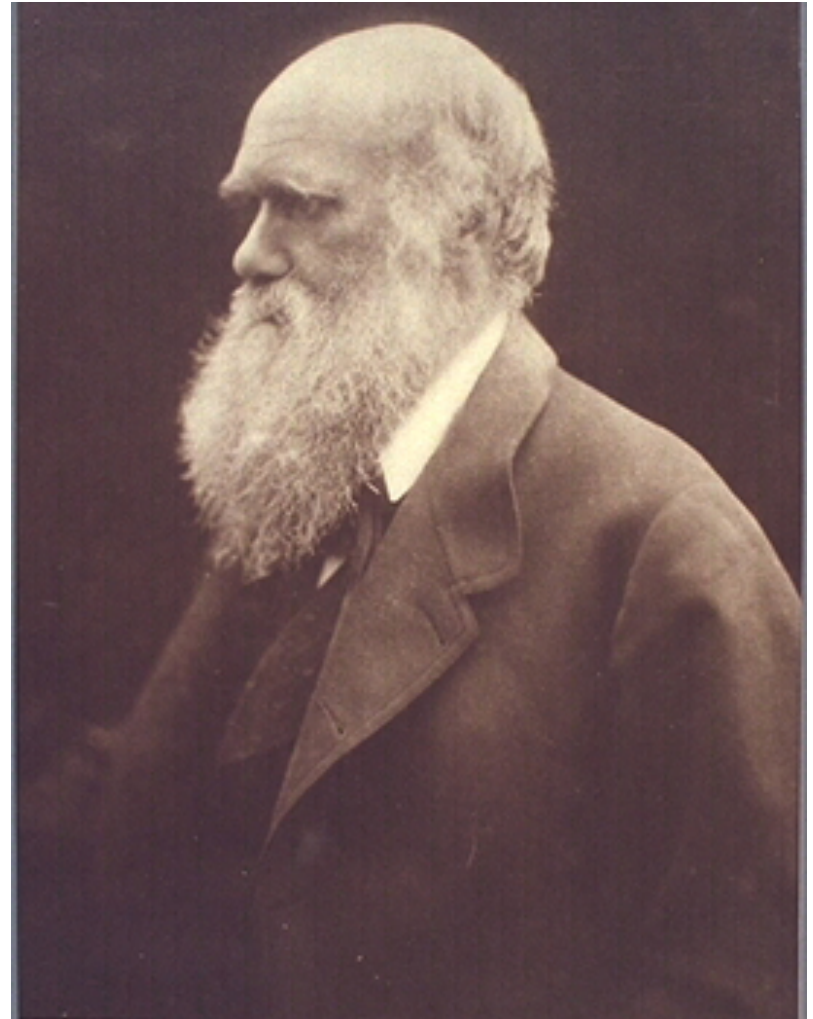


# Darwinian Evolutionary Morality



Charles Darwin (1809-1882); photo  
(1868) by Julia Cameron

## Usual Assumptions about Darwinian Morality

1. It's dog-eat-dog, survival of the fittest—no room for traditional notions of morality—religious sources.
2. It leads to the neglect and destruction of the weak, those with disabilities.
3. It's the kind of morality that led to Hitler and the extermination camps.

*New People:  
Journal of the  
Office of Race and  
Politics of the  
N.S.D.A.P.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> volume, 1934*



# FROM DARWIN TO HITLER

Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany



Richard Weikart



RICHARD WEIKART

# HITLER'S ETHIC

THE NAZI PURSUIT OF  
EVOLUTIONARY PROGRESS

## Darwin's Moral Theory

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From Darwin's *N Notebook*, pp. 1-3

“Dog obeying instinct of running hare is stopped by fleas, also by greater temptation as bitch. . . Now if dogs mind were so framed that he constantly compared his impressions, & wished he had done so & so for his interest, & found he disobeyed a wish which was part of his system, & constant, for a wish which was only short & might otherwise have been relieved, he would be sorry or have troubled conscience. --Therefore I say grant reason to any animal with social & sexual instincts & yet with passion he must have conscience—this is capital view. Dogs conscience would not have been same with mans because original instincts different.”



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2. The problem of the social insects becomes acute in 1840s
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Two casts of workers in a single leaf-cutter nest; they show extreme dimorphism of size.



*Atta cephalotes*, the head of a soldier

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2. The problem of the social insects becomes acute in 1840s
  - a. Worker ants and bees are neuters, so they cannot pass their advantages to offspring.
  - b. Solution is a kind of group selection—community selection.
  - c. Hence, altruistic behavior could be explained by selection working on whole nest or tribe, not on the individual.

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## Community Selection of Moral Behavior

It must not be forgotten that although a high standard of morality gives but a slight or no advantage to each individual man and his children over the other men of the same tribe, yet that an advancement in the standard of morality and an increase in the number of well-endowed men will certainly give an immense advantage to one tribe over another. There can be no doubt that a tribe including many members who, from possessing in a high degree the spirit of patriotism, fidelity, obedience, courage, and sympathy, were always ready to give aid to each other and to sacrifice themselves for the common good, would be victorious over most other tribes; and this would be natural selection. At all times throughout the world tribes have supplanted other tribes; and as morality is one element in their success, the standard of morality and the number of well-endowed men will thus everywhere tend to rise and increase” (Darwin, *Descent of Man*, p. 166).



3. Added problems arising from Wallace and R. Gregg—the Irish
  - a. In case of morality, it is positively detrimental to those exhibiting it—the English vs. the Irish
  - b. Darwin sees how to explain altruistic behavior with his theory of community selection.
  - c. Then in small tribes, moral behavior would be a trait directed to welfare of the group; social learning would indicate what actions are for the good of the group.
    - 1) Good is interpreted for the welfare of the group, not its pleasure—hence anti-utilitarian.

“In however complex a manner this feeling [of sympathy] may have originated, as it is one of high importance to all those animals which aid and defend each other, it will have increased, through natural selection; for those communities, which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best and rear the greatest number of offspring.”

Darwin, *Descent of Man*, vol. 1, p. 82.

## Three sources of altruism

1. Praise and Blame, which would encourage other regarding behavior.
2. 'Reciprocal Altruism'— motivation is implicit promise of future aid.
3. 'Pure Altruism'—instilled through community selection.

Four requirements of conscience—that is, for moral judgment and behavior

1. Well-developed social or altruistic instincts.
2. Reasoning ability in a high degree.
3. Language
4. Inculcation of habits by instruction of family and community.

## Roles of Reason in Moral Judgment

1. To retain in memory and reflection unrequited altruistic impulses.
2. To determine what means are best for realizing the good (that is, the health, vigor, and welfare) of the community.
3. To determine who is a member of our community.

1. Praise & Blame; 2. Reciprocal Altruism

