

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

#### 5.1 Conclusion

*Project Hail Mary* by Andy Weir (2021) follows the story of Ryland Grace, a science teacher turned astronaut with a critical mission to save the Earth from extinction. In carrying out his mission, Ryland must make sacrifices to ensure the survival of humanity. His sacrifices include altruistic behavior with extreme risk that led to death. Moreover, the novel portrays those sacrifices as the only strategy that can guarantee humanity's survival. While the concept of survival traditionally conveys the instinct to preserve life, the novel suggests that altruism and self-sacrifice can be used as tools to ensure collective survival. Furthermore, the story develops when Ryland meets Rocky, in which the novel portrays how Ryland's altruism and sacrifices also extend to an alien. After a comprehensive analysis, it is clear that the novel internalizes Darwinian ideas, as evidenced by the reasons and motivations behind Ryland's sacrifices and altruistic behaviors.

First, Rylands reveals a motive to aid kin and non-kin through his deep affection and devoted altruism toward his students. His background as a science teacher also contributes to his decision to invest in things outside his family, which enables him to sacrifice for his students, even though they are not directly related to him. Second, through Ryland's instinctive acceptance of the suicide mission, it reveals how he displays a motive of survival as he is inclined to prioritize his species' survival, further revealing how he carries a responsibility as a part of humanity. Moreover, Ryland's interaction with Rocky reveals a motive to discover something, and his background

as a scientist also influences this particular behavior. Eventually, their cross-species cooperation, which culminates in reciprocal altruism, shows that Ryland has a motive to make friends and form alliances, which, interestingly, extend to other living beings. Through identifying the evolutionary motives behind Ryland's altruism and cooperation with Rocky, it shows how humans are inclined to engage in altruistic behaviors despite the detrimental costs.

The inclination then allows these behaviors to be analyzed from a species-centered perspective with sociobiological theories. Through Hamilton's inclusive fitness and Dawkins' selfish genes perspectives, the novel promotes the idea of self-sacrifice as a biological adaptation that ensures the continuity of genes and of species. Additionally, the novel promotes the importance of self-sacrifice, which demonstrates Fletcher's idea that literature helps us adapt to our biology and encourages us to internalize a tolerant and pluralistic understanding of situations. Eventually, Ryland's ultimate sacrifice to save Rocky by giving up his life embodied Singer's expanding-circle idea of moral concern, in which the sacrifices he made for "the many" have expanded from just his own humanity to all sentient life, including aliens. It shows that Ryland's ethical reasoning has expanded to include other living beings and that we, as humans, can expand our ethical range through literature. This sociobiological perspective offers the understanding that the sacrifices portrayed in the novel are not irrational or merely a reflection of human motivation, but a logical and adaptive mechanism that ensures the survival of humanity.

Andy Weir's *Project Hail Mary* clearly demonstrates that altruism and self-sacrifice are not a paradox to survival, but rather biological and ethical adaptations that guarantee humanity's continuation. Moreover, from a Darwinian perspective, the

novel suggests that humans are inclined to engage in adaptive behaviors, such as altruism and sacrifice. Eventually, literature allows us to broaden our imagination and moral concerns through its narrative. It reminds us of the next step we should take as human beings, as we are not just part of our own humanity, but of all living beings. Therefore, the novel fosters the sentiment that we need to expand our solidarity and empathy as a universal consciousness.

## 5.2 Suggestions

While this thesis focuses on the evolutionary reading of the altruism and self-sacrifice portrayed in Andy Weir's *Project Hail Mary*, it opens the way to analyze these behaviors through a moral-philosophical lens. Future research may examine how the characters' behaviors and decisions in saving humanity involve a profound ethical reasoning through the lens of moral philosophy. The writer believes this can add more perspective to the novel's ethical themes and reveal a deeper moral reasoning behind its message.

