Volume 3 Issue 4 2016

JCRL

Journal of Corporate Responsibility and Leadership

Contemporary Challenges in Corporate Social Responsibility

Genetic Determinants of Human Nature and their Consistency with Human Hedonism

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/JCRL.2016.021

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Abstract: This paper presents the synthetic sociobiological concept of human nature as devised by Edward Wilson and then expanded by Richard Dawkins and Robert Trivers, which on the one hand is subjected to critical analysis, and on the other hand verifies the consistency of the author's concept of the hedonistic nature of human action. As part of the analysis, the concept of maximum fitness with regard to humans is proven partially erroneous and the consistency of the remaining principles of sociobiology according to the author's concept of human action are demonstrated.

Key words: sociobiology, theory of evolution, human nature, hedonism.

1. Introduction

The fundamentals of modern sociobiology were formulated by Edward Wilson (1978), and were then expanded upon by Richard Dawkins and Robert Trivers, among others. Today, sociobiology has become a distinct scientific discipline with an impact on the development of many related disciplines; unfortunately, however, there is a general problem of too little interdisciplinary study along with a lack of a holistic approach

in explaining many of its principles and scientific theories. In addition, many scientists, despite taking the theory of evolution for granted, are privately guided by and are apologists for creationism. Such a dichotomy often results in either a failure to address the impact of religion on social behaviours or demands a possible merger in the theory of evolution and creationism which, in the light of science, would appear to be an unacceptable position.

In order to fill the cognitive gap, I will be linking the theory of evolution, the basic assumptions of sociobiology and my own theory of the hedonistic nature of human action. The aim of this article is to indicate a partial error in the accepted principle of maximum fitness in relation to human evolution modelled on the principles of sociobiology, and to demonstrate consistency in most of the principles of sociobiology with the theory of the hedonistic nature of human action. Operationalizing the aforementioned aim of the paper, the following research questions have been asked to organise the research process (1) What are the principles of sociobiology and how are they translated into human behaviours? (2) What are genetic differences between human beings and other species? (3) What is the role of religion in shaping human behaviours? (4) What are the relationships between sociobiology and the theory of the hedonistic nature of human action?

The principles of human action resulting from the theory of evolution, sociobiology and related sciences are also very important for economic sciences, including the theory of management. Human nature is, after all, a fundamental issue for all social sciences. Knowing both the characteristics of the permanent human nature that have evolved in the process of evolution and those that are variable and emerging in the process of socialization are indispensable conditions for a better understanding of human behaviours. This knowledge is a prerequisite for creating good business strategies. Therefore, sociobiology can be considered as a "theoretical orientation with the potential to explain micro-, meso- and macro-social processes which may be useful for management professionals"[1].

So far, the perspective of sociobiology has been rarely used in research within the field of management sciences. Therefore, the conceptual proof that principles of sociobiology can be applied in management theory and practice should be considered as the added value of the

[1] The author is grateful to the anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

paper. The study assumes that principles of human nature deriving from genetics and evolution processes go along with the hedonistic nature of human action. Certainly, such assumptions must be validated through the empirical procedure and the conceptual findings included in the paper provide the theoretical foundation for such studies.

2. Principles of sociobiology

The basic assumption of sociobiology, given by Edward Wilson (1978) in his work *On Human Nature*, is that patterns of behaviours are genetically programmed, and that the detailed principles of this theory, arising from the Darwinian theory of evolution, are as follows:

- the principle of maximising Darwinian fitness, which consists of natural selection and the pursuit of the transfer (introduction) of the greatest number of individuals with the genes of a particular individual to the next generation. This principle applies to all animals (including *Homo sapiens*) and all categories of behaviours, hereinafter referred to as the principle of maximising fitness;
- the principle of inclusive fitness, which extends Darwinian fitness and explains altruistic behaviours, which in reality are not a manifestation of altruism but in fact are self-serving, assuming the achievement of one's own benefit. Inclusive fitness involves altruistic behaviours towards related individuals, which consequently leads to the reproduction of one's own genes and is the true maximisation of one's own fitness;
- altruism in favour of strangers, originally described by Trivers, assumes reciprocity, which is calculated in terms of a future return, and with payback. This type of altruism has been called reciprocal and also takes into account the likelihood of fraud and the failure of the beneficiary to return the favour.

The most important conclusion from these principles is that they are genetically programmed. This is due to the genetic evolution of humans and affects the entire species without exception, which translates to their being unambiguously assigned to human nature. The implications that should result from these rules can be very useful for understanding the majority of human behaviours; however, they must not be accepted uncritically. Some of the most important are (Reykowski and Bielicki, 1997):

• nepotism, which is a simple reflection of the principle of inclusive fitness on the occurrence of altruistic behaviours towards family members and the absence of such behaviours towards strangers if they are not a guarantee of reciprocity;

• the increase in altruistic behaviours is positively correlated with age, which follows directly from the principle of maximum fitness. Those of childbearing age are less prone to altruism, as they are primarily focused on spreading their own genes. Once elderly, humans show a greater propensity for altruism, but here there is a negative correlation with respect to the age of the beneficiary, that is, the younger the person the more likely they are to rely on the altruistic behaviour of an older person. Such a behaviour, however, is related to the principle of inclusive fitness, because it primarily occurs amongst family members, which may contribute to the spreading of genes, and in the case of strangers almost only when the probability of reciprocity is high;

• a direct result of the principle of maximum fitness is the difference in sexual behaviours between men and women. A woman's strategy should be giving birth to as many children as possible during her childbearing years, while being with a partner who can provide the appropriate economic conditions for her and her children. In the case of men, it would be logical to have relationships with the maximum number of partners in order to exploit their reproductive capabilities to the maximum extent. These strategies would translate into a monogamous approach of women and a polygamous approach of men with regard to sexual behaviour.

It is worth considering whether these principles, which are implications of Darwinian evolution and the principles of sociobiology, are observable facts. In the first case, it can definitely be said to be so. This can be seen in many areas, both in family behaviours, when parents behave in an altruistic way towards their children, as well as, for example, in politics, when we observe the nepotism of politicians both towards their relatives and to members of their own political party. On the other hand, when analysing the psychological principle of reciprocity, the situation occurs when a person experiencing an act of altruism on the part of a stranger feels an obligation to reciprocate. This example shows that altruism from a stranger is an unnatural phenomenon and results in an inner need on the part of the recipient to reciprocate. This condition, on the other hand, does not always appear between family members, who often believe altruistic behaviours to be natural when

it concerns people close to them. The above reasoning also explains another principle that clarifies behavioural changes occurring with ageing in humans. The last of the principles relating to the different sexual behaviours of men and women is certainly an observable phenomenon, although it goes beyond the desire to maximise the expansion of one's own genotype by seeking to have the maximum number of offspring. It is worth noting that the phenomenon of male polygamy still exists today in some communities and is considered to be natural.

3. Genetic nature of *Homo sapiens*

In the course of the discussion, the question arises as to whether human beings are in their genetic nature different from other species of animals living on Earth. Such an approach may also allow a critical analysis of the principles of sociobiology. From a review of the literature and observation, the following conclusions concerning humans may be drawn:

- they are not entirely subject to the principle of maximum fitness;
- they are one of only a few species to have self-awareness of their own existence;
- they are the only species to have self-awareness of their own mortality;
- they are only species that have sex not only for procreation and are also one of the few species that derives pleasure from sex;
- they are the only species to have created religion.

In the case of maximum fitness it would seem that humans, at least in modern times, have never been guided by this principle and have not multiplied in order to maximise the spread of their genes. Even if until recently multiple children were the norm in most countries, this was more the result of a precautionary approach to old age and the expectations of parents' own benefit in having large families who could support them when they were unable to work, and not from the Darwinian principle of maximum fitness. If we look at a contemporary fertility rate table, it clearly shows that, especially in those countries which have pension systems and a high degree of economic development, fertility rates are usually at about 2 children or lower, which is contrary to the principle of maximum fitness. These figures are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Comparison of worldwide wealth and birth rates (10 wealthiest and 10 poorest countries)

No.	Country	GDP per capita in PPP (in international dollars for 2015)	Fertility rate (2014)
1	Qatar	132,870	1.92
2	Luxembourg	99,506	1.77
3	Singapore	85,382	0.80
4	Brunei	79,508	1.82
5	Kuwait	70,542	2.53
6	Norway	68,591	1.86
7	United Arab Emirates	67,217	2.36
8	Ireland	65,806	2.00
9	San Marino	62,938	1.49
10	Switzerland	58,647	1.54
177	Madagascar	1,466	4.28
178	Eritrea	1,300	4.14
179	Guinea	1,238	4.66
180	Mozambique	1,192	5.27
181	Malawi	1,126	5.66
182	Niger	1,077	6.89
183	Liberia	875	4.81
184	Burundi	831	6.14
185	Democratic Republic of Congo	767	4.80
186	Central African Republic	628	4.46

Source: own compilation based on IMF data for wealth and The World Factbook for fertility rates.

The table shows that the fertility rate is negatively correlated with the wealth of a society, and small differences may result from accepted cultural patterns in the given communities. Self-awareness of one's own existence, and above all, self-awareness of one's own mortality is certainly a great difference of *Homo sapiens* in relation to other animal species and both have a huge impact on human behaviours. In particular, it is precisely these qualities of human consciousness which have contributed to religion.

4. The religion phenomenon

Religion and the tendency for beliefs are the most complex and powerful force in the human mind and an inalienable part of human nature (Wilson, 1978). The impulse in the creation of proto-religions was to satisfy human desire to prolong life beyond the threshold of death, and the desire for resurrection (Keller, Kotański, Tyloch and Kupis (Eds.), 1986). I believe, however, that this was not a desire, but rather a fear of death, of nothingness. Fear is much more important to human behaviour than desire. On the basis of this impulse all of today's major world religions were created and each of them promises life after death.

The original religion or proto-religion was Animism, i.e. the belief that people, animals, plants, natural phenomena, stars, planets, rivers, forests, mountains, lakes, some special places or even inanimate objects are spiritual beings with a soul. The concept of animism was devised by a British anthropologist, Edward Burnett Tylor, in the 1870s. According to his theory, which first appeared in the work entitled *Primitive Culture* (1871), a belief in spirits is the minimum necessary for the creation of a religion and was the earliest stages of its development. In this context, the question arises as to whether at this stage of human development, self-awareness of mortality had already crystallised and whether the fear of entering a state of nothingness was the cause of the belief in the existence of the soul, or whether this was the period preceding the emergence of self-awareness and beliefs were associated more with the observation of physiological behaviours such as sleep and death, when it would seem that some immaterial part (the soul) leaves the body during sleep and at death. It is this dual perception of the world that was the beginning of the birth of religion.

One of the key messages from all major contemporary religions is the continuation of life after death. Every religion tempts its followers with a reward, subject to appropriate behaviour over the course of their lives. Above all, they should follow the general principles of the faith. The end of existence that comes with death raises an age-old fear among all people, and this has been reflected in all religions. What awaits us after death is slightly different depending on the religion and, simplified, is as follows:

- Christianity, Islam, Judaism – after death a person is judged for his or her actions and faith in life. If the judgement is favourable,

he or she attains salvation, and is thus ensured a happy life in heaven. Otherwise, and, depending on the religion, the soul dies or is condemned to e.g. a life of suffering in hell or eternal separation from God;

- Hinduism, Buddhism – after death reincarnation occurs: all beings are born again, and depending on their behaviour in life they go to a higher or lower level of existence;
- Confucianism – the worthy dead becomes a part of the sky, a faceless entity controlling the world's fate.

In each of these religions, a person must earn their reward in the form of life after death. The most important demand would be ethical conduct consistent with the dictates of God.

The main question is what has caused the majority of the seven billion people living today to be one of the followers of these religions? Surely this should be regarded as a phenomenon. Is it simply the human fear of death? It would appear that this is not the only factor. It is also a human longing for justice and equality, which over the centuries has always been lacking and will continue to do so long into the future. It is an escape from a life where the constant pursuit of the realisation of often basic needs takes precedence, to one where the trials of everyday life, pain, inequality and injustice no longer exist. Visions of life after death, as proposed by religions, are a reward for a life in harmony with their doctrines.

At this point, a dilemma appears i.e. a duality in the perception of reality by scientists who are also believers, and not infrequently believers of creationism. Unfortunately, it is not possible to combine modern knowledge and belief in the study of reality, and in particular the principles of human action. This does not at all mean that people who believe are inferior or that religions are evil. On the contrary, most religions have moral principles that can and do contribute to the peaceful coexistence of people and communities. However, what must not be overlooked is the great influence of religion in a variety of human behaviours, including the negative, and those who are involved in the scientific explanation of human nature cannot ignore the influence of religion as an important cultural factor, and which may have some characteristics of a genetic factor.

5. Consistency of the rules of sociobiology with the theory of the hedonistic nature of human action

The concept of sociobiological principles discussed here is additional confirmation of the theory of the hedonistic nature of human action (Hoppe, 2014). This theory is based on the a *priori axiom* of human action devised by Ludwig von Mises (1998) and is consistent with a number of economic laws on human behaviour (Hoppe, 2015). Its main assumptions, which are axioms, are as follows (Hoppe, 2014):

- Human beings seek to achieve subjective and maximum subjective pleasure or benefits by their actions.
- Humans have both a short-term and a long-term aversion to risk – the fear of the risk of not obtaining pleasure, or a benefit, or the fear of experiencing something unpleasant.
- When humans decide between immediate pleasure or long-terms pleasures or benefits, they act so as to maximise gain.
- Individuals arrive at their own subjective definition of pleasure and benefit, which may change during their lifetime due to the influence of their surroundings.
- Every human action is determined by the functioning of both the unconscious and consciousness, with unconscious processes having priority when it comes to deciding on a given behaviour.
- The human unconscious is always oriented toward achieving pleasure or a benefit, while consciousness is shaped over an individual's lifespan by their environment, i.e. by culture, religion, moral and legal principles, upbringing and learning, and this is why humans may display attitudes other than hedonism.
- The human unconscious is primarily shaped by drives and instincts, in particular by the sex drive, which causes the unconscious to seek sexual pleasure.

Above all it should be noted that the main idea in the theory of human action is that every human being has a hedonistic attitude and a subjective perception of their surrounding reality and accepted values. Another important assumption is that fear in terms of a lack of gain / pleasure or of a sensation of unpleasantness is the most important factor in shaping human behaviour. This attitude is consistent with the principle of the absence of altruistic behaviour, especially towards strangers, adopted in sociobiology. It is precisely genetic determination which translates into the majority of the above axioms.

It can also be assumed, by combining both theories, that genetic factors accepted in sociobiology are encoded in the human unconscious, and these have priority in terms of human action. It is here that the lack of altruism, nepotism, the pursuit of sexual pleasure and the different sexual attitudes of men and women are encoded. It seems that the most important determinant of human action, the fear (risk aversion) of failure to obtain benefits / pleasure and the fear of unpleasantness is an attribute of the unconscious. The remaining axioms are associated with human experience, resulting from the impact of the environment, and vary in time over the course of every human being's life. It is clear to see that both theories are completely consistent with each other, and my own theory of the hedonistic nature of human action is thus confirmed by a theory arising in different fields of academic study.

6. Summary

Has the cognitive gap been filled? In my view, the argument proposed here is a confirmation of this gap. Challenging the partial correctness of the principle of maximum fitness is the direct result of the observable demographic facts presented in the article, and the consistency of the principles of sociobiology with the hedonistic nature of human action stems from the logical assignment of the rules of one theory to the other and demonstrating their reciprocity. The most important message to arise from both theories is to accept that part of human behaviour is genetically programmed and whether we like it or not, this is simply our nature, this is the nature of human action. No-one engaged in the search for answers to questions related to the issue of human choices can remain indifferent to these facts.

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