Is Evolutionary Ethics Compatible with Christian Ethics?

Many evolutionists from Darwin to the present have argued that normative ethics have a biological basis and originated through the evolutionary process. In this view ethics is merely a tool—some evolutionists even say an illusion—that helps humans survive and reproduce. It is neither objective nor universal nor immutable. I will discuss various historical and contemporary examples, including sociobiology and evolutionary psychology, and then I will then offer a critique of evolutionary ethics.

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I. Importance of Topic
   A. Evolutionary ethics is permeating our culture, our media, etc.
   B. It is common response to Christians arguing for objective morality

II. In some forms evolutionary ethics violates NOMA principle

III. Darwin’s view of morality
   A. Based on social instincts
   B. Since these instincts evolve, it is not unchanging
   C. It is not universal nor objective

IV. Haeckel’s view of morality

V. Eugenics movement and evolutionary ethics
   A. Rejected human equality
   B. Some promoted euthanasia to advance human evolution
VI. Hitler as exemplar of evolutionary ethics

VII. Julian Huxley’s 1943 lecture on evolutionary ethics
   A. Rejected Nazi vision of evolutionary ethics
      1. Evolution, he claimed, leads to cosmopolitanism
      2. He provided no evidence for this claim
   B. Argued ethics are not fixed, but changing
   C. Criticized the Golden Rule as impractical

VIII. E. O. Wilson, Michael Ruse, and sociobiology
   A. Wilson claimed morality was based on hereditary traits
   B. Believed altruism arose through kin selection and reciprocity
   C. Denied fixity of morality
   D. Wilson and Ruse stated: “Ethics as we understand it is an illusion fobbed off on us by our genes to get us to co-operate.”

IX. Critique
   A. Evolutionary ethics assumes that basis of morality is biological instincts
      1. But ignores historical changes of moral behavior
      2. Robert Wright and adultery
      3. Rape, war, etc.
   B. Story-telling about reproductive value of moral behaviors
      1. Story-telling is speculative, not based on scientific evidence
      2. Promoting reproduction doesn’t tell us anything about origin
   C. Evolutionary ethics is also used to justify immoral behaviors
1. Infanticide

2. Homosexuality

D. Undermines Judeo-Christian sanctity-of-life ethic, e.g., Rachels and Singer

X. Evolutionary Ethics is powerful intellectual current opposing Christian worldview

**Suggested Readings:**


