



**Simposio Internacional:** Evolución por cooperación. La obra de Lynn Margulis (1938-2011)

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## **The moral evolution of mankind**

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The rise of moral behaviour and moral codes among hominids has received much attention by animal psychologists, ethologists and primatologists. By contrast, we know much less about evolutionary patterns in moral behaviour from the moment mankind developed complex cultural systems. Anthropological and sociological theory have put forward some interesting hypotheses about the possibility of an evolutionary pattern in the moral history of mankind, though wide cultural disparities often undermine attempts to achieve a convincing overall view of such process. The early social scientists—Adam Smith, Comte, Marx, Spencer—were not averse to develop such general theories. With the considerable progress made since by the social sciences, we are now in a better position to draw up some very cautious generalizations about a shared moral evolution, and even about the possibility of moral progress. The attempt to discern a common pattern in human moral development under the aegis of most complex civilizations—from the Neolithic till today—may help us to discover common traits in the ethical and moral development in some of them—from China to Egypt, from India to Greece. The question also arises: are complex civilizations the only possible frameworks for the growth of universalistic moral systems, including Buddhism and Christianity, Judaism and Islam, as well as lay and secular conceptions, such as those generated during the Enlightenment in the West? Perhaps a close look at this may help us to build a convincing evolutionary theory of human morality and to better understand the nature of democracy, the scientific ethos, and human and civil rights today.

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