

sion for conservatives, but the “wounded warrior” car is an example. This driver is also trying to get you to care, but conservative caring is somewhat different—it is aimed not at animals or at people in other countries but at those who’ve sacrificed for the group.<sup>12</sup> It is not universalist; it is more local, and blended with loyalty.

## 2. THE FAIRNESS/CHEATING FOUNDATION

Suppose a coworker offers to take on your workload for five days so that you can add a second week to your Caribbean vacation. How would you feel? *Homo economicus* would feel unalloyed pleasure, as though he had just been given a free bag of groceries. But the rest of us know that the bag isn’t free. It’s a big favor, and you can’t repay your coworker by bringing back a bottle of rum. If you accept her offer, you’re likely to do so while gushing forth expressions of gratitude, praise for her kindness, and a promise to do the same for her whenever she goes on vacation.

Evolutionary theorists often speak of genes as being “selfish,” meaning that they can only influence an animal to do things that will spread copies of that gene. But one of the most important insights into the origins of morality is that “selfish” genes can give rise to generous creatures, as long as those creatures are selective in their generosity. Altruism toward kin is not a puzzle at all. Altruism toward non-kin, on the other hand, has presented one of the longest-running puzzles in the history of evolutionary thinking.<sup>13</sup> A big step toward its solution came in 1971 when Robert Trivers published his theory of reciprocal altruism.<sup>14</sup>

Trivers noted that evolution could create altruists in a species where individuals could remember their prior interactions

with other individuals and then limit their current niceness to those who were likely to repay the favor. We humans are obviously just such a species. Trivers proposed that we evolved a set of moral emotions that make us play “tit for tat.” We’re usually nice to people when we first meet them. But after that we’re selective: we cooperate with those who have been nice to us, and we shun those who took advantage of us.

Human life is a series of opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation. If we play our cards right, we can work with others to enlarge the pie that we ultimately share. Hunters work together to bring down large prey that nobody could catch alone. Neighbors watch each other’s houses and loan each other tools. Coworkers cover each other’s shifts. For millions of years, our ancestors faced the adaptive challenge of reaping these benefits without getting suckered. Those whose moral emotions compelled them to play “tit for tat” reaped more of these benefits than those who played any other strategy, such as “help anyone who needs it” (which invites exploitation), or “take but don’t give” (which can work just once with each person; pretty soon nobody’s willing to share pie with you).<sup>15</sup> The original triggers of the Fairness modules are acts of cooperation or selfishness that people show toward us. We feel pleasure, liking, and friendship when people show signs that they can be trusted to reciprocate. We feel anger, contempt, and even sometimes disgust when people try to cheat us or take advantage of us.<sup>16</sup>

The current triggers of the Fairness modules include a great many things that have gotten linked, culturally and politically, to the dynamics of reciprocity and cheating. On the left, concerns about equality and social justice are based in part on the Fairness foundation—wealthy and powerful groups are accused of gaining by exploiting those at the bottom while not paying their “fair share” of the tax burden. This