

A Proof of Altruism - Alec Rogers

This essay presents a proof of the view that altruistic kindness is essential to human nature. This view opposes the commonly held (and often implicit) view that people are essentially selfish. Here are several statements of the sort we wish to prove:

- One's self-concept limits one's awareness. Therefore, one's self-concept limits emotional content by restricting the content of awareness.
- The limited emotional content which is a result of the self-concept entails that the person realizes only limited wisdom: the wisdom of that self-concept.
- By removing the limitation of the self-concept, the person removes the self-centered limitation on wisdom; removing *any* concept from arising allows unrestricted wisdom.
- The fulfillment of our human nature (seen as unrestricted wisdom) requires universal empathy, where empathy is understood as emotional understanding.

First of all, this essay is written because a deep conviction of the essential kindness of our fellow beings is important because it is soteriologically transformative: the conviction of the essential kindness of our fellow man facilitates empathizing with them, and therefore exhibiting compassionate action toward them. It also helps to increase our wisdom, as will be explained below. Therefore, in order to help establish this conviction in the kindness of human nature for those inclined to rational argument, the outline of a proof is presented here.

To perceive others as essentially kind, or as kind in their essence, we must know what human nature is. For the purposes of this essay, it is sufficient to regard *knowing-wisdom* as an essential characteristic of human nature. That wisdom is the source of our intellectualization, and it expresses itself in intuition and feelings (or non-negative emotions). Given that assumption, we attempt to prove that universal empathy is essential to the manifestation of that nature.

The proof requires the following assumptions:

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Assumptions:

1. *Human nature is knowing*, or has wisdom as an essential characteristic. The fulfillment of human nature is therefore similar to a sort of omniscience.
2. *Knowing may occur conceptually or non-conceptually*; the former entails concepts, and the latter entails emotions (because intuition operates by producing emotions or feelings).
3. *Only one concept can be known at a single time*, because concepts constrain the content of our awareness and are therefore mutually exclusive.
4. *Emotions can occur in parallel* (unlike concepts).

If one accepts those assumptions, the proof is fairly straightforward:

Argument:

5. A particular concept about a thing is equivalent to a particular perspective (or story) about that thing.
6. Since every different perspective entails a different concept (5), only intuition can represent multiple perspectives of a thing at a single time (3), whereas the conceptual mind can take only one perspective (4).
7. Because intuition can know multiple perspectives at a single time, its capacity for knowing is greater.
8. Because intuition (or System 1 in dual-process terminology) can know more, it can fulfill human nature (knowing) in a way that conceptual mind (or System 2) cannot.
9. Because intuition requires feeling the feelings associated with many different perspectives, the complete development of intuition can be called *universal empathy*.
10. Because fulfilling our human nature requires developing intuition (8), the complete fulfillment of our human nature requires universal empathy (9).

To summarize, our nature is knowing, and the fulfillment of that knowing wisdom is a position of both cognitive selflessness and (emotional) universal empathy.