and Richerson 1985). Many have worked on this same set of issues from a similar perspective (see for example, Waddington 1960; Campbell 1965; Cohen 1981). The importance of the Boyd and Richerson (1985) approach is its intricate working out of a theory that simultaneously includes both genetic and cultural evolutionary processes. Each, they argue, evolves in response to logically similar mechanisms but reacts to different selectors operating at differing rates, in differing enabling environments, all the while interacting and affecting each other. Conceptually, biological and cultural evolution are logically and empirically separate domains, but phenomenologically they are united into a single process of "descent with modification". The theory is not only intellectually satisfying and aesthetically pleasing, but it also provides a counterargument to the sociobiological strategy of searching for explanations that rely solely on fitness logics through
biological reproduction. Boyd and Richerson (1985) go beyond this by adding cultural transmissions that can be selectively retained and extinguished behaviorally.

Under the classic sociobiological argument (e.g., Trivers 1971; Wilson 1975), cultural practices evolve to foster and express genetic fitness; culture is the ultimate product of, and is utilized by, the "selfish gene" to enhance reproductive success. That's what culture is; that's why it's here. In contrast, dual inheritance theory makes the case for a more multicausal set of processes. In effect dual inheritance posits that changes in adaptation that are selected and retained originate from and are transmitted by reproductive activity in both the behavioral and the genetic domains.

For example, in some instances cultural regulations may demand self-sacrificial behavior that ensures the survival of the culture and its bearers and in so doing acts to increase the frequency of genetically deleterious variants (Boyd and Richerson 1985, 202)—the exact reverse of biologically caused behavior. In sociobiology natural selection among gene frequencies is the predicated source of self-sacrifice, or altruism, by individuals towards their genetic relatives. On the other hand, using dual inheritance theory it is just as logical to have culture evolve sacrificial prescriptions making these demands part of the inheritable transmissions (or learning) required for acceptable membership in the society or a particular segment of it that shares the same rules.

As a dramatic example of this point the authors (ibid., 202–3) show how a priest opts for celibacy to become the servant of his "flock." In doing so he sacrifices his reproductive capacity to devote more time and energy to propagating the faith. His success is measured by his capacity to reproduce culturally, not biologically, even though his genes may deliver quite the opposite message to his everyday interactions. Unlike the insect analogues used in sociobiological arguments, he is not sterile. And that creates problems of biological versus cultural determination of priestly behavior evidenced by the fact that a small proportion of priests find it impossible to refrain from sexual relations. Nevertheless, the sifting and winnowing of variants through time have shown that the demands of celibacy enhance an individual's total dedication to the Church, and contribute to the institution's survival in a cultural sense.

For the most part, sociobiologists have concluded that group selection is improbable (Barash 1982). Possibly then the priest's
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celibacy is a form of inclusive fitness—that is, he sacrifices his own reproductive capacity so his genes will have a better chance of being reproduced through advantages derived from his actions by his kin. Since priests are obliged to help everyone, to minister to the faithful no matter what their relationship, and to work tirelessly for the survival and expansion of the Church, it is not evident why their kinsfolk’s fitness would be especially advantaged by their celibacy and obligatory altruism. Alternatively, dual inheritance theory highlights conflicts between culturally derived behavior on the one hand, and genetically determined egoistic motivations on the other. In the dual inheritance model, the survival of the Church is best served if the cultural variant of celibacy is selected for by human actors choosing among alternatives. The mechanisms that produce such selection involve all of the factors that determine directions of social and cultural change and their relations to both individual and group behavior and beliefs (cf. Cohen 1981).

Boyd and Richerson (1985, 204–40) put it this way: the empirical facts of cooperation and altruistic behavior cannot easily overcome the egoistic nature of individual actors. To do so, theory must first “account for the evolution of humans who cooperate on a large scale with genetically unrelated individuals. Second, given that individuals belong to many different groups, it must specify with which group (or groups) an individual will identify” (ibid., 236). Alternatively, a more plausible way of explaining such behavior is that of “cultural group selection” (ibid.), which assumes that humans inherit at least some portion of their values and beliefs as part of cultural transmissions.

Membership in groups always requires some sacrifice of personal interests. Humans must live in interacting groups to survive, with role differentiation more and less developed. Each generation must recruit new occupants, each of whom varies in her or his capacity to fill the roles successfully, their conformity to learning pressures to conform to older norms, their capacity to cooperate with or even sacrifice for others, and their assessments about the contemporary merits of older norms that are to be applied to new or changing conditions. But there are always regulations, inheritable through learning, which prescribe individual sacrifice in terms of group interests rather than their own or even those of their close kin.

Even among the simplest societies observers have recorded concepts of the public good for which egoistic motives must be sac-
rificed or else everyone in the group will suffer. Thus Freuchen (1961) observed an Eskimo encampment in which an individual was killed by common consent after continually breaking rules about the proper etiquette in his treatment of scarce animal kills. The danger that the surviving animal spirits would not cooperate anymore with humans, thus starving the group as a whole, was the rationale, and the man chosen as executioner was a close relative so that no intergroup feuding would result from the death of the miscreant. Proper treatment of animals was a public good. The executioner (a kinsman) was performing a public service—sacrificing his close kinsman for the public welfare and group survival. The beliefs and laws of this group are adaptations to a food-scarce environment. A complex theology has evolved linking animals and humans into a single morally interdependent network of actors. And this results in culturally transmissible conservation practices that help maintain the food supply. These local beliefs about the cause-effect relations that determine optimal animal population numbers have been selected and transmitted down the generations along with the altruistic behavior of kinsmen as executioners. The example illustrates how humans act in terms of an evolved rationality for group survival rather than the simple arithmetic of individual or even inclusive fitness.

In effect, many of the most important intergenerational transmissions among humans have evolved from selection and retention of sociocultural factors that contribute to group rather than individual survival. This acts through a set of selective relations such as role-model pressures from the older generations, from learning and assessments by individuals about the merits of traits that bias his/her adoption of transmitted instructions, or even from frequencies that suggest which transmissions are the most popular and most important to conform to (ibid., 206–8). Elsewhere I have suggested that a number of factors in normal human group life tend to bias our transmittable inheritance regulations and performances away from random or simple genetic determination of trait distribution (see Cohen 1981). First and foremost among these is role recruitment. The constant changeover among social roles required by aging means that each new person occupying the role can and does vary the way roles are performed. This provides a pool of potentially new and adaptive shifts in role behavior performance, transmissability, and normative regulations governing the role. Secondly, migrations provide for variants in transmiss-
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able behavioral terms similar to those observed in biased sampling effects or genetic drift. European migrants to Australia were not a representative sample of the English homeland, and this significantly affected their development. Thirdly, variations in behavior and beliefs are affected by "flow" or diffusion of traits from one region to another. Adoption of new plant varieties as well as more complex and subtle beliefs, move across populations through contacts among them.

Selection occurs in many ways. Boyd and Richerson (1985) suggest a number of these, including frequency effects—choosing to be altruistic because so many others seem to be doing it—and merit effects. Actors, they note, can choose to be altruistic because they can calculate and imagine the social benefits of their own sacrifices. I have suggested (Cohen 1981) normalizing effects such as gossip, accusations of wrongdoing, and other regulations that disfavor new variants. I also posit balanced selective mechanisms that allow for some acceptance of new behavioral and belief features, but within limits. Like the selection of sickling in biological reproduction, above and below such limits the new trait is disfavored. At the sociocultural level, there is always some room in a society's role set for dissent, and even acceptance of roles that contradict the dominant values. Finally, there are clear-cut forms of directional selection at the sociocultural level. The welfare state reforms of Scandinavia are a collective reaction to the inequalities and injustices of early capitalism. Over a number of years each new reform carried these societies a step further to a political culture that has turned the state into the manager of altruistic regulations. Each individual recognizes the obligation to give up income for utilitarian goals. The vast majority of the population supports the sacrifices that each individual and each family must make for societal welfare. There are also unintended costs. The resultant culture has shifted the locus of morality away from the person to the state, and is now fostering a syndrome of serious social and personal problems in these societies (Wolfe 1989). But the overall point is clear. There are at the sociocultural level selective factors that can be used to explain a counteregoistic altruism based on the fitness of the behaviors in terms of group selection and survival.

Such transmissions may resonate with and strengthen genetic codings, act independently of them, or stand in direct opposition. They evolve at enormously accelerated rates because they are based on brain-processed, rather than gene-processed information
transfers. Where genes must await biological reproduction effects on population genetics, sociocultural and behavioral selection can change many times faster, based as they are on behavior and its diffusion rather than on biology. This means that hedonic reward-seeking human actors can evolve altruistic behavioral traits and themes in their cultures that may counteract self-seeking dominance striving—the natural genetic outcome of scarcity and individual needs. The novel idea here, seen most clearly by Boyd and Richerson (1985), is that even though group selection is an improbable explanation in terms of genetic fitness, it makes perfectly good and plausible sense in explaining why humans opt for and transmit patterns of behavior and belief in the realm of cultural adaptation.

The Genetic Basis of Altruism Reinterpreted

Does this mean that as organisms we have evolved beyond the selfish gene because culture has taken over to ensure a better, more adaptive species through social learning and individual adaptation of the learning? In older nature/nurture terms one could say that I wish to score for nurture and do battle with the nonrandom inheritance of traits through genetic selection. Nothing could be further from my intention. That old battle, like so many in science, is dead—or it should be—because it set up spurious polarities between two theories, each with reliable and sensible claims on validity.

No, what I wish to look for is a set of genetically evolved features whose evolutionary potential makes probable the emergence of the "dynamic duo," both cultural and biological inheritance trajectories and the increase in fitness provided for by their interactions and independence. Here I would vote for a set of features adapted recently (Cohen 1981) from earlier work (Waddington 1960). These are restraint, learning from authority—therefore the capacity to take instruction—and a sense of right and wrong, or morality, which I see as evolving from the brain's capacity for abstraction (which has many other deep and important potentialities). To these suggestive beginnings I would add echo responses to distress signaling from recent work in psychology. Let me summarize these genetic codings briefly before going on to a new perspective on sociocultural syndromes, including altruism, that I now imagine
to have evolved as a biological and sociocultural set of traits—and that are still evolving to enhance our fitness as a species.

**Restraint as Fitness**

Dominance seeking without a complementary or dialectical counterforce is injurious to reproductive success. As noted above, dominance is an inevitable outcome of competition and scarcity. However, it must be reconciled with group life. Although we have evolved from a primate background shot through with dominance striving, it is at the same time tempered with restraint capabilities that are just as necessary to survival. Kaplan's (1976) work on rhesus macaque hostile encounters, and Kummer's (1971) provocative work on baboon courting behavior both support the conclusion that normal behavioral arenas of dominance striving (fighting and courting) have associated restraint features in the behavioral repertoires of competing males. These balancing features run counter to dominance hierarchy but enable group structure and constituent relations to survive. In a significant number of dominance fights Kaplan (1976) observed subdominants unite to protect one of their members, stimulating restraint by the dominant but no overall change in group structure. Kummer (1971) found that regardless of dominance, once a courtship relation had been established it stimulated restraint behavior by the noncourting male. Certainly it has been noticed for many years that peripherals in primate groups who restrain sexual drives, learning when, and when not, to advance behind the back of the dominant male toward the oestrus females, do better than the "hotheads." Restraint capacity controls dominance and reward seeking, allowing the animal to assess perceptual signals, process the information, and make a more advantageous response. Given the drive feature of dominance and gratification striving, restraint capacities—holding back on reward seeking to plan a strategy, learning how to avoid an enemy, or to outwit a rival—is a modifier that is associated with increased fitness. Dominance striving is best served, then, by a balanced selection for restraint, which in turn selects for more capable and efficient information processing, and patterned reactions to this information that allow for more adaptive responses—that is, for learning.
Learning—from Authority

Having to constrain to achieve rewards within a group enables other forms of advances to be made in the direction of greater neural capacities. The greater the rewards and the fitness accorded to individual and group behavior, the greater the need for restraint and the greater the capacity for learning by information transfers, signals, and the passage of adaptive capacities in nongenetic forms of acquired—that is, learned—traits. To carry this down generations we must bond to authority figures, generally parents, and have a genetically evolved capacity to copy, or learn from them (Waddington 1960). In this sense, authority, and heeding authority models, aids fitness, if the information being learned contributes to increased reproductive success.

Morality: The Transmission of Tradition

Learning capacity and tradition imply another biologically based trait system—morality or oughtness. The passing of information and instructions through learning and authority subsumes the inherent ability to label some variants right, others wrong. More broadly, and logically, long-term and stable tool traditions such as presapiens Mousterian, and the later and more various paleolithic industries associated with the rise of our own species, employed reinforcements to learning over several millennia of fairly stabilized transmissions of behavioral features through nongenetic means. That is to say, for cultural tradition to appear and obtain its dominant position in our adaptation as a species, there had to be ways to restrict behavioral variances in order to sustain the identifiable cultural patterns down the generations. The most efficient form of heritable transmission is through normalizing selection in which variants are disfavored and previously evolved patterns are favored in the learning process. Other explanations would logically involve copying, which produces more frequent variations, or each generation learning the tradition anew, which would produce even more variants. Logically then it is plausible that heritable transmission of tradition by learning requires acquiring a sense of “right” and “wrong” through instructions, followed by “right” and “wrong” behavioral responses for doing things “culturally.” It follows that a capacity to evaluate one’s own behavior and that of others in moral terms is a basic prerequisite
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for the working of the dual inheritance model—meaning our capacity to use both genes and culture as adaptive modes. I am postulating, therefore, that *morality should be seen as a cause, not a result, of culture.* Humankind the tool maker was above all an animal with a genetic capacity to label and teach and enforce a “sense” of right and wrong. The material remains survive and so we mistakenly give them causal priority. But somehow our ancestors made the jump to cultural life, tool making, burials, and the prohibition of incest behavior, among a myriad of transmissible regulations, by assessing some activities correct, right, acceptable, and some beyond a tolerated variance. Some things done, produced, or acted out were incorrect, wrong, and unacceptable. Consensus among group members about patterned behaviors increased the fitness of individuals who were able to attach normative significance to patterned transmissible behaviors. Incest behavior predates incest prohibitions in evolution. The prohibition turns the adaptive pattern into a cultural rule that reinforces and adds adaptive capacities to any genetic instructions that determine the behavior, without the prohibition. In effect, and of central importance to cultural evolution, moral assessments building on the enabling capacity of genetically determined dominance striving, restraint, and learning have combined to become the governing features of nongenetically transmitted information. Cultural transmission of information down the generations requires some kind of restriction or censor on variance away from selected adaptations. In this sense morality—the capacity to sense oughtness—is a prerequisite of cultural tradition.

**Criticism: The Fundamental Adaptation**

And underlying this set of biological instructions is an even more generic one: that of *abstraction*, the capacity to perceive and remember similarities among differences, and differences across similarities, and then to recall these for comparison with other abstractions. This allows us to *assess*. Other animals do this as well. We do it in a quantum leap of expanded capacity that is the basis for our most exorbitantly human quality: that of creating brain images for comparisons of quantities, qualities, relations, and modalities—that is, of significance and explanation. Beyond this most general level, which also explains generalization, the perception of causality, and of metaphor—the bases of human un-
derstanding—is the notion of critical assessment. What we learn, and learn to expect, can be compared with what we experience, and the degree of similarity or difference can be assessed. We are thus programmed for appraisal of our culture as well as for learning, transmission, and conformity. When our learned patterns, moralized into rightness and wrongness, don't fit, we can compare expectations and imagine a better "fit" between behavior and goals. In this sense critical analysis, and examining our hedonic reward-seeking goals in relation to the constraints of sociocultural traditions (intergenerational transmission of learned behavior) is a major means for natural selection at the nongenetic level. We not only transmit adaptation behaviorally, but we can also select new or low-frequency variants and increase their frequency when they prove adaptive.

**Psychobiological Factors**

The above features summarize some of the biologically based capacities not discussed in my original assumption of an hedonic actor constrained into adaptive behavior through the evolution of altruistic rules and moral teachings. There are, no doubt, many others. For example, research on prosocial behavior in psychology has produced promising results in the search for brain mechanisms that foster specifiable behavioral outcomes. This has led to theories and research on the opioid hypothesis (Panskepp 1986, 22–49) of social affect. This work correlates brain opioid systems with separation distress, echo response to distress signals, and the strengthening of social bonds. Proponents believe that this particular research strategy has already uncovered an important basis in genetically programmed brain organization and its development among maturing individuals for gregariousness, maternal behavior, dominance, sexual behavior, social displays, affective vocalizations, and social bonding. Ultimately, although still hypothetical, it is suggested that this thrust may lead researchers to posit organically influenced brain features that stimulate altruistic activity in the biological sense (ibid., 44). And there is more. Humans are unique in the amount of guilt they can bring to bear on their own reactions. Dogs have been observed to produce some of it, and chimpanzees show an ability to make reparations for wrongdoing. Nevertheless, humans show by far the greatest (biologically based?) capacity both for experiencing guilt and for bringing
shame and blame on others (Zahn-Waxler 1986, 312). Clearly, this feature enables and supports the development of behaviorally transmittable moral teachings. There are, in other words, a number of biologically evolved features that together provide humans with a bundle of capacities for the selection and retention of the more complex form of altruism embodied in our cultural traditions.

The field is complex. Still, it is clear that genetic coding for brain-organized reactions is a necessary foundation for the varied architecture of altruism manifest in human sociocultural systems. Simply assuming an hedonic actor constrained by the adaptive features of evolved traditions of altruism overlooks the enabling role of genetic evolution. Although I would still opt for the primary or at least necessary causal status of cultural factors whose evolution has produced altruism as we know it, there is no doubt they interact with and build on biologically based features.

THE EVOLUTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Having established the dual origins of our altruistic capacities as a species, let me now discuss how this feature helps produce what I call civil society. This is an emergent quality that selects for the rapid expansion of commonly held moral constraints. Kant’s notion of universal moral imperatives was wrong for his times, right for a future that has now arrived. In effect an increasing number of societies are beginning to accept universally agreed-upon moral rulings applicable to all persons. Between 1928 and 1980 there have been well over one hundred declarations by international and regional organizations and unions of states concerning the rights of persons and collectivities. No other period in world history has witnessed such a flood of universally applicable and widely endorsed moral principles. Although this admittedly optimistic view can always be defeated by events, one of the major selective factors in this historic pulse of proclamations was the Holocaust of World War II, an event so powerful in its impact that it promulgated a shift in the way we as a species see our responsibilities to one another. In the rest of this essay I wish to expand on these ideas sufficiently to explain this rather turgid summary.

Civil Society

The idea of civil society has been with us for a long time. Early Enlightenment writers used it to refer to humanity’s gain under a
social contract in which unrestrained egoism is restricted in accordance with the legitimate rights of others, guaranteed by an authoritative state (Locke 1946, 343). Others (e.g., Burke 1987, 237) suggested that religious teaching indicated civility to be part of God's will, although sacerdotal origins were just as often disputed (Rousseau 1946, 121–22; Hooker 1946, 333–37). For these early thinkers civil society meant the rules of a tranquil and ordered social life, government, and the functions performed by moral obligations in a society whose members respect, obey, and enforce virtue.

Later, civil society expanded to include society's nongovernmental realm. This view argues that without "political society" the private sector or civil society was one of unrestrained Hobbesian egoism pitting individuals against one another outside the restraining capacity of the state (Giddens 1971, 5) This approach (put forward most forcefully by Hegel) sees civil society as chaos requiring order, justice, and authority by the state to represent and enforce the moral consciousness of society as a whole (Kolakowski 1978, 1:94–96). Marx (1977) decried the separation of civil and political realms, calling for a "revolutionary" integration of state and society. Civil and political activity will eventually be unified within a new Socialist/postcapitalist human personality, making the restraining power of the state unnecessary. Evolution will then stop because of the triumph of true civility—the natural outcome of a just and classless social order (brought into being by the absolute power of revolutionary leaders).

In more recent times civic culture is more often associated with democratization. Using economic theory, Hayek (1973) argues that optimizing individuals are a constant selective pressure for increased democratization because this organizational context maximizes their personal degrees of freedom. Almond (1988) theorizes that human evolution involves an inevitable increase in liberal democracy, or what he calls the civic culture. Operationally, this means the selection and retention of more enlightened political forms—universal suffrage, representative government, political decisions made through rational and deliberative processes, and the protection of human rights. Theoretically, these optimistic outcomes will supplant more authoritarian forms. And worldwide trends in this direction, plus the failure of many overcentralized governments (Wunsch and Olowu 1990), have now revived interest in these earlier ideas.
Elsewhere (Cohen 1992), I have theorized that the capacity for assessment, for the evolution of increased force and scope of altruistic cultural demands, and a capacity for critical reaction to social and political life are embodied in a redefinition of civil society. This is a normative concept of individual and collective reactions and rule making that isolates processes by which populations come to demand greater democracy and rights protection. It includes within it both civil (i.e., nongovernmental social) life, and civility, or rules and behaviors toward other persons and groups that take their welfare into account as well as one’s own. So far I have isolated three levels of interaction in which such rules and performances occur; these are (1) reactions by individuals and groups to rules and performances that create just and unjust outcomes, (2) reactions propagated by the culture to the public or even humanity’s interest rather than one’s own individual or parochial group membership(s), and (3) the degree of civility that can be and should be expected in everyday life. In this latter dimension the civil society concept refers to a culturally defined obligation to positively value and practice norms of sympathy and empathy for others, and to exhibit active or measurable concern for their welfare beyond the boundaries of ethnicity and kinship.

The first quality refers to humanity’s capacity to critically assess fairness outcomes of both governmental and private performances. This provides a constant selective pressure from aggregated grievances for changes in the rules and their performances. It is a quality I have called “endless tears,” which embodies the notion that governed populations ultimately select (morally significant) reforms through pressure and choice. The entire process is dependent upon the degree to which “rights talk” (Ackerman 1980) is allowed in a society. Critical assessment from pulpits, the arts, the press, social science, and autonomous organizations constantly attempt to aggregate individual unfairness reactions to initiate reform. The degrees of freedom (or democratization) allowed in the society then predicts to its capacity to marshal the critical capacity of individuals for adaptive purposes (Cohen 1992). The second aspect refers to the evolution of increased scale in the inclusiveness of the moral universe (see below), which extends moral injunctions to groups and individuals previously excluded. The third component refers to the cultural evolution of more, not less, altruistic beliefs, customs, and performances—that is, empathic, sympathetic, and gratuitous generosity or sacrifice. Together these features make up
what I am calling the civil society, one in which altruistic actions can become incorporated into cultural regulations.

All of this is just a start. It is apparent in the above that I see civil society as a kind of "ideal type"—a teleological causality, in evolutionary terms, or a goal towards which humanity is learning to set its course, is struggling towards, selecting variants that further its force (intensity within individual character) and scope (degree to which it pervades numbers and kinds of institutions) in our cultures. It is being selected for, at the very least, because of its obvious merits and the frequency of its acceptance among more developed societies. Although the concept of civility needs more work, it is clear that similar ideas underlie many of humanity's most revered religious and political teachings (Aron 1980). In effect, it is a systematic attempt to find the best form of social life and the means to its achievement (Wolfe 1989). In evolutionary terms, because I prefer that paradigm, it is a target we can aim at intentionally, and in so doing obtain increased fitness for an uncertain future.

Selective Factors

There is a vast array of factors that theoretically select for civil society. Generally, such selection involves some contribution or sacrifice of personal rewards for the benefits of a larger group. Unfortunately, this sociobiological criterion is somewhat specious at the sociocultural level since it is easy to rationalize personal benefits resulting from individual sacrifice for the larger group. This being so, let me point to a number of candidates for selective pressures, ending with the one most apposite to the focus of this volume.

First and foremost there is the rising concern around the world with public over private concerns. However it comes about, whatever are the local and the more general causes, the principle remains the same. As people become more convinced that their private fates are deeply and directly affected by publicy based activity, concern with public affairs increases. Sacrificing time and resources for more public, more collective good, always considered to be morally desirable, is becoming more customary. Even large business corporations are devoting resources to "community relations," corporate responsibilities, and business ethics. Reasons for such actions may be prudential rather than altruistic but the
end result is a more civil society, one whose actors perform more altruistically. In the West an enormous increase in home ownership since World War II (30 percent in 1940, 66 percent in 1980) has turned people’s attention to problems of property and investment and to the local governments whose policies and actions affect this enormous stake in personal wealth. Added to this are problems of education, crime, and, most recently, the environment—a problem that links local to national and global affairs, thereby imposing public concerns onto private welfare. In the rest of the world, access to scarce resources, massive public sector corruption, human rights, personal security and liberties known to be enjoyed elsewhere, the importance of cultural traditions challenged by modernism and the state, and a host of other factors have led to increased concern for, attempts to participate in, and efforts to obtain greater control over, the public life of the state. Because of its critical and moral basis this effort has in some instances led to religious fundamentalism, or radical political movements, ethnic conflict, civil wars, and so on. But it is also leading to a worldwide democracy movement that is pressing for wider participation in, and sacrifice for, social groups beyond kin and ethnicity in the economy and the polity. A very probable outcome is the strengthening of civility—cultural demands and regulations that call for increased fairness, less egoistic, less parochial, and more civic-minded performances.

Secondly, the end of Cold War tensions has eroded the backdrop of conflict influencing an inordinate amount of postwar public affairs. If the major powers are seeking a more civil way of solving differences, if time and effort spent on conflict is decreasing in the major arenas of national and international life, and if the means to increased development and human welfare do not in fact lie so clearly in conflict, then possibly we are on the verge of rejecting conflict as a viable or even fruitful way to solve problems. There are indications from all round the world that conflict-laden issues and relations are calming down, and that peaceful, more just, more civil solutions are not impossible. A cultural theme that has world-wide appeal, one of peaceful and hopefully increasingly fair resolutions of conflict, is quite measurably blanketing the world. Possibly it is just a momentary pause resulting from a lack of successful outcomes in the last few decades. Viet Nam and Afghanistan come to mind, but interethnic conflicts in the Third World, and both leftist and rightist extremism almost everywhere,
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illustrate the point just as well. The Near East may be an exception or a means by which the world community unites to try to suppress older-style conflicts. The Hegelian-Marxian notion that progress can result only from struggle may be giving way to a more Kropotkinlike vision. That human advance is dependent on peaceful cooperation, a sense of common problems and shared destiny, along with a sense that local problems should be handled locally. Whatever it is, or why, there is very little doubt in my mind that it is upon us—a new and infectious spirit of peace, strengthening the hands of those who seek more civil ways of handling conflict, both within and between societies. Perchance it is ephemeral. On the other hand, it is a trait or syndrome whose time of selection for world and local conflict resolution has arrived—possibly because older, more conflict-laden solutions have failed. Whether of long or short duration, it seems clear that while it is upon us, this new mood of Pax humana will help us to overcome some terrifying or just irritating conflicts and to go forward in our capacity to invent lasting techniques for doing so. Hopefully, this means developing cultural traditions and political techniques for greater degrees of conflict resolution and therefore for enhanced civility. In evolution nothing is certain. Actual, rather than hoped-for, directions are apparent only after the fact—and as with all life forms, extinction is always an option.

Thirdly, and hearkening back to my previous work (Cohen 1978), there are worldwide indications for an increase in nuclearization of family life. As I pointed out in that paper, sociocultural “scolding,” as Campbell (1978) described it, has a much greater chance of becoming an actual feature of people’s internalized dispositions and behavior when families are nuclear and role models both impart and reward the development of affect in human relationships. In effect this means that the change from shame to guilt, to having civility and its altruistic components as part of individual character structure rather than cultural regulation, is a function of the nuclearization process. And within that process the internalization occurs, I suggest, most fulsomely under conditions of long-term stable parent-child relations. Affectivity is a major component determining our capacity for empathy and sympathy as an important part of the maturation process. In many societies mothers reject their children as part of the weaning process. In large extended families with high turnover of personnel, emotional investment in persons is destructive for the smooth operations of households
(Cohen 1971). In more general terms, the affective aspects of adult personality can be inhibited by cultural regulations that call for early childhood rejection, by high divorce rates (over 50 percent of all marriages end in breakups), and by large extended family settings where children are taught to respond unemotionally to rules governing roles rather than developing the capacity to invest emotionally in interpersonal relations (Cohen 1978). Altruism in cultural traditions without affective depth in individuals produces an incapacity to genuinely internalize such teachings (ibid.). This in turn produces a tension in which altruistic acts are more likely to be used for self-gratification, competition, and increased personal status. However, the increase in family nuclearization, if it is paired with low divorce rates (under 50 percent of unions end in divorce) and family stability during children’s younger years, is theoretically associated with increased development of affectivity, and an increased capacity to internalize altruistic demands and behave more civilly (ibid.). This argument requires more space than I am able to devote to it here, and it should now be integrated into a dual inheritance model that incorporates biologically stimulated behaviors such as echo responses. In any event, this line of theorizing leads plausibly to the conclusion that evolutionary trends among sociocultural patterns spreading across many societies are moving in the direction of greater psychosocial expressions and performances of civility and its altruistic components.

FROM TRIBALISM TO UNIVERSALISM: ALTRUISM AS THE END OF MORAL BOUNDARY

The most powerful selective factor in bringing about a civil society is that of increased scale in the scope of the moral universe. The development and ideological emergence of civil society is constrained by cultural definitions of membership. Most often these are in ethnic terms—that is, a process of we/they dichotomizations triggered by multiple markers that define common memberships (Cohen 1978a). These markers—religion, physical appearance, language, citizenship, region of birth, common customs, and so on—define ethnic boundaries. They also vary enormously in scale. For example, as an empirically valid cultural identity “Christendom” cross-cuts nationalities, languages, and other localized markers of common descent. Thus triggering variables are not always in exact congruence. One’s religion may incorporate a number of group
memberships, one's region of birth another set, and one's citizenship still another. This lack of necessary congruence among identities makes ethnicity into a process as much as an entity. Different determinants, especially situations, conflicts, ambitious leaders looking for followers, and other factors constantly trigger our loyalties to separate groupings defined by a distinguishing identity marker. I may be loyal or concerned as a citizen in one situation, and react against other citizens as a member of a region or town in other situations. Thus identities are multiple and varying in their scope of inclusion. The we of me is an accordionlike set of features.

Secondly, ethnic boundaries often define the applicable loci of moral injunction. Outside an ethnically defined moral universe the individual finds himself and herself in the realm of potential enemies. But the moral universe refers to two levels of inclusiveness. First there is the level of belief and of moral teaching, second the level of actual practice—the group one feels closest to in terms of a shared moral tradition. In many cultures there are often fellow creatures outside the group to whom moral rules apply either in belief terms or practice, or both. For most of human social evolution these moral boundaries are delimited primarily by ethnicity. But there are always penumbral arenas at the edges of the moral universe where interacting persons and groups are partly in, partly outside the boundaries. Thus, among the Orakaiva of New Guinea (Williams 1936) intervillage warfare was endemic. The people also practiced strict village exogamy. Visiting one's in-laws, or even arranging a marriage, or a wedding, could easily end or even begin with violence. Under such circumstances women became ambassadors back to their home territories, and marriage ceremonies often involved mock battles in which the bride was ritually captured. On the other side of the world among the Bura of Nigeria, where I have done field work, and where intervillage hostility is still remembered, intervillage marriages were often planned as a kind of fake kidnapping (some were real). The bride was ritually captured amid a show of violence to sever her forcibly from her kin while arranging to compensate her group for the loss in order to restore peace. In both places the boundary of the moral universe is the village community itself. But the surrounding villages may be dealt with and some mutual agreements reached to alleviate their status as outsiders, enemies, people beyond the sphere of mutual trust to whom moral rules do not apply. The same thing
occurs for institutions of blood brotherhood, in which a stranger, for reasons of trade or some other form of alliance, is turned into kin in order to travel safely across the boundaries of the moral universe.

One more point is important. In a few instances, the traditions of moral injunctions have universalistic qualities so that the moral universe, the "we" to whom moral rules apply, is all of humanity, or all living things, or even all entities since spiritual existence may be extended to include beings and objects identified by traditions and personal experience. But as already noted, this is not always congruent with other we/they dichotomizations. Thus Israelis and Palestinians each practice universalistic religions that grant moral rights to all humans, but many in each ethnic group see the other as outsider, beyond the practical and realistic boundaries of each other's moral universe. (See the chapter by Ian Vine in this volume.)

In Europe, as Marx (1977) pointed out, the Jew has always been the stranger in our midst, inside economy and society, outside religion—that is to say outside the most profound symbolic expression of European morality. The same thesis was put forward more recently by the anthropologist Sir Edmund Leach (1984) in his attempt to explain the work of Jewish anthropologists in Britain. He notes how these men tried desperately, and pathetically he claims, to become part of the non-Jewish intellectual establishment. And this he feels, with Marx (ibid.), is part of the timeless Jewish dilemma, to ask for full membership in the sociocultural and political community of Christendom, and yet also to demand the right to remain outside its buttressing beliefs, and therefore its version of, and regulatory teachings about, morality and legitimacy. What both these authors miss is the fundamental claim of catholicity in Christendom's vision of the moral universe and the enormous overlap in the content of both religions' moral regulations. More importantly for the present discussion, both Christianity and Judaism profess species-wide applicability and membership in their conception of the God-given bounds of the moral universe. The Judeo-Christian tradition is clearly one in which morality ordained by a universal God applies to humanity as a whole, not only to coreligionists. In practice of course each religious community has a more limited scale of inclusiveness, involving primarily those others with whom, historically, the force of the moral life is more intensely shared. Those outside these
groups are less deserving, less likely to be included in the moral universe. In this sense each community challenges the universality of the other's moral principles. In the rest of the world similar problems abound. The place of the Afro-American in U.S. culture, the struggle for human rights in multiethnic societies of Africa—indeed wherever pluralism exists, or should exist, the moral universe as idealized versus its practice is in conflict and tension. Marx (ibid.) suggested that such differentiation—he used the Jew as an appropriate example—could never succeed in producing a "species-being," one concerned with, and morally involved in, all humanity. Only a common ideology, communism, and the overthrow of older class differences could in his view produce an appropriate support for a species-wide moral universe that was practicable as well as ideal.

But in fact we are, all of us, aware of the universality intrinsically woven into our moral teachings. A few, because of factors of rearing, of communal life, and of role models in school, in church, and in peer groups, are fortunate or unfortunate enough to have internalized these ideal scoldings as a determinant characterological trait. This quality of personality, of integrity (i.e., integration of ideal and real), makes such individuals difficult to live with, moral irritants in a world of compromise. But by the same token, activating the ideal keeps it alive. When a culture possesses a universally applicable concept of the moral universe that ought to be applied universally, but that is limited in practice, then the very existence of such teaching guarantees variance in practice. No matter how few, there are bound to be those who have internalized the larger-scaled, more inclusive bonds of the moral universe into fully incorporated personal norms. This was the meaning and the function of the rescuing behavior of Jews during the Holocaust. Caught in a conflict between the abrogation of moral rules for the sake of safety and conformity and compliance with the ideals internalized into their characters, a few non-Jews could not act against their own character and understanding. For them rescue behavior was the only possible response to a society acting contrary to its own most hallowed virtues.

There is clearly more to it than that. In terms of my own theoretical argument, and those of other chapters in this volume, these people were the products of upbringings that produced the altruistic or civil response, one that made them sympathetic and
empathic with the sufferers. Their generosity and possible sacrifice of personal safety for Jewish victims was, however, in my view, the activation of critical assessments (or "extensivity") that defined a moral universe in which Jews were included, even though the theme of the day was to ratify and legitimize Leach’s position, that Jews are self-selected for exclusion by the heritable transmission of their own outsider culture. Once the definition of universal moral universe is made, cognitively, then affect responses that determine sympathy and empathy intensify the civility/altruism, making the saving behavior logical, albeit in no way less heroic.

CONCLUSION

As we move forward in a direction (among many possible outcomes) toward a world in which the moral universe is no longer defined by our particular subspecies memberships, we also move towards the achievement of what I call the "civil society" (Cohen 1992). In this essay I have tried to show how our human altruism is involved in that possible outcome, how we are evolving a cultural conception of a civil society, and how a number of factors are operating to select for such an outcome. The rescuing behavior of non-Jews towards Jews was a milestone, as in even more intense ways was the Holocaust itself, in the evolution of universally applicable moral rules. Kant’s categorical imperatives have come of age. Now to survive we must expand our moral universe to include humanity as a whole. And the process seems to be underway.

The meaning and the importance of the Holocaust is both singular and selective for our evolutionary next steps. It is singular in that its use of a partial and ethnicized moral universe led to the abrogation of all claims of moral legitimacy. Using insider/outside distinctions leaves a social space for victimization that in the modern world can mean horror on a massive and unjust scale. On a more general evolutionary level it means we have been challenged to make sure that all claims to moral legitimacy are, and must be, based on the species-wide relevance and practice of our moral rules. There is no room left for parochialism in the moral universes of our many cultures. And this is now a rising pressure selecting among possibilities for our future. As with almost everything else, something good came out of something awesomely evil.
REFERENCES


