

"ASCRPTIVE VERSUS UNIVERSALISTIC NORMS"

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This paper's topic is the evolution of universalistic norms. When will social rules that focus on what people do (their actions) displace ascriptive norms, which focus on who people are (their ascribed identities)? We use two variants of evolutionary game theory to address this question. In the first part of the paper we analyze the evolution of different kinds of norm-like strategies: those attuned to players' ascribed characteristics versus universalistic ones which ignore identity. Results here show that in repeated PD-like games, where ascriptively invidious norms are inefficient, there is a selective pressure toward universalism. Universalism continues to be favored even when exploitation is efficient, in e.g. divide-the-dollar games, though less so than in PD-like situations.

In the second part of the paper we study the evolution of preferences, via the indirect approach of Guth and Yaari (1992). In this section agents maximize expected utility, given their preferences. Evolutionary fitness, however, is determined by objective payoffs, not subjective preferences. Agents are randomly matched and play a one-shot PD. We examine three types of preference-types: egoists, whose subjective preferences correspond to the PD's objective payoffs; universalistic reciprocators, who differ from egoists in preferring mutual cooperation to exploitation; and tribalists, who have egoistic preferences when playing Outsiders but reciprocator preferences when playing Insiders.

Following Dekel et al. (2005), we find that preference-types associated with efficient outcomes (here, universalistic reciprocators) are evolutionarily advantaged when preferences are common knowledge and that preferences associated with the Nash outcome (egoism) are advantaged when preferences are private information. Tribal reciprocators prevail when preferences are (a) common knowledge in intra-tribal matches and (b) private information in inter-tribal ones.