

PSYC 770/ANTH 585

Selfishness, Altruism, Reciprocity: The origins of sociality

Interdisciplinary Graduate Workshop

Sponsored by the Emory Center of Mind, Brain, and Culture (CMBC)

Spring 2009. Room 332 in the psychology building, Tuesdays 6:00-9:00 p.m.

Instructors:

Bradd Shore (Anthropology)

Room 210 Anthropology

Email: antbs@emory.edu

Phone: 7-4200

Philippe Rochat (Psychology)

Room 318 Psychology

Email: psypr@emory.edu

Phone: 7-4284

Tracing the origins of human sociality to ritualized forms of reciprocity is central to moral philosophy, social anthropology and developmental psychology. But rarely are these traditions of scholarship brought together. This is what we propose to do in this interdisciplinary graduate seminar. For moral philosophy, the problem of mediating self-interest and altruism underlies classic works in both political and economic theory, and is the key philosophical issue behind contract theory. For social anthropology, these issues have been addressed in classic exchange theory, beginning with Marcel Mauss' famous *Essay on The Gift*, and developed in an extensive anthropological literature on ritualized forms of social reciprocity and much of the literature on ritual exchange, particularly in Oceania. While providing some novel perspectives on the wide variety of social arrangements human cultures have produced for mediating self-interest and altruism, the underlying theoretical and philosophical issues of exchange theory were set out in the social contract literature of political and economic philosophy. Meanwhile psychologists have explored these same themes from the intra-psychic and interpersonal perspectives in developmental psychology and primatology. In psychology the key theoretical issues are framed as the ontogenesis of altruism, perspective-taking, play and game behavior and transitional object theory. Jointly taught by a developmental psychologist and a psychological anthropologist with long-standing interests in these issues, and utilizing the resources of local and outside scholars, this course is interdisciplinary seminar sponsored by Emory's Center for Mind, Brain and Culture.

The goal of the seminar is to discuss with and meet researchers whose works illuminate in some ways the issue of sociality and its origins.

As an organizing principle, preparatory readings will be paired with a number of invited speakers who will make formal presentations followed by discussions. Each guest will be asked to share and discuss their own research.

This class can be taken with a Pass/Fail evaluation based on attendance, class participation, preparation and the journal that each student will have to keep (3 sections: class notes, reading notes, personal notes). Students can also get a letter grade based on a 10-15 page paper on a topic of their choice that pertains to the general theme of the class after consulting with and getting approval from the instructor.

Guiding Questions

Anthropological questions about selfishness and altruism

1. To what extent are altruism and selfishness opposites?
2. Can either altruism or selfishness be considered as an aspect of human nature?
3. To what extent are altruism and selfishness defined by historically contingent worldviews?
4. What are the connections between popular understandings of selfishness and altruism and capitalism?
5. How are altruism and selfishness understood in Western philosophical traditions defined by contract theory and the idea of “the social contract?”
6. What is “exchange theory” in Anthropology and how is it related to the “social contract?”
7. What are the key types of reciprocity defined by social anthropology.
8. How do rituals both express and serve to reframe human understandings of self-interest and sociality?
9. How are rituals of gift exchange related to levels and types of social complexity.

Psycho-developmental questions about selfishness and the origins of sociality

1. Are we born selfish?
2. What are the origins of pro-sociality?
3. What is pro-sociality at the origins of human development?
4. How do children understand fairness?
5. How do children develop a sense of fairness?
6. What is trust and how do children express forms of trust in development?
7. How do children share and sharing propensities develop?
8. What is specific to human sociality?
9. How can we construe sociality at the origins of development?
10. How does sociality develop in the first years?
11. What is the economic life of children?
12. How do children develop to become “Homo Economicus”, “Homo Negotiatus”, and eventually “Homo Donatus” (Latin joke)?

Schedule

January 20 Introduction to the class. Establishing a set of issues for the rest of the semester.

January 27 (Shore absent) Rochat: Developmental approach to sociality, trust, and selfishness.

Readings:

Rochat, P. & Passos-Ferreira, C. (2008). Homo Negotiatus Ontogeny of the unique ways humans own, share and reciprocate. In Itakura & Fujita (Eds) *Origins of the social mind: Evolutionary and developmental views*. (pp. 141-156). Springer Publishers.

Rochat, P. (2008). Mutual recognition as foundation of sociality and social comfort. In Striano, T. & Reid, V. (Eds). *Social Cognition: Development, Neuroscience and Autism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Rochat, P. & Passos-Ferreira, C. (2008). From Imitation to Reciprocation and Mutual Recognition. In J. A. Pineda (Ed.) *Mirror Neuron Systems: The Role of Mirroring Processes in Social Cognition?* Series on Contemporary Neuroscience, Humana Press.

Rochat, P. (2008). Trust at the origins of development. Paper presented at the conference on Trust, Sociality and Selfhood, University of Copenhagen, December 4-5 2008.

February 3 (Rochat absent) Shore: Anthropological approach to sociality, trust, selfishness . Reciprocity:

Readings:

Mauss, Marcel *The Gift* (PDF)

Sahlins, Marshall *The Spirit of the Gift* (PDF)

Emerson, Ralph Waldo *Gifts* (PDF)

Mauss, Marcel *Gift, Gift* (PDF)

February 10 Gift (continued discussion) and Moral Philosophy

Readings: Levi-Strauss, more Mauss,

Shore, Bradd *Kwakiutl Animal Symbolism: Food for Thought* (PDF)

Bourdieu, Pierre *Selections from The Logic of Practice* (PDF)

Levi-Strauss, Claude *Selections*

February 17 Jonathan Nash (Business school) prep readings for Zahavi

February 24 Discussion with Prof. Dan Zahavi, University of Copenhagen

Readings:

Zahavi, D. (2004). The embodied self-awareness of the infant: A challenge to the theory-theory of mind? In D. Zahavi, T. Grünbaum, J. Parnas (eds.): *The structure and development of self-consciousness: Interdisciplinary perspectives*.

John Benjamins,

Amsterdam, 2004, 35-63. Please quote only published version.

Zahavi, D. (2008). Simulation, projection and empathy. *Consciousness and Cognition*

February 25 4:00 Department of Philosophy, Dan Zahavi colloquium

March 3 (Film) *Ongka's Big Moka*

Reading: Andrew Strathern, *The Rope of Moka*

March 10 Spring break

March 17 Michael Sullivan (Moral Philosophy)

Readings: Locke, Rousseau, Adam Smith and Locke, Rousseau

March 24 Discussion with Daniel Povinelli, Louisiana State University

Readings:

Daniel J. Povinelli and Jennifer Vonk (2003). Chimpanzee minds: suspiciously human? Trends in Cognitive Sciences

Penn D. and Povinelli, D. (2009). On the lack of evidence that non-human animals possess anything remotely resembling a 'theory of mind'.

Philosophical Theories of Mind.

Povinelli, D. (2004). Behind the ape's appearance: escaping anthropocentrism in the study of other minds. *Daedalus*.

Silk et al. (2005). Chimpanzees indifference to the welfare of others. *Nature*.

DeWaal, F. (2008). Apes and philosophers, excerpt on comparative morality.

March 31

Readings: To be announced (still open), lecture/discussion with either John Snarey (Religion/psychology) or someone from Economics or Business School.

April 7 and Discussion: Schieffelin, Edward *The Sorrow of the Lonely and the*

Burning of the Dancers.
Damon Prep readings.

April 14 Fred Damon (Anthropology, University of Virginia) "The *Kula* As a Set of Sacrificial Relations."

Readings:

Damon, F. 1980a "The Kula and generalised exchange: considering some unconsidered aspects of The Elementary Structures of Kinship." Man (n.s.) 15 (2): 267-93.

Damon, F. 1983a "What Moves the Kula: Opening and Closing Gifts on Woodlark Island." In THE KULA: New Perspectives on Massim Exchange. Edited by J. W. Leach & E. R. Leach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 309-342.

Damon, F. 1983b "The Transformation of Muyuw into Woodlark Island: Two Minutes in December, 1974." The Journal of Pacific History 18 (1):35-56.

Damon, F. 2002 "Kula Valuables, the Problem of Value and the Production of Names" L'Homme April-June 162: 107-136.

April 21 Last day of class