# Preface

This book is derived from a conference entitled "Man the Hunted and the Origin and Nature of Human Sociality, Altruism and Well-Being" held at Washington University, March, 2009. Authors include academics from around the world and across multiple disciplines—anthropology, psychiatry, human evolution, biology, psychology, religion, philosophy, education, and medicine—to focus on the evolution of cooperation, altruism, and sociality and possible factors that led to the evolution of these characteristics in nonhuman primates and humans.

The traits of altruism and cooperation often are assumed to be among humanity's essential and defining characteristics. However, it has been difficult to account for the origins and evolution of altruistic behavior. Recently, scientists have found data on altruistic behavior in many animal species, as well as in human societies, that do not conform to evolutionary models based solely on competition and the evolutionary drive to pass on selfish genes. In this volume, recent debates about the nature and origins of cooperative behaviors are reviewed. The hypothesis that unselfish cooperative behavior has evolved in animals that live in social groups is discussed. Many of the mechanisms that primates and humans have evolved for protection against predators, including cooperation and sociality are explored.

Social animals, including primates and humans, are not forced to live socially but do so because it benefits them in numerous ways. Through natural selection, primates and humans have developed areas of the brain that respond to being cooperative or altruistic as pleasant and satisfying activities. Data are presented supporting the idea that the normal pattern for most diurnal primates and for humans is to be social. People who develop the need for psychiatric intervention are those who have become alienated and antisocial. It is human nature to want to work together and cooperate. A hypothesis is developed that well-being is inseparable from positive social interaction.

All diurnal primates live in social groups. This is widely recognized as a predator protection mechanism. The more eyes and ears to detect predators and the more animals to mob them, the better the group is protected. Early humans have traditionally been thought of as hunters. However, because of their relatively small size, dental morphology, lack of hunting tools, and a number of other factors, it is more likely that the earliest humans, like most other primates, were prey

species rather than predators. Sociality, cooperation, inter-individual dependency, and mutual protection are all part of the toolkit of social-living prey.

Watching the 5 o'clock news regularly, you might think that humans were born to be destructive, violent, and antagonistic. But this is not the case. The evidence leads to the conclusion that cooperative and altruistic behaviors are not just by-products of competition but rather are essential ingredients in evolution, ecology, and development, and are the glue that underlies the ability for primates and humans to live together in groups. The paleontological, behavioral, neurobiological, and psychological evidence provided in this book gives a more optimistic and realistic view of human nature than the more popular, conventional view of humans being naturally and basically aggressive and warlike. Competition and aggressive self-preservation are a definite part of the behavioral repertoire of all mammals, but they are primitive tendencies that are progressively regulated by higher cognitive processes increasing the capacity for cooperation, which emerged in a stepwise fashion in the evolution of nonhuman primates and human beings from their common ancestors. The evidence described in this book from many fields indicates that cooperation and altruism are the statistical norm and represent the more typical, "normal," spontaneous (or natural) and healthy behavioral pattern in primates. In fact, cooperative sociality is a necessity for well-being in anthropoid primates.

In this volume, the authors review recent debates about the nature and origins of cooperative behavior. They test the hypothesis that unselfish cooperative behavior has evolved in group-living animals. Finally, they explore this hypothesis and many of the mechanisms nonhuman primates and humans may have evolved as protection against predators, including cooperation and sociality. The authors discuss how behavioral, hormonal, neuropsychiatric, and developmental mechanisms related to our evolution as a prey species might be affecting modern human and nonhuman primate behaviors.

Social scientists and biologists are learning that there is more to cooperation and generosity in both human and nonhuman group-living animals than an investment in one's own nepotistic patch of DNA. Research in a great diversity of scientific disciplines is revealing that there are many biological and behavioral mechanisms that humans and nonhuman primates use to reinforce pro-social or cooperative behavior. For example, there are specific neurobiological and hormonal mechanisms that support social behavior. There are also psychological, psychiatric, and cultural mechanisms. However, there has been little interaction among researchers working on these subjects from different disciplines. Given that little interchange has taken place among the scientists conducting this research, there have been few attempts to synthesize this material or to carry out interdisciplinary projects on this subject. In this book, the authors will describe interdisciplinary research and synthesize currently available information.

The book moves theoretical anthropology forward by integrating, synthesizing, and providing new hypotheses and a better understanding of the proximate and evolutionary underpinnings of human cooperative behavior, altruism, and sociality. There is abundant evidence for both social cooperation and violence in human history. Alternative theories make different predictions about the determinants of

both social and antisocial behaviors in primates. Some primatologists suggest that humans are naturally aggressive and violent in most situations, so that cooperation is infrequent and externally forced. Others suggest that human beings are "bipolar apes" with conflicting dispositions for waging war (like aggressive chimpanzees) and making love (like sociable bonobos), so that human beings must constantly strive to engage in emotional reconciliation to maintain social harmony. We suggest that human beings are naturally cooperative when healthy and only revert to violence under abnormal conditions, as when stressed, abused, neglected, or mentally ill. Readers will have an opportunity to consider the evidence needed to distinguish among these alternative theories of human nature. In a shrinking world, the proper mechanisms for future peaceful global interactions necessitate a better understanding of how, when, and why humans cooperate. Anthropology should provide a synthesis of this diverse body of knowledge and we hope that this volume helps moves us in a more optimistic direction.

The book is intended both for the general reader and for students at a variety of levels (graduate and undergraduate): it aims to provide a compact, accessible, and up-to-date account of the current scholarly advances and debates in this field of study, and it is designed to be used in teaching and in discussion groups. The conference from which this volume originated was sponsored by N.S.F., the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the Washington University Committee for Ethics and Human Values, and the Anthropedia Foundation for the study of well-being.

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