

CHAPTER 1

The Neurobiology and Development of Human Morality in Light of Evolution

Since the middle of the twentieth century, a number of facts have been converging to suggest that, from a phylogenetic perspective, something is going terribly wrong. Humans are not who they used to be. People seem to be getting less social, and less socially capable, even though sociality is a key component of human adaptation (Darwin, 1871/1981). I focus on data from the United States (because there are abundant data available and the United States often exports its attitudes and practices) as well as data that are not usually included in international indices of well-being. Here is a sampling of trends over the past 50 years:

- Societal trust has deteriorated at all ages in the last half of the 20th century (Putnam, 2000).
- Participation in social leisure groups has decreased, as has the average number of confidants individuals have (e.g., McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Brashears, 2006; Putnam & Feldstein, 2003).
- More than 50 percent of adults are single, and single-adult households have become the most common type of household (Klinenberg, 2012).
- Avoidant attachment in college students, and perhaps narcissism in this population as well, has been trending upward for decades and has increased significantly in the past decade (Konrath, Chopik, Hsing, & O'Brien, 2014; Twenge & Campbell, 2009).

Mental and physical health also seem to be trending downward:

- Anxiety and depression are at epidemic levels for all age groups (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). In 2004, 25 percent of American adults reported suffering from a mental illness the year before (Reeves et al., 2011). More than half of Americans will suffer from a mental

illness during their lifetime (National Comorbidity Survey Replication, 2007).

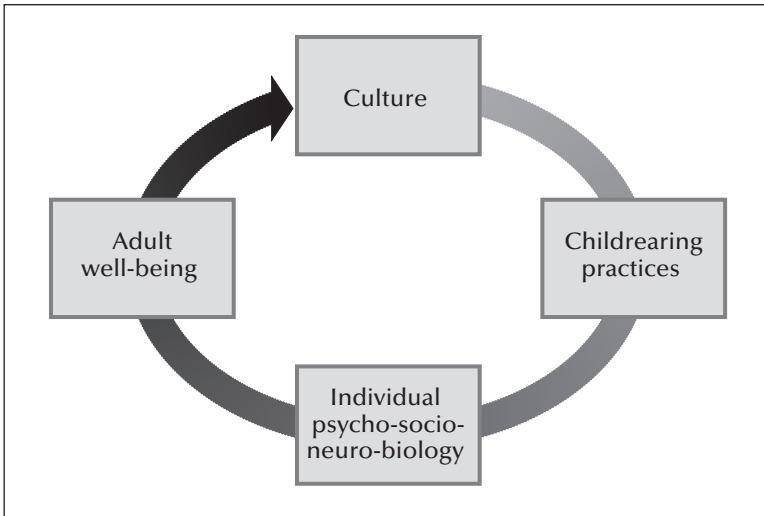
- A record number of young children are being expelled from day care for aggression (Gilliam, 2005; Raver & Knitze, 2002).
- The percentage of young children with psychosocial problems and the percentage of young children on psychotropic medication have risen dramatically (Powell, Fixen, & Dunlop, 2003; Zito et al., 2000).
- Children's health and well-being have deteriorated since the middle of the twentieth century (Heckman, 2008; National Research Council, 2013; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2009; UNICEF, 2007).
- Twenty years ago, about 21 percent of children ages 9 to 17 were impaired by mental or addictive disorders, reflecting actual rate increases from their parents' generation (Haggerty, 1995), and the numbers of children on prescribed psychotropic drugs keep rising (Haggerty, 2003).
- One out of every five children has a diagnosable psychiatric disorder, and one out of every 10 suffers from a mental illness severe enough to impair everyday living (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2011).

Overall, the United States has a health *disadvantage* in comparison to other advanced nations. Health outcomes for people under age 50 were among the worst in a 17-member developed-nation comparison and have been trending downward for decades (National Research Council, 2013). There are higher rates of chronic disease and mortality among U.S. adults, regardless of wealth, and higher rates of injuries and untimely death among U.S. adolescents and small children.

Despite these trends, currently there seem to be only pockets of alarm (Commission on Children at Risk, 2003; Karr-Morse & Wiley, 1997, 2012; Shonkoff et al., 2012; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Perhaps we have grown accustomed to the less-than-optimal way children are being formed. Researchers tend to point out the resiliency of children, noting better outcomes than those predicted by an early trajectory (e.g., Garmezy, 1983; Masten & Garmezy, 1985). In a way, the resiliency literature focuses on "good-enough" development—the upside of the downward slide of child well-being. As long as children do not end up as drop-outs or inmates,⁸ their development can be termed a success. Perhaps the increasingly toxic conditions for childhood have themselves generated a *need* to look for resilience (Garbarino, 1995; Shonkoff et al., 2012). The fact that resiliency is possible does not necessarily make it probable or even good enough as a final aim for our children.

I believe that standards for what are normal, expectable outcomes for children have slipped over time, sometimes subtly, much like standards in environmental arenas have shifted, where each generation assumes their childhood

Figure 1.1 The Relationship of Culture to Childrearing, Child Development and Adult Well-Being



experience is normal and over time there are less fish in the ocean, fewer old forests, fewer birds and butterflies (Pauly, 1995). In a similar way, suboptimal conditions for children have been regularized. For example, in the United States adults *expect* child distress when other cultures do not—that babies cry extensively and go through “terrible twos,” that adolescents have turmoil and that young adults are needy.

I believe that problems in social behavior that used to be exhibited by a tiny minority of children raised in nonoptimal circumstances are becoming normalized (e.g., poor emotion regulation, distractability, noncompliance) (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Even when these child outcomes are recognized as unusual, the suggested remedy is often directed toward parents, who may be charged with under-supervising, underpunishing, or underadmonishing. Parents are blamed for lack of inculcating appropriate *values*, with the underlying assumption that *coercion* is the way to obtain moral outcomes. But I believe that this is a misunderstanding of human development on multiple fronts, and that to truly comprehend human development we must grasp the dynamic, coconstructive effects of caregiving on the child’s body and brain in early life. To do so, we need to take a glimpse into perspectives and practices outside of our current repertoire.

Why concern ourselves with physiological health and development when our topic is morality? The shift in baselines for normal childrearing may be altering what Darwin called the pinnacle of human evolution, the *moral sense*. According to Loye (2000), the capstone to Darwin’s theory of evolution was his empha-

sis on moral agency as the most important force in human evolution. In both his private notebooks (Gruber, 1974) and in *The Descent of Man* (1871/1981), Darwin proposed that the moral sense initially arose from the parental and social instincts that evolved in mammals. Recent research concurs, identifying prosocial instincts not only in humans and primates but other mammals (e.g., De Waal, 1996; Preston & de Waal, 2002). Even nonprimate mammals demonstrate prosocial behavior, as demonstrated by rats who free other rats from restraint even when they could instead receive a favored chocolate reward (Ben-Ami Bartal, Decety, & Mason, 2011).

But Darwin emphasized the moral sense as particularly germane to *human* evolution. Indeed, although primates are generally oriented to helping others, young human children show a greater natural tendency to help than other animals (see Tomasello, 2009, for a review). Loye (2000) paraphrases Darwin from *The Descent of Man* (pp. 72–73):

In the first place, the social instincts lead an animal to take pleasure in the society of its fellows, to feel a certain amount of *sympathy* for them, and to perform various services for them . . . Secondly, as soon as the mental faculties had become highly developed, images of all past actions and motives would be incessantly passing through the brain of each individual. Out of a *comparison of past and present* the feeling of dissatisfaction, or even misery, which invariably results from any unsatisfied instinct, would arise. Third, after the power of language had been acquired, and the wishes of the community could be expressed, the *common opinion of how each member ought to act for the public good* would naturally become the guide to action . . . Lastly, *habit* in the individual could ultimately play a very important part in guiding the conduct of each member, for the social instinct together with sympathy, is, like any other instinct, greatly strengthened by habit, and so consequently would be obedient to the wishes and judgment of the community. (pp. 128–129)

When I look at the data available on the characteristics Darwin identified, the evidence is disheartening. Regarding *sympathy*, or concern for others, empathy has been *decreasing* in U.S. college students (supposedly the nation's cream of the crop) in recent decades, and especially in the last decade (Konrath, O'Brien, & Hsing, 2011). Darwin mentions the capacity for *guilt* and *concern for social opinion*, which, when not realized, leads to shame. The United States has been plagued by an increase in the flaunting of social rules, more oppositional behavior, and less shame for selfish behavior and even advocacy of it (Callahan, 2004; Mooney & Young, 2006; Rand, 1964; M. Robinson & Murphy, 2008; H. Walker, 1993). In terms of *habits*, self-regulation of negative feelings has been decreasing in young children and adults (Powell et al., 2003; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Cheating is widespread in all age groups and walks of life (e.g., Callahan, 2004). In every case, it looks as if the components of Darwin's moral sense have been heading in the wrong direction.

Are all the identified problems due to the random stresses of "modern life," or

is there some other systematic cause? Is there a *moral* cause to these problems? I believe so, but I think what looks moral within individuals has causal components “all the way down.” That is, implicated are not only reasoning, empathy, and relational capacities but also the brain-body systems upon which these capacities rely, including emotional brain circuitry and neuroendocrine systems. Morality is influenced by all sorts of physiological systems, most of the time without our awareness. Their misdevelopment influences moral conceptions and the types of societies we adults create.

You will notice that the arguments I make bridge the realms of human development and ethics. Developmental theory generally involves both descriptive and normative aspects because it attends to how human development unfolds and how *better* and *worse* outcomes come about. Starting at least with the work of genetic epistemologist, Jean Piaget, an implied standard of adequacy has been built into the notion of development. “When one says that the goal or aim of development is to attain a particular endpoint . . . one is not simply making an empirical claim about the natural course of development . . . one is also making an evaluative and normative claim” (Lapsley, 1996, p. 6). Developmental theory necessarily implies a direction of growth that is descriptively better—more adaptive, adequate, or desirable. Thus, in developmental theory generally, factual and normative issues are mutually implicated. As Murdoch (1989, p. 52) pointed out, these are also concerns of moral philosophy: “What is a good man like? How can we make ourselves morally better? Can we make ourselves morally better?” For Aristotle and other ancient Greek philosophers, answering questions like these about human excellence and flourishing was dependent on *knowledge of human nature*; “only through knowledge of shared human nature [do] we become aware of where we want to go, the ideals at which we should aim” (Chisholm, 1999, p. 1). Thus, to be able to aim for flourishing, we need to understand our evolved needs and propensities. We need to understand what is typical and atypical for our species, how we begin and how we end up.

In his review of the literature on early development, Allan Schore (1994) proposed several principles for the growth of the brain. I take up and extend two of them here. First, brain growth involves critical periods of intense and interactive social experience. These critical periods are concentrated in early life and involve systems governed by right brain hemispheric development. The circuitry and thresholds for basic functioning for a lifetime are established at this time. I contend that these systems are vital for optimal moral development that matches up with our heritages. Second, experience and the shifting social environment induce epigenetic changes and reorganization of the brain/mind during development. As dynamic systems, humans are rapidly changing and developing in early life, building on prior foundations. Both of these principles ground the focus of this book because they impinge on matters important to morality and moral development. If moral conceptions and development emerge from the very conditions of human life, then it matters what those conditions are; habits and intuitions are built from experience (Dewey, 1922/2000).

Intrigued with humanistic psychology and Spinoza's claim that what is "good" is becoming fully human (Wienpahl, 1979), I agree that human purpose has to do with "transforming our existence into an ever increasing approximation to our essence" (Fromm, 1964, p. 144). All prior choices impinge on the present choice, narrowing options with each step. Taking up Fromm's view, evil is the loss of humanity, "an ever increasing estrangement between existence and essence" (p. 144). The path of evil is taken one step at a time, with choices that squelch life, that downshift to a prehuman essence, and/or promote self-destruction through egoism (inflated I-ego regard). A lack of awareness and vision hobbles one on the path toward goodness. But with clarity of heart and mind, individuals and societies have the freedom to develop cultures that promote well-being, aiming to fulfill our human essence collectively.

This book is about the development of the capacity for virtuous morality, which requires taking the path toward the fulfillment of human essence, socially and personally. The *social* aspect of virtuous morality concerns how individuals and communities make meaning of social life (MacMurray, 1961/1999). Cultures carry out practices surrounding "how our attitudes and our actions should take into account the needs, the desires, and the entitlements of other people" (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 7). The social embedding of the self in turn shapes individual moral meaning-making that feeds into the cultural milieu. Morality, then, includes human systems of any kind, such as family, community, cultural, and government structures. But every human system begins with the mother-child dyad and from there iteratively builds the roots of individual and cultural virtue. The *personal* aspect of morality means developing one's essence through lived social experience. Each individual constructs a moral universe based on experience, particularly in early life when the foundations for implicit or tacit knowledge begin. Early-life experience influences at first the implicit, then the explicit, answers a person has to questions like these: *Who am I? Who are we? What is the sense of my/our life? What is my/our role in the universe? What are my/our responsibilities? How am I/are we connected and to what? What must I/we nurture? What must I/we avoid doing? What is good, what is bad?*

When I say "virtuous morality" I refer to a "thick" view of morality that encompasses most everything we do in life (Bernard Williams's [1985] distinction). That is, to be virtuous is to behave in the right way at the right time according to the particular situation. Virtue comes from extensive practice under the guidance of mentors. And it influences the well-being of all else. Almost everything a person does is morally relevant because it influences the trajectories of self and others (including nonhuman others). Thus, even attitudes and emotions are moral acts. For example, if I harbor a grudge against a coworker, over time it can lead to harmful action when the opportunity arises—for example, slander or failure to defend her if she is unfairly accused. Such harmful behaviors occur as if "without intention," but the intention was long rehearsed with the harboring of resentment or thoughts of revenge (Murdoch, 1989). Further, if I

consider myself superior to another, then I will have no compunction about ignoring his needs and interests when a relevant opportunity arises.

Developing virtue requires the cultivation of one's character through focused attention and through the activities and environments that one chooses. This necessitates a practical wisdom guided by "second-order desires" (*wanting* to have *certain* desires) as opposed to first-order desires (basic desiring) (Frankfurt, 1971). But second-order desires are characteristic of autonomous, free persons. Babies are not yet autonomous. So in early life, parents choose the foundations for the child's desires by the quality of their attention, the guidance they provide, and the types of activities and environments in which they place the child. For example, a parent who is distracted from responding to the cues of the baby fosters different motivations than a parent who is deeply socially engaged, emotionally present, and mutually responsive to the baby.

Experience during sensitive periods such as early life shapes the cognitive structures and personalities of individuals. These include attachment patterns that dictate habits for broader social life later on. Structures and personalities built in childhood are brought into adulthood as default assumptions for the life-escape (Wexler, 2006). Culture is also influential. The culture in which one is immersed influences how one behaves toward others on all levels: as an individual toward another individual, as a member of a group toward members of another group, as an individual or group member toward institutionalized social will. Implicit default assumptions about others influence individual and cultural worldviews and habits, which in turn shape the culture of childrearing that adults provide for children, influencing the next generation, and so on. See Figure 1.1 for an illustration.

Only recently in human genus history have all elements of this cycle shifted in ways detrimental to human well-being. So we must look outside the dominant culture for a baseline representation of human well-being.

Humans have been around for more than 2 million years. The last 11,000 years or so, approximating the beginning of settled societies, represents less than 1 percent of human genus history. The other 99 percent was lived out primarily in immediate-return, small-band hunter-gatherer communities (SBHG) of 5 to 30 individuals on average (Fry, 2006).⁹ SBHG have coexisted with settled societies all along. For example, the !Kung San culture is estimated to be over 35,000 years old (tools that old were recently discovered and they match their tools today), and the Australian aboriginal culture is estimated to be 60,000 to 150,000 years old (Balter, 2012; Lawlor, 1991; Martin, 1999). Around the world in nomadic foraging communities, a similar social culture emerged, suggesting that it is a stable form (see Ingold, 1999, for a review). And, until the modern world impinged on their lifestyle, the SBHG lived sustainably, like all animals, or perished. Migrating from feeding ground to feeding ground, intelligently like other migrating animals, they would move on before irreversibly damaging an area (Gowdy, 1998, 1999).

Despite physical hardships, on average SBHG societies live peacefully and happily in a companionship culture of shared activities with a premium on autonomy (i.e., no one is coerced to do anything, not even children, except not hurt others). The individual exists in a cooperative web of nurturing and egalitarian relations within the natural world; all lifeforms fall into the moral universe of these communities. With the domestication of plants and animals, humans shifted away from this cultural heritage, although we seem always to be trying to get at least some aspects back. In different sections of the book I will be contrasting dominant contemporary views with common views from small-band hunter-gatherer society, what Marshall Sahlins (1968) terms the “original affluent society.”

But it is not all was sweetness and light. SBHG necessarily kept their population small, even committing infanticide when resources were scarce. As will be noted later, modern society has gifts to bring to the table that can be integrated into a deliberate approach to our self-development for greater flourishing.¹⁰

In my explorations, I discovered that there is much that humans inherit from prior generations. Keeping this host of inheritances in mind can help us figure out the source of social and individual problems. In Chapter 2, I address humanity’s heritages through the lens of a developmental systems approach. Which inheritances contribute to human nature? Science discourse in recent decades has usually focused on genes, but genes are themselves inert. They do not act alone but require an interactive context of environmental influence, maturation, and action. Moreover, we have many inheritances beyond genes (extragenetic), including our developmental plasticity, the microbiome (the biological entities that keep our bodies functioning), and our ecology and culture. All our inheritances matter for morality and may be influencing the development of the moral sense in our children. But we also inherited the capacity to change ourselves, as self-organizing organisms, with our imaginative and self-directing capabilities (“self-authorship”) (Baxter-Magolda, 2009). So we don’t have to remain where we are.

In Chapter 3, I examine the dynamism of development in early life. I point out how much of human psychology is biological and embodied—how who we are is deeply shaped by early experience. Our systems and thresholds for their function are biosocially constructed in early life, whether stress response, immunity, emotion systems, or hormones. Physiological underpinnings affect who we become, deeply influencing personality and dispositions. I examine the development of emotions that are foundational for the moral life. The complexities of human brain development, even though minimally known to this point, would take an encyclopedia to describe, so I select only a few findings to illustrate the importance of early-life experience to emotional functioning. I examine how we become a self and a moral self by establishing empathic effectivity roots and a communal autonomy space that frame our actions.

Darwin considered the moral sense to be the driver of human evolution. According to Darwin’s notebooks, the moral sense gave rise to the golden rule

and the second commandment stated by Jesus, to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Loye, 2000). Chapter 4 introduces one of our key moral inheritances related to love, the engagement ethic. The engagement ethic involves relational attunement and is most clearly displayed in our mammalian emotional systems of *care* and *play*. Because the engagement ethic is manifested by our relational presence with others, it relies on the proper development and functioning of systems governed by the right brain hemisphere, which develops rapidly in early life with supportive childrearing practices. The early shaping of emotion systems is critical for moral functioning as adults. When our emotions are well educated, our sensuality is trained “to enjoy organic experience, to enjoy the satisfaction of the senses” (MacMurray, 1992, p. 19).

Chapter 5 addresses the other key human inheritance for morality: our moral imagination. In moral psychology research, human imagination has been studied mostly in terms of reasoning about hard-case hypothetical dilemmas emphasizing a “philosophized” view of moral functioning—that what we *consciously think* determines what moral actions we take. However, this is an upside-down view. Emotion and procedural knowledge systems are developed initially in the first years of life through somatosensory experience with caregivers and then increasingly through other implicit knowledge systems, from which intuition originates. The rationality of thinking, then, is “secondary and derivative of emotion” and intuitive understanding (MacMurray, 1992, p. 11). A judgment of value relies on one’s emotions and emerges from the education of those emotions. If intellect alone is used to make a value judgment, it is derivative—a representation of other people’s opinion or one’s own but not a true value judgment. When a person’s emotion systems are educated well—in supportive social environments—emotions and sensibilities coordinate with cognition and motivation. Our moral inheritance of communal imagination requires immersion in a supportive social environment in early life and beyond.

How often do you go into a panic? A rage? Feel anxious? If something like this happens to you regularly or frequently, your “present” may be governed by things that happened in your past. When you go into such a brain state, you usually cannot perceive accurately what is happening before your eyes. Instead, old memories take over and affect what you “see.” Freud and other therapists have documented these occurrences in their patients. In Chapter 6, I describe how early experience can misshape our stress response and misdevelop our social capacities. When brains are undercared for, they become more stress-reactive and subject to dominance by our survival systems—fear, panic, and rage. In fact, one’s free will can be undermined by how the brain-body complex was shaped in sensitive periods, particularly in early life. Allan Schore (2003a) identified self-regulation as a point of convergence for psychology and neuroscience. Now we can add morality to that convergence. Self-regulation, which is co-constructed by caregivers from birth, is a fundamental component of the sociality that carries our morality.

Chapter 7 addresses the types of ethics that stress reactivity promotes. In the

moment of threat, self-protection is of utmost concern. The Safety Ethic is a moniker for a set of moral mindsets that emerge from triggered autonomic responses to threat, resulting in general threat sensitivity, externalizing (combative morality), or internalizing (compliant morality). Trauma or chronic stress can lead to habituated use of these primitive moral mindsets and related ideologies. A malformed brain may have no other option but to use these systems. Self-protection coupled with imagination can create a dangerous situation over the long term, either through deliberate control and dominance of others (vicious imagination) or deliberate withdrawal from emotional connection (detached imagination). Moral imagination can mislead us when our brains are sensitized to threat and we are emotionally insecure, resulting in self-aggrandizing or emotionally-removed imagination of various forms.

Moral psychology research today focuses mostly on moral judgment in constrained experimental tasks and does little to investigate the moral decision-making and action that occurs on a moment-to-moment basis, where perceptions interact with situations to promote shifting moral mindsets. Chapter 8 addresses the nature of a moral mindset and how we develop mindset preferences and shift into one or another. Our past can lead to habitual use of one mindset over another. Despite lending its possessor a feeling of moral certainty, a moral mindset does not necessarily reflect moral wisdom.

In Chapter 9, I contrast two ways cultures can be set up, with either an emphasis on competition or on cooperation. In the natural world, competition is a thin icing on a thick cake of cooperation. Although cooperation infuses and predominates in the natural world, in contemporary social discourse, competition tends to be the basic assumption about humans and the natural world. I suggest that, because it is a rare view among human societies, the currently dominant competition story may be a natural output of the way we have been raising children and ourselves. Under evolved conditions, humans are malleable and aim for social flourishing—that is, the development of cooperative, social multi-verses that prepare one for wisdom. Poor social experience during sensitive periods may result in the development of competitive, soloist universes. A safety mindset and its imaginative counterparts make the competitive worldview seem reasonable as an explanation for impaired social and emotional competencies that often lead to violence and destruction in the world.

In Chapter 10, I discuss the nature of moral wisdom, comparing ancient wisdom traditions with what I call Primal Wisdom—“Primal” because it is humanity’s original wisdom, based on the social structure of most of human prehistory and our small-band hunter-gatherer cousins. Both sets of wisdom provide insights into how to foster well-being and avoid large-ego-driven selves. However, Primal Wisdom has unique characteristics that may be vital for rreturning to our human essence and living in partnership with the natural world. These include the embracing of our original animal nature and our fellowship with all entities.

In Chapter 11, I discuss tools for self-mending, self-development, and living

a transformative life according to a “common-self” wisdom. The very beginnings of our morality are established without our consent in early life, so sometimes self-development of virtue is a matter of undoing what was done to us. Thus, if we learned to design a competitive solo-verse, we can reshape ourselves for a cooperative or ecominded social multi-verse. The ultimate power lies in our ability to self-author and self-develop as individuals and as communities.

Although the notion of “original sin,” like the notion of selfish genes, has been used to explain human aggression and selfishness, such behavior is better explained by our propensity to downshift to self-protective orientations when we feel threatened, a characteristic we share with all animals. A wise society is one that lubricates *upshifting* through thoughtful early-life caregiving and ongoing social support that promotes the three main virtues recognized in religious traditions around the world: humility, charity (love), and authenticity. In Chapter 12, I discuss these elements of virtue and what they mean for self and relationships. Emphasizing one over another puts us out of balance. All three, within an ecosystemic mindset, can move us toward a world that supports all lifeforms.

Some may want to blame genetic evolution for the immoral behaviors we see, arguing that human nature is naturally selfish, so what more can you expect? But my argument is that the worrisome outcomes we see today are mostly due to *culture and imagination*—cultural practices that affect epigenetics and related physiological processes. Because immorality is primarily due to the effects of impaired emotional intelligence and imagination, the environments that humans set up for themselves and their children play a large role in how and who humans become. With greater attention to these matters, humanity can alter its own course.

This book focuses on what is considered to be the normal range for persons in Western societies. It does not address clinical psychopathology except to illustrate or offer a contrast to what has come to be considered the normal range. Overall, this book makes four main points:

- First, like everything human, morality emerges from biology and embodiment—our lived experience. It is insufficient to discuss human social and moral functioning only as psychological phenomena (e.g., mental representations, internal working models). Physical and mental health, morality, and flourishing are integrated.
- Second, our morality is multidimensional and arises from our evolved brain propensities. Through epigenetics and developmental plasticity, early experience shapes not only how well the body works but also how our social capacities function. Our neurobiological beginnings matter for all our capabilities, including emotional, intellectual, and moral.
- Third, cultures are malleable. Cultures foster or undermine health and well-being and encourage or discourage our highest human nature. A society can intentionally foster greater capacities in its citizens. Through the

beliefs we select, the institutions we design, and the practices we embody, we can choose to cultivate a more empathic and communal mindset—fulfilling our human essence.

- Fourth, individuals can self-author virtue and wisdom capacities to facilitate change. They can join together to reauthor their communities and make them places where all thrive. With mindful self-cultivation and communal choices, humans together can develop relationships and institutions that stimulate and foster well-being and flourishing for every individual in the lifescape.

When we understand the dynamics of human becoming, we can better understand ourselves—our shortcomings but also our resilience. We then can envision how to move ourselves toward our fullest potential as cocreators of self and society. Armed with a mindful awareness of the power of early experience and the knowledge of how we can fall into misleading mindsets, we can learn to maintain more prosocial mindsets. Then we are equipped to design our societies to facilitate the path to higher virtues and sustainable flourishing for all.