



## Altruism - Альтруизм

The topic I chose for my third writing assignment is altruism. I am familiar with the idea of altruism but have never considered the validity of it. Altruism by definition is a motive to increase another's welfare without conscious regard for one's self-interests. This is obviously very difficult to accomplish. The last self-less act I did was stopping to help elderly women up to some toe stairs at the mall. As I was escorting her up the stairs all I was concerned with was making sure she made it without hurting herself. Initially, it appears that this act was motivated solely for the well-being of the elderly lady. But as demonstrated in class s discussion there can always be an ulterior motive even if that motive is subconscious.

The social-exchange theory states that interactions are guided by a social economics idea. This theory describes how we exchange not only material goods and money but also social goods. For example, we exchange love, services, information, and status. As with economics, we aim to minimize the input and maximize the rewards. The social exchange theory would state that people do these good deeds for the reward of feeling good about yourself, although the act itself may seem selfless. The helping we give can be disguised in two ways. Either externally or internally. For example, when I gave the women help up the stairs, it was external because I sought appreciation. An example of internally disguised helping would be responding with empathy to someone who is distressed.

The altruistic acts serve to increase our sense of self-worth. The example given in our text describes nearly all blood donors report feeling good about giving blood after they do. A few researchers have attempted to define six motivations for why people volunteer to befriend AIDS patients. They include values, understanding, social, career, ego protection, and esteem enhancement (Clary & Snyder, 1993, 1995; Clary & others.) This cost-benefit analysis does seem to belittle the overall intentions of good deeds. When you consider it further, it can be said that this, in fact, speaks volumes about humanity. Humans innately derive pleasure from helping others.

The internal explanation for our behaviors regarding altruism is that of empathy. Empathy seems to insinuate a purely emotional response to the misfortune of others. But what is theorized is that we do not like the feeling of distress brought on by the suffering of others. To alleviate the distress we attempt to help the person. The feeling of empathy is found to be strongly correlated with how well we know the person.

I think altruism is an important concept to consider because it defines peoples basic desire to contribute to society. It doesn't contend that you are wealthy or famous to have a positive impact on the lives of others but rather the profound effect a simple act of kindness can have. Although it is pretty apparent from the research that no selfless behavior is truly selfless, that behavior still can help others in need. I think the outcome of our actions can in some instances outweigh the motives behind it.



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