

1 **Generosity makes sense**

2 original at

3 <http://www.economist.com/node/21524698>

4 The extraordinary success of *Homo sapiens* is said to be a result of four
5 things: intelligence, language, an ability to manipulate objects dexterously
6 in order to make tools, and co-operation. At the moment co-operation is
7 the most fashionable subject of investigation. In particular, why are
8 humans so willing to collaborate with unrelated strangers, even to the
9 point of risking being cheated by people whose characters they cannot
10 possibly know?

11 Evidence from economic games played in the laboratory for real money
12 suggests humans are both trusting of those they have no reason to expect
13 they will ever see again, and surprisingly unwilling to cheat them—and
14 that these phenomena are deeply ingrained in the species's psychology.

15 Existing theories of the evolution of trust depend either on the participants
16 being relatives (and thus sharing genes) or on their relationship being
17 long-term, with each keeping count to make sure the overall benefits of
18 collaboration exceed the costs. Neither applies in the case of passing
19 strangers. Why should humans trust and help people they might not meet
20 again?

21 Recently, an article has put forward that the reason we prefer to be kind
22 to strangers is that we are simply never sure that we will not meet them
23 again. Moreover, in the ancient world of hunter-gatherers, limited
24 movement meant a second encounter would be much more likely than it is
25 in the populous, modern urban world. This implies that an open hand to
26 the stranger makes evolutionary as well as moral sense. Except, of
27 course, that those two senses are probably, biologically speaking, the
28 same thing. But that would be the subject of a different article.

Questions

- 1) What are, according to the article, the qualities that are behind the success of the human species?
- 2) What is the risk of co-operation with strangers?
- 3) How do scientists test social interaction between humans?
- 4) Why do conventional theories of trust find it difficult to explain behaviour observed in humans subject to scientific tests of generosity?
- 5) What does the explanation of human trust put forward by a recent article consist of?
- 6) According to the article, in what sense are inclinations developed in the course of evolution and morality the same thing?
- 7) Do you usually trust strangers you meet? Based on what do you decide whether to trust them or not?

Vocabulary

willing (line 8) – disposed or consenting; inclined, ready

keeping count (line 17) – to keep a record of items or events; keep track of event,

put forward (line 21) – to suggest or propose

encounter (line 24) – a meeting with a person or thing, especially a casual, unexpected, or brief meeting

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

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Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček:

