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SUBJECT: mp 89 Social Conquest of Earth EO Wilson
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mp 89 Social Conquest of the Earth. EO Wilson 2.7.16

I finished EO Wilson's Conquest of Earth. This was his effort to present a counter argument to kin selection as the mechanism of human evolution. He argued that it was the socially constructed drives of protection of the nests (home) and family centric organization with the assistance of external network of the group. Kin selection is the result, not the cause. Kin selection only "works" in very narrowly constrained situations with exclusive pair bonding.

He argues that this social or (eusocial) drive is evident in the most prolific insects and is key to human (homo sapiens) distinct leap past other hominids. Particularly the development of language as a mechanism to facilitate cooperation and shared attention to long term goals as well as creative works of art and religion.

Ethics comes into play as we negotiate the competing goals of individual needs for attaining self advancement versus the altruistic goals promoting group needs. Groups benefit from individuals who sacrifice individual needs to help others in their group. Groups with more altruistic behavior outperform groups with more selfish behavior. Balancing the needs of individual self promotion with group needs fulfillment is tension that all groups have to address.

Religion is created to give group members an ideology of superiority to other groups. Psychic security is a major source of religions strength. Altruism is narrowly focused on those within the religious group and also to potential converts. The vision of science is devoid of any religious utility (meaning making and identity). I wonder if science should not be seen as meaning maker for many secular people. It does for me. I see the vision of human nature as constrained by competing goals (individual versus group). What is needed is science's vision of humanity as a single community (not a sea of competing groups) I would suggest.

What we need is to train our minds to free ourselves from destructive individual practices (addiction, materialism, aggression) and social practices (ecological destruction, militarism, and capitalism). So that we can identify a way forward that is sustainable. Sustainable as an individual (mindful wellbeing) and as society (nurturing society - socialist politics, economics and sustainable practices.)

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