
Subject: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Tue, 10 Feb 2009 21:55:00 GMT

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Altruism does not and cannot exist. Period.

Subject: Re: Racism

Posted by [GEORGE ZIMMER](#) on Tue, 10 Feb 2009 23:07:10 GMT

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cheesesoda wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009 15:55Altruism does not and cannot exist. Period.
I disagree. It just cannot exist amongst everyone.

Subject: Re: Racism

Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Tue, 10 Feb 2009 23:59:15 GMT

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Cabal8616 wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009 18:07cheesesoda wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009
15:55Altruism does not and cannot exist. Period.
I disagree. It just cannot exist amongst everyone.

1. the principle or practice of unselfish concern for or devotion to the welfare of others.

Not possible. When you get down to the bare reasoning as to why you're practicing "unselfish concern", it's purely egotistical. Even if you're doing something you HATE for someone you HATE, you aren't showing "unselfish concern". You are doing it in hopes that the favor is returned, thus having a selfish motive.

Altruism does not and cannot exist.

Subject: Re: Racism

Posted by [GEORGE ZIMMER](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 00:09:34 GMT

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cheesesoda wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009 17:59Cabal8616 wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009
18:07cheesesoda wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009 15:55Altruism does not and cannot exist.
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having a selfish motive.

Altruism does not and cannot exist.

It's quite possible to do it for both out of concern for others, and yes, so the favor would be returned. To sort of make a mutual trust and friendship with someone else, or atleast in hopes of it.

Subject: Re: Racism

Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 01:50:04 GMT

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Then, you're not doing it out of altruism. You're doing it, so that it benefits you in some way.

Subject: Re: Racism

Posted by [u6795](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 02:29:39 GMT

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cheesesoda wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009 20:50Then, you're not doing it out of altruism. You're doing it, so that it benefits you in some way.

BUT LOL JEEZUS DIDN WANT NUTHIN IN RETURN!

Subject: Re: Racism

Posted by [Ethenal](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 02:43:45 GMT

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u6795 wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009 20:29cheesesoda wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009 20:50Then, you're not doing it out of altruism. You're doing it, so that it benefits you in some way. BUT LOL JEEZUS DIDN WANT NUTHIN IN RETURN!

You sir, are and idiot =)

Subject: Re: Racism

Posted by [R315r4z0r](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 03:42:24 GMT

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cheesesoda wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009 18:59Cabal8616 wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009 18:07cheesesoda wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009 15:55Altruism does not and cannot exist. Period.

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concern", it's purely egotistical. Even if you're doing something you HATE for someone you HATE, you aren't showing "unselfish concern". You are doing it in hopes that the favor is returned, thus having a selfish motive.

Altruism does not and cannot exist.

I can't agree with this. Although I somewhat agree with your statement, your point is easily contradicted.

I actually spent like 20 min writing a post explaining why I think that, but it turned out making it seem like I was promoting myself too much (and no, I don't think I'm a selfless person). I ended up turning it into a personal assessment of myself... and as such I didn't think anyone would be interested in reading it. :V

Subject: Re: Racism
Posted by [z310](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 06:26:00 GMT
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Say you unselfishly help others. Is that rational? Does it make sense to help somebody with no personal gain? If you deny altruism's impossibility, can you justify regarding action?

Subject: Re: Racism
Posted by [Ma1kel](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 08:37:24 GMT
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its common decency bro

Subject: Re: Racism
Posted by [SSADMVR](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 09:45:43 GMT
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Humans naturally do not care about the wellbeing of people they don't know. Therefore, everyone is selfish. Wether it's doing volunteers work to calm your conscious, give you some self fulfillment or even bragging rights. Even simply expressing compassion for people you don't know because society says it's the right thing to do. You're always doing it for yourself. Even when I'm typing this post to deliver you all some truth, I'm doing it so I can feel superior to all you dumbasses.

Subject: Re: Racism
Posted by [z310](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 10:12:01 GMT
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By partaking in such common decency, one can fit in, gain respect, gain reputation, and feel good about him- or herself. Performing an action for those selfish reasons, with or without being aware of it, makes sense. Performing an action with no personal satisfaction and thus no reasonings does not make sense.

Subject: Re: Racism

Posted by [Goztow](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 11:26:24 GMT

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z310 wrote on Wed, 11 February 2009 11:12By partaking in such common decency, one can fit in, gain respect, gain reputation, and feel good about him- or herself. Performing an action for those selfish reasons, with or without being aware of it, makes sense. Performing an action with no personal satisfaction and thus no reasonings does not make sense.

This doesn't make it less noble. The very fact that you value respect enough to do things to gain it, seems a very noble way of living IMO.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 13:30:03 GMT

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Nobody's saying that egoism can't be noble. Egoism isn't saying, "everybody is selfish and evil". All egoism says is that people do things for their own benefit and nothing can be done altruistically.

Egoism is far from a bad thing. It's a good thing. It's why humans have developed it. It's not a flaw like a lot of idiots like to think. The entire reason why animals survive.

Subject: Re: Racism

Posted by [Spoony](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 14:24:56 GMT

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cheesesoda wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009 17:59Cabal8616 wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009 18:07cheesesoda wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009 15:55Altruism does not and cannot exist. Period.

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Not possible. When you get down to the bare reasoning as to why you're practicing "unselfish concern", it's purely egotistical. Even if you're doing something you HATE for someone you HATE, you aren't showing "unselfish concern". You are doing it in hopes that the favor is returned, thus having a selfish motive.

Altruism does not and cannot exist.

What about charitable donations that are done anonymously? For example, my father made a pretty substantial donation to a charity after the Boxing Day tsunami a few years back. It can't have been to show what a nice guy he was because he didn't tell anybody about it - including our family (I just found the thankyou letter when I was helping him clear out the garage recently). The only plausible argument that that could've been 'selfish' was that it might have made him feel good, but he could've spent the money doing something which he certainly would've enjoyed more.

Another example, my league admin work. I'm not really talking about Renegade here, but at CW I was the admin of quite a few leagues and I didn't tell anybody about it. That wasn't to feel good either, it was pretty damn annoying sometimes.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 14:30:03 GMT

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Oh, give me a break. You cannot possibly think those are two examples of altruism.

Doing something for the good of others and not expecting anything in return still gives someone something in return. A sense of accomplishment, a civic duty fulfilled, or just the joy of giving.

Just because something could have been done instead doesn't change the fact that some benefit was gained. It makes it less practical, maybe, but not altruistic.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [Herr Surth](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 15:04:20 GMT

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you're wrong.

thats about how much thought i spent onto this.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [SSADMVR](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 16:02:25 GMT

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I don't normally say this, but cheesesoda is right.

Subject: Re: Racism

Posted by [Starbuzz](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 16:36:09 GMT

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It is biologically impossible.

Subject: Re: Racism

Posted by [R315r4z0r](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 16:47:41 GMT

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So what you are saying is that there is always a reason behind someone's actions, good or bad, beneficial to them or otherwise?

What if the only reasoning was to make it easier for someone else? Regardless if it makes it easier or harder for yourself?

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 17:50:19 GMT

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You're still deriving pleasure from it in some form. Like I said above, it makes you feel a sense of accomplishment, you like the feeling of helping someone knowing you made their day/year/life, etc...

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [Herr Surth](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 17:52:41 GMT

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What if I dont derive pleasure or accomplishment from it?

also, what are you even trying to prove with this thread?

edit@starbuzz: okay, "what are you even trying to prove with this post?" then. happy now? ;P

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [Starbuzz](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 18:14:47 GMT

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Frontier Psychiatrist wrote on Wed, 11 February 2009 11:52also, what are you even trying to prove with this thread?

AFAIK, he did not create this thread.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [R315r4z0r](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 18:27:57 GMT

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cheesesoda wrote on Wed, 11 February 2009 12:50 You're still deriving pleasure from it in some form. Like I said above, it makes you feel a sense of accomplishment, you like the feeling of helping someone knowing you made their day/year/life, etc...

No, I just said:

"Regardless if it makes your life easier or harder."

Meaning regardless of your own feelings in the matter.

To reiterate: What if you do something to make life easier for someone else, regardless of your own feelings and regardless if it makes your life easier or harder.

Like acting as if it was second nature. Having no ulterior motive to do it other than to do it? Having no intention of helping anyone nor having any intention of accomplishing anything?

Why do you keep on talking as if doing something for the sake of someone else is some chore you have to go out of your way to do?

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [Ryu](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 19:56:41 GMT

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cheesesoda wrote on Tue, 10 February 2009 21:55 Altruism does not and cannot exist. Period.

You just proved it existed, idiot.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 22:15:53 GMT

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R315r4z0r wrote on Wed, 11 February 2009 13:27 cheesesoda wrote on Wed, 11 February 2009 12:50 You're still deriving pleasure from it in some form. Like I said above, it makes you feel a sense of accomplishment, you like the feeling of helping someone knowing you made their day/year/life, etc...

No, I just said:

"Regardless if it makes your life easier or harder."

Meaning regardless of your own feelings in the matter.

To reiterate: What if you do something to make life easier for someone else, regardless of your own feelings and regardless if it makes your life easier or harder.

Like acting as if it was second nature. Having no ulterior motive to do it other than to do it? Having

no intention of helping anyone nor having any intention of accomplishing anything?

Why do you keep on talking as if doing something for the sake of someone else is some chore you have to go out of your way to do?

If you can give me an example, I'd appreciate it.

When did I EVER say that doing something nice for someone else is a chore? That just proves you have no clue what this debate is even talking about. The point I'm making by saying that altruism doesn't exist is that people's actions are ultimately motivated by some self-interest, be it physical or emotional. This is not to say you CONSCIOUSLY act in self-interest, but you wouldn't do it (consciously or subconsciously) if you wouldn't benefit from it in any way. This isn't a bad thing. Egoism is vital to self-preservation.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [R315r4z0r](#) on Wed, 11 Feb 2009 23:15:41 GMT

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Unfortunately I can't give you an example without making myself look like an elitist. But maybe I can put it another way:

Do you have any sort of 'routines' in your life? Like what you do in the morning when you wake up? Or your general way of dealing with people you don't know? Or a way of doing a specific chore or something? ect. If you do, do you have any ulterior motives to doing it that way? For example, it is the way you got used to doing them.

Well, if you can have those sorts of routines for doing certain things and acting certain ways, then why can't you do the same with acting in a kindly manner to others? Simply putting others first out of reflex rather than out of charity or for personal gratitude. The only ulterior motive being "it's how I know how to act."

Would you consider that a personal beneficial reason?

Quote:When did I EVER say that doing something nice for someone else is a chore?

I never said you did. What I said was:

Quote:Why do you keep on talking as if doing something for the sake of someone else is some chore you have to go out of your way to do?

Quote:That just proves you have no clue what this debate is even talking about.

Well, you are right about one thing. It does prove something.

However, what it proves is that you don't understand my position in this thread.

I'm not even debating on topic, if you haven't realized. But if I was, I would be on the same side as you are. We are in agreement. I even said so 2 or 3 of my posts ago. The only thing that I disagree with is your point that people require a selfish motive to want to do something. (Positive or negative)

Seriously, if you don't believe me, go check my first post!

Quote:I can't agree with this. Although I somewhat agree with your statement, your point is easily

contradicted.

I'm agree with you that altruism can't exist. But I am just disagreeing with that one single point you made. I'm not arguing on the same topic as everyone else, only against a single point you made.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 01:22:40 GMT

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Perhaps I shouldn't say "selfish", I should say self-interest and egoistical.

Like I have already said, you may not even consciously do something. If you are used to a routine, it's done subconsciously. That, however, doesn't change that the act is still being done in self-interest. Egoism doesn't have to be consciously done.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [GoArmy44](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 04:26:08 GMT

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cheesesoda wrote on Wed, 11 February 2009 11:50 You're still deriving pleasure from it in some form. Like I said above, it makes you feel a sense of accomplishment, you like the feeling of helping someone knowing you made their day/year/life, etc...

Here is an experiment: follow someone who has had a lobotomy and see if he puts a dollar in the Salvation Army jar. Or we could just talk about this for another 5 pages.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [reborn](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 07:38:32 GMT

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To believe that altruism does not exist, is to say that all Bhuddists are driven by personal, selfish motivations. This is not true.

I'm compelled to do something when I see the needs of other people. This is not out of a feeling of guilt, or to relieve my own guilt, because I feel none. It isn't to make me feel better about myself through charitable actions, I just feel the need to free people from suffering. This feeling comes from empathy, and the empathy comes from meditation, which leads me to strive towards freeing people from suffering.

Besides, believing that altruism doesn't exist must mean you do not believe in unconditional love, surely?

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [SSADMVR](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 09:48:43 GMT

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Ehh, you're dumb. There is no possibility to have empathy with a person you never met or seen in your life. You can't picture the person, it's just an empty space in your mind. The reason you think you feel empathy for these people is because it's been taught to you that, that is the way to feel if you're a decent human being.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [reborn](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 10:27:00 GMT

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SSADMVR wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 04:48Ehh, you're dumb. There is no possibility to have empathy with a person you never met or seen in your life. You can't picture the person, it's just an empty space in your mind. The reason you think you feel empathy for these people is because it's been taught to you that, that is the way to feel if you're a decent human being.

Meditation enhances the interdependence, integration, and cohesion of self.

The path to enlightenment and the pursuit of freeing all man-kind from suffering gives you empathy with the world.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 11:03:54 GMT

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reborn wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 02:38To believe that altruism does not exist, is to say that all Bhuddists are driven by personal, selfish motivations. This is not true.

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Besides, believing that altruism doesn't exist must mean you do not believe in unconditional love, surely?

Okay, how about this. Say you see someone that you're compelled to help, but you choose to just ignore the situation instead of acting on it. Would you feel guilt for your lack of action? If so, you're clearly acting out of self-interest.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [reborn](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 12:59:26 GMT

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I do not choose to help people out of some feeling of guilt, because I do not feel any. Nor do I do it out of some sort of self gratification by feeling that my charitable deed somehow makes me a better person. I just as equally do not feel guilty about choosing not to help someone, I do not feel ashamed or have any sense of moral wrong. It is as it is, and it's all part of the journey, so no, I feel no guilt.

I really feel that you under estimate compasion and empathy.

If you're just arguing for the sake of arguing, then that's fine, it's just the internets afterall. But if you're serious about not believing in altruism, and are willing to look at another point of view, then a very good example would be to research a little about the lesser vehicle and the greater vehicle, or just Buhddism in general.

Even the pursuit of enlightenment is sought for the purposes of freeing other people from suffering.

I will agree though that true cases of selflessness tend to be rare.

Nice debate, some interesting points of views.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 13:28:56 GMT

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You can't have empathy without feeling SOMETHING in some form.

1. the intellectual identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another.

If you don't feel guilty about NOT doing something, then it's NOT empathy, and it's NOT altruism. It's, once again, done in self-interest.

Besides, if you don't feel, how in the HELL is that enlightenment? That sounds a lot more like sociopathy.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [Spoony](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 13:29:42 GMT

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cheesesoda wrote on Wed, 11 February 2009 08:30Oh, give me a break. You cannot possibly think those are two examples of altruism.

Doing something for the good of others and not expecting anything in return still gives someone something in return. A sense of accomplishment, a civic duty fulfilled, or just the joy of giving.

Just because something could have been done instead doesn't change the fact that some benefit was gained. It makes it less practical, maybe, but not altruistic.
That wasn't what you said.

Quote:Then, you're not doing it out of altruism. You're doing it, so that it benefits you in some way. This implies that the reason a good deed is done is to reap the benefits (sense of accomplishment etc) - which is very often false. It certainly is in the two examples I mentioned.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 13:35:48 GMT
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Well, that's not what I meant.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [reborn](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 14:17:50 GMT
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cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 08:28You can't have empathy without feeling SOMETHING in some form.

1. the intellectual identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another.

If you don't feel guilty about NOT doing something, then it's NOT empathy, and it's NOT altruism. It's, once again, done in self-interest.

Besides, if you don't feel, how in the HELL is that enlightenment? That sounds a lot more like sociopathy.

I've never heard anyone compare it to sociopathy, you made me laugh out loud. But less humoursly, this is not the case.

My motivation in helping people comes from a desire to free people from suffering.

You could argue that because I desire this, then there is in a certain sense a form of ego. There is something in it for me...

My desire has been gratified by my good deed. Which is what I think is your point and what you are trying to argue. Which is most cases is likely to be true.

However, my desire is only to see people freed from suffering, nothing more. That sentence is important to understand. I only wish for all sentient life's freedom from suffering, which is a perfect

case and exact example of altruism, infact it is pretty much the definition of it. Any happiness, or joy I feel from this act is merely a by-product, my real desire is there freedom from suffering; a selfless act. My motivation, my reasoning for doing it, is purely to free them from suffering.

I guess it comes down to if you can believe that someones motivation can be the other persons happiness, and if you feel better for doing this, then this is just a by-product and not the motivation for doing such acts.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 15:01:02 GMT
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The thing is, you CAN'T have an unselfish concern for someone else and their well-being. You said it yourself, it's your motivation and desire to see them free from suffering.

Yes, joy and happiness that you gain from it is a by-product. It wouldn't make sense if it wasn't. You don't feel the same sense of accomplishment if you simply think "today, I'm going to help someone".

Basically, I don't see how you can perform an unselfish act. You'd basically have to unknowingly perform an act that benefited someone in some way. Though, you then wouldn't perform that act consciously OR subconsciously, so it doesn't really count.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [bisen11](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 15:13:10 GMT
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I sent my freind a birthday present in the mail a few days ago and not for any kind of reward. I've been tutoring my younger sister in algebra recently because I care about her. I'd rather just be lazy and surf the internet.
Altruism exists.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 15:24:17 GMT
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THOSE TWO EXAMPLES ARE GREAT. THEY HAVE PROVEN ME WRONG. I AM SORRY I EVER DOUBTED THE EXISTENCE OF ALTRUISM.

Sorry, but those two examples have been explained away in this thread already.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [Spoony](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 15:35:11 GMT
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cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 07:35 Well, that's not what I meant.
Then clarify it for me.

If I do a good thing and end up feeling good because of it or getting some other benefit, am I thereby demonstrated to be "selfish" even if I wasn't expecting the benefit, or if it had absolutely no bearing on my decision to perform the good deed?

I got a reward, so therefore I'm selfish in doing the work which earned it, even if I didn't know I'd get the reward or didn't care?

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 16:07:01 GMT
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If there was no benefit, you wouldn't do it. You feel like it's the right thing to do, so you fulfill that desire to do the right thing. Either that or you were attempting to avoid guilt that you would have if you didn't do something.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [reborn](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 17:14:58 GMT
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cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 10:01 The thing is, you CAN'T have an unselfish concern for someone else and their well-being. You said it yourself, it's your motivation and desire to see them free from suffering.

Yes, joy and happiness that you gain from it is a by-product. It wouldn't make sense if it wasn't. You don't feel the same sense of accomplishment if you simply think "today, I'm going to help someone".

Basically, I don't see how you can perform an unselfish act. You'd basically have to unknowingly perform an act that benefited someone in some way. Though, you then wouldn't perform that act consciously OR subconsciously, so it doesn't really count.

My desire is to see them freed from suffering. My desire is not to see them freed from suffering because it makes me happy, I know you are debating the reasoning for the desire has to come from a selfish motivation, however my reasoning for this desire comes from compassion.

I realise you think that this feeling of compassion is the selfish act, by relieving there suffering I feel better, because I want to see the end of there suffering. However, my feeling better about the situation is not my motivation, my motivation is the desire to see them freed from suffering.

You believe the mere act of fulfilling your desire is a selfish one, even if the desire is a selfless notion?

And really, by your definition there is no such thing a selfless notion, because every thought we have is basically about ourselves in someway?

Actually, the more I think about it, the more I can see your point of view.

By this reasoning, does that mean that no Christian would get into Christian Heaven? There love for Christ and the Holy Father is not not selflessly given, but rather out of hope of favour? Or a place in heaven, some after-life reward, or just because it makes them feel good to worship. Or irrelevant of there motivation, the mere acts of Christianity themselves are enough to grant entry, God loves them anyway regardless of there reason for worship?

Infact, if no one is capable of a selfless act, does that mean that no religions God's love for its followers in unconditional? The deity itself loves you because he has a desire that needs to be fulfilled too?

Do humans only marry eachother, not out of love, but out of selfishness? They do not really want to spend there lives making the other person happy, but really only want to feel good because they are making that person happy, or perhaps even less noble desires.

If I stop someone from throwing themselves off a bridge to commit suicide, I talk them into choosing life. I do this because I don't want them to die, I don't want them to die because I value life, and because O got what I wanted, this is selfish?

You've given me allot to think about, I hope you're not right, I feel that you probably aren't, but I'm not as sure as I once was.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 17:31:55 GMT

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I think you misunderstand the concept of self-interest a little bit. You are insinuating that all selfishness is a bad thing and that it's a corruption of sorts. I don't believe that, at all. It certainly can BE a corruption of the mind/soul/heart, etc..., but I don't feel that it has to be.

I assume that in Buddhism, you live your life in a way to be enlightened among other things. You're acting in self-interest, but it's not "selfish" in the way that the world sees selfishness. You're not trying to put yourself above anyone else, and you're certainly not trying to push anyone down. You're simply trying to progress as a person, and helping others along the way. Certainly bettering yourself is not "selfish", but it is acting in self-interest.

Of course, acting in a self-destructive manner IS a selfish act, and selfishness is a negative form of egoism.

Like I said, acting in self-interest doesn't have to be done with the intent to reap the benefits. That's the difference between someone you can see as moral versus someone as immoral. It's what one seeks to get out of it.

You brought up love. People don't get into love because it's "what humans do". You have a desire to be with someone and make them happy. If you can do that, then you succeed in your desire. You benefit from the sense of fulfillment, and you benefit from getting love in return (hopefully) from your partner.

Edit: Of course, there's also people who like relationships to control someone else, but then that's just an obvious case of egoism. Then there's arranged marriages which is to not shame one's family/culture/religion by refusing.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [reborn](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 17:54:04 GMT
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In it's simplest form that I can think of, you're saying that whatever you do, you do it because you want to do it. Whether that want is to free someone from suffering or not, you are still fulfilling that want. That actually makes sense to me, I need to contemplate this. I'm not sure if this is a clever twist of words, merely semantics, or you are in fact right.

I am extremely curious if you believe in a God, or some deity. And if so, do you believe they are capable of a selfless act?

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [Spoony](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 18:24:38 GMT
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cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 10:07 If there was no benefit, you wouldn't do it. You feel like it's the right thing to do, so you fulfill that desire to do the right thing. This is just wordplay; by this non-logic doing anything can be considered selfish. To do a thing (unless perhaps something of pure instinctive reflex, like pulling your hand away from something you didn't know was really really hot) you first desired to do it, so by fulfilling your desire to do it, you acted selfishly.

cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 10:07 Either that or you were attempting to avoid guilt that you would have if you didn't do something. I don't really think that's applicable.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 18:35:58 GMT
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That is the point of what I'm saying, Spoony. That's the entire point of psychological egoism. Nothing is selfless.

In conventional terms, sure, there are selfless acts. You're putting someone else's well-being in front of your own. However, there's still something to be gained from it, and you do the acts because of that.

@reborn: Ultimately, yes, you would do it because you want to do it. Either you do it because you

gain something positive from it, or you avoid something negative.

As for a god, I believe in a personal god, but I don't really know the characteristics of the god. As for ANY god... I'm not sure if it's possible. If the god thinks and acts as humans do, no, I can't say I think it's possible. If we talk in terms of the Judeo-Christian god, no, He's not capable of being altruistic, either.

Personally, I wouldn't know how any supernatural being would go about avoiding any self-interest. As a human, I can't fathom it, but I'm not going to say that it's supernaturally impossible.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [Spoony](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 18:57:20 GMT

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cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 19:35 That is the point of what I'm saying, Spoony. That's the entire point of psychological egoism. Nothing is selfless.

In conventional terms, sure, there are selfless acts. You're putting someone else's well-being in front of your own. However, there's still something to be gained from it, and you do the acts because of that.

The last eight words are where the problem is for me. It's plainly not the case in either of the two examples I gave.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [SSADMVR](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 19:02:00 GMT

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Yes, it is. Woopdeedoo spoony-style debate.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [reborn](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 19:11:49 GMT

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OK, I have some more thoughts on the subject and as I have compassion for all sentient beings, I would like to extend this to the animal kingdom...

If you can agree it is fair to assume that an animal has less intellect than humans, and also does not have the psychological capacity for complex emotions and reasoning, or at least most do not. Then it is safe to assume that altruism does exist amongst animals, as they have been seen risking their own life for that of another, or the collective good. Would you agree?

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [Ma1kel](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 19:19:41 GMT

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Lets say we have a hypothetical situation. A man is locked up into a cage and will die if you don't press the button. You press it and save his life. This man will still be in the cage. Helping this man does not benefit you in any way, you don't feel any satisfaction nor do you believe in karma.

You were altruistic without being selfish. Selfish would be not pressing the button because it costs you time. You did use some of your time to press the button without any returns.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [reborn](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 19:46:23 GMT

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I can't believe I am disagreeing with you, but by jball's logic, and one I am beginning to follow, you wanted to push the button. For whatever reason you wanted to push the button, you still wanted to push it. In pushing that button you fulfilled this want, therefore the exercise was in some way self serving.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [Ma1kel](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 19:54:32 GMT

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And your action is still altruistic, even with the faulty logic/definition aside.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [Ma1kel](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 20:01:13 GMT

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Altruistic is not being selfish.

Selfish is doing something because it benefits you.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 20:08:04 GMT

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@Spoony:

You deny that it's the case, but it has to be true. You don't just do things to do things. There's something pushing you to do it. You must gain something from it. Whether it be experience, pleasure, or an avoidance of something negative.

Would your dad have given if it made him feel like shit afterwards? WHY did you do all of that administrating? Even if you didn't end up benefiting it, you had to have had some goal to achieve.

@ma1kel: Altruism is being selfless. Doing what you desire is not selfless.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [reborn](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 20:08:31 GMT

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The definition of altruism states that the act or concern has to be selfless. Whilst the action has good meaning, it is not done without a self serving purpose.

I'm going back-and-forth allot on this, I was tempted to suggest that both statements are correct depending on your interpretation of any example at all; If you view it from an egoistic point of view or not.

However, this is a weak flim-flam arguement. Probably not as bad as what I was previously thinking of suggesting, which then starts to redefine the question by trying to challenge the very meaning and definition of altruism.

Certainly is a tricky one. I am going to give it some further contemplation through meditation.

Jball, come on dude, animal kingdom was a nice example I thought. Any thoughts on it?

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [Ma1kel](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 20:09:39 GMT

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The only reason to push the button is common decency, but that still doesn't make me selfish.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 20:20:47 GMT

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reborn wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 15:08The definition of altruism states that the act or concern has to be selfless. Whilst the action has good meaning, it is not done without a self serving purpose.

I'm going back-and-forth allot on this, I was tempted to suggest that both statements are correct depending on your interpretation of any example at all; If you view it from an egoistic point of view or not.

However, this is a weak flim-flam arguement. Probably not as bad as what I was previously thinking of suggesting, which then starts to redefine the question by trying to challenge the very meaning and definition of altruism.

Certainly is a tricky one. I am going to give it some further contemplation through meditation.

Jball, come on dude, animal kingdom was a nice example I thought. Any thoughts on it?
Sorry, I was going to respond to that question, but then I noticed ma1kel's responses, and thus forgot about yours.

I think with less intellect, animals are less prone to be selfish in the way we consider selfishness, but if I'm not sure there's altruism still. There's still some goal, some desire. Maybe.

Even though I'm arguing in favor of psychological egoism, I'm still not entirely convinced. I once thought that as an evolutionary process, we have moved beyond psychological egoism and into the realm of being altruistic, but I can't shake the idea that we control our thoughts and actions, and even biological instincts are geared towards self-preservation which are clearly in self-interest.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [reborn](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 20:29:47 GMT
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I'm not convinced animals have the capacity for desire, but are driven by self preservation. The act of risking or giving it's own life for another animal directly conflicts with it's instinct for self preservation, yet examples are evident. Surely this is an example of altruism?
Unless animals do have the capacity for desire, the intellectual capacity for reason and higher thought. Which would incidently mean they are just as self centered as us humans.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 20:37:01 GMT
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If they don't have the intellect, is it really altruism? It can't have the desire, the devotion toward another animal, can it?

If it does have the intellect to desire, then it's not altruism, either.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [Ma1kel](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 21:00:51 GMT
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It seems to me that you are altruistic out of self-interest (wanting to fulfill the desire of altruism) but not selfishness, which would be gaining from it without thinking about the subject.

I do agree that it's self-interest of fulfilling the desire of acting in the very least (at it's core) when performing the act of altruism. You can add some to this like karma and dopamine.

As in every action you do being out of the self-interest of fulfilling the action.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [Herr Surth](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 21:05:05 GMT
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isnt it more like, animals are not altruistic, unlike humans? Since they are restricted to their genes while humans have slipped passed that by creating memes, by being conscious?

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [bisen11](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 21:13:24 GMT
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cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 10:24THOSE TWO EXAMPLES ARE GREAT. THEY HAVE PROVEN ME WRONG. I AM SORRY I EVER DOUBTED THE EXISTENCE OF ALTRUISM.

Sorry, but those two examples have been explained away in this thread already. Alright, I'll give you a very simple example you can understand. Today at lunch, a freind of mine mentioned how she wanted to get fries. I offered her some of mine. Do you really think I give a shit enough to outweigh the pros and cons of french fries? Would I really be so concieted as to think OH WOW I'M AN AWESOME PERSON CUZ I GAVE HER 1 FRY!!!! Hell no. It was nothing.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 21:41:19 GMT
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Who says you did it to make yourself feel like an awesome person? You desired to give her some french fries because she wanted some. You still chose to do it, thus acting in self-interest.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [Carrierll](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 22:39:42 GMT
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cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 21:41Who says you did it to make yourself feel like an awesome person? You desired to give her some french fries because she wanted some. You still chose to do it, thus acting in self-interest.

How is giving away food self interest, on any level?

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [nikki6ixx](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 23:31:05 GMT
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CarrierII wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 14:39cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 21:41Who says you did it to make yourself feel like an awesome person? You desired to give her some french fries because she wanted some. You still chose to do it, thus acting in self-interest.

How is giving away food self interest, on any level?

Possibility of fornication?

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Thu, 12 Feb 2009 23:41:27 GMT
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CarrierII wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 17:39cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 21:41Who says you did it to make yourself feel like an awesome person? You desired to give her some french fries because she wanted some. You still chose to do it, thus acting in self-interest.

How is giving away food self interest, on any level?

The desire to give the food is ultimately self-interest over the concern of others.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [Muad Dib15](#) on Fri, 13 Feb 2009 00:58:01 GMT
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cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 17:41CarrierII wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 17:39cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 21:41Who says you did it to make yourself feel like an awesome person? You desired to give her some french fries because she wanted some. You still chose to do it, thus acting in self-interest.

How is giving away food self interest, on any level?

The desire to give the food is ultimately self-interest over the concern of others.

How? That makes absolutely no sense what so ever.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [BlueThen](#) on Fri, 13 Feb 2009 01:03:15 GMT
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Muad Dib15 wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 18:58cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 17:41CarrierII wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 17:39cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 21:41Who says you did it to make yourself feel like an awesome person? You desired to give her some french fries because she wanted some. You still chose to do it, thus acting in self-interest.

How is giving away food self interest, on any level?

The desire to give the food is ultimately self-interest over the concern of others.

How? That makes absolutely no sense what so ever.
Fulfilling that want, I assume.

Personally, I think that this entire argument is pointless and stupid. Who cares if people are donating to charity to make themselves look good? They're still donating, aren't they?

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Fri, 13 Feb 2009 01:12:10 GMT
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Nobody is making the argument that people are evil because there's no such thing as altruism. It's just a philosophical principle that people always put their desires/self-interests first. Whether it's the desire to help someone or wanting to shoot someone in the face.

Again, the entire point of me even saying "Altruism doesn't exist" was to derail the "Racism" thread. Why altruism? It was in Fobby's huge image.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [reborn](#) on Fri, 13 Feb 2009 07:41:51 GMT
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After contemplating this, I have to come to the conclusion that my original position is wrong.

The very definition of a selfless act is flawed. Because simply it means you have to act, the process of acting means you have to want to do it, and the act fulfills that want. Even if you don't want to do it, you do it for some reason, and this reason is gratified by your act.

If there is no reason for your action, then there is no intent to do a selfless deed. Without the intent, it cannot be a selfless act.

The burden of this knowledge is greater then you might think.
I gave this a great deal of contemplation through meditating on the subject. I used to believe that the pursuit of enlightenment was a selfless act, it's motivation driven by the want to free people from suffering. But this is not a selfless act.

The consequence of knowing there is no selfless act is troublesome for me, I am having difficulty digesting it.

If there is no such thing as a selfless act, my nature is based on self. Then what is the meaning of life?

Am I to assume that I must defy my nature, which is impossible, or accept my nature and act accordingly.

I cannot possibly believe that anything I do which I used to deem as a good deed is selfless, I did it for my own benefit, it was driven by my nature of self.

Perhaps I should make knowledge my pursuit, experience of life maybe. Even if I make my pursuit in life a noble one, it is still driven by my nature of self.

I must therefore conclude that there is no meaning to life, if there is indeed an afterlife then there is nothing I can do to justify my existence, it's just a pointless exercise.

I might as well accept my nature and try to enjoy myself. Perhaps if there is a creator then this was there intention, and this is the best thing I can do with my life, as I am incapable of anything else anyway.

Or maybe despite knowing that I perform these acts for my own benefit in some way, I should continue anyway because I believe it's the right thing to do.

It's quite perplexing, and I must thank you for making me challenge it. Although it is almost equally as easy to not thank you and curse you for this knowledge. But I do not believe that ignorance is bliss.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [Spoony](#) on Fri, 13 Feb 2009 11:33:18 GMT

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cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 14:08 You deny that it's the case, but it has to be true. You don't just do things to do things.
So far so good...

cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 14:08 There's something pushing you to do it.
Losing me...

cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 14:08 You must gain something from it.
...lost me.

cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 14:08 Would your dad have given if it made him feel like shit afterwards?

Haven't I already answered this? I guarantee he could've spent it on something he really would've enjoyed, another European holiday with my mother perhaps. They love them, and the amount he spent would've probably paid for at least one. If he felt any personal satisfaction from the donation it was almost certainly trivial by comparison, and it definitely didn't impact his decision.

cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 14:08 WHY did you do all of that administrating?

Because nobody else could be bothered. I never cared about anything I might have stood to gain as a result, and it certainly gave me more annoyance than satisfaction - as I knew it would before I even started it.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [reborn](#) on Fri, 13 Feb 2009 12:07:24 GMT
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Spoony wrote on Fri, 13 February 2009 06:33
cheesesoda wrote on Thu, 12 February 2009 14:08WHY did you do all of that administrating?
Because nobody else could be bothered. I never cared about anything I might have stood to gain as a result, and it certainly gave me more annoyance than satisfaction - as I knew it would before I even started it.

J_ball is asking why you did it, he isn't asking why other people didn't.

To act means you had to have a desire to act, performing the act fulfilled that desire.

You cannot act without motivation, whatever that motivation is, it is being satisfied by the act.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Fri, 13 Feb 2009 15:24:06 GMT
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reborn wrote on Fri, 13 February 2009 02:41After contemplating this, I have to come to the conclusion that my original position is wrong.

The very definition of a selfless act is flawed. Because simply it means you have to act, the process of acting means you have to want to do it, and the act fulfills that want. Even if you don't want to do it, you do it for some reason, and this reason is gratified by your act.

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Perhaps I should make knowledge my pursuit, experiance of life maybe. Even if I make my pursuit in life a noble one, it is still driven by my nature of self.

I must therefore conclude that there is no meaning to life, if there is indeed an afterlife then there is nothing I can do to justify my existance, it's just a pointless exercise.

I might aswell accept my nature and try to enjoy myself. Perhaps if there is a creator then this was there intention, and this is the best thing I can do with my life, as I am incapable of anything else anyway.

Or maybe despite knowing that I perform these acts for my own benefit in some way, I should continue anyway because I believe it's the right thing to do.

It's quite perplexing, and I must thankyou for making me challenge it. Although it is almost equally as easy to not thankyou and curse you for this knowledge. But I do not believe that ignornace is bliss.

I think you're looking at this the wrong way. You're looking at in black and white. Either you're completely selfless or you're an egomaniac. I don't think that's true. I think it all boils down to the intent and desire. Yes, you HAVE intent and desire, and you can't shake that, but what makes the desire to do good any less noble and moral than being completely "selfless"? I think actually DESIRING to help others is more noble than walking through life as someone who doesn't act in a way that fulfills a desire to help others.

Besides, if you can't respect yourself, you cannot respect others. Thus, self-preservation is the first step in forming relationships with others and the world. It's a good thing, and without it, we would never have progressed as a species or a society.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [reborn](#) on Fri, 13 Feb 2009 16:27:44 GMT

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Perhaps if the desire to act is based on compassion and the act is a good deed, or something noble, then it's OK for it to be based on self, because you have to love yourself, and if we are all indeed one, then the perception of self is flawed anyway.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [cheesesoda](#) on Fri, 13 Feb 2009 17:05:35 GMT

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That's one way to look at it. By being selfish, you're being selfless, as long as the deed/intent is good, because we're all inter-connected.

I'm not sure I would go with that for myself. I follow what's essentially the ethics of care. I still hold

others in regard, but my family, friends, myself, and even my pets come before others in what I'm morally responsible for.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.

Posted by [bisen11](#) on Sun, 15 Feb 2009 08:25:55 GMT

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reborn wrote on Fri, 13 February 2009 02:41 After contemplating this, I have to come to the conclusion that my original position is wrong.

The very definition of a selfless act is flawed. Because simply it means you have to act, the process of acting means you have to want to do it, and the act fulfills that want. Even if you don't want to do it, you do it for some reason, and this reason is gratified by your act.

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It's quite perplexing, and I must thank you for making me challenge it. Although it is almost equally as easy to not thank you and curse you for this knowledge. But I do not believe that ignorance is bliss.

How would reflexes/instincts fit into this? Say a guy with a lady's purse is running down a street

and you have no time to think. Perhaps you reflexivly take the guy out.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [z310](#) on Sun, 15 Feb 2009 08:47:37 GMT
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All reflexes and instincts have an underlining reason, and that reason can always be tied to self-interest.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [bisen11](#) on Sun, 15 Feb 2009 18:29:37 GMT
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So altruism is meant to include the subconscious. Which is something that no one can ever actually know what it's thinking. That sounds like a circular argument to me.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [Ma1kel](#) on Tue, 17 Feb 2009 18:35:54 GMT
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bisen11 wrote on Sun, 15 February 2009 14:29So altruism is meant to include the subconscious. Which is something that no one can ever actually know what it's thinking. That sounds like a circular argument to me.
There's no argument and the reasoning isn't circular.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [bisen11](#) on Wed, 18 Feb 2009 06:59:45 GMT
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Ma1kel wrote on Tue, 17 February 2009 13:35bisen11 wrote on Sun, 15 February 2009 14:29So altruism is meant to include the subconscious. Which is something that no one can ever actually know what it's thinking. That sounds like a circular argument to me.
There's no argument and the reasoning isn't circular.
In that case. Provide me with the research.

Subject: Re: Debate on Altruism.
Posted by [Ma1kel](#) on Wed, 18 Feb 2009 20:43:04 GMT
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Are you mentally retarded? Do you have any idea what you are saying?
