

An Analysis of the Reasons Why Altruism Does Not Exist

Junze Ma^{1,a,*}

¹Jiangsu Wuxi Tianyi High School, Wuxi, Jiangsu, China

a. eric8977928@163.com

*corresponding author

Abstract: Altruism has always been a hotly debated philosophical issue. In real life, people often confuse altruism with the act of helping others as such. This paper aims to debunk the existence of altruism in terms of its motivation, the meaning of the principle of altruism, and the possibility of its existence. This article mainly uses a speculative approach based on existing literature research and relevant theories. After demonstration, it comes to the conclusion that altruism does not exist. The motivation of seemingly altruistic behavior can be boiled down to self-interest. The research of this paper has a certain practical significance, and the research results can provide a certain reference for the dissemination of social values and the development of education.

Keywords: Altruism, Egoism, Motives, Implication, Intuition

1. Introduction

Altruism has not been completely proven or disproved yet, and although all factions on the issue have their own evidence, it does not necessarily support their respective views. At present, there have been extensive studies on altruism in academia. For example, in the aspect of the influence of altruism on social behavior, the juxtaposition of altruism and egoism has been proposed. In terms of altruism and moral obligation, altruistic behavior is highly commendable in morality, and moral obligation is the bottom line that everyone must follow. But the motivation and ultimate purpose of altruism are still less discussed. The motives of altruism and intuitively motivated altruistic behavior have not been talked about enough yet. This paper is about solving the problem. This paper primarily employs the speculative research method, which is divided into three parts to complete the discussion. It primarily discusses the existing premise of the principle; the existence of motivation for altruism; and the possibility of altruism. The result of the paper could be used for law-making, societal value propagation, and educational development. For example, the country can better improve people's minds so that the overall quality of the country's population is higher.

2. Exclusion of Intuitively Motivated Behavior

The reason why a doctrine is a doctrine is that it must contain some meaning behind it. "Selfishness" is not a neutral concept unrelated to good and evil, and the practice of equating "selfishness" with "selfishness" can only lead to a self-enclosed circle. Any correct understanding and effective interpretation of "selfishness" must be based on "self" reflection and continuous expansion of cognition. The "self" and the "other" are inseparable and unified, because the "other" is the participant of the "self", that is, as a part of the story of the "self", and intervenes in the life world of

the “me”.”[1]. Even if a doctrine is to advocate no meaning, it is also a kind of meaning in itself. The doctrine itself requires people to make a certain choice to form the doctrine, and the choice is produced according to the doctrine. Therefore, the choice of a certain doctrine of people, must be for a certain meaning. We’re not talking about random behaviors, we’re talking about choices and we’re talking about choices that are optimal. The point here is to talk about why altruism is not ideal and why there is no rational altruism. That is, to talk about the ideal situation, not the situation happened in reality. It cannot be ruled out that selection for altruism is due to false or biased perceptions of altruism, even if the assumption is that such a case does not exist. “Altruistic motives since the truly selfish person chooses his goals through rational guidance and the rational person’s interests do not conflict, others often benefit from his actions. However, the good of others is not his primary goal or purpose; his own interest is the primary goal and conscious purpose that guides action.”[2].

3. The Possibility of Altruistic Motives

3.1. Behavior from Intuition

Why does altruism not exist? Because every action has a motive. For instance, people only eat when they are hungry or they want to taste the flavor of the food. “He no longer lived for himself, but for others. The word “I” no longer has any meaning, thinking of others takes up all the space in the heart. He gives himself completely to others. He can sacrifice himself for others.”[3]. The non-subjective part of instinctual behavior is not constructivism, because even though people’s instinctual choices can include the role of people’s subjective will, the non-subjective part of instinct is not the result of people’s choices, so it is the material part. “Obviously, most ethical theories require some kind of account of this behavior, because very few ethical theories do not include some other-conscious requirement for action. Even if the social behavior required does not include serious self-sacrifice, it almost certainly includes situations in which no obvious self-interest appears and in which the parties may find some inconvenience, or at least unprofitable. So self-interest as a defense of altruism is unlikely to succeed. But people may appeal to other interests, including the universal sentiment of undifferentiated sympathy or kindness.”[4]. The material part of the choice is not called a choice; it is necessary. So the material part of the “choice” does not exist as a motive.

3.2. Meaning is The Carrier of Thinking

“Altruism is the voluntary or active pursuit of the intended purpose. Altruism belongs to the category of ideology, which guides the actor to carry out the behavior, and it is voluntary and active.”[5]. Therefore, whether people are conscious or not, the part of the will that makes the choice always makes the choice because of the corresponding meaning of the choice. Therefore, the choices made by people in the unconscious state cannot be counted as for a certain doctrine, while the choices made by the conscious part are divided into degrees. The lowest degree of choice is to “not make a choice” and let the situation develop. In fact, it is hard to find people who have made a choice but their subjective did not agree with the choice of meaning before making a choice or no example to recognize the significance of choice, because meaning is the carrier of thinking for people, now that the only distinction between people and things is people’s thinking, so thinking is the premise of existence. Accordingly, meaning namely is the carrier of thinking, so something that doesn’t make sense in the human brain is unrecognizable to the human brain, that is, it can’t be thought about in the human brain.

3.3. Random Behavior

There is also the problem of random selection in the face of new things. When people are faced with something completely new, the new thing has one meaning for them, that is, “new”. Until they realize the other meaning of the thing, they can only think about the thing based on the meaning of “new”. Meaning is not just specific to one thing, one thing can function in a whole sense. In arithmetic, for example, the basic number element may not have meaning, but it can have a role in a larger human action, such as calculating, and the act of calculating creates meaning for people. That is to say, things can have no meaning to people, but people must be based on meaning to think consciously. However, random selection cannot reflect people’s subjective will in essence, so pure random selection of new things cannot be counted as a person’s choice. The choice to adhere to a doctrine arises when the chooser chooses the most relevant, actionable, and not instinctually or randomly covered by the doctrine in the space of perceived alternatives. Why should it be the most enforceable? Because in some cases, although the choice made by the chooser is the second-best choice, the inability to implement the optimal choice due to the chooser’s own human attributes (insufficient willpower, insufficient executive power) cannot be regarded as the chooser does not ideally follow the doctrine.

4. Exclusion of The Possibility of Altruism Occurrence and Altruism Falsification

Therefore, where there is a will to participate in the choice, it is always for some or other meaning. So, are there any motives that don’t want to give themselves any benefit at all, motives that don’t mean anything at all? If a person says I wish I did an action that didn’t mean anything, then that’s a meaning in itself. “The selfish gene theory of Richard Dawkins further revealed the essence of altruistic behavior. This theory holds that genes are selfish, and selfish genes will breed limited altruism under environmental pressure, and altruism is for the selfish needs of genes. Based on the selfish nature of genes, biologists have made a reasonable explanation by unifying the selfish behavior and altruistic behavior of individual animals.”[6]. Let’s make a hypothetical case. A helper, after he helps the recipient, may benefit or suffer. Give the helper a value of presumed moral satisfaction, and there are the following situations:

1. After helping others, the helping person is damaged, and the value of the damage is greater than the moral satisfaction;
2. After helping others, the helping person is damaged, and the value of the damage is less than the moral satisfaction;
3. Helping others will benefit, and the benefit value is greater than the moral satisfaction;
4. After helping others, they benefit, and the value of benefit is less than moral satisfaction;

The wise reader will notice that we do not need to discuss the latter two cases, because there is no proof of altruism, whether or not the benefit to the helper exceeds his moral satisfaction. After all, who would not do what is good for him? The second case is not discussed either, for the same reason. “From animal altruism to human altruism, the research results show that profit is not necessarily premised on harming others, and that profit and altruism can be unified. This theoretical research result is of great significance for resolving social contradictions and conflicts, coordinating the interest relations between different groups and countries, and building a harmonious society.”[7]. So let’s just focus on the first case. So does case 1 exist? Obviously there is, but there is a condition. We are talking here about rational altruism, that is, the situation where altruists want and should be altruistic. The first of these can only happen if the helper has very little thinking time to make a judgment and act. Once a man has had time to think, he can weigh up which alternative is more meaningful. But if you deprive people of time to think, altruism seems to exist because the helper seems to have acted altruistically and is willing to continue doing so. According to the foregoing, a

doctrine is a doctrine in that the person who believes in it must be able to act in this way all the time. If only on a whim, or if the same person may make a different choice when the same situation arises, or even without thinking and weighing whether the meaning of his choice conforms to a particular criterion (except for the instinct that has been trained by the belief in a doctrine), he cannot be said to have acted out of a doctrine. This is the first condition for the existence of the doctrine, that is, the believer must know its meaning and believe in it. "Human nature is an inherent universal attribute of human nature. It has the same, lower and general natural attributes as canine nature, and also has the higher and special social attributes that are different from animals." [8]. False doctrine can also exist, that is, a certain objective law that does not exist in the real world can exist in people's minds wrongly or through sophistry.

But what this paper wants to disprove is that altruism exists in reality, not in people's minds. So, most altruistic behaviors that are instinctual or coincidental are not evidence of altruism. So, we're going to talk about conscious altruism. In these behaviors, people may have some moral instinct or subconscious out of instinct, moral influence, or social doctrine. "A person's choice of altruism may be due to an individual's desire to gain recognition and praise from society for this kind of behavior. Even to reduce the imbalance of moral sense or obtain some spiritual satisfaction from the process of altruism, it is also with a certain egoistic color." [9]. Therefore, at the moment of choice, people can choose altruistic behavior out of instinct. But in this case, the person is acting out of instinct, so his choice is not made by his part of the person. In one case, a researcher's friend showed seemingly altruistic behavior in his particular field, but actually it was not. "On that day, I praised Yu Liang's behavior with the ready "altruism", but Yu Liang did not accept it. He said that it was not altruism but pure egoism, because the real estate industry was facing too much social pressure, and he did not want any more bad news about this industry to be spread." [10]. Therefore, altruism does not exist.

5. Conclusion

Altruism does not exist because pure altruistic behavior can only be motivated by intuition but not decision. So there is no possibility of altruism in its existential meaning, behavioral motivation, or existential possibility. The paper hasn't proved whether there are other categories or situations listed above to motivate people to be altruistic, and this can be discussed in the following research.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to show my deepest gratitude to my teachers and professors in my school, who have provided me with valuable guidance in every stage of the writing of this thesis. Further, I would like to thank all my friends and parents for their encouragement and support. Without all their enlightening instruction and impressive kindness, I could not have completed my thesis.

References

- [1] Cheng Litao. (2017). *The virtue of selfishness and the ethic of altruism*[J]. *Journal of Hebei Normal University(Philosophy and Social Science)*. 40(4), 6.
- [2] Ayn Rand. (2020). *Aren't all people selfish?*[J]. *READING&WRITING MONTHLY*. (Z1):18-20.
- [3] Yao Dazhi. (2015). *Altruism and moral obligation*[J]. *Social Science Front*. (05):24-30.
- [4] Thomas Nagel, Wan Junren. (2005). *Altruism: The Problem of intuition*[J]. *World Philosophy*. (03):68-74.
- [5] Zhang Hongmei. (2010). *Philosophical reflections on altruism*[J]. *vicissitudes*. (12):155-156. DOI:10.13514/j.cnki.cn14-1186/k.2010.12.048.
- [6] Liu Heling, Chenjing. (2008). *Scientific interpretation and cultural inheritance of altruism*[J]. *jiangnan tribune*. (06):32-35.

- [7] Ye Zexiong. (2010). *Research on the Riddle of Altruism in School of Political Science and Law of Central China Normal University and its Contemporary Enlightenment*[J]. *Journal of Central China Normal University (Natural Sciences)*. 44(04):662-665. DOI:10.19603/j.cnki.1000-1190.2010.04.030.
- [8] Wang Jin. (2014). *Analysis of the new idea of altruism*[J]. *Modern Women*. (08):33.
- [9] Niu Chaowen. (2019). *Altruistic motives: a philosophical perspective*[C]//. 2019 Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Free Trade Zone Construction Symposium—Proceedings of the 5th Public Policy Think Tank Forum. 163-167. DOI:10.26914/c.cnkihy.2019.048061.
- [10] Liu Xiangming. (2008). *Altruism*[J]. *IT Manager World*. (05):8.