THE ONTOLOGY OF IDENTITY

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Big Picture

1. Aristotle positively invites evolutionary analysis
2. Aristotle’s natural ethics provides an integrative theoretical context for
   a. Evolutionary psychology
   b. Developmental psychology
   c. Social psychology
3. Psychological research fleshes out Aristotle’s theory
4. Natural ethics can guide political and personal life
5. Provide a physical, social ontology for identity
Man is by nature a political animal\textsuperscript{1}

- “Political beings”
- By nature
- Animal
- Evolutionary Theory
- Space of Moral Questions
Aristotle’s Natural Ethics

- Priority of the Good
- Function argument
Man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animals\(^2\)

- Power of speech\(^3\)
- Good and evil
- Justice and injustice
- Morality makes a “state”
The “state” is by nature clearly prior to the individual

- Key evolutionary point
- Two greatest threats to survival
  - Other groups
  - Exclusion
- Individual is not self-sufficing
- A beast or a god?
A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature\(^7\)

- Neither isolated nor herd animals
- Social instinct
  - Infant sociality
  - Social identity
Infant Sociality

- Facial recognition
- Synchrony
- Mutually Responsive Orientation
- “Self”-regulation
- Shared gaze and object focus
- Imitation
- Theory of mind
- Committed Compliance
- Moral self
Evolutionary Evidence

- Ubiquity
- Heuristic form
- Neurophysiological
  - Oxytocin studies
  - Activation of the ACC in self-regulation
- Comparative research
  - Impulsiveness “problem”
  - Chimpanzee maternal-infant interaction
- Evolutionary Account
  - Self-regulation adaptation
Social Identity

- Social categorization
- Individual identity
- Social identity
  - In-group favoritism
  - Prioritize in-group over self
  - Loyalty heuristic
- Social identity & justice
Evolutionary Evidence

- Ubiquity
- Heuristic form
- Simulation studies
- Neurophysiological
- Comparative research
- Evolutionary Account
Aristotle and Evolutionary Psychology

- Aristotle invites evolutionary analysis
- Aristotle’s ethics is integrative:
  - Humans are essentially social beings
  - Human development is socially keyed
  - Social identity as basic as individual identity
  - Evolution, development, sociality
- Psychological research fleshes out Aristotle
Integrative Implications

- Natural ethics provides guidance
  - Morality of groups
  - Malleability of group inclusiveness
    - Group identity is culturally defined
    - Membership change
    - Redefine group boundaries
    - Focus on common ground
- Physical, social ontology for identity
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