

## ZYGON

the quality of our published work. And last, and perhaps best of all, it will make us more cautious and modest when we feel the need to export our limited generalizations to those outside our discipline who need science's objectivity as well as its understanding and guidance.

### NOTE

1. Donald T. Campbell, "On the Conflicts between Biological and Social Evolution and between Psychology and Moral Tradition," in this issue.

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## SOCIAL EVOLUTION, SCIENCE, AND ETHICS

Science has many important things to say to ethics. That, certainly, is one of the very significant messages conveyed by Donald T. Campbell's presidential address, a landmark statement that deserves to be widely studied.<sup>1</sup>

We may hope that this particular message will be taken to heart especially by contributors to the literature that goes under the rubric "science and ethics." Their writings, it seems to me, have been characterized almost preemptively by the assumption—rarely explicit and often, probably, unconscious—that ethics or moral philosophy is purely a matter of taste and as such not accessible to scientific analysis. (The taste involved will be divine or human, depending upon the particular author.) In this too conventional literature, then, ethics is accepted as ready made; the only intellectual problem recognized is to interpret it in a form applicable to the workings of science. The resultant mode of discourse may best be termed "moralizing *at* science."

To this state of affairs Campbell's teaching should help restore some much-needed perspective—by supplying both a partial justification for the ethics-as-a-shelf-item approach and a strong reminder of its one-sided incompleteness. Campbell shows us that ethics is not simply a matter of taste; moralizing behavior has a utilitarian, evolutionary-adaptive function to perform. Its performance is at least partially susceptible to scientific analysis.<sup>2</sup>

In any event, the facts and processes of nature probably set limits to the permissible content of ethics. Thorough exploration of the connections, no doubt, will turn out to be a long and arduous task for many researchers. Such work appropriately may be termed "basic research into the ethical implications of science." Pending substantial progress in this field, as I read Campbell, we should be somewhat diffident in our criticism of traditional moral philosophy. And, by the same token, its provisional use in discussing the ethical position of science may be considered reasonable.

Taking a broader view, one may hope that we stand at the threshold of a period of major development of themes suggested by Campbell and by the

other works he has cited.<sup>3</sup> Surely, there can be few intellectual tasks as important, difficult, and fascinating as developing an explanation of human society that is made explicitly compatible with known facts of biology and evolution. And we know quite a lot more such facts now than we did when the currently conventional wisdom was getting established. It was one thing to point out the errors and omissions of the original "social Darwinists," and it will be quite another to produce a credible, thoroughly worked-out alternative.

#### NOTES

1. Donald T. Campbell, "On the Conflicts between Biological and Social Evolution and between Psychology and Moral Tradition," in this issue.
2. See the list of topics for study in the section "A Two-System Analysis of Some Specific Moral Precepts," *ibid.*
3. E.g., E. O. Wilson, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1975).

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## ALTRUISM IN SOCIOLOGY

I would like to say that members of the American Psychological Association are to be congratulated for having elected a person capable of producing such a provocative, synthesizing, and innovative presidential address. It is necessary, yet infrequent, for the intellectual leadership of the social sciences to grasp new trends or paradigms in related and relevant disciplines and use this external stimulus to redirect attention to the core foundations of one's own discipline. This is my impression of the gist of Donald T. Campbell's "On the Conflicts between Biological and Social Evolution and between Psychology and Moral Tradition."

Although rigorous documentation would be too laborious, I think it can be shown that Campbell's major critique is equally applicable to prevalent presuppositions in sociology concerning images of men interacting in society. In particular, there is an amazing lack of theoretical and empirical attention given to altruistic behavior. Although for Auguste Comte the transformation of egoism into altruism was a central theoretical aspect of social evolution, empirical research on this subject has had an unfortunate career of benign neglect save for one notable exception, namely, that of Pitirim A. Sorokin. I suggest that psychologists who want to follow up Campbell's invitation to treat heuristically traditional religious moralizing as highly relevant for grasping the dynamics of social evolution, particularly in its complex urban form, will find the following works of Sorokin quite germane in documentation, theoretical and empirical: *Altruistic Love* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950); ed., *Explorations in Altruistic Love* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950); ed., *Forms and Techniques of Altruistic and Spiritual Growth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1954); and *The*