Philosophy of Altruism: A Critical Analysis

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Dedicated to Aane and Aaba

and my sisters

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Declaration

I, Kago Kevin, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis titled 'Philosophy of altruism: a critical analysis' has been carried out by me, under the supervision of Prof. Prabhu Venkataraman, in the department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, Assam.

This work has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of any degree.

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Certificate

This is to certify that the work contained in the thesis titled 'Philosophy of altruism: a critical analysis' by Kago Kevin (Reg no. 196141004), a student of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, for the award of Doctor of Philosophy was carried out under my supervision. The results embodied in the thesis have not been submitted to any other university or institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

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Yours Sincerely,
Kago Kevin

Contents

Abstract of the thesis

The thesis looks at the notion of *altruism* which is the idea of selfless concern or action for the wellbeing of others. Although debates surrounding altruism remain largely unidirectional, with egoism being the main challenger for altruism across the other side of the field, this thesis attempts to bring out a multi-dimensional understanding of the whole spectrum, particularly emphasizing the diverse way in which we can view altruism or altruistic actions, and work towards better promotion of this benevolent action. After exploring the various nuances preserved in the dichotomy between selfless giving and selfish taking, this thesis will argue for the promotion of the idea of altruism. In order to do so three perspectives will be employed: i) Pragmatic/Naturalistic Perspective - which shows that when the historical and sociological factors of our human society are studied, altruism is naturally recommended over egoism. This recommendation serves many crucial purposes, from holding a family together to holding a larger group such as a village. ii) Applied Ethical Perspective - will attempt to prove if egoism can be argued against as a mistaken doctrine with the help of the explication of the qualities that organ donors seem to possess. This perspective will also explore other instances of altruistic behaviors to show that egoism can be refuted on an applied level. Lastly, to diversify the critique that can be generated against egoism, and to delve into the distinctive notion of 'passive altruism', the thesis will also explore the spiritual lineage of our identity/ego from a Vedantic notion called 'jivanmukti'. Hence, the research intends to contribute to an understanding of practical and normative ethics from a selfless and prosocial point of contemplation.

Chapter I: Introduction

The term ‘altruism’ refers to selfless actions performed without the expectation of a return of the favor (Wilson D. , 2015; Seglow, 2004). The root word for altruism comes from the Latin word ‘alter’ which means ‘other’. It is a concept whose significance is very little discussed both in our everyday lives and in the larger discussion on morality. A person is altruistic if his or her action is explicitly directed towards the welfare of someone else. On the other hand, an action cannot be called altruistic in its proper sense if the intention behind an action is selfish or is established upon the belief of some kind of benefit for the self. Egoism would be a better terminology to describe such type of actions.

Altruism can be understood in various other forms; of which many may not carry the same characteristics as the definition described above but share the quality of *goodness* in general. These are concepts such as prosociality, charity, love, and philanthropy, to virtues like kindness, honesty, empathy, benevolence, and the like. Altruism is in harmony with all the aforementioned values. It can be considered the apex of moral behavior since no other virtue stresses this explicitly on the selfless aspect of our actions (Weinstein, 2004; Graham, 2002).

The term altruism was first popularized by the sociologist August Comte in the mid-1800s as a part of his humanistic project (Comte, 1851). His idea for altruism was that of the promotion of happiness and progress, not through the command of the divine or similar other entities, but by recognizing that each individual through the faculty of his or her reason is capable of this divinity and charity towards others.

Dictionaries define altruism in the following ways:

> *‘Willingness to do things that bring advantages to others, even if it results in disadvantage for yourself’*

Cambridge Dictionary[1]

'Unselfish regard for or devotion to the welfare of others'

Merriam Webster[2]

Although the standard definition of altruism is without much contention the technical side of it is far from being uniform. The first ambiguity lies in the usage of the term across disciplines (Clavien & Chapuisat, 2013; Nicholas, 1997). This is evident, for instance, in the fact that both evolutionary biology and economics have used the concept differently according to the definition that fits into the nature of their discipline. The former defines altruism in the evolutionary sense as an act that reduces the reproductive success of an organism (Hamilton, 1964; Wilson E. , 1975; Dawkins, 2016 [1976]). The latter view is based on a cost-benefit framework, exemplified by the notion of homo economicus—a hypothetical idea asserting that human beings are creatures who seek to maximize their self-interest and profit in relation to their economic and social circumstances. If an actor performs costly action for the benefit of other individuals, then that act is altruistic in the economic sense (Alexander, 1987; Nowak & Sigmund, 1998).

Clavien and Chapuisat (2013) after a review of the concept from various disciplines came up with four types of altruism: 1) Psychological altruism: An action is altruistic if it results only from motivations directed towards the goal of improving others' interests and welfare. 2) Reproductive altruism: A behavior is altruistic if it increases other organisms' fitness and permanently decreases the actor's own fitness. 3) Behavioral altruism: A behavior is altruistic if it brings any kind of benefit to other individuals at some cost for the agent, and if there is no foreseeable way for the agent to reap compensatory benefits from her behavior.

[1] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/altruism
[2] Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Altruism. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved March 7, 2022, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/altruism

4) Preference altruism: An action is altruistic if it results from preferences for improving others' interests and welfare at some cost to oneself. Their work by and large is intended to lower the ambiguity that surrounds the word altruism whenever it is used by researchers across various fields.

Secondly, the ambiguity of the term exists under the discipline of moral philosophy itself (Schwartz, 1993; Badhwar, 1993; Churchill & Street, 2002). These ambiguities mostly arise because of the lack of conceptual clarity and looseness of the semantics of the term. This becomes apparent when we assess those actions which are altruistic by definition but could be viewed in the context of selfishness also and vice versa. For example, when a person acts generously towards another fellow being to feel good about themselves. Was the action performed by the person ever generous if the only reason they acted that way was to feel good about themselves? Such person may think that generosity will help give value to one's low spirit. Or a case where a person donates to charity and in return gets fame and recognition. If say a wealthy engineer donates a substantive amount of money to a charity run by the members of a community, but the only reason he does so is to gain fame and recognition which he really admires, then there is definitely a space to doubt whether his altruism is genuine or insincere. At the same time, we can also ask - do the altruism need to be absolutely self-sacrificing to the level of sabotaging oneself to be considered genuine? These examples throw light into the definitional quandary of altruism. The quandary runs so deep that at times it becomes hard to assess if the concept actually captures anything significant.

However, on the philosophical side, the greatest challenge for altruism lies with the existence of the opposing theory *egoism* (Hobbes, 1651; Bentham, 2000 [1781]; Nietzsche, 1998 [1887]; Rand, 2000 [1964]). The argument goes that if all our actions (other regarding or neutral) are regulated by our choice which instead springs from our personal desire then the notion of altruism cannot be justified as a real thing. One of the major contemporary proponents

of egoism Ayn Rand writes 'An organism's life is its standard of value: that which furthers its life is the good, that which threatens it is the evil' (Rand, 2000 [1964], p. 17). However, many other commentaries have responded against this doctrine stating that altruism does exist and that its capacity to establish itself as a significant moral idea remains a very tangible possibility (Nagel, 1970; Batson & Shaw, 1991; Ricard, 2018). Social psychologist Daniel Batson (1991; 2011) has tried to prove that heightened experience of empathy in a person can lead to altruistic motivation and hence can generate altruistic action. He called this hypothesis 'empathy-altruism hypothesis'. Although Batson demonstrates an optimistic correlation between empathy and altruism critics have argued that altruism can be discarded if empathy is removed (Bloom, 2016). A more critical discussion will be required to understand the intricacies of this debate.

Another challenge for altruism comes from the scientific literature of evolutionary biology and various results obtained from psychology and other disciplines which inquire into human behavior. Since, evolution has described nature as a selfish planet which selects the fittest organisms it cannot be the case that altruism as a trait will evolve and survive. Hence, it is an unrealistic behavior, a bad survival strategy, or at best an *evolutionary puzzle* (Hamilton, 1964; Wilson E. , 1975; Dawkins, 2016 [1976]). But the counter arguments have emerged in the biological literature too regarding the nature of animal behavior (Kropotkin, 2020 [1902]; De Waal, 2019 [2009]). For example, De Waal argues for the existence of the elements of empathy and kindness in animal kingdom which entails a positive supposition for human kingdom as well:

> *Don't believe anyone who says that since nature is based on a struggle for life, we need to live like this as well. Many animals survive not by eliminating each other or keeping everything for themselves, but by cooperating and sharing* (De Waal, 2019 [2009], p. 7).

Psychological studies on altruistic and prosocial behavior have yielded mixed conclusions regarding the moral nature of human beings. On the one hand we are capable of altruistic and prosocial actions to a very inclusive extent, on the other, we are closed and rigid when it comes to providing our altruism to people, especially to those who are outside our immediate circle. It is also the case that at times contexts have played larger role than our beliefs in shaping our decisions on altruistic matters. For instance, a study suggested that in our ordinary perception more than inaction an altruistic action is harshly judged as selfish when an underlying benefit is witnessed as a side effect. Carlson and Zaki writes 'when actors perform good deeds in order to accrue material or social benefits, observers view them as "counter-altruistic", more selfish even than people who engage in non-prosocial behavior' (Carlson & Zaki, 2018, p. 39). This study also reveals an interesting character about how our thoughts are processed when we make social judgements about other people's actions. We judge only those people whom we can see and we judge them on the basis of the preconceptions that we carry in our heads. Given their study, an egoistic blood donor is more wrong than a person who did not even donate. If consequentially judged, we might remove the allegation off of the egoistic blood donor however. But at the same time, it will be counter-intuitive to say that we always make judgements based on the consequential measurements. By and large, we are social creatures who are affected by various social factors that are implicit in nature. Sometimes these social factors can even take a bitter turn revealing our most indifferent side. In a classical psychological study, researchers demonstrated that people do not usually extend their help when the victim is situated in a group environment (where many people are present). Everybody thinks that somebody else will do it. As a result of this, the individual responsibilities get diffused and the victim's plea gets neglected. A phenomenon which is known as the bystander effect (Darley & Latane, 1968). In the case of altruism too perhaps, many of us have acted like bystanders, thinking that somebody else will extend their altruism.

With the element of both realism and pragmatism these studies show us a side of our nature that is beyond what we merely presuppose based on our social conditions, and rather make our behavior in relation to altruism more observable.

On the policy making side the value of altruism has had quite an impact on many charitable organizations. Based on the utilitarian principle of 'greatest good for the greatest number' social movement like Effective Altruism (EA) encourages donors to donate as much as they can and as effectively as they can to create a more equitable society. EA hopes to eradicate global poverty by managing charity initiative in the most productive manner. They define their program as *'a research field which uses high-quality evidence and careful reasoning to work out how to help others as much as possible'*.[3] In his article (Famine, Affluence, and Morality, 1972) one of the influential advocates of EA Peter Singer discusses about the moral responsibility that falls into the hands of people in the affluent nations. He proposes that we as a society ought to be charitable in every way possible, to the extent that we must reduce ourselves to the marginal utility of our recipient. At the same time, he also criticizes that the people in the affluent and rich nations are not charitable enough. Singer's writings have influenced many charity organizations in the recent past to take altruism seriously and effectively (1972; 2009; 2015).

Additionally, outside of these organizations altruistic activities have been performed by various everyday exemplars. Many of these actions were performed by people during tough times like war and tragic disasters. In both cases the risks of losing one's life were very high for the altruists (Monroe K. , 1996; Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, Biennial Report, 2019-2020). But these factors did not create any barriers for the actors from performing their altruistic deeds. Thus, presence of such individuals and their actions remarkably produce positive

[3] (Introduction to effective altruism, n.d.)

tendencies in the collective minds of the people as to how much altruism can be advanced from their side.

We may now be in the right position to ask few questions - are we ever truly altruistic? How significant is the role of altruism in our social life? Can the moral life of a community function in a normal way if altruism is completely removed? Can we make any logical sense of the idea of pure altruism?

The above-mentioned cases reveal to an extent that to conceptualize altruism in its most genuine sense *intention* will have to play a big role. It is the intention behind the action that can essentially give us the hint if the action is genuinely altruistic or not. But we might not always be well-equipped to look behind the intention to make out a difference. Moreover, there could be other social, political, or religious ideologies which may overlap and interact with altruism. For example, concern for humanity, religious moral values, or motivation based on the principles of justice, etc. (Seglow, 2004). But if that is so then their actions might not exactly fit into the definition of altruism per se but rather something else. Let us expand the thesis further to get a better understanding of the nuances associated with the concept. I will try to address one question at a time as I proceed.

1.2 Altruism and egoism: the debate

Altruism as a moral theory is usually discussed in contrast to the opposite theory of egoism. An egoist by definition acts only with a tendency to further their own self-interests. So, given an egoist x, x would only act in a manner y if that action y has a propensity to benefit x's self-interest. Thomas Hobbes in his work (Leviathan, 1651) famously made an observation about human nature which is often cited by various scholars:

> *No man giveth but with intention of good to himself, because gift is voluntary; and of all voluntary acts, the object is to every man his own good; of which, if men see they shall be frustrated, there will be no beginning of benevolence or trust, nor consequently of mutual help* (Hobbes, 1651).

The English philosopher Hobbes had a presupposition about humans that in the state of nature where there is no form of government, and where all man is by and for himself, the quality of life is *'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short'*. In such a state sovereign's intervention becomes necessary to tame the primal instincts of people so that individuals can stop harming one another. Hence, in Hobbes' theory state has been seen as a mere mechanism to protect the negative liberty of the people. In responding to the narrative of perpetual war and mutual struggle that is very prominent in Hobbes' and Darwin's writings late 19th century writer named Peter Kropotkin writes:

> *To attribute, therefore, the industrial progress of our century to the war of each against all which it has proclaimed, is to reason like the man who, knowing not the causes of rain, attributes it to the victim he has immolated before his clay idol. For industrial progress, as for each other conquest over nature, mutual aid and close intercourse certainly are, as they have been, much more advantageous than mutual struggle* (Kropotkin, 2020 [1902], p. 208).

In one of his dialogues Plato is also seen as initiating a discourse on the nature of human personality. But unlike Hobbes' description of human nature Socrates also argued for the innate human capacity to distinguish wrong from right. In the dialogue Socrates is in a conversation with his fellow citizen named Glaucon who is contemplating on the nature of justice. Glaucon's account of justice is such that, a just person only holds their value of justice in so far as it can instrumentally benefit them to live a peaceful life while inviting no unnecessary trouble in their

journey. Thus, this account does not uphold the intrinsic value of justice but only merits itself to the extrinsic use of it. This presupposes an underlying egoistic attitude. On the contrary, Socrates is arguing against this position by saying that this self-interested attitude will lead the person in a destructive path further in the course of their life since there is a disharmony between the internal emotion and the external action:

> *For it is not the part of a man of sound mind to pursue or avoid what he should not, but to pursue or avoid what he should, whether it things, or people, or pleasures, or pains, and to stand his ground, where duty bids, and remain steadfast* (Rogers, 1997, p. 16).

Furthermore, a society where justice is ordained only for the personal benefit will not be able to withstand challenges that demand collective effort from the people. Thus, for Plato as conveyed in the dialogue through Socrates, it is the intrinsic value of the collective good that needs to be grasped and only then the true value of justice can be actualized. Hence, egocentric values are not justified for Socrates in any shape or form.

Still, there exists a classical tale that involves the former president of the United States Abraham Lincoln who without any objections would otherwise be considered as one of the most altruistic presidents that appeared in American history. In the story Abraham Lincoln is projected as an advocate of the proposition that all humans are selfish by nature, even when they act on behalf of others:

> *Mr. Lincoln once remarked to a fellow-passenger on an old-time mud-coach that all men were prompted by selfishness in doing good. His fellow-passenger was antagonizing this position when they were passing over a corduroy bridge that spanned a slough. As they crossed this bridge they espied an old razor-backed sow on the bank making a terrible noise because her pigs had got into the slough and were in danger of drowning. As the old coach began to climb the hill, Mr. Lincoln called out, "Driver,*

can't you stop just a moment?" Then Mr. Lincoln jumped out, ran back and lifted the little pigs out of the mud and water and placed them on the bank. When he returned, his companion remarked: "Now Abe, where does selfishness come in on this little episode?" "Why, bless your soul Ed, that was the very essence of selfishness. I should have had no peace of mind all day had I gone on and left that suffering old sow worrying over those pigs. I did it to get peace of mind, don't you see? (Shafer-Landau, 2013, p. 170).

What egoism imply is that, in all our different ways of acting given the numerous situations and circumstances, self-interest plays the major role. The theory is a universal generalization of our thoughts into one single motive of selfishness according to which we are all subjected to it and cannot act otherwise. Since all our action, if it has emerged from our volition, has also emerged from our ego's association with it. Hence, the interconnectedness of Body – Ego – Volition reinforces the idea that all actions will have the element of selfishness in them as long as we are acting on something.

However, egoists have argued that their theory do not violate morality per se. They stress on different ways in which selfishness can manifest in the world. These can broadly be classified under two types - actions that produce harm and actions that do not produce harm (Gert, 1967; Irwin, 2017). The former type can be considered as actions that are immoral under any circumstances irrespective of the motive associated with the action, whereas, the latter does not violate any moral rule nor does it produce any moral harm. Any action that is of the former nature will be invalid at its core whether it is egoistic or not. It is the latter type that egoists advocate. They argue that selfishness does not concomitantly imply immoral behavior. If in any given circumstance immorality arises, they argue that it will be an implausible proposition to say that selfishness is the cause behind this immorality. Foundations are neutral and can never be the immediate reason behind all immoral actions performed in the external world.

Moreover, many other good actions are brought into this world under the light of the same egoism. The bottom line is simply the idea that our ego remains the primary template on top of which different actions are layered. Irwin writes: *'The interests of others can be merged with one's own, but as a part of one's interests they will never be greater than the whole of one's interests. The egoism remains'* (Irwin, 2017, p. 17).

1.3 Reason, intuition, and altruism: some preliminary links

When we are confronted with situations related to morality few of our mental faculties are in operation. Sometimes we might make a decision based on careful deliberation and other times we might not think much before we make the decision, any longer than when we use our hand to open the door. Yet in a few other times, the motivation behind the actor to behave the way they behave could be based on social influence, religious influence, or in some cases influenced by the actions of moral exemplars (good moral exemplars and bad ones alike).

During the time of David Hume discussions emerged around the question - whether the reason is superior than passion (intuition, emotion) or the other way round? Hume was of the view that passion is much more primary and fundamental than cold-functioning reason. He writes:

> *Nothing can oppose or retard the impulse of passion, but a contrary impulse; and if this contrary impulse ever arises from reason, that latter faculty must have an original influence on the will, and must be able to cause, as well as hinder, any act of volition. ... Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them* (Shafer-Landau, 2013, pp. 7-15).

Hume realized that things such as emotions and passions are directly associated with the fundamental characteristics that we possess as human beings. Contrary to this, he thought that reason is used only as an instrument to justify these passions. Extending this idea further, Jonathan Haidt (2001; 2013) in his social intuitionist model of moral judgement proposed a theory that our moral judgement can be categorized into two faculties (metaphorically 'elephant' and the 'rider'). The former is the primary impulse of 'intuition' and the latter is the faculty of 'reason'. Despite rider being the one in charge of the elephant he elaborated further that it is the elephant that makes the subconscious moral judgement most of the time which is later supported by an ad hoc reason by the rider[4] to justify whatever the elephant conceived as right.[5]

On the other hand, Immanuel Kant had previously quickly dismissed the view that passion or intuition can provide us with any solid foundation for morality. He thought that until and unless the source of morality is not cemented under the principle of universality that is guided by reason it will only be predicated upon the contingencies of the imperfect world that we live in:

> *Indeed, a philosophy which mixes together these pure principles with empirical ones does not deserve the name of philosophy. For philosophy treats as separate what common rational knowledge only grasps as mixed. Still less does it deserve the name of moral philosophy, since by this very mixing it even manages to infringe on the purity of morals themselves and is thereby self-defeating* (Kant, 2019 [1785], p. 6).

Given the two models via which the source of morality can be derived a further extension can be made by investigating how each of the models supports altruism in their framework. If, as

[4] Like a lawyer defending the case for its client or a secretary speaking on behalf of her boss.
[5] For example, when we think of killing as an immoral action, we don't judge its immorality by reason. We rather judge its immorality by the fact that it creates a certain sort of natural disapproval in our emotional mind prior to its rational condemnation.

Hume suggests, emotions and other sentiments are more significant than the faculty of reason then altruism will also need to be viewed in that light. If, on the other hand, the reason is superior to the fluctuating emotions then subsequently altruism too could be better understood and promoted if we first understand reason clearly. However, the possibility of things not aligning with either of the models is always an open-ended route. This is because altruism in itself is a very dynamic concept with multiple utilities and its own rich normative implications.

Thus, I will attempt to discuss the implications of the aforementioned models on our understanding of altruism in the following chapter of this thesis. In that altruism will be assessed in relation to the primary normative moral theories that are present in the literature. As we saw in the start of this section reason-based model is objective and calculative in nature whereas intuition-based model is spontaneous and more emotional. This thesis intends to roughly characterize the normative moral theories as reason-based, and metaethical sources of morality like sympathy/empathy as intuition-based. For instance, in the three primary normative theories i.e., categorical imperative, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics we can see that categorical imperative is a theory where the reason is based on objective command, in utilitarianism it is a reason based on utility and consequence, lastly, in virtue ethics it is a reason based on the condition of self-improvement. In the intuition-based model we may perhaps not get to see this level of computation since actors will mostly be influenced by the immediate nature of the given situation. He or She will be making decisions more from the gut than from the different types of moral logic that are available. With this preliminary information in the background, I will start the thesis with the chapter on 'Normative Ethics and Altruism'.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To explore the prospect of altruism in the light of normative moral theories such as – categorical imperative, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics:

   The first objective of this thesis will be to carry forward a review of some of the primary normative theories in relation to altruism. Although all the normative theories are first and foremost a moral system that is designed to take care of the ethical requirements of the society this thesis will move beyond the systemic approach and explore how each normative theory associate altruism into its structure. On the other hand, this objective will also be open to anticipation that altruism might not have too much a significant connection with the normative theories. Thus, the first objective of this thesis aims to bring out some interesting relation between normative theories and altruism.

2. To explore the characteristics of altruism through a pragmatic/naturalistic approach:

   Throughout the chapters of this thesis (with the exception of the sixth chapter) the approach towards understanding the threads of altruism will remain pragmatic in nature. This will be done by doing away with available alternatives which are not practically contributing when trying to understand altruism. The same approach will be taken forward when altruism is being implemented as a prescriptive theory, for instance, in policy domain or as a benevolent practice that is required in the community. At the same time, the thesis will review altruism in a naturalistic light by presupposing the notion that altruism, and the occurrence of it, is primarily a natural phenomenon. This view will be supported by drawing evidences from various branches of natural sciences that study altruism as one of the significant elements of the larger corpus of human behavior. Hence, the second

objective of this thesis will be to carve an understanding of altruism based on the combination of pragmatism and naturalism.

3. To argue for the idea of altruism via taking three perspectives into account:

- *Pragmatic/Naturalistic Perspective*

  The first perspective from the third objective will be to garner support for altruism via a pragmatic naturalistic account. In order to achieve this aim, Kitcher's theory of pragmatic naturalism will be introduced in one of the chapters. The aim of this theory will be to show that, when the historical and sociological factors of our human society are studied altruism is naturally recommended over egoism. This recommendation serves many crucial purposes, from holding a family together to holding a larger group such as a village. Further down the lane altruism helps in moving a group toward a more sophisticated kind of organizations such as a corporate firm, or a large political unit like nation/country.

- *Applied Ethical Perspective*

  The second perspective will argue against egoism in support of altruism (pure altruism) by picking up a unique case from applied ethics. Of the many applied ethical issues, the case that I will be studying for the purpose of my hypothesis will be 'organ donation'. In the chapter I will try to prove if egoism can be argued against as a mistaken doctrine with the help of the explication of the qualities that organ donors seem to possess. This objective will show that egoism can be refuted on an applied level as well.

- *Indian Philosophy (Metaphysical) Perspective*

  The third perspective will bring an aspect from Indian philosophy in trying to argue against egoism. I will look at an idea called ‘jivanmukti’ particularly to make my case. In the otherwise a very psychologically oriented procedure, this perspective will introduce the component of spirituality in nullifying the egoistic notion of the primacy of the self. The primary aim of the objective will be to take into account different human experiences and offer them as critique against egoism.

1.5 Research Methodology:

- The research procedure for this thesis will consist of interdisciplinary readings both from primary and secondary sources (books and papers from various journals).
- Both, established empirical reports (from various interdisciplinary sources) and theoretical materials (which are mostly from philosophical sources) will be integrated under a unified framework.
- The thesis will follow the traditional form of dialectical method (objection and affirmation) throughout the chapters wherever it is applicable.

1.6 Outline of the thesis:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter will highlight the background of the theory which will include— the conceptual framework of the topic, historical development, philosophical significance, thematic variations, and the current implications of the topic. The chapter eventually aims to conclude by elucidating a standard definition of altruism.

Chapter 2: Normative Ethics and Altruism

In this chapter, the notion of altruism shall be viewed and analyzed from a normative stance. This would be carried forward by exploring the various philosophical literature and foundational texts on normative ethics. Furthermore, a tentative analysis of altruism shall be made by comparing and synthesizing it with moral theories such as virtue ethics, consequentialism etc. to see which theory entails a larger prospect of altruism.

Chapter 3: Altruism and Egoism: A Possible Conjunction?

In this chapter, I will highlight the difficulties that are encountered when we try to classify our actions into altruistic and egoistic. The chapter will show that many a time our actions might not fit under either of the categories. Some actions which we take for granted to be altruistic may not be altruistic, if looked closely, similarly actions which we consider as egoistic may have significant altruistic import. This chapter will problematize these terminologies and try to bring the argument that many of our actions may not exactly fit under the altruism/egoism dichotomy.

Chapter 4: Evolution, Society, and Altruism

This chapter will explore altruism as it is conceptualized in various disciplines; more specifically in the disciplines such as evolutionary sciences, anthropology, and sociology. The multidisciplinary links of altruism will be explicated in this chapter to enquire what morale can be extrapolated from these various perspectives. This chapter will introduce the pragmatic naturalism methodology of Philip Kitcher to understand altruism, and morality in general, in its natural and historical setting.

Chapter 5: Altruistic Moral Exemplars: Pure Altruism Versus Psychological Egoism

In this chapter, an evaluation of the moral exemplars from the near past, and the current times will be made. I will focus on analyzing how various altruistic insights can be drawn from the deeds of some of the extraordinary and selfless persons that live among us. The chapter will also reflect on the realistic and unrealistic dispositions that exemplars tend to display. I will provide support for the notion of pure altruism in this chapter by taking the example of organ donation from applied ethics.

Chapter 6: Some thoughts on *passive altruism*: cues from the idea of 'jivanmukti'

This chapter will look at a concept from Indian philosophy called jivanmukti which is a state of enlightened existence where the duality between the self and the other disappears. In this state the idea of self is subordinated to a larger reality and ego is instead understood as an illusion. Furthermore, this chapter will propose that *jivanmukti* renders support for the existence of a passive kind of altruism. The passive altruism of an enlightened aspirant

(jivanmukta) is inferred from their outlook towards life which sees everything as one and one in everything.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter will carry out a brief overall analysis of the reviews and findings of the thesis. In this final section, the most significant moral insights will be summed up and its ethical implication will be studied.

Chapter II: Normative Ethics and Altruism

2.1 Introduction

Normative ethics is a branch of moral philosophy that primarily deals with the questions surrounding value judgement and what we ought to do. The content of normative inquiry consists of moral precepts, principles, and axioms. These principles and axioms have direct implications on self, institutions, policy-making, and society at large. Different normative moral theories incorporate different sets of value principles in their framework. Furthermore, based on these different principles each theory justifies its way of considering an action right or wrong. Normative ethics is a useful tool in dealing with many practical issues of the social world. They guide us through critical scenarios and help put things in perspective, which further gives us a standard rule to analyze and settle the matter.

There are three major normative moral theories - *Deontology* postulates that all moral precepts operate like an absolute command whose source is inherently good by virtue of the will of reason. *Consequentialism* is a theory that judges the merit of the action based on the consequence of the action, for example, an action is right if it can save five people as opposed to two. Finally, *virtue ethics* is concerned with the character of the person. According to virtue ethics, good action is produced firstly by building good character and developing good habits. Additionally, I will review another moral theory which is not normative but significant for this discussion nonetheless, this is the theory of *moral sentimentalism*. Moral sentimentalism is based on the idea that our sense of morality is derived from our basic emotional constituents such as sympathy, sentiments, and feelings. All the moral theories are proper in their own place but the task is to see the relation they hold with altruism. Sober and Wilson (1998) argues that altruism functions independently from the normative moral theories:

> *This is because altruistic desires are often directed at specific individuals, whereas moral principles, in virtue of their generality, are about no one in particular. Suppose two parents want their child to do well, not for egoistic reasons but because they take the well-being of their child to be an end in itself. It is possible that the parents have this altruistic desire without embedding it in any moral system at all. They may never formulate the thought that all parents should care about their children; nor need they think that if some other child were theirs, they would have an obligation to take care of that child as well* (Sober & Wilson, 1998, p. 238).

Although none of the moral theories discussed above mention altruism as their direct motivation for action. An altruistic reading can still be done on each one of them. Since all the theories maintain different criteria to evaluate the action, we will most likely find that the status and place of altruism are also peculiar in all the theories. A larger question is also yet to be posed, which is, what end do all normative moral theories aim for? A general answer is that all moral theories aim for the attainment of good. However, the notion of good is far from being uniformly understood and can be interpreted in multiple ways. A deontologist may understand good as that which is absolute. Whereas a consequentialist may understand good in a quantitative sense. Still, virtue theorists may interpret good as that which is most contributing to our flourishment and sentimentalists may argue that good is something which approves of our feelings. Others like G E Moore (1903) argued that good can never be defined but only understood in an intuitive sense.

Moral theories presuppose that human beings do not live individually. Hence, all moral theories are built on the fact that we are social animals who continuously seek to find the most optimal way to coexist together. Now altruism may not be the ultimate motive upon which normative moral theories base their system but it is an ingredient that plays a part. Suppression

of egoistic tendencies and enactment of actions in line with the general good certainly entails the presence of at least a minimal amount of prosociality. Since all normative moral theories cover these aspects, it can be explored if prosociality and altruism are a part-and-parcel of these theories. Thus, in the following sections of this chapter I will evaluate how much of altruism is available in these different moral systems.

2.2 Is altruism deontological?

To ask if altruism is deontological is to ask if altruism and its conditions are universal and absolute in nature. Alternatively, we could ask, 'Do we ever have a moral duty to be altruistic?' It is to inquire if the demand for altruistic behavior is unconditionally expected from us. Venturing into the dimension of universal morality Immanuel Kant in his work Metaphysics of Morals argued quite substantively for the existence of an absolute moral law whose principles are also understood as categorical imperative. As we saw in the introductory section Kant was not convinced that moral principle can derive its source from empirical characters of this world. Hence, it is only in the universal dimension that morality can have its source. Let us explore further if the categorical imperative of Kant brings any implication for altruism.

Immanuel Kant introduced the prudential maxim that each individual should, *'Act as if the maxim of your action, by your will, were to become a universal law of nature'* (Kant, 2019 [1785], p. 35). This maxim implies that no individual must act with the disconnected universal self; our actions are not mere actions that mechanically get us from point A to point B. It is rather that every action that we execute within ourselves and others is in direct correlation with the license that we give to others to act in the same manner. With this logic for instance, if I cheat against someone or steal from someone, I automatically give the other person the

universal license to cheat against me or steal from me or from anyone else for that matter. Clearly, we do not imagine the universality to be of such character. The universalizability maxim of Kant basically asks our rational will - should we not expect the same action from somebody else, whether wrong or right, that which we act ourselves? Should we not expect that all business owners should run their businesses solely based on self-interested motives, without caring for either the stakeholders or the customers, if we ourselves run our business in such a manner? Another selfish business owner might justify this treatment to be a normal part of how the businesses operate but what if both the owners are customers themselves in somebody else's business and that businessman happens to be as cruel and selfish as the other two owners? Could they have the right to complain about how the business is being operated by the owner? Here there can be two ways how things will go: Either the owners will accept Darwinism as the universal nature of business enterprises or they will realize their need to be able to raise their voice against the injustice of the third owner. In both cases, universal morality is being pitched. However, there are differences, in the former universality is pictured as selfish, which is not a very stable way in which a society can function according to Kant; in the latter, the need for objective universal law is being pronounced which is rightfully aligned to our rational will.

We may likewise try to explore if another altruistic insight can be drawn from the second maxim of Kant which states, *'Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or anyone else's, never merely as a means, but also always as an end'* (Kant, 2019 [1785], p. 42). The second maxim commands that human beings are creatures who are supposed to be treated as autonomous individuals. According to Kant, we should never treat a person as if the person is only a tool to get our needs fulfilled. Each individual member of society is subject to this respect by virtue of the fact that the individual is an autonomous being in itself. It will not be right for me to befriend somebody merely for the sake that the person

whom I am calling my friend helps me get a few of my things done, such as doing my class assignments or lending me his car whenever I need it. I will not be able to justify my action if tomorrow I will discard my friendship because that person whom I called a friend was unable to provide me with all the things that he was able to provide after a certain point in time. This is not a genuine friendship in the Kantian sense. In this context, the reverse will also be appropriate in Kantian schema of things. A person who sacrifices their own welfare for the welfare of others would be treating themselves as a means to an end which is still a violation of the categorical moral law. A true relationship is built when the individuals involved are able to treat each other as ends in themselves far beyond treating them as mere means who can provide something for them.

Going back to the previous example of the business owner, in the Kantian sense, the owner will not be justified if the only way they know how to treat their customers is to treat them as mere means– means to make a profit and means to sell their product. Until the owner finds a way to resolve this ethical dilemma they will not be included as a legitimate member in the kingdom of ends.

Kant can be interpreted as a philosopher whose maxim does not seem to entertain the existence of egoistic intention since it is only in the universal self that one realizes their true moral duty.

> *This principle of self-love, or of personal advantage, is perhaps perfectly compatible with everything going well for me in the future; but the question is, is it right? I therefore transform this unreasonable demand of self-love into a universal law, and frame my question as follows: 'how would things stand if my maxim were to become a universal law?' I then see immediately that it could never hold as a universal law of nature and be consistent with itself, but rather must necessarily contradict itself. For if it became*

> *a universal law that anyone who believes themselves to be in need may promise whatever they like with the intention of not keeping it, then this would make the promise and the purpose one has in promising thereby impossible to achieve. For no one would believe they were being promised anything, but would laugh at any such utterance as a hollow pretence* (Kant, 2019 [1785], p. 36).

Kant makes the case that universal law can never be formulated from self-interested desires since individual whims are always subject to inconsistency and fluctuations based on external circumstances. Given this fact, a simple moral duty like promising will not function the way it is supposed to function. If the promiser promises something to another person merely because they felt like promising, not knowing that promising anything implies a degree of commitment, and if the person who is being promised also knows that no person is ever obliged to deliver anything that one promises then the institution of promising itself becomes shallow and meaningless. Similarly, if one friend shows affection and respect for their other friend only until the time when their friend contributes to their self-interest, and abandons them cold-heartedly the moment their contributions fall short, then their affection and respect also becomes shallow and devoid of the universal moral law. Hence, it is only when the self transcends into the universal realm that the moral law can be established.

Although Kant's categorical imperative dissociates from egoism it does not provide an assertive appeal for altruism. Categorical imperative will require altruistic action to be on the basis of apriori command. If the action is altruistically motivated but does not take into account the criteria of apriori command, then it would not be considered deontological. Altruism would only be worthy of consideration to be of a rational nature if and only if it is performed as a solemn duty but the link between altruism and duty is not very clear. Sober and Wilson (1998)

in discussing Kant's categorical imperative speculate that actions that are altruistically motivated may not align with the moral principle as actions that are universally right:

> *Suppose Alan cheats Betty at cards because Alan wants to use the money to buy something for Carl. Alan may be motivated by an altruistic concern for Carl, but that may not be enough to morally justify the way he treats Betty* (Sober & Wilson, 1998, p. 239).

An action can be genuinely motivated by an altruistic desire but not all altruistic desires will fulfill the criteria of the moral rule. Hence, we see a regrettable disconnection between altruism and deontology. However, Thomas Nagel argues in a similar manner as Kant more directly for the endorsement of altruism. Envisaging every individual as having the capacity for an impersonal standpoint who is guided by objective reason he writes thus:

> *Just as there are rational requirements on thought, there are rational requirements on action, and altruism is one of them. . . Altruism itself depends on the recognition of the reality of other persons, and on the equivalent capacity to regard oneself as merely one individual among many* (Nagel, 1970, p. 3).

In categorical imperative, it is evident that a moral point of view has to have a universal and objective character but it is not clear if Kant explicitly recommends the act of doing things for others without concern about one's welfare. In other words, the element of altruistic motivation is missing or not advocated for in Kant's moral theory. This gap can be seen as being filled by Nagel when he argues for altruism as the rational requirement of action. For Nagel altruism is a concomitant implication of our capacity to see ourselves as one among many. Just as we are unable to see our future selves but we still take all the relevant steps to see it end up in a desirable place (or at least hope for it not to end in an undesirable place) we have an equal and

objective requirement to be altruistic towards other individuals whom we are equally not familiar with.

Both Kant and Nagel take the universal point of view in their normative analysis of morality but unlike Nagel Kant does not make this leap into prosociality as something very necessary. Although we can always ask, is any significant value taken away from categorical imperative when it is turned out to be realized as less altruistic, all things being equal? If the whole weight of the quality of a theory is primarily dependent on judging how much altruism is present, then definitely in this case we can say that categorical imperative will lose some of its value. But if the theory was made to function for whatever and however way it was designed to function (the value of altruism here being not too crucial for the theory) then categorical imperative can still be considered as well and good in its place.

2.3 Greatest altruism for the greatest number

Utilitarianism is a consequential moral theory whose principles say that the right moral approach is the one that benefits the greatest number of people. The classical utilitarian theory advocates the maximization of happiness over pain as the primary parameter upon which the standard of its rightness is evaluated. Latter utilitarianism added the element of intellectual happiness over mere hedonistic happiness to further conserve the theory to its full maturity. John Stuart Mill writes:

> *It would be absurd that while, in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone* (Mill, 2007[1861], p. 7).

Regardless of the changes brought in utilitarianism, its central element remained unchanged throughout the history of the theory i.e., promotion of the overall good. Based on this framework, if we happen to come across a situation where we have to choose between letting go of three lives in order to save ten or save three lives at the cost of ten then the former would be the preferred utilitarian option. In the above case, it is clear that saving ten lives at the cost of three lives will bring greater welfare than the choice where three lives are to be saved at the cost of ten. Since utilitarianism is guided by the maximization of overall happiness principle the alternative where only a tiny proportion of individuals will avail the benefit will be eliminated. Three lives do not deserve any extra privilege over ten other lives. These privileges will not be taken into account under a utilitarian scale and would rather be considered legitimately immoral. Hence, the maximization of the welfare principle taken together with the appointment of both the higher and the lower pleasures as the primary human condition upon which all humans survive makes up the theory of utilitarianism.

To find a connection with altruism in the philosophy of utilitarianism we need to see if the theory entails any type of other-regarding or self-sacrificial behavior when it is being executed by the agent. Although it seems like a genuinely easy task to find out the motivation of the agent it might not be so. Most utilitarian moral propositions are policy-like statements where the agent-object relation is not apparent enough for the observer to be able to measure altruism. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, in its most basic shape altruism functions without hovering over an ideology of what should be the norm. Hence, we can say that an altruist *acts*, and their action is classified as either altruistic or not altruistic, only based on the action per se, not on the principle they are acting upon.

Given this condition, we have to find an alternative path to explore the weight of altruism in utilitarianism. A direct observation of utilitarianism shows that it presupposes the

property of impartiality and objectivity as crucial characteristics of its function. This partly fulfills the criteria of altruism since altruistic disposition entails that the altruist becomes selfless in their approach and selflessness implies an optimal amount of impartiality i.e., removing oneself from the picture. When a utilitarian makes a decision to invest in a pharmaceutical company that has helped dozens of people over the years by manufacturing lifesaving medicines at affordable prices, they are bringing about greater welfare for the people. Their decision to maximize the happiness of the community by financially supporting the health sector is as altruistic as it is utilitarian. The investor here is motivated by the altruistic end that the members of the community be capable of buying the necessary medicines when in need. Unlike the basic altruistic path where the actor directly benefits the recipient via acting selflessly here the altruism of the actor is being channelized through the policy which in turn is set to produce the well-intended outcome for the recipients. It can be questioned here whether the indirect pathway discredits the altruism present in the action during the time of execution. Does the fact that the investor's action does not directly benefit the recipient, but rather depends on the existence of a third party to do so, make their action less altruistic? Here we can answer that if the immediate concern of our inquiry is regarding pure altruism[6] then the investor cannot be considered as a genuine altruist. For if they wanted to perform genuine and solid altruistic action then they could have donated the medicines to the needy themselves. Since that is not the case, we can say that although their utilitarian intentions were prudent their altruism was not as robust.

On the other hand, if we are not concerned about any robust kind of altruism as such but are satisfied with softer versions of it (investors helping the community members through the assistance of a third-party entity like a policy-making agency) then it can be said that the

[6] In chapter 5 ‘Altruistic Moral Exemplars: Pure Altruism versus Psychological Egoism’ I will do a detailed inquiry into the notion of pure altruism.

investor was still altruistic in their approach towards the community members. Altruistic actions can be either *robust* or *soft* and utilitarianism has been understood as advocating for a softer version of altruism by some scholars (Nahra, 2021). This kind of altruism does not demand substantive amount of energy and resources from the altruist. A simple other-regarding gesture that is intended for the well-being of the other person is enough for the action to be called altruistic.

This utilitarian approach may at times be accused of being cold and calculative but in many instances, it might actually be the only available alternative. D'Souza and Adams (2014) in arguing against pure altruism which does not consider the consequential possibilities of costs and benefits prior to its execution, state that such type of altruistic action, which although in many cases is motivated by a pure intention to help, fails to comprehend the larger results of the action. We can think of examples such as a non-athletic man jumping into a burning house to save the people who are stuck inside before making the decision to call the fire department. Or a situation where a man donates his entire month's savings in the name of charity to a person who is in need of money. We can see that in both cases the consequences are most likely to turn out badly for the altruists. The man who intended to rescue the people from the burning house could easily become the victim of the disaster himself and the man who donated his entire savings could also end up borrowing money from somebody else to survive. In a worse case, he might have to pay back the money to his lender with interest which will put him in further financial distress.

Could that mean that altruism should entirely be avoided when there is a realization that the consequences will not turn out well for the supposed altruist? Their argument seems to suggest so. In many practical ways, this proposition might also not appear to be too dubious. For why ought we take so many responsibilities into our hands (that in many cases can best be

avoided and looked away from) when we ourselves have got too many problems to deal with? David Miller (2002) in an essay desperately asks how much of our intervention is required in a world full of people:

> *In a world of strangers, where there are many needy people, but also many others who could respond to their need, how should I decide when it is my turn to help? Or should it always be my turn, so long as there are people in need?* (Miller D. , 2002, p. 111).

Hence, upon deliberation on the relationship between utilitarianism and altruism, we can say that they both do not have an unadulterated connection as something that is completely complementary to one another. At best utilitarianism recommends and presupposes in its theory a softer form of altruism, which does not wholeheartedly commit to the idea of *doing for the other*.

In a different manner, however, altruism can also directly be established as a superior principle in disjunction with utilitarianism. In the essay challenging the consequential discrepancies of utilitarianism Brian Rosebury (2021) by supporting instead what he calls *Informed Altruism* writes:

> *The Utilitarian project requires, for optimal effectiveness, a system of social organization, law, and education whereby the diverse actual motives of individuals may be channeled to produce the best consequences. Individual altruistic intention is at best supererogatory within this system much as the need for any personal moral commitment to equality and care for the disadvantaged is bypassed by the 'scientific' historical narrative of Marxism. Informed Altruism, in contrast, recognizes the independent existence of the capability for altruism, which is activated as we imitate and reciprocate the care shown by those closest to us. We are able to perceive analogies between the goods and harms of these loved ones and those of a progressively wider conspectus of*

human beings—the friends, parents, siblings, children of strangers (Rosebury, 2021, pp. 742-743).

It is true that in a consequential framework, all of our altruistic intentions are bypassed by our compulsion to weigh the gains and losses, even if the larger goal of bringing welfare for the most amount of people remains. Rosebury here argues that just as the altruism that can be provided towards the disadvantaged and the needy becomes supererogatory (as something that is too high to achieve) in a Marxist society, so the altruism also becomes too systematic and unintentional when it is subsumed and practiced under utilitarian governance. Hence, we can end this section here by reiterating the fact that voluntary intentions play a significant part in altruistic practices which are not consequential in manner. Non-consequential altruism, it can be said, is more intimate and direct whereas a consequential reading of altruism as well as altruistic reading of a consequential doctrine like utilitarianism shows that these elements of intimacy and directedness are rather absent.

2.3.1 Effective altruism

Effective altruism (EA) is a contemporary philosophical/ethical movement that took shape in the early 2000s to promote research and developmental activities in charity organizations with the purpose of bringing about the greatest and most effective solutions to the problem of poverty in the world. The EA project argues that existing organizations do not succeed in channelizing relief funds to the poor in the most efficient way. Some charities perform decently whereas some perform very badly, with most of their resources not reaching the needy. These have been ascribed to the lack of proper systemic management and apathetic dedication by the

charities toward their objectives. Hence, EA proposes to repair such shortcomings that are prevalent in the world of philanthropy and charity today (Singer, 2009; MacAskill, 2015).

The methodology that they use is highly utilitarian in nature since the movement primarily aims to bridge the gap between charities and the beneficiaries on the basis of the identification and the perfecting of the means that can bring the most optimal consequence. The project urges the importance of doing charity effectively as opposed to doing mere charity. We can say that doing charity effectively will demand more effort from us than doing mere charity. However, it can be seen here that the moment we make this shift into the zone of *doing it effectively* we do things more with our head than our heart. Should it reduce the intimate quality of the altruist's action? Based on our above review of the relationship between utilitarianism and altruism the answer may be a hesitant 'yes'. But on the other hand, we can also see that effective altruists will have to put on more work and commitment than normal altruists to bring the most-good that they can bring through their charity activities. An effective altruist will first have to review different charities to check which one will be most suitable, then he will donate the amount while being mindful about either donating not too much or not too less, subsequently, he will also take utmost care in making a follow-up call to check if the beneficiaries are properly helped, all this while being hugely dependent on the proper functioning of the charity systems.

A normal altruist who is indifferent towards the workings of the system in comparison to an effective altruist could definitely donate more amount of money with genuine altruistic desire in their heart but they might fail to be mindful of the post-phenomenon that can occur once part of the donation is completed. This of course does not make them less of a kind person but if consequentially observed their action might fail to bring about a larger benefit which

could have been possible otherwise. This can be made clear in the passage that is extracted from the website effectivealtruism.org:

> *Global inequality is extreme. Because of this, transferring resources to the very poorest people in the world can do a huge amount of good. In richer countries like the US and UK, governments are typically willing to spend over $1 million to save a life. This is well worth doing, but in the world's poorest countries, the cost of saving a life is far lower* (Introduction to effective altruism).

In affluent countries like US and UK, people sometimes spend more than one million dollars to save someone's life. On the other hand, given the same amount of money, we can equip ourselves to save dozens of lives in the poorer countries of the world. If all lives are equal irrespective of ethnicity, class, or gender why not save a larger number of lives to bring greater good with the same number of resources?

A different passage from the website, using the same utilitarian principle, highlights the types of charities that we should donate to:

> *Preventing terror attacks is certainly important. But the scale of the issue seems smaller. For instance, just to focus on the number of deaths, in the last 50 years, around 500,000 people have been killed by terrorism. But over 21 million people were killed by COVID-19 alone – or consider the 40 million killed by HIV/AIDS* (ibid.).

We can see here again that number of deaths due to terror attacks in the last 50 years was estimated to be about 500,000 people. Whereas people killed during the covid-19 pandemic was estimated to be over 21 million worldwide and the number of deaths recorded due to HIV is 40 million which is way larger than the number of deaths caused by terrorism. These are some other examples that can be used to help us prioritize our urgent issues. All issues that

pose a threat to the sustenance of human society and environment are crucial and none can be downplayed as insignificant. But when statistically laid on a map of concern lists, we will find that of the many issues there will be those which will demand the most amount of attention and altruism from us. For instance, it is definitely not a bad idea to fund x amount of money on a premier science institute to help upgrade the machinery, but if the same x amount of money can be used to fund an organization that will help thousands of blind people see again would we not consider the latter?

Thus, choices like these at times can be tough, and our world is filled with such critical dilemmas awaiting our decisions. EA urges that we should prioritize those matters which are most urgent, the support of which will bring the most amount of good and the largest amount of net happiness. To conclude, it can be stated that utilitarian principles are best utilized as an other-regarding framework in the ethics of effective altruism.

2.4 Are virtues selfish?

Aristotle (c. 384 – c. 322 BCE) contributed extensively to what we now know as virtue ethics. This major philosophy was brought in two of his books *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics* where he explicated on the nature of virtue and practical wisdom at length. It was very typical of ancient Greek society to focus much on the character of a person, and Aristotle continued that lineage throughout his scholarly activities. He stresses on the importance of the development of virtues in humans since virtues are the primary characteristics that raise a person to high moral status. On the other hand, the lack of these virtues in a person has been associated with the notion of inferiority. A person that lacks good moral character is diagnosed with some kind of deficiency and Aristotle was adamant in making this point. An additional

feature that is explicit in Aristotle's view on virtues is that it is not inherited but acquired through practice and learning. He states:

> *Anything that we have to learn to do we learn by the actual doing of it: people become builders by building and instrumentalists by playing instruments. Similarly, we become just by performing just acts, temperate by performing temperate ones, brave by performing brave ones* (Aristotle, 2004, p. 32).

Since acquiring virtues is similar to acquiring any other art forms that are perfected primarily through training and adapting, virtues also become a type of art that everyone can learn. It ceases to become an exclusive sort of privilege that only a few members of high society can access. Hence, as long as an aspirant have the discipline and commitment to practice and emulate the characteristics of novelty and justice upon themselves, they can become a virtuous person.

Coming now to the question that we posed in the title of this section: are virtues selfish, we will have to make some preliminary analysis to answer this. Subsequently, we can then ask: are virtues altruistic or what relations do they hold with altruism? First, we can start with the question of selfishness. At the most basic level it can be seen that concern for virtues and the method of reaching those virtues require that a person be motivated and self-disciplined in their path. If they are motivated and disciplined enough, they will acquire the necessary virtues and can be called a virtuous person. But being motivated and disciplined, in order to become a virtuous person, also entails that they desire deep self-respect and concern for their wellbeing, for being virtuous also contributes to a person's well-being, and is an aspect of a *eudemonistic* life which means– a life well lived. If it is true that people have a deep concern for their self-respect and wellbeing (the reason why the accommodation of virtues in one's life becomes so important) then it is also plausible that virtues are selfish irrespective of how much good it

brings to one's life. Hence, we see a strong relationship between *the desire for virtues* on one hand and *self-love* on the other. However, Neera Kapur Badhwar in her analysis of Aristotelian virtue ethics tried to clarify certain points about the nature of well-being and happiness.[7] She argues that happiness in the true virtuous sense can only be actualized if her means to attain her happiness is an expression of an efficacious life, she writes:

> *(1) Virtue is essential to practical efficacy; (2) practical efficacy is essential to well-being or happiness; hence (3) virtue is essential to happiness…. On this understanding of happiness, then, to say that happiness is objective is to say that happiness is not just a matter of pleasurable, tranquil, contented, or other positive feelings, but also a matter of leading a certain sort of life. A happy person, on the view I will defend, is a person whose positive feelings are a reflection of an efficacious life, and not only of a life marked by success and prosperity through the blessings of good fortune. For it is only insofar as positive feelings are a reflection of an efficacious life that they are firm and enduring, and it is only insofar as they are firm and enduring that they can be constituents of a firm and enduring thing like happiness* (Badhwar, 1997, pp. 227-228).

There can be many ways in which the tranquility of the mind can be attained. We can be instrumentally virtuous in so many ways but not all instrumental ways will be worthy of being called eudemonistic. A person may do very well in managing their business, owing to the virtuous character of prudence that they developed over the years, yet they may fail to attain a holistic state of well-being because they lack certain kind of sympathy to treat their customers altruistically. They might possess the virtue of knowing the management part of the business but lack the altruistic character of charity. In the system of virtue ethics conscious effort into learning and habituating plays a central role. It is a system of ethics that finds the necessity of

[7] See also: Annas, J. (2008). Virtue ethics and the charge of egoism. *Morality and self-interest*, *205*.

improving the character of one's self, in order to produce social harmony, prior to being dependent on the group or the society to bring this outcome.

Now let us look at the more explicit question of altruism and how it relates to virtue ethics. Since altruism means a selfless act for somebody else's welfare it is left to be seen if the principle of virtue ethics renders this aspect of selflessness into its system. Is a virtuous person also an altruistic person? The former type of person by definition is someone who has got all their impulses and irregular choices under control. They are a person who, with all their learned excellence and practical knowledge, knows how to make the right choices in various aspects of life. By Aristotle's definition, they know how to not be deficient in embodying or practicing certain values and also not be too excessive on the other hand. In other words, a virtuous person understands the goodness of moderation. In terms of strength, for example, they know how to not be too timid and also not be too bully-like. They understand the mean point between any two opposite extremes. Thus, these qualities make them a virtuous person.

The latter type of person i.e., altruistic person is someone who acts for other's benefit, sometimes even at the cost of one's loss. So, if a person acts for someone else's welfare, it is not necessarily because they are virtuous individuals. They may fail to meet all the criteria of Aristotelian virtues but still be very altruistic people. It is evident in the analysis that virtues do not necessarily imply altruism. Principles of virtue may recommend many life skills and sets of values that are of significant practical use but altruism per se may not be included in these lists (although it does not mean that the theory can be discredited because of this for altruism is only a part of our moral disposal whereas virtue ethics is much broader). To make a quick highlight of this disconnection we need simply look at how the primary goals are prioritized in this ethical system. Virtue ethics primarily takes it to be imperative that all persons be equipped with mindful habits and prudence to purposefully and rationally regulate their life. Inculcation

of virtues rather requires that a person be very thorough with knowing one's self. Stressing the importance of true virtuous actions, as opposed to merely doing what the conditions of virtue recommend, Aristotle writes:

> *Acts to be sure, are called just and temperate when they are such as a just or temperate man would do; but what makes the agent just or temperate is not merely the fact that he does such things, but the fact that he does them in the way that just and temperate men do. It is therefore right to say that a man becomes just by performance of just, and temperate by the performance of temperate acts; nor is there the smallest likelihood of any man's becoming good by not doing them* (Aristotle, 2004, p. 38).

The ability to be just and temperate is different from being just and temperate for someone else's good. The latter is neither explicitly mentioned nor presupposed in the entire schema of virtue ethics. Although Aristotelian virtue ethics is largely focused on the development of individual virtues different arguments have also been provided by various scholars to free the theory from the allegation of selfishness, as discussed above (Kahn, 1981; Badhwar, 1997; Annas, 2008; D'Souza J. , 2020). These arguments may succeed to an extent but according to the analysis made in this thesis a wide disconnection is still being seen between the virtue principle and altruism. I would like to conclude this section by stating that virtue does not presuppose altruism. A virtuous person will either be altruistic or not be altruistic. As long as the person is moderate in their approach towards life their level of altruism will not have any significant bearing on the status of their virtue. On the other hand, a person is fully capable of acting altruistically (depending largely only on their will) even if they lack virtues in many ways.

In Aristotelian virtue ethics discussion on altruism is to some degree apparent in Books 9 and 10 of Nicomachean Ethics where he talks about friendship. He can be understood as

saying that a good friendship is where each one understands the other as they are in themselves. Furthermore, by incorporating the idea of virtue with friendship, he says that only virtuous individuals are capable of the truest kind of friendship (Kahn, 1981). Aristotle is of the disposition that friends hold a very valuable aspect in our life since it is by being in their companionship that we learn and understand the requirement of our social nature. However, he prefers recommending a type of friendship that is based on mutual respect and reciprocation. D'Souza (2020) after a review of the Aristotelian notion of eudaimonia offers an alternative answer to the *Self-Absorption Objection* that is made against the theory. He deals with this objection by introducing a motivational account which he calls the 'Altruistic Eudaimonist Account of Motivation'. Here he argues that the Altruistic approach to eudaimonism does not fall into a self-absorbed trap since virtuous quality is not just desirable because it is in our best subjective interest but rather because it is 'good *qua* human goodness'.

2.5 Hume/Smith's sentimental approach towards altruism

Before we conclude, let us shift our attention from the normative ethical approach to altruism to the moral sense approach where morality is conceived not based on the criteria of rules but on the notion that we are moral beings by nature. Both the Scottish philosophers David Hume and Adam Smith contributed extensively to the moral philosophy of the early 18th century. Hume and Smith (HS) believed that morality was more of a natural thesis as opposed to being objective and norm-driven. Their influence could be seen as taking a biological form in Darwin's evolutionary thesis. The theories that we discussed earlier uphold either the role of reason or the objective criteria as the significant basis from which all the moral precepts are derived and manifested in the world. But there exists another lineage of moral theory that looks for its foundation not from above but from below where the moral agents are situated. This

moral inquiry concerns with the experiential aspects such as emotions, passions, benevolence, sentiments, justice, utility, conscience, etc. as the foundation of our moral faculty (Hume, 1737; Hume, 2019 [1751]; Smith, 2009 [1759]).

Hume was not an advocate of idealistic moral principles; he thought it was too distant from how actually humans develop their understanding of morality. He writes about transcendental virtues as something that is too far removed from being effective enough to move our conscience:

> *There is no necessity, that a generous action, barely mentioned in an old history or remote gazette, should communicate any strong feelings of applause and admiration. Virtue, placed at such a distance, is like a fixed star, which, though to the eye of reason it may appear as luminous as the sun in his meridian, is so infinitely removed as to affect the senses, neither with light nor heat. Bring this virtue nearer, by our acquaintance or connexion with the persons, or even by an eloquent recital of the case; our hearts are immediately caught, our sympathy enlivened, and our cool approbation converted into the warmest sentiments of friendship and regard* (Hume, 2019 [1751], p. 36).

That is to say, explaining morality by not taking the practical aspects into account such as– feeling hurt when betrayed by a friend, feeling loved when appreciated by our peers, making ourselves polite, and kindhearted towards others, and so on becomes unexplainable and foreign to its own definition. Hume was of the view that this estrangement between our human feelings and moral reason need not be looked at as incompatible. It is rather the case that our biological reality comes first and then the moral reason emerges from there. We approve whatever is agreeable and utilizable, and disapprove whatever is not agreeable and utilizable, as if it is guided by our inner nature. HS theory can be said to be the foundational source for the moral

tradition now known as 'sentimentalism' (Kraut, 2020; Kauppinen, 2014) which is a theory that our sentiments such as emotions, feelings, and sympathy form the basis of our moral sense.

Hume was not alone in this school of thought, just eight years after the publication of his (An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, 2019 [1751]), Adam Smith published his first book (The Theory of Moral Sentiments, 2009 [1759]) which developed a theory of human morality akin to Hume's sentimental approach. Smith writes about sympathy as something which gives us a window to gaze into another person's thoughts. It is through the arousal of our sympathy that we can bring somebody home to our own station. He writes:

> *And hence it is, that to feel much for others and little for ourselves, that to restrain our selfish, and to indulge our benevolent affections, constitutes the perfection of human nature; and can alone produce among mankind that harmony of sentiments and passions in which consists their whole grace and propriety* (Smith, 2009 [1759], p. 31).

Both Hume and Smith popularized the idea that our moral inclinations might largely have its root in the primary human tendency that we carry within ourselves. These inclinations need not be understood in a rational sense as something that is timeless, or in a divine sense as something that was bestowed upon the human race from God; but as something that we acquaint ourselves with through experience and interaction with our acquaintances and fellow human beings. The presence of altruism in human society in HS approach is justified in the fact that people's emotions are naturally aversive towards uncomfortable and demoralizing social evils such as murder, cheating, or theft; whereas the same emotions are instantaneously attracted towards things like the fellowship of a good friend or the comfort found in a kinship environment. The process that is undertaken by us to deduce these thoughts in our chests is purely empirical in HS thesis.

Although, just like the previous theories that were discussed, sentimentalism also cannot be considered as an idea that recommends altruism as its primary concern, it nonetheless provides a very wide space for people to take a chance on it. Since the validation of morality in HS thesis is not based on objective principles but instead on our capacity to feel associated with our fellow citizens the altruism here becomes unrestricted. It becomes a matter of feeling more than a matter of rule, which leads to the activation of values like sympathy and perspective-taking. If the sentimental thesis does not get restricted by any rule, then many of the altruistic feelings that we feel for our fellow human beings also become unquestionable, even if they may not fulfill the utilitarian criteria of bringing the greatest amount of good or act like a deontological command.

Of the many types of sentiments, parental love could rightfully be the most genuine type that we see existing in nature. A mother's heart will always altruistically beat for her child no matter what circumstances might befall her. She will be acting in all her sentiments whenever she is providing nurture for her child. And based on these feelings in her chest her morality will be justified. Smith writes, *'What are the pangs of a mother, when she hears the moanings of her infant that, during the agony of disease cannot express what it feels?'* (Smith, 2009 [1759], p. 17). Similarly, if we look at other forms of sentiments, which may be of a lesser degree as compared to parental love, like friendship or daily associations with our co-citizens, we will see that our sentiments play a big part here too. We invest our energy in people and later decide to solidify a form of friendship with our fellow citizens based on how much compatible feelings we can receive from each other. It is not the case that we look only for warm feelings but that our innate passions are subconsciously drawn towards that which is appropriate to our senses and aversive towards that which is not. In our daily associations too with other human being, formal or informal, we are guided by the same principle of approbation and disapprobation. If our sentiments nudge that there is a hint of rudeness, or impoliteness in

the other person we are naturally alerted about it and we make our judgements accordingly. On the other hand, if our thoughts are never in an unpleasant state throughout the length of the communication with a person, but only find him or her respectful and proper, then here too the judgements will accordingly be made by our implicit passion as something positive:

> *When the original passions of the person principally concerned are in perfect concord with the sympathetic emotions of the spectator, they necessarily appear to this last just and proper, and suitable to their objects; and, on the contrary, when, upon bringing the case home to himself, he finds that they do not coincide with what he feels, they necessarily appear to him unjust and improper, and unsuitable to the causes which excite them* (Smith, 2009 [1759], p. 22).

All things considered, the only major shortcoming that is visible in the sentimental approach to morality is that this theory fails to account for the concern of all members of the group. Even though the purity of a mother's love for her child is unquestionable it can be the case that she will spoil her child and make them an impatient and irresponsible kid owing to her unconditional and reckless love. Had her love towards them been more practical and value-oriented this could be avoided. Similarly, when we get into fellowship with another person because of compatible passions we might not fail to click with each other but will it be for good reasons, that is the question. If I have a sadistic passion for seeing someone in pain, I will not be justified in associating with another person with the same syndrome in the name of forming fellowship with people with similar passions. There will come an objective point when passion needs to be questioned. Hence, although the genuineness of passion per se cannot be questioned in most cases, its rightfulness can always be questioned because many of our sentiments can be short-sighted without us knowing about it. Lastly, another off-putting deficiency that the

sentimental approach towards altruism reveals is that its radar of concern is limited to only a small number of people:

> *We expect less sympathy from a common acquaintance than from a friend: we cannot open to the former all those little circumstances which we can unfold to the latter. ... We expect still less sympathy from an assembly of strangers* (Smith, 2009 [1759], p. 29).

Since, in HS world moral expectation is hugely dependent upon the arousal of sympathy it is very natural to anticipate that not everyone will be included in the priority list. It will need to be acknowledged that the circle of our sympathy is not very wide. Thus, as a concluding remark for this section may I argue that HS approach, in comparison to the previous three theories, certainly is a more intimate way of understanding and practicing altruism but it can be seen on the other side still that in this thesis the circle of altruism becomes much smaller and limited despite being sympathetically intimate and wholesome.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I looked at three major normative moral theories and one additional non-normative moral theory in relation to the question of how much altruism is recommended by each one of them. It was found that in each moral system, the status of altruism is unique in both its availability and unavailability. In deontology, firstly, we saw that moral duty is suggested as nothing less than an absolute command but we also saw that altruism is not explicitly stated as the requirement of the command. It is rather the case that altruistic action can at times take place while violating the absolute moral law as we saw in the example of Alan, Betty, and Carl's card game. Secondly, when it comes to systematically aiding out

altruism to the largest number of people, we found that the consequential moral theory of utilitarianism is the most successful one. However, it is apparent in this moral theory that even though the recipients are diversified and large in number (because of utilitarianism's impartial approach) the element of intimacy and proximal bond is reduced. Nevertheless, discussions can continue on how important the elements of intimacy and proximal bonds are in order to justify altruism. In virtue ethics, we encountered that the primary goal in this ethical system is the development of a person's intellectual and moral character. We inferred that if a person is motivated by the idea of the development of their virtue they will also be profoundly motivated by self-respect and one's own improvement.

Lastly, in Humean/Smithian (HS) sentimental thesis we saw that the elements of sympathy and sentiments play very crucial roles here. Altruism here was found to be a matter of empathizing with the person instead of following a command or participating in a systemic approach. However, here too some shortcomings were observed, which is that an empathetic person's circle of altruism is impeded by various factors. In most cases, our tendency to connect with other individuals on an emotional level is much easier when there are certain familiarities. A mother connects with her offspring so automatically that she does not require the guidelines of any moral system telling her how she should connect with her child. Likewise, as we expand the circle wider, we see that by nature it is much easier to share resources with one's immediate kin members than with people outside of the kin circle. Similarly, it is much easier again to participate in a fellowship with an acquaintance than with a stranger.

Hence, we can see that altruism is not a necessary and exclusive feature in any of the major moral theories. Normative theories primarily function in a different way of recommending moral actions to the agents. Objectivity, equity, and common good are some of the ends that normative ethics strive to achieve via their idiosyncratic functions. Altruistic

actions on the other hand do not exactly share these features. It functions autonomously without strict normative guidelines. Suffice it to say, the predominant factor that can determine the nature of altruism is perhaps how much willingness an agent has within oneself.

Chapter III: Altruism and Egoism: A Possible Conjunction?

3.1 Introduction

Moving on from the normative analysis of altruism we will now explore the motivational domain of the two dichotomously existing ideologies i.e., altruism and egoism. The issues so far which I have put forward make it apparent that altruism is not an easily identifiable phenomenon. However, these factors did not create hindrance in any manner for the opposing theory of egoism to make its way into the creation of the dichotomy between the two, implying that both may possibly have real differences and its own foundations. But what if that is not the case?

Hence, a clear understanding of motives can highly benefit us in understanding the factors that create the dichotomy between altruism and egoism. Moreover, there is a huge weight of supererogation on one and a bleak stigmatization on the other. It follows that any meaningful learning would be a fruitful contribution to the discussion. For instance, Thomas Nagel (1970) withstood on the ground of altruism providing a forefront reason why it is a universal necessity that our action must be altruistic.[8] On the other side, Ayn Rand (2000 [1964]) advocated that we ought to promote our own good, and that promotion of self-interest is a moral thing.[9] While Nagel writes *'Ethics is a struggle against a certain form of the egocentric predicament, just as prudential reasoning is a struggle against domination by the present'* (Nagel, 1970, p. 100). Ayn Rand, on the other hand states *'Life can be kept in existence only by a constant process of self-sustaining action'* (Rand, 2000 [1964], p. 17). So, given the equal force between the two positions (Badhwar, 1993; Churchill & Street, 2002; Schulz, 2016)

[8] Some other advocates of altruism include Daniel Batson, Kristen R. Monroe, Matthieu Ricard, August Comte, etc.

[9] Similarly, in the egoist school proponents are many which include Thomas Hobbes, Jeremy Bentham, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, etc.

can it probably be that the whole distinction that exists between the two is overgeneralized? We may ask a further question - Are the motives of all our actions apprehensible or only the motives of some actions are? And if it is the case that only some motives are apprehensible and others are not then it is necessary to provide an explanation. Hence, in the following sections, I will analyze the predominant trend in the egoism-altruism debate where affirming one leads to the negation of the other. The resolution to this discrepancy can perhaps be brought if we will recognize that altruism need not only take place in a self-denial mode, and egoism need not be understood only based on self-interest. A larger reality is that, in most cases, we are not able to differentiate between these two types of motivation.

Although this chapter will explicate on the commonality between egoism and altruism its objective will not exceed beyond theoretical exercise. The ideas will primarily be discussed to highlight a part of the larger entity which may require some attention.

3.2 Altruism and egoism: the problem of motivation

Other-regarding action or altruism can be of various kinds (Clavien & Chapuisat, 2013). From as mundane an act such as opening the door for a stranger to extraordinary actions like donating one's organ or giving away fortune from hard-earned savings. As far as these phenomena are concerned, such deeds are categorized as altruistic, although it may not be possible to determine the actual internal motivation of the doer.

We can perhaps bring to light that *pure altruism* can be differentiated from m*ere altruism* (Nahra, 2021). Former is a type of altruistic behavior where self-interested motive is entirely absent. Such behaviors include donating blood to a stranger without any expectation for the return of favor or a case where a man jumps into a railroad track to save a random stranger from being run over by a speeding train etc. On the other hand, mere altruism refers

to all other forms of altruistic actions where the apparent act is altruistic but the intention is irrelevant and hence unquestioned. Mere altruism is a kind whose structure perfectly fulfills the altruistic criteria i.e., X helping Y without Y ensuing any immediate return to X nor X expecting any. In short, the question of intention shrinks to an insignificant aspect in the entire process. Now, in this situation an intention can be many– self-interested, not interested, neutral, etc., and also it can actually be selfless, empathetic, based on objective principles about charity, etc., or interestingly it can also be an accident or a matter of luck whose altruistic value was not preconceived but happen to become one, e.g., a rich man throwing five hundred rupees at a starving homeless person in anger. All these are mere altruistic actions where the status of the person's intention is non-defined and could be anything.

Consider another theory that stands in direct opposition to altruism. This theory is called egoism – an idea that states that all actions are based on self-interest. There are mainly three major types of Egoism. The first type, *Ethical egoism* (Kalin, 1975) states that we morally ought to perform those actions that maximize our self-interest. Second type, *Rational egoism* (Rand, 2000 [1964]) states - we rationally ought to perform those actions if and only if, and because, performing that action maximizes our self-interest. The third type, *Psychological egoism* (Tilley, 2019) states descriptively that we are always only interested in self-welfare.

The rest of the thesis will view egoism from a psychological egoistic perspective which states that irrespective of the kind of action we are performing the underlying motive is always driven by the operation of our ego and in the vicinity of our ego, hence all actions are egoistic in nature. The peculiar nature of this idea is – even if we consider an action that is absolutely altruistic, it could still be interpreted as a phenomenon that is borne out of egoistic intention (Irwin, 2017). For instance, consider Jack who helps his friend Jill in moving her things from her old place to a new one without expecting any monetary or other benefit as compensation for his action. Although this seems prima facie like a straight case of altruism performed by

one person to another egoism would state otherwise—it might be that Jack is expecting a selfish advantage from Jill, maybe not urgently but somewhere down the near future. Or it could also be that Jack is only doing it to feel good about himself since turning down his opportunity to help his friend might result in him feeling guilty later. It can also be that Jack is only helping Jill out of obligation since Jill has been his friend for a long time now and not helping might result in damage to their friendship. Possibilities can be many but it so far remains a psychological notion in egoism that all actions are driven by egoistic propulsion to navigate self-interest.

3.2.1 Some deliberations

The distinction seems valid as far as categorizing the different forms of altruism and egoism goes but it becomes problematic when we dive into the domain of actual motivation. In explicating the problem that subsists when trying to distinguish altruistic motivation from egoistic motivation Sober and Wilson writes:

> *We infer people's motives from their behavior; aside from this, we have little or no access to what their motives really are. This does not mean that the question of altruism versus egoism is insoluble; it does mean that we must tread carefully, since the inference problem is a difficult one* (Sober & Wilson, 1998, p. 250).

If altruism and egoism can protrude over each other to this extent that it becomes almost puzzling to separate one from the other, then perhaps the point of diversion between the two is not too far away. Here in lies the first caveat which is that it is not possible to meaningfully comprehend the actual motivation behind any action. In this regard, it can be claimed that a statement such as 'his action was truly devoid of self-interest' or 'his action was purely based on self-interest' can make no genuine sense, but only be frowned upon in a skeptical gaze. This

brings us to the second caveat which is that since a person's actual motive can never be known, concomitantly, there cannot be any sense generated out of the idea of pure altruism or pure self-interest. Altruism and egoism, firstly, could only be made sense of if we can capture the motivation of a person with clarity which, as we have seen is, muddled in serious philosophical problems. Secondly, it is inconceivable that a person will entirely lose her sense of *self-situatedness* when performing her action regardless of how altruistic the action is.

Many a time, the nature of our action is delineated neither towards selflessness nor towards self-interest, and many other times it coexists as if each one is dependent on the other (Badhwar, 1993; Churchill & Street, 2002; Schulz, 2016). In view of these suppositions, it could only be said that the motivational status of our actions is undetermined at best. Neera Kapur Badhwar (1993) argues that self-affirmation of one's interest is a significant property to make the nature of our altruistic action truly virtuous:

> *There is a kind of moral excellence, an intuitively recognizable excellence of character and action, which is at once a form of deep altruism and a form of self-interest. Such moral excellence may be exhibited over a lifetime, or over a brief span of a person's life; it may take the form of moral heroism or saintliness, or the more ordinary everyday form of an easy, cheerful, reliable goodness. An adequate description of this kind of moral excellence, I argue, is also a description of the person as someone motivated by self-interest, and of (the relevant portion of) her life as one that is well-lived or deeply satisfying. If the self-interested motivation were absent, something of moral worth would be lost* (Badhwar, 1993, p. 93).

Her argument substantiates our hypothesis by exhibiting the vague lines between egoism and altruism. Similarly, Van Der Steen (1995) argues that egoism and altruism debate has relied excessively on the overgeneralized proposition to position itself which in the process

downplays the plurality that surrounds the discussion. Indeed, it is not strange that most of our everyday actions, even seemingly altruistic ones, will eventually reveal some egoistic intentions which may or may not be valid. Similarly, the actions which might singularly seem egoistic and selfish may result in an exceptional altruistic outcome. It is just that the apprehension of the independent existence of either of the maneuvers comes across as a bit too constricted.

3.3 Duality of justification and negation of the other

The faculty of *reason* has long been the ultimatum in philosophers' quest for justifications. In the egoism-altruism spectrum reason has been present on both sides as a substantiating dictum with a consequence that the interlocutor's position is always negated as an invalid principle. This is because the same faculty is incorporated in these two contradictory theories as the bedrock of their ideas to an extent where each one nullifies the other:

> *When a defender of the altruism hypothesis cites a behavior as evidence for altruism, advocates of egoism reply by trying to show that the behavior can be explained within their favored framework. If they succeed, the conclusion that egoists usually draw is that egoism is the preferable hypothesis. But why should this be so? If both theories can explain what we observe, why say that egoism is true and motivational pluralism is false? Why not conclude, instead, that the observation fails to discriminate between the two theories?* (Sober & Wilson, 1998, p. 291).

This duality requires disentanglement to reach an intelligible conclusion. It could either be that one of them is valid and the other is invalid, or they could both be valid at the same time. Given the way these possibilities exist the whole distinction may require a reappraisal. Although it could be argued from the Humean perspective that *reason* does not have a say for oneself and

only gets subordinated to a justificatory mechanism for whatever things we choose to value. Hume writes:

> *The ancient philosophers, though they often affirm, that virtue is nothing but conformity to reason, yet, in general, seem to consider morals as deriving their existence from taste and sentiment* (Hume, 2019 [1751], p. 2).

This could potentially destroy the argument against the duality of reason and convert the whole story to a game of relativism. This is because, given the totality of reason if it is nothing more than a justificatory mechanism then neither of the interpretations could be understood as valid or invalid. It would become a matter of persuasion as in who can state one's argument more convincingly or in the peculiar sense it could also be–who can acquire more support for one's argument. In both cases, the advocates will only be motivated by a prior 'taste or sentiment' as Hume would suggest. I will not analyze who argued more correctly but will take the third route and let reason intervene on both altruism and egoism in a way that adds another layer of rationale into an interweaved phenomenon that previously existed into two contrary parts.

I would like to suggest that the conflict between altruism and egoism can be untangled in two ways. The first way will view the dichotomy as the consequence of *abstraction*. Since we have enough weighty impetus that points to the inseparability of egoism and altruism let us call it the *congruence principle*. The congruence principle, I would suggest, states that egoism and altruism are interweaved phenomenon which functions in a plural manner catering to both egoistic and altruistic motivations. They are contingently detached but not necessarily distinct. It implies that by being able to be abstracted the distinction is contingently made potent to exist separately. Although it does not mean that the separation is configured out of two independent grounds. The dichotomy between egoism and altruism must be recognized as subsumed under a singular motivational ontology. Supposing that the autonomy of both egoism and altruism is

equally real in its most robust form, what we will encounter, and apparently, have been encountering is the inexhaustible tussle between these two types of motivation. This leads to infinite regress and deems the matter inconclusive.

For instance, we see Nagel putting forward his argument in support of altruism: *'I maintain that the failure to regard all reasons as timeless involves one in a peculiar sort of dissociation from one's practical concerns'* (Nagel, 1970, p. 56). If our moral reasoning does not capture the objective necessity of timelessness, the internal structure of the theory will lack the element of *practical concerns*. This view concomitantly removes egoism from morality and declares it incompetent to serve the need of practical concerns. To consider all reasons as timeless goes beyond just seeing if the act benefits oneself or for any other self in general and rather points to what we have an absolute reason to do or act upon. But how far the timelessness of reason is properly supported by absolute grounds remains inexplicable. We may encounter numerous cases where the situatedness of reason and self-interest can provide us with much higher-order reason than the selfless act. As we see in Rand's explication of the requirement for an ideal society – *'It is only on the basis of rational selfishness—on the basis of justice—that men can be fit to live together in a free, peaceful, prosperous, benevolent, rational society'* (Rand, 2000 [1964], p. 35). For Rand reasons for self-interest appeared more timeless than reasons for altruistic concerns. Since the heuristics of egoism states that all our actions and choices need to be based on the realization of self-interest altruism is inevitably relegated to a secondary status. In our everyday moral affairs, we perform numerous actions and choices. Sometimes our actions are completely tilted towards the egoistic side and other times the action is completely motivated by the altruistic drive. However, many a time the whole motive behind the action is unknown. *'The observed behavior—person X helps person Y—is thoroughly uninformative about whether the egoism or the altruism hypothesis is true'* (Sober & Wilson, 1998, p. 247).

Secondly, the congruity between egoism and altruism can perhaps be extricated meaningfully by looking at the dichotomy from an applied perspective. The plurality of real-world moral scenarios is such that no matter how extensive the theories are they can always fall short to encircle the aspects of the entirety. Bernard Williams (1993) enunciated that philosophical exercise fails to reach the *Archimedean point* of objective knowledge when it comes to dealing with real-world ethical issues. Just as unsettling is the controversy between categorical imperative and utilitarianism for instance, so is the potentiality of each of the theories to encompass the various real-world moral simulations limited and more often than not unintelligible. The same holds for the endless argument that exists between the means and ends. Given the breaking point of even the apex moral theories, how then shall the same distinction between egoism and altruism be viewed from an applied aspect?

Plainly, it can be said that from an applied point of view, the concern of our actions is less inclined towards the motivation than the outcome based on the pragmatism (and reciprocity) that is required in the situation. For instance, Jack helping Jill move things from one place to another will be considered an act of altruism, regardless of the intention that Jack may or may not be holding. Moreover, in this context, both genuinely receive their share, even though not symmetrically. Still if in some near future, Jill decides to do the same for Jack then we might even reconsider our observation of the relationship as being asymmetrical. The point here is that given the above scenario, the only thing that would have made Jack's action undesirable is if he had completely said no to Jill's plea as this would be a violation of the minimum criteria of any friendship between two individuals. Since Jack did not take the route otherwise, the friendship still holds. If in an exceptional situation Jack completely denies to lend a helping hand then it would still not mean the victory of egoism over altruism. All it would show is the fragility of their friendship and the lack of character on Jack's end. What it will not show is that Jack is being overpowered by some metaphysical egoist spirit and that

this is what he lives for. In other times Jack might have been the most selfless person not just towards Jill but everyone that he met. Perhaps it can be said that context and situation play a more major role than the individual's position on the trajectory of egoism and altruism (Doris, 1998; Miller C. , 2017). The former moulds itself with the situation, the latter tries to project the personality as a trademark overestimating its contingent nature.

Hence, in the above case, neither egoism nor altruism is seen as overpowering the other to endure as the absolute. In the daily conduct of our affairs, we nudge and try to get along with each other not based on the separation that we create between altruism and egoism. Our subconscious perception is rather busy involved in a community where more weight is being given to practical ideas like equity and justice; agreeableness and blamableness. In this respect, it would be appropriate to quote Hume again:

> *The only object of reasoning is to discover the circumstances on both sides, which are common to these qualities; to observe that particular in which the estimable qualities agree on the one hand, and the blamable on the other; and thence to reach the foundation of ethics, and find those universal principles, from which all censure or approbation is ultimately derived* (Hume, 2019 [1751], p. 4).

3.4 Are we committing motivational extremism?

Both other-regarding actions and selfish actions can be diverse. Given the dynamics, instead of asking the question: does other-regarding action at the mercy of one's loss exist, a more significant question must be—should other-regarding action come at one's loss? Provided it is the case that other-regarding action at one's loss does exist a further question then arises: does it prompt individuals to execute this action? For some philosophers the answer for the first question is affirmative (Singer, 1972; Heyd, 1982). They opined that we do have a space for

other-regarding actions at one's loss. David Heyd argues that given our status as free moral agents who are not confined by external forces, we have the full capacity and unrestricted options to perform supererogatory actions. These are those actions which goes beyond what duty requires. Peter Singer also argued that we have the responsibility to contribute as much resources to the poor until we *'reduce ourselves to the level of marginal utility'* (Singer, 1972, p. 241) of the beneficiaries.

For the second question, this thesis would like to argue that, given the diverse repository of empirical evidence (Kawamura & Kusumi, 2020; Sun, 2018; D'Souza & Adams, 2014) we can say that it does not prompt individuals to take this action. In a study done in Japan with a handful number of participants recruited through an online research system researchers explored the relation between altruism and the basic norm towards giving set by the society. They found that giving more than the established norm did not produce any positive impact on the giver no matter how large the amount was. They elaborated that norm-deviant altruism rather led to negative evaluations (Kawamura & Kusumi, 2020). Sun (2018) analyzed altruism via psychoanalytical approach and described altruism not as a phenomenon of pure motive but something that works as an ego-defensive strategy. This subconscious defensive strategy can suppress the underlying egoistic intention resulting in the actor not realizing their own motive which more often than not is self-serving. This can at times lead to the manifestation of altruism in pathological ways. Can we call someone altruistic if the reason for her altruism was due to the terrible guilt that she felt inside her owing to the lack of financial assistance that she could not provide for her cousin when she had the option to? Still, some have argued that altruistic action should not be performed unconditionally without having a clear understanding of the situation at hand (D'Souza & Adams, 2014). They concluded, 'A truly enlightened altruist would act with objectivity, with knowledge of the inevitable consequences of any response after carefully considering the problems at hand and after deliberating on a global scale'

(D'Souza & Adams, 2014, p. 190). They support their consequentialist position by stating that it is better not to act than to act with an unenlightened altruistic intention.

Schulz (2016) makes an evolutionary case that egoism and altruism cannot be the only rigid forms of organism's behavior, since environment where these organisms interact has the potential to bring out many levels of action, which at times will be reflexive in nature resembling neither the former nor the latter. He instead argues for 'cognitive-efficient' mechanism which has the potential to explain various behavioral outcomes, for instance, paternal love and reciprocation does not always take place via calculations regarding costs and benefits. Many a time it can be observed that our action towards others is impulsive in nature depending on the necessity of the situation. Such actions do not require any sophisticated mental models (similarly neither altruistic nor egoistic) hence saving time and cognitive energy, and this will be selected for in the nature because of its adaptable quality. He concludes:

> *When it comes to evolutionary biological accounts of the psychology of helping behavior, it is useful to consider the situation from the point of view of what is most cognitively efficient, and not just of what is most reliable. When doing this, it becomes clear that there is adaptive pressure on at least some organisms to move away from being purely egoistically motivated, and also that this pressure can push in different directions: towards altruism, reciprocation-focused "behaviorist helping", or reflex-driven helping* (Schulz, 2016, p. 22).

Acknowledging some of the empirical evidences and evolutionary argument pointing to the discrepancies that is conjured when both altruism and egoism is stressed to an extreme level, we can say that selfless regard at one's loss becomes one form of motivational extremism, so does selfish regard at someone else's loss suffers from the same defect. Having said that we can assess the case of Jack and Jill again. If Jack happens to help Jill with a robust attitude that

his action has to be purely altruistic at the cost of one's loss, and also if it is the prime concern that he has, more so than to see Jill getting the help, then we can consider that a form of motivational extremism. Here Jack has failed to see the singularity between the two motivations. If on the other hand, Jack helps Jill with the primary attitude of wanting to see Jill getting the help, with a contingent possibility of either one's loss or no loss then it can be called a case of genuine altruism. In the first case, too much stress is given to the refinement of the motive of the action to a point that the chief moral aim is overshadowed i.e., to see the other person getting the required help. This defeats the condition of other-regard and commits motivational extremism. In the second case, primary regard is given to the objective that person gets the required help irrespective of one's gain or loss. This is theoretically more defensible than the former. The plural nature of disinterestedness towards what one may gain or may not gain also adds to the action being more defensible than the one where the concern for one's action is given most of the importance (Sober & Wilson, 1998).

It is clear from the discussion regarding the association between altruism and egoism that plurality seems to be the most efficient path given the indeterminate nature of our motivation. Churchill and Street (2002) after exploring some traits of altruistic personality posed possible paradoxes that might underlie in altruism. These paradoxes include the distinction between selflessness and self-interest, relationship between extensivity and autonomy, and the confusion regarding soft and hard ego boundaries. In all these possible threats to altruism they discern the idea that existence of one does not negate the other. Hence, being selfless and extensive towards others do not take away our capacity to be an individual and autonomous being. These factors are rather a 'coherent construct' of our personality. Talking about an egoist failing to draw a separate line from an altruist Bernard Williams writes:

> *He operates in society, fulfilling his desires and projects involves society, and we can add that the very existence of his desires and projects is the product of society, not just*

causally but conceptually. And society implies a degree of minimal altruism in order to operate (Williams B. , 1973, p. 252).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter tried to argue that altruism and egoism both come in different forms, with each form incorporating in itself motivations based on contingent conditions. This is because conditions play a pivotal role in maneuvering the exchange between individuals. The following sections argued that the plurality that surrounds the dichotomy does not point to the independent existence of egoism and altruism. Both types of actions may have their grounding in a singular motivational ontology with the supervening idea that neither of the actions negates the other. Hence, if the gap that exists between altruism and egoism is recognized as not as wide as we make it to be, or rather viewed as non-existent, then perhaps we may see the dichotomy in a new light.

Although this being the case, the latter chapters of this thesis will keep the skepticism running in the background while looking at the nature of human motivation. I will presuppose the autonomy of altruism from egoism as an independent theory for the purpose of the discussion that needs to be carried forward. For even though the presence of the hints available to separate altruism from egoism are scarce in nature many a time the altruistic character of a person is as clear as it can be. Such altruistic acts are genuine and it will not be a very bright idea to sideline it under the notion that no acts are motivationally recognizable. Cognizance of genuine altruistic actions will not only serve us descriptively but also help in understanding the value of altruism in a prescriptive way. Thus, as of now, I do not intend to suggest that this chapter is the conclusion per se, although it will probably have some bearing on the main conclusion later. We will need to explore some other domain of inquiries to make our case

more holistic. That being said, the next chapter is set out to take up that task. There I will inquire if altruism and its related concepts can be measured in a different format, particularly the formats that sociologists and evolutionary scientists use.

Chapter IV: Evolution, Society, and Altruism

4.1 Introduction

Altruism or prosocial behavior in general have a long-standing discussion in evolutionary literature and other empirical discourses. The way society works owes much to the moral apparatus existing within the social parameter that forms one whole structure and various substructures within it. Different societies of different types regulate and operate their various institutions like socio-political, economic, culture etc. in their manner and altruism as one of morality's impetus play a very prominent role in the sustenance of these institutions. Although it would be an over simplification to view morality and altruism as an interchangeable notion, it is nevertheless imperceptible to view morality in any sense that is not about our conduct unto others. Some philosophers view altruism as the very essence of morality (Nagel, 1970).

Still the intensity of our other regarding behavior may vary depending upon persons, situations, motivations, and contexts and so on. For instance, as mentioned in the previous chapter, we might classify altruistic behavior into two namely–soft altruism and robust altruism, similarly, altruistic motivations can also be classified into pure and impure kind (Nahra, 2021). Many other variants of altruism have also been discussed upon by several philosophers and scientists (Wilson D. , 1992; Nicholas, 1997; Clavien & Chapuisat, 2013). Some have argued for the non-existence of the exclusive kind of altruism stating that the classifications of helping behavior may not be considered as either fully altruistic or egoistic (Badhwar, 1993; Schulz, 2016). Human being as a species may not have been encountered as being altruistic towards one another all the time but altruism has definitely been part of human nature ever since the dawn of civilization or may be even before that (Kitcher, 2011; Tomasello, 2016; De Waal, 2019 [2009]; Kropotkin, 2020 [1902]). The civilization in our present state with its vastness, for good or bad, has been the product of our extended moral capability

towards others. As it stands, it may not be that the phenomenon of altruism plunged through the human society and established this massive civilization, but *cooperation* surely did play a big role in gluing this social thread together (Darwin, 1871; Kitcher, 2011; Curry, 2016; Tomasello, 2016; De Waal, 2019 [2009]). The role of cooperation in evolutionary literature has been a very essential one in explaining the various ways in which societies move forward. Human beings have been very sophisticated cooperators who not only excelled beyond mere survival but also successfully established their kingdom with heightened capacity for solidarity. Regarding the relationship between morality and social norm Tomasello writes:

> *The moral dimension does not come from the social norm per se, which only sets parameters for the expectations; it comes from the underlying second-personal morality of sympathy and harm, fairness and unfairness, in which the norm is grounded* (Tomasello, 2016, p. 100).

Although in the objective study of morality the normative weight of social norms is ascribed to the pure dimension of morality alone, in many cases, our sense of deontic morality, or what can be considered as *Kantian moral structure,* is also shaped by social norms (Haidt, 2001; Tomasello, 2016). Hence, both moral norms and social norms can be understood as influencing one another. And it can be added that both norms may have an even more prior condition coming from primary human instincts like sympathy and our innate notion of fairness and unfairness, as Tomasello describes.

Tomasello (2016) presents the two-step evolutionary process that shaped the social landscape of human moral history to its present form. The first step was the *foraging together* of partners to fend against any possible dangers of attack or starvation. This resulted in the partners investing together on a joint goal formed out of 'joint intentionality'. The second step explicates the augmentation of limited capacity from a single partner to the whole group

resulting in the creation of *culture* based on 'collective intentionality'. Thus, we can see in Tomasello's two-step evolutionary model that the upsurge in our moral consciousness begins with our primary human connection such as kinship ties and friendship. It then extends its solidarity to other members of the group with whom there is no direct intimate bond but because of the existence of common resources which is at stake a culture is formed based on the homogeneity of the collective.

Across all cultures, humans have developed some form of morality to tackle against the problem of disorder and conflict. Thus, no extraneous reason for morality can be generated from anywhere else other than the need for cooperation (Curry, 2016). In chapter seven of his book (Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution, 2020 [1902]) Kropotkin writes about the significance of mutual assistance that we provide for each other via different institutions that we have built as social members. These mutual relations are so crucial that in their absence human society will not even survive for one generation:

> *In our mutual relations every one of us has his moments of revolt against the fashionable individualistic creed of the day, and actions in which men are guided by their mutual aid inclinations constitute so great a part of our daily intercourse that if a stop to such actions could be put all further ethical progress would be stopped at once. Human society itself could not be maintained for even so much as the lifetime of one single generation* (Kropotkin, 2020 [1902], p. 163).

Morality as a form of mechanism for cooperation can also be demonstrated by a non-zero-sum game scenario. Axelrod (1984) models the human cooperation through a computer simulation of prisoner's dilemma game to assess the success rate of different social strategies that best fits the likes of every individual in the society. He concludes that the reciprocal strategy of tit-for-

tat (TFT) always persists as the most successful strategy that benefits everyone. He identifies four characteristics of TFT that makes it so effective:

1) Niceness: the disposition to not cheat and defect.

2) Forgiveness: the capacity to continue cooperating after being defected against, resulting in the peaceful de-escalation of tension that is destructive in the long run.

3) Retaliation: Occasional retaliation as a counter attack towards the first aggressor to prevent exploitation from happening.

4) Clarity: transparency of people employing different strategies results in the building of trustable environment (Barker, 2017).

Social psychologists have ventured into a deeper level of underlying moral phenomenon that makes up the social world (Fiske, 1992; Rai & Fiske, 2011). Although cooperation stands out as a very necessary criterion for the subsistence of society, various other aspects remain unexplained by the parameter of cooperation alone. Fiske (1992) outlines four elementary psychological models that make up the totality of how a society with its diverse relations is regulated. These are - 1) *community sharing* - The perception of others as representing the member of a community where one also belongs to, making the bonding process easier. 2) *authority ranking* - evaluating the sense of hierarchy present in the social structure 3) *equality matching* - presence of the natural human tendency to balance the resources and privileges and 4) *market pricing* - arrangement of the different goods and entities into a proportionate value. Thus, we can say this model might not precisely capture the way each and every society is structured but every society nonetheless will be a prototype of this form in one way or the other.

Through the lens of numerous empirical social discourses, we might not find a direct route towards a pure kind of altruism that is unconditionally selfless in nature, which is of a noble concern in philosophy but altruism's less-demanding counter parts such as cooperation,

reciprocity, conscience, loyalty, kindness etc. are definitely found to be existing as real entities which play a big part in stabilizing moral life of the individuals. Christopher Boehm (2012) in his anthropological fieldwork on tribal society found that human cooperation and altruism can be explained through its linkage with the idea of shame and ostracization. He states that *'shame feelings are directly linked to a universal human physiological response that is triggered by a sense of moral culpritude'* (Boehm, 2012, p. 20). For instance, if a chief or some other man in the village is seen to be misbehaving, acting immorally, or abusing his privileges he will lose respect and all the advantages that he previously had. On the other hand, investing his resources in the common pool altruistically in everyone's interest will earn him more social support and larger chunk of resources in the long run. Hence, anthropologically no straight route to altruism is found since all actions are somehow linked with an underlying consequence. This may sometimes be intentional or many a time externally regulated (Price, Cosmides, & Tooby, 2002; DeScioli & Kurzban, 2009).

Marcel Mauss in his book The Gift presents a very authentic and peculiar way of viewing the concept of gift giving. He shows how the society at large is structured by gestures which seems mundane and small but carries major moral implications. Mauss dismisses the standard notion of gift practice as mere giving and rather explains that every instance of giving a gift to someone is followed by an underlying but a very real obligation by the recipient to give back. Denying the notion of 'pure gift' as an unreal idea altogether. He writes:

> *All in all, just as these gifts are not freely given, they are also not really disinterested. They already represent for the most part total counter-services, not only made with a view to paying for services or things, but also to maintaining a profitable alliance, one that cannot be rejected* (Mauss, 2012[1954], p. 94).

Hence, in Mauss' view we see a big role of the practice of gift giving not just as an occasional treat but also as a covenant of friendship that helps in keeping the bond in its prolonged state. Mauss further elaborates:

> *Societies have progressed in so far as they themselves, their subgroups, and lastly, the individuals in them, have succeeded in stabilizing relationships, giving, receiving, and finally, giving in return* (Mauss, 2012[1954], p. 105).

Visnovsky (2011) bringing into light a pragmatic attitude towards altruism explores the work of John Dewey and his moral philosophy of transaction and cooperation. While also reviewing the ethical theory of Richard Rorty and his idea of 'panrelationalism' he states that social structure and different individuals in it are not independently existing entities but rather a 'nexus of relations' functioning as a unit. He nullifies the dualism of egoism and altruism by viewing them both as a shared manifestation of the social whole which cannot be considered as a separate phenomenon. Overall, Visnovsky argues for solidarity and altruism as a standing possibility in human society by acknowledging our capacity for interdependence, reciprocity and democratic human values.

4.2 Altruism in evolution

Before moving further in the literature looking at the multiple ways in which evolution and altruism is related to each other, one crucial factor of how evolution operates and functions needs to be highlighted. This is the distinction between *ultimate explanation* and *proximate explanation*, former is the explanation of 'why' and the latter is regarding the 'how' (Scott-Phillips, Dickens, & West, 2011). For instance, the ultimate explanation of the phenomenon of say *cooperative behavior* is that it exists because it results in greater inclusive fitness and has higher adaptability in nature whereas the proximate explanation of the same phenomenon

points to the aspects such as individual's concern for the praise and blame towards one another, desire for friendship resulting in the balanced practice of reciprocation etc. (Scott-Phillips, Dickens, & West, 2011). Proximate explanation concerns with the visible features - such as the employed mechanism or the modus operandi of any natural phenomenon, it does not ask why it exists or is present in the population. Such questions fall under the domain of ultimate explanation which eventually points to the notion of *inclusive fitness*. Thus, in studying altruism we need to make sure that the two distinctions are not overlapped or used in a mismatched context.

Evolutionary biologists W D Hamilton (1964) and Robert Trivers (1971) designed two theories that models the rudimentary ways in which altruism takes place in nature. Before we get into the explanation of their theory it is necessary for us to understand how the term altruism is understood in evolutionary biology. Altruism in the evolutionary biological world has been conceived as a puzzling concept. This is because the world and its various organisms both big and small have been depicted as struggling for their existence against the tides of natural selection. The pioneer of this idea Charles Darwin (1871) laid down the foundational premise of evolution that every species on this planet is in a constant process of existence through adaptation and it is the most adaptable ones that the nature selects. Herbert Spencer (1864) famously transposed this concept into sociology popularizing the phrase 'survival of the fittest' (Allhoff, 2003). In the midst of such selfish narrative that has been generated since the time of Darwin it is no wonder why the concept of altruism seems puzzling. It is because altruism (despite being a vulnerable trait that can be easily abused by the evolutionary force and selected against) has been successfully surviving in the natural world. Scientists since the mid-twentieth century has been looking for ways to best explain how altruism can resist the natural selection process which is hugely selfish in its design. Although many later scientists would want to

picture the nature otherwise (Rosas, 2007; Melioni, 2013; De Waal, 2019 [2009]). De Waal in his noble attempt to bring out the good in nature writes:

> *What we need is a complete overhaul of assumptions about human nature. Too many economists and politicians model human society on the perpetual struggle they believe exists in nature, but which is a mere projection. . . Obviously, competition is part of the picture, but humans can't live by competition alone* (De Waal, 2019 [2009], p. 7).

4.2.1 Kin Altruism

Hamilton (1964) attempted to solve the puzzle by his theory of kin altruism. Kin altruism is a theory that when an agent helps their close relatives say an offspring, they indirectly help the copy of their genes which is partially present in their offspring (though this idea can be extended to siblings and cousins). When an agent does so it incurs a little amount of cost to themselves but since they are helping the copy of their own genes it does not result in any loss but enhances the overall inclusive fitness. Using what is now famously known as Hamilton's rule we can calculate the genetic relatedness through the variable $rB > C$ where C is the cost paid by an agent for their altruistic behavior, B is the benefit received by the recipient and r is the coefficient of relatedness. Whereby we can understand it as: if the benefit of a related individual is larger than the cost incurred by the actor altruism will be supported by natural selection. Dawkins' interpretation really captures the gist of the theory:

> *If an individual dies in order to save ten close relatives, one copy of the kin-altruism gene may be lost, but a larger number of copies of the same gene is saved* (Dawkins, 2016 [1976], p. 116).

This theory makes total sense in the biological definition of the term altruism since it coherently fits with the selfish design of nature. But a close analysis of this theory reveals that its capacity to explain the phenomenon of altruism outside the circle of kinship is unattainable, although it throws a shining light in explaining why we intuitively behave more altruistically towards our close blood relatives. At best it only explains the mechanism of nepotism that we inhabit as a species.

Even within the circle of biologists they have agreed upon the fact that various species including humans cooperate outside their kinship. This cooperation in the human scenario occurs within groups – such as tribes, communities, villages, as well as their modern equivalents like towns, cities, states, and nations etc. Kin selection theory fails to extend its reach to this level of altruism.

4.2.2 Reciprocal altruism

Robert Trivers developed a theory in his influential paper 'The theory of reciprocal altruism' (1971) which has an explanation for altruism outside the kin circle. Reciprocal altruism is a theory that explains the cooperative behavior of non-related individuals. How can a trait of helping behavior evolve if nature by design has only predisposed us to act altruistically towards our close relatives? Trivers narrates this scenario thus:

> *One human being saving another, who is not closely related and is about to drown, is an instance of altruism. Assume that the chance of the drowning man dying is one-half if no one leaps in to save him, but that the chance that his potential rescuer will drown if he leaps in to save him is much smaller, say, one in twenty. . . Also assume that the energy costs involved in rescuing are trivial compared to the survival probabilities. Were this an isolated event, it is clear that the rescuer should not bother to save the*

drowning man. But if the drowning man reciprocates at some future time, and if the survival chances are then exactly reversed, it will have been to the benefit of each participant to have risked his life for the other (Trivers, 1971, pp. 35-36).

Much like the kin altruism where the benefit of the recipient is larger than the cost incurred to the actor, in reciprocal altruism too *'the benefit of the altruistic act to the recipient is greater than the cost of the act to the performer'* (Trivers, 1971, p. 36). Although, Trivers further adds that reciprocal altruism can only take place for certain when the possibilities of repetitive interaction is more likely to take place between the two parties. Since, in a single instance of interaction the best evolutionary strategy for both of them would be to play a cheat and not cooperate. But if both concede to the fact that they would have to co-exist for a series of prolong period then evolution would select reciprocal altruism by default (Hamilton, 1964; Axelrod, 1984).

4.2.3 Discussion

These two types of altruism have been the most dominant explanation of helping behavior in evolutionary biology. Using the above ultimate-proximate distinction we can summarize that both kin altruism and reciprocal altruism falls under the category of ultimate explanation for altruistic behavior. Both the theories make it look like altruism is only an apparent concept that masks themselves with a seemingly helping behavior, which in reality is just another selfish tactic to survive through life. If we take the selfish nature of the world for granted, we might come to a perspective that 'selfishness' need not always be viewed from a negative connotation. We may just view them as what 'is' instead of what it 'could be'. And in such a world of clarity the evolutionary explanation of altruism would not baffle us; we would just instinctively know that 'this is what I need to do for survival'. Or maybe because we do not know for sure what

our ultimate nature is, the reason why we are hesitant to ascribe any badge of selfishness to ourselves. Although the bottom line of the evolutionary theory is that it asserts the former as its starting point and the rests follows from there.

The above theories leave aside the philosophical facet of the *notion* per se which is the analysis of the idea of altruism in its objective form (Nagel, 1970). They rely on the outcome-based observation of an action where the *fitness effects* criteria play the main role. On the other hand, the objective form of altruism is concerned with the nature of the *motivation* of the act. Unlike the standard speculation where psychological altruism is considered as having its genesis outside of evolution (since the biological variants of altruism such as kin and reciprocal altruism does not require motivational content in their description) Sober and Wilson (1998) demonstrates that psychological altruism can also have its root in the natural world. Defending psychological altruism as an essential part of nature they argued that various other-directed behaviors that we perform as social species cannot be the function of egoism but rather a pluralistic kind of genuine psychological altruism which is evolutionarily more *available, reliable,* and *efficient* making it more prone for the nature to select. Hence, Sober and Wilson through their work gave us some positive substance to think about the relationship between evolution and psychological altruism (Sober & Wilson, 1998; Jamieson, 2002; Ananth, 2005; Rosas, 2007; Clavien C. , 2012).

Arguing in a much wider sense, Steven Pinker (2010) elaborated that the coevolution of language, intelligence of using various tools, sociality, and our capacity to understand abstract concepts have been the result of thousands of years of manipulating survival tactics which resulted in the development of 'cognitive niche' at its present state. He writes that morality being one of the ingredients of this niche can also be conceived as having evolved for a considerable period of time. This brings forward crucial implication along the way, shedding light on the way morality operates in its natural state. Thus, understanding how altruism

functions in nature and how the domain of ethics at large is influenced by the natural force can bring pioneering contributions in moral philosophy (Clavien C. , 2015; Ravat, 2015; Stewart-Williams, 2015; Wilson C. , 2017). In her essay, Hermann (2017) explored different paths and varieties in which moral progress can take place. She stressed that knowledge of evolution among the people can play a massive role in informing us about both the enhancement and limitations of the existing moral capacity. She looks at the two means through which progress in morality can be contorted: 'moral enhancement' (through education and adapting to a properly informed knowledge) and 'changes in the circumstances of moral practice' (enlightening oneself of the perpetual changes taking place in the society through science and social reformation). She then adds that these means can be applied to calibrate our attitudes towards the distant poor and gradually also the non-human animals as well.

With this review of some of the key empirical literature I will attempt to defend a theory proposed by Philip Kitcher in the next section, which is a well proposed theory to understand the holistic nature of morality and also altruism. Pragmatic naturalism is built upon the cues received from different major disciplines that contributed in answering to crucial questions on morality.

4.3 Kitcher's pragmatic naturalism

Morality holds a central place in human society. Every group of people since the early stages of civilization, whether it's a small band of nomads or any random agriculturalist community, a highly fortressed Roman empire, or a lively intellectual city-state of Greeks, have tended to develop some sort of moral values and norms that were employed to regulate the workings of their communities. Although no inquiry has shed a satisfactory light concerning the actual beginning of the ethical system it has been estimated that *'until about fifteen thousand years*

ago, human beings lived in groups of roughly the size of contemporary bands of chimpanzees' (Kitcher, 2011, p. 11). It is highly probable that had there been no moral practice as one of the significant aspects of our lives we would not have acquired such harmony and cooperation among our members (Tomasello, 2016). Morality assisted people to create bonds with each other and embedded the spirit of altruism among us, on the other hand, it also implanted a sense of conscience (Darwin, 1871) in the people which resulted in our knowledge of the right action from the wrong action.

Kitcher (2011) in his book The Ethical Project argues that the ethical values of human society do not have a preexisting ontological structure and that moral values were rather learned and acquired over thousands of years of interdependence (Kitcher, 2011). Stating further he makes his claim that it is only in the gradual movement through time that society learns to create and uphold these values. And, this upsurge through time is what brings progress among the people learning to live together. Kitcher paints a picture of human society as a collective entity that is and has been constantly rearranging its social structure. Kitcher sees these instances as the outcome of society engaged in the perpetual motion of pragmatic naturalism. In other words, it is the description of human beings in their natural setting looking for efficient and practical solutions. However, Kitcher further adds that the progression is not as straightforward as it may seem. In each phase of the progress, there are problems to be dealt with. Kitcher refers to it as the lack of ability to solve various social problems that emerge at different times, calling it 'altruism failures'. Hence, like any other process of learning errors as well as victories were part of our ethical journey.

Thus, in the following sections, I will look at Kitcher's theory of pragmatic naturalism and its critique thereof. Despite its notability as an extensive contribution to naturalistic ethics, few criticisms against his ethical theory have been made on the basis that it fails to avoid the naturalistic fallacy (Derpman, Duber, Rojek, & Schnieder, 2013). Others like Barresi (2017)

observe that pragmatic naturalism does not give its proper due to individual moral contribution by stressing too much on social level occurrence. This section will review these criticisms and firstly, argue that alleging pragmatic naturalism of committing a naturalistic fallacy would miss the point of Kitcher's methodology since its aim is not to invalidate the fact and value dichotomy by offhandedly deriving one from the other but to show that a big chunk of observable moral knowledge is lost when we completely try to avoid it. Secondly, I will try to argue that focusing on social-level phenomena does not amount to discrediting an individual's contribution. Indeed, individuals are recognized as the major driver of progress in the schema of pragmatic naturalism. Still, these contributions cannot be conceived in isolation from the larger pragmatic social discourse that is essential for the change to occur.

While summarizing Kitcher's theory and its various criticisms I will conclude that most of the arguments charged against pragmatic naturalism do not hold any major threat to the significance of the theory. My responses to the critiques of the theory will altogether highlight a crucial philosophical issue that largely looms around in the discussion of naturalistic ethics (Flanagan et al., 2016). The issue here is with regard to the way in which moral values are formed and universalized in our highly intersubjective world. Thus, if successful, I will have shown that pragmatic naturalism is a very promising theory in explaining different components of our moral life, which are otherwise blurred out by a pure normative discourse on morality. Kitcher's theory also reveals that no one elite group has the monopoly over the intellectual resources in establishing a normative principle since every member is participating in this process, and each innovation is inadvertently recognized if it dynamically contributes to the evolution of society.

4.3.1 Experiments of living: A pragmatic-naturalistic account

Kitcher (2011) in establishing his ethical theory starts firstly by dissociating itself from moral realism which posits the idea of objective truth, and from divine command theory since religion too according to Kitcher has been viewed at most as one of the instances (although maybe a refiner one) in the larger system of his theory, which is a 'historically evolving' one. Thus, outrightly taking his stance against any 'independent realm of values' in his ethical project. In order to lay down his interpretation of the genealogy of human morality he establishes his framework of pragmatic naturalism which understands ethics in terms of 'human phenomenon, permanently unfinished' (Kitcher, 2011, p. 2), whose task is not to discover moral truths but rather to identify the existing deficiency in the society and bring out practical improvements and progress. This framework of ethics is the merging together of Dewey's pragmatism and philosophical naturalism. The project that Kitcher puts forward can be interpreted as the further development of the vision that John Dewey had for pragmatic ethics. Dewey writes:

> *A complete historical account of the development of any ethical idea or practice would not only enable us to interpret both its cruder and more mature forms, but what is even more important would give us insight into the operations and conditions which make for morality* (Dewey, 1902, p. 124).

Dewey exhibited his keen interest in the application of evolution to ethics since he thought it can make the mechanism of the moral institution more practical, which will increase society's capabilities to solve complex moral issues. Similarly, Kitcher adapts the criteria of viewing ethics as a social technology that should be understood as a purely ongoing naturalistic phenomenon. Kitcher writes:

> *Ethics pervades every human society and almost every human life. People deliberate about what they should do on specific occasions, about what is worthwhile, about the kinds of lives they should aspire to lead. In subtle ways, their everyday actions*

> *presuppose habits of conduct, roles and institutions current in their societies, endorsed sometimes after serious reflection, often accepted without much thought* (Kitcher, 2011, p. 1).

Hence, in Kitcher's pragmatic naturalism, the ultimate purpose of ethics is to comprehend the continuity of the properties of ethics as it so finds its relevance in nature. In this manner, ethical properties become a generational product. Each new generation lifts off from where it was previously landed by the preceding generation, molding the existing structure and its components, and giving new and meaningful shape to it 'one thing after another'. In Kitcher's words *'People begin with a problem and achieve partial successes in solving it. The successes generate new problems to be solved'* (Kitcher, 2011, p. 7). These social ties compel them to validate or develop a set of virtues or norms that will supposedly release the friction that is produced if gone unchecked. In a more or less, similar line of argument Rai and Fiske (2011) by introducing their Relationship Regulation Model (RRM) argues that *'In order for relationships to function, people need competing motives that lead them to regulate and sustain social relations by controlling their own behavior and sanctioning others'* (Rai & Fiske, 2011, p. 59).

The historical analysis points out that some practice whose moral status was not pondered upon as problematic at one point in time was deemed immoral in another (for e.g., Slavery, subordination of women) giving us possible insight into the progressive nature of morality (Kitcher, 2011, p. 138). Variations in moral judgments do not merely suggest that morality per se does not have any fixed substratum and that it is nothing more than relativistic; it rather implies that all moral interventions are solutions to the necessity of the present and its problems. As a corollary, this perspective forces us to abandon the view of morality as having any independent nature free from its social-relational context (Curry, 2016; Rai & Fiske, 2011). Kitcher's pragmatic naturalism introduces a gigantic shift from discussing ethics as an

independent domain of inquiry into moral truth, to a problem-centric domain where the business of the ethicists lies in the remedying of 'altruism failures'. As stated above, the deficiency of altruism in a society cannot be eradicated in one generation, it has to be identified and dealt with over generations. Hence, *'The ethical project began in response to central human desires and needs, arising from our special type of social existence'* (Kitcher, 2011, p. 8).

4.3.2 Critique of pragmatic naturalism and some counter-arguments

Despite the establishment of such a progressive socio-anthropological description of our ethical institutions its degree of coherence with the broader philosophical methods has been questioned from various directions (Rottschaefer, 2012; Campbell & Kumar, 2013; Derpman, Duber, Rojek, & Schnieder, 2013; Sager, 2014; Barresi, 2017). Most critiques of the theory come from the school of moral realism who advocates for objective moral phenomenology. They questioned - what gives pragmatic naturalism this potentiality that it can transcend its own social nature and become categorically significant (Campbell & Kumar, 2013; Rottschaefer, 2012). Although I will not provide a direct response to the question of moral realism, I will view two other critiques which are equally significant and contributing to the debate. The other two counter positions which I will address are also the remnants of the larger objective ideology that cast a shadow over any theory which are not built upon the foundation of objective principle. Firstly, the major critique that was put forward strictly targeted the normative aspect of the theory. Precisely the alleged jump from factual narrative to the normative narrative. They argue that Kitcher's theory violates the age-old philosophical rule of not deriving values from facts (Derpman, Duber, Rojek, & Schnieder, 2013). Secondly, Barresi (2017) critiques that the method of pragmatic naturalism overshadows the existence of individuals' subjective

experiences which can many times bring forth more impactful solutions to the existing problems of our society than the solution at the social level. Hence, let us look at two primary criticisms that are made against Kitcher's theory starting from the first one i.e., *naturalistic fallacy.*

4.3.2.1 Naturalistic fallacy

Perhaps the first obvious critique that can be expected against Kitcher will be the allegation of naturalistic fallacy (Hume, 1737; Moore, 1903; Derpman, Duber, Rojek, & Schnieder, 2013). This fallacy which states that no normative conclusion can plausibly be drawn from any descriptive premises precisely fits the bill as the main challenge for pragmatic naturalism. Before providing our defence let us understand what is this fallacy. Oliver Curry identified eight types of reasoning allegedly considered to be committing this fallacy. These are:

1. Moving from is to ought (Hume's fallacy).

2. Moving from facts to values.

3. Identifying good with its object (Moore's fallacy).

4. Claiming that good is a natural property.

5. Going 'in the direction of evolution'.

6. Assuming that what is natural is good.

7. Assuming that what currently exists ought to exist.

8. Substituting explanation for justification (Curry, 2006, p. 236).

Along with the identification of these fallacies he also provided defence for each one of these allegations concluding that the Humean-Darwinian thesis does not commit any of the

mentioned fallacies. As we can see from the above eight points naturalistic fallacy is basically predicated on the idea that there is a permanent and solid wedge that divides the domain of facts from the domain of values. A factual statement is a mere description of the thing that is a part of the natural world. On the other hand, a value statement is not about a tangible object or a thing that we can factually describe since we cannot see nor can we touch them. Values are rather ideological representations of our beliefs and rationality. Values represent principles that we bring into this world to guide our lives. They provide us with directions on which we can accordingly walk. Given this difference between the nature of the two domains, it is fallacious to validate the overlap between the two. Facts do not lead to values, nor do values lead to facts hence there is no entailment relation between facts and values. Any two propositions that are oddly clubbed under such a format posing as one entailing the other will be committing the naturalistic fallacy. Taking cognizance of this wedge Peter Singer writes:

> *No science is ever going to discover ethical premises inherent in our biological nature, because ethical premises are not the kind of thing discovered by scientific investigation. We do not find our ethical premises in our biological nature, or under cabbages either. We choose them* (Singer, 2011[1981], p. 77).

Since Kitcher eventually intends to bring out the normative implication by first outlining the historical account and his descriptive metaethical framework, it needs to do so in a manner that does not commit such a fallacy, or even if it so circles through this path, it will be mandatory for him to give a feasible explanation. Derpmann et al. (2013) point out that Kitcher's theory fails to meet this challenge successfully. They do so by picking up two historical instances of moral change (the abolition of slavery and the rise of feminism) that Kitcher discusses in his book. They argue:

> *The crucial point is that unlike the pragmatic naturalist, both feminists and abolitionists start from normative premises about what is right and wrong or good and bad. Their ethical starting point is not a description of the evolution of ethics like the one that Kitcher presents in the first part of his book. The fact that these protagonists of ethical progress can be described within the historical framework of the ethical project that pragmatic naturalism develops does not make these protagonists themselves pragmatic naturalists. Therefore, Kitcher's observation does not protect the pragmatic naturalist from committing a naturalistic fallacy* (Derpman, Duber, Rojek, & Schnieder, 2013, p. 71).

Moreover, they argue - because Kitcher understands every episode that emerges in our ethical framework as a continuing channelization of solutions for different problems, he overlooks the various moral insights of the participants. In other words, in the process of exalting himself in the position of an *observer*, he arbitrarily detaches *himself* from participation preposterously. This would still not suffice for him in positioning the normative force of his theory safely because:

> *If the pragmatic naturalist takes his own reflections on the status of ethical judgments seriously, he is forced to understand ethical judgments in terms of their historical development alone, not in terms of their genuine normative force. All he can say about his deepest ethical beliefs is how humans have turned out to become the kinds of beings likely to hold these beliefs. Therefore, the normative part of Kitcher's ethical theory lacks justification at this point* (Derpman, Duber, Rojek, & Schnieder, 2013, p. 71).

Explanation of morality in natural terms of such kind has often been made the subject of Hume's is/ought dichotomy (Hume, 1737; Moore, 1903; Allhoff, 2003). This has also initiated the trend of red-flagging against any ethical theory that derives its foundation solely based on

the description of nature. The above criticism is not one of its kind. Contrarily, it needs to be highlighted that the resistance against this allegation is equally persistent on the other side of the discourse (Wilson E. , 1975; Curry, 2006; Harris, 2012; Tomasello, 2016; Ruse, 2017). For example, Ruse out rightly maintains in his adaptationist approach that morality is *'an illusion of the genes put in place by natural selection to make us good cooperators'* (Ruse, 2017, p. 98). Curry writes *'the normative question mistakes the Humean-Darwinian thesis for an argument about what people believe, when it is in fact an argument about the ontological status of moral values'* (Curry, 2006, p. 242). Similarly, in explaining the goal of his book Tomasello states *'We proceed from the assumption that human morality is a form of cooperation, specifically, the form that has emerged as humans have adapted to new and species-unique forms of social interaction and organization'* (Tomasello, 2016, p. 2). Also, Harris argues: *'From a factual point of view, is it possible for a person to believe the wrong things? Yes. Is it possible for a person to value the wrong things (that is, to believe the wrong things about human well-being)? I am arguing that the answer to this question is an equally emphatic "yes" and, therefore, that science should increasingly inform our values'* (Harris, 2012, p. 36). Although Kitcher himself does not intend to take the adaptationist path or pure scientific reductionism as a counterargument, these options always remain a tenable contender for some philosophers.

Coming back to the criticism made by Derpmann et al. we have to consider — it is not that Kitcher does not accept the validity of Hume's Law. He fully does. Thus, he makes sure that his theory is built around it in such a way that it doesn't discredit what Hume had to say. In a succeeding paper, Kitcher (2013) responds to this by clarifying that the above criticism is based on a foundationalist epistemology contrary to his theory which is a non-foundationalist one. Regarding the criticism that is made against his historical framework as being fallacious and lacking in its normative force, Kitcher writes:

> *Understanding how they make these transitions isn't a matter of answering Hume's challenge: the task is to show how, given ordinary experience and scientific discoveries, you get from one mix of facts and norms to another* (Kitcher, 2013, p. 181).

Hence, to allege Kitcher of committing a naturalistic fallacy would itself be an act of committing the fallacy of missing the point. The crucial point here is that a substantial conglomeration of insights which are of huge value for understanding the nature of ethics are sidelined in doing so. Ethics which is completely devoid of naturalistic touch becomes incomplete in a way. The domain of normativity and description may entirely be different from each other but an analysis of a normative proposition will always indirectly lead to some sort of natural facts via which the norm is, although not directly derived but, inspired. We can take for example the universal immorality attached to actions such as killing or stealing. A deontologist like Kant also found these actions universally immoral. Here, it would be wrong to say that the knowledge of the wrongness of killing or stealing was pre-given. Even if it were the case that it was pre-given it would not be easy to prove the argument that so was the case. The justification for it will, in some way, hugely depend on *circling around* some kind of factual data, either from the past or the present, reinforcing the notion all over again that it is literally not possible to explain norms without looking at some facts, with all due respect to is-ought dichotomy. In fact, it will not be entirely wrong to say that the pioneer of the is-ought dichotomy Hume himself was a naturalist in many ways.

If we ask the question – what does the knowledge that day follows night, night follows day again and vice versa teach us anything special or normative about existence? A normative critic would probably resort to the answer 'nothing'. Kitcher would answer the same. He agrees that facts have to be looked at as facts and not something else. But he will add that to get rid of even attempting to make any descriptive analysis will result in a loss of a big chunk of valuable insights which seems unaffordable if we are to look ahead in refining our ethical practice. For

instance, Jonathan Haidt found in his research that there is a significant disconnect between people's emotions and reasoning when deliberating on matters such as morality, politics, and religion. He argued that most people make decisions on these matters based on their emotions and only justify them through reason afterward (Haidt, 2013). Hence, doing a historical analysis of the ethical transition does not in itself give us any resolution for bridging the gap between the facts and values but it does give us some other valuable information about our moral institutions. It helps us open our perspectives to the understanding that much like the advancements in science, which are built upon the restless trials and errors driven by human ingenuity, our socio-moral world is also subject to empirical interventions that can aid us in rectifying multiple evils and shortcomings that are present in our society, things which we take for granted as categorically given. Hence, doing a historical analysis of the ethical transition does not in itself give us any resolution for bridging the gap between the facts and values but it does give us some other valuable information about our moral institutions. By stating the historical narrative in his ethical project, he only intends to reiterate his minimal ambition: *'Understanding how we have come to do the things we take for granted, we may see our practices quite differently. Genealogy can liberate'* (Kitcher, 2013, p. 183). Values might not be entailed in the causality of our moral history per se, which is a factual description of the episodes that unfurled so far, but in many crucial ways they are hugely stimulated by it. We learn from our history and in order for that to happen history (which is a factual phenomenon) needed to occur in the first place.

4.3.2.2 Unrecognition of individual moral contribution

Another philosopher Barresi (2017) argues against Kitcher that his theory of pragmatic naturalism focuses too extensively on group-level moral progress, failing to recognize the role

of an individual's personal moral experience. Since, many a time it is rather an individual that succeeds in identifying the better truth, if not the only truth. He writes:

> *But if it is conceded that personal discoveries of the sort can play an important role in ethical progress, then the pragmatic naturalist's current emphasis on social-level phenomena will need to be modified to give a significant role to moral innovations made by individuals in at least some instances of progressive ethical change* (Barresi, 2017, p. 204).

Although Barresi criticizes Kitcher on the ground that he overlooks the variable of individual's 'personal discoveries' in his account of moral progress; he does not do so in a manner that supports the existence of moral realism. Rather he does it because there are general moral psychological truths that can be viewed as an objective reality across all human psychology. Here, he is referring to the emotional capacity of human beings such as guilt and sympathy for their fellow beings as a universal psychological truth. He calls this *sympathetic methodology*, a motivational theory that takes place in the head contrary to the independent ethical truth that is not as tangible as our basic psychological nature. Barresi argues against Kitcher that his theory fails to give proper due to the contribution of individuals like John Woolman whose writings hugely influenced the outset of the abolition movement during the eighteenth and the nineteenth century in America. He reviews various works by Woolman and explains how throughout his life he submitted himself for the cause of others' wellbeing. This level of benevolence, Barresi argues cannot be subdued under a pragmatic naturalist framework as a temporal episode waiting to be overshadowed by yet another flicker in the dialectics of history.

Here I would like to argue that Kitcher would not reduce such moral exemplars as someone who does not play a crucial part in society's progress. Just as we do not consider Socrates' individuality as unimportant for the development that took place in philosophy, or

Gandhi's individual stand as having created no impact on the independent movement of India. Similarly, any individual from the history of such moral caliber is not reduced to a nobody whose contribution is not recognized just because it has been described inside the framework of pragmatic naturalism. The crucial point is that any revolutionary insight captured by the individual will fail to leave a mark in history, and hence in the existing social structure, unless it is brought out in the open for a social-level discourse. Although few individuals might have to do the extra work (which they usually do) to bring change in the existing deficiencies of society, it can only manifest in reality if the other people in the group also participate. Barresi himself confirms this in his paper:

> *His (John Woolman) moral psychological discoveries gave him a discernment of moral dilemmas of his time that few of his contemporaries had, and motivated him to act on his insight to teach others what he himself could see clearly* (Barresi, 2017, p. 216).

Thus, moral discoveries aside (personal or impersonal) it can only get its validity as a profound theory with an impact in the act of *teaching* it to others and making them see the profoundness of the idea. John Woolman's contribution would have never been recognized if it were not for the larger pragmatic need of society to bring the necessary change. Still, Barresi could be credited for pointing out something crucial that Kitcher may or may not have overlooked in his grand project. Individual moral insight can be considered a very pivotal contribution in carrying forward the wave of moral progress. For it cannot be expected that all individuals will have the equal amount of moral capacity necessary to build a good society. However, we might still want to consider the explanation given by Kitcher who speaking of the contribution of individuals writes *'Philosophers have no final authority on ethical matters. Philosophers (by and large) only propose'* (Kitcher, 2013, p. 183). And any proposition in itself has no capacity to manifest instantaneously in the social domain as authoritative which Barresi seems to convey. Here we can say that we encounter the pragmatic aspect of putting the idea to the test.

Hence, over time the idea gets either invalidated or accepted as naturally efficient depending on its workability. And it may perhaps later get adapted into the convention too.

Other than their differences regarding the participatory role of the people in initiating moral progress, both agree on the implausibility of independent moral truth hence it shouldn't create an overall problem for either of them to prompt a huge disagreement. On the other hand, if we allow ourselves to understand Kitcher's intention behind his notion of progress as the truth then we might spare him of some harsh critique that was levied upon his theory. In his words:

> *Understanding the ethical project, its origins, its evolution, and the historical episodes supporting a conception of ethical progress can free us from the choice between unconvincing philosophical abstractions and problematic religious foundations* (Kitcher, 2011, p. 170).

Here Kitcher merely intends to bring out his genealogical account of ethics. These include firstly the minimization of epistemic distortion in the most efficient way possible when trying to understand the social world. And secondly to direct the concern more primarily on the progressive solutions to various problems than to seek ultimate answers and close the inquiry. Every so often, we have resorted to various problematic assumptions in answering the big questions of life. Most of our assumptions about facts from ethics and religion typically tend to sideline the role that pragmatics play in sustaining and engendering the developments that take place in these institutions. Integrating the methodology of pragmatic naturalism into our knowledge system can greatly serve us in filtering out presuppositions that are not grounded in nature and practice.

4.4 Conclusion

Ethics understood in the light of progressive movement which ultimately works towards the refinement of its practice, untroubled by the quest of ultimate truth on morality is what pragmatic naturalism brings to inquiry. In this ever-changing plurality of the social world, it is only in progress that any sense of the truth can be made. So, to get the best grip on the subject, viewing ethics as a social apparatus, that is always prepared to solve the existing deficiencies in society need not be thought of as the universal truth being subdued to a level of an instrument. For if the instrument can possess enough capacity to identify and refine the urgent discrepancies more efficiently than the ultimate ones, then it is equally as desirable a theory as any other existing accounts which are supposedly more prominent. With each new height, new ventures for greater and more refiner developments make their way. If this cycle is given the push that it needs without any obstacles and corruption, then society will prosper in its most grandeur fashion. And behind this cooperative development, the greatest force that lies underneath is the ability of human beings to be moral to one another. If the moral institution of any society is not fully developed and tuned, then social prosperity is unimaginable. Thus, Darwin writes:

> *The more efficient causes of progress seem to consist of a good education during youth whilst the brain is impressible, and of a high standard of excellence, inculcated by the ablest and best men, embodied in the laws, customs and traditions of the nation, and enforced by public opinion* (Darwin, 1871, p. 159).

Morality envisaged by pragmatic naturalism may seem like a diversion from the standard normative pursuit of ethics. But once we start to acknowledge the genealogy of morality as a natural phenomenon that has this malleable potentiality for progress then the question of it being philosophically problematic and normatively untenable will also cease to arise. On this

account, it can be said that morality acts as an apparatus in the community furthering the uncharted goal of perpetual progress.

Chapter V: Altruistic Moral Exemplars: Pure Altruism Versus Psychological Egoism

5.1 Introduction

'Whosoever saves a single life, saves an entire universe' (Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:5).

Motto of Yad Vashem Medal

'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (John 15:13).

Motto of Carnegie Hero Medal

A moral exemplar is a person whose character is worthy and valuable enough to be emulated by society. A person is called a moral exemplar because their action has produced a substantive amount of good for the people whom they are sharing the world with. Although many are capable of performing good actions for the people, we may still not consider them fully moral exemplars. A moral exemplar has to have the consistency of acting morally and rightfully in all circumstances, even when the situation becomes too challenging. A person cannot be considered a genuine moral exemplar if they act in a kind-hearted way only for their benefit.

Historically there have been a handful of them who cemented their legacy as impactful moral exemplars. To name a few – Gautama Buddha whose teachings about the four noble truths and the eightfold path are still echoed and meditated upon in different parts of the world. Jesus Christ whose fundamental values revolved around love and forgiveness lived like a genuine exemplar himself. An example from our near history would be Mahatma Gandhi who equally lived the kind of life that he was preaching to the world - a life of non-violence and promotion of empathy. And Nelson Mandela whose political views were driven by the

principles of secularism and coexistence. His activism further helped gain the long-awaited freedom from the apartheid.

Although in the above examples just discussed most of the personalities are either from the long-gone chapters of history or are no more alive. It does not mean that an exemplar cannot appear in the present while still living among us. One of them could be residing in our neighborhood, performing all the moral deeds without getting noticed. Another could be residing in the other town or perhaps even a different country while maintaining all the criteria of a moral exemplar in every modest way (Rugeley & Van Wart, 2006). We would not entirely be mistaken to say that among the different ways in which exemplars conduct their affairs, they retain within themselves one prominent characteristic, which is that they perform actions that are valuable enough to be imitable. Exemplar's actions are those that promote a great amount of nobility and righteousness. These are the virtues that the citizens can further pick up on themselves. Linda Zagzebski (2010) in her moral framework aimed at bridging the distance between moral theory and practice. She writes that presence of an archetypical person possessing all the virtues will help navigate the common people to make sense of what the 'morally good' actually look like just as the two-dimensional map help the people to navigate from one place to another. Hence, learning and embodying something is much harder without a sense of reference, and the presence of a moral exemplar in society provides just that requirement.

In this chapter, I will look at moral exemplars who perform the highest type of altruistic behavior. I will call these types of behavior as pure altruism. To challenge pure altruism, I will introduce psychological egoism into the discussion. After reviewing both psychological egoism and pure altruism I will argue that the latter stands the challenge provided by the former. To make the argument I will also bring in the case of organ donation by taking organ donors to be the exemplars of pure altruism. The chapter will conclude by proposing that ideological

assumptions such as psychological egoism cannot be true given the presence of extraordinary exemplars like organ donors.

5.2 Exceptional altruism and some conditions

Other than the everyday exemplar deeds that are present in and around our society there have been recorded cases of various exceptional and extraordinary altruistic episodes as well. Many people across the world may have participated in such acts themselves without getting recognized by the public. These could be acts ranging from rescuing someone from minimal danger to saving someone's lives, sometimes even at the cost of putting one's life at risk. A philanthropic organization called Carnegie Hero Fund Commission (CHFC) was set up in 1904, which is still active today, to award such rescue and heroic/altruistic activities taking place around North American continent.

> *The Commission awards the Carnegie Medal to those who risk their lives to an extraordinary degree while saving or attempting to save the lives of others* (Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, Biennial Report, 2019-2020, p. 2).

They specified a few criteria to judge whether the honorees' deeds merited the Carnegie medal. These criteria give us interesting insight to further gaze into the notion of pure altruism:

> • *The rescuer must be a civilian who knowingly and voluntarily risks his or her own life to an extraordinary degree. Members of the armed services and children considered by the Commission too young to comprehend the risk involved are ineligible for consideration.*
>
> • *The rescuer must have rescued or attempted the rescue of another person.*

• *The act of rescue must be one in which no full measure of responsibility exists between the rescuer and the rescued, which precludes those whose vocational duties require them to perform such acts, unless the rescues are clearly beyond the line of duty; and members of the immediate family, except in cases of outstanding heroism where the rescuer loses his or her life or is severely injured.*

• *There must be conclusive evidence to support the threat to the victim's life, the risk undertaken by the rescuer, the rescuer's degree of responsibility, and the act's occurrence* (Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, Biennial Report, 2019-2020, p. 9).

In the criteria that are mentioned by the commission we can find that firstly only those individuals are qualified for the honor who are not a regular member of the armed services. The reason for this could perhaps be that members of armed services are bound to perform rescue activities as their duty, and action cannot be called altruistic in an exclusive sense if you are obligated to perform it. We can take for example, fire service personnel or life guards. Another criterion also exclusively mentions precluding those actions which are directed to one's immediate family members, although with an extended clause which states 'except in cases of outstanding heroism where the rescuer loses his or her life or is severely injured'. Sidelining the extended clause for now we can see that the commission clearly denies to recognize those actions as extra-ordinarily altruistic which are performed towards our family members. In other words, kin altruism cannot be classified as altruism in its pure sense. Lastly, one of the criteria also stresses on the existence of the risk factor in order for the recipient to qualify for the medal. This criterion presupposes the elimination of egoism that can at times be the core motivator behind the rescuer's action.

I am assuming one more criterion will be necessary here: a rescuer should not intentionally act according to these criteria solely to achieve the medal. This is because actions

cannot be considered altruistic if they are performed just for the medal. In all the cases the recipients were unaware that their actions will be honored too. This is where the novelty of the altruists is witnessed which makes them worthy of such awards. In many similar cases of heroic honoring for altruistic activities, such as Yad Vashem award,[10] it was found that most of the recipients rather refused to accept the award citing that they just did what was supposed to be done without doing anything extravagant (Oliner & Oliner, 1988; Monroe K. , 1996). There are other group of scholars however who argue that saintly actions ought not be a necessary recommendation of our moral system (Wolf, 1982). A group of psychologists also tried to show that attainable and relevant moral exemplars are more effective than those exemplars whose actions are too extraordinary when it comes to promoting social service (Hans, Kim, Jeong, & Cohen, 2017). Thus, the discussion is ongoing and diverse. In the section below I will assess the notion of pure altruism more closely via various examples from the existing literature, after which I will seek to justify it using the applied example of organ donation practice.

5.3 Psychological egoism vs pure altruism

Before we get into the discussion let us first look at some background which are necessary for us to understand the debate that we are trying to address here. Following this setting some preliminaries need to be in place i.e. when both egoism and altruism are put against each other, it is apprehended as the debate at the level of the ultimate desire. Where *'Egoists maintain that all of our ultimate desires are selfish, and although altruists concede that some of our ultimate desires are selfish, they insist that people can and do have ultimate desires for the well-being of others'* (Stich, Doris, & Roedder, 2011, p. 151). So, aligning with the existing literature this

[10] A Jewish organization that identifies and confers honors to those individuals who volunteered in rescuing Jews during the holocaust perpetrated by the Nazi regime.

thesis also recognizes that psychological egoism makes a universal generalization about human motivation as foundationally egoistic, whereas the approach of pure altruism remains plural in nature. We will need separate subsections to discuss each one of them briefly.

5.3.1 Psychological egoism

Despite its controversial nature psychological egoism has always crept up time and again as an almost unavoidable antecedent. A big part of egoism's capability to still stand strong as an unavoidable force, although not often admired by many, has to do with its association with the 'ego'. Since egoism as an idea comes from the word *ego* it necessarily shows that the totality of all our actions will always be borne out of it. Applying this logic, it has been argued that as long as we are associated with ourselves as being with an identity, as someone who can feel, as someone who can breathe, as someone who feels responsible, we will always only be doing things that will be *selfish* by default and hence, egoistic (Irwin, 2017).

The lure of this idea goes deeper than we can imagine. It is because given the background of psychological egoism and its all-pervading nature every action, including other-regarding actions, that we perform becomes egoistic by definition. Some of these actions perhaps can include– rescue activities, donating to charity, helping an old man cross the street, lending a huge sum of money to your friend who is in need, buying an expensive gift for your sister, and so on. The possibilities of such actions will be innumerable. But the point is the psychological egoistic argument that in all such cases, the ultimate motivation of the agent is always egoistic in nature, a kind that is sure to benefit the interest of the agent. Thus, William Irwin argues in his essay reverberating the popular egoistic narrative:

> *In rejecting the ideal of pure altruism, I argue that we always ultimately pursue self-interest. To be clear, this does not mean that we are, or should be, unconcerned with*

others. One can still be guided by prudence in concern for others, layering concern for others on top of the foundation of self-interest (Irwin, 2017, p. 70).

Here it can be understood as saying that doing things out of self-interest is different from doing it in a manner such that you do not acknowledge the concerns of others. An action can be as much self-interested as it can be and yet be in full awareness of other person's autonomy, and hence still be respectful. Irwin argues that egoism does not presuppose that our action is always without concern for the other. When, given any random person X - if X acts in a certain manner, it will not automatically come at the loss of other party Y present in the exchange. But as he states above what is important here is the idea that whatsoever the nature of the exchange between the parties, it will be built 'on top of the foundation of self-interest' (Irwin, 2017, p. 70). The egoistic element here is that although X's act did not come about in exchange for Y's loss still in the long-term evaluation the case remains that the action had an underlying benefit for X. This argument is provided in a way to remove the negative connotation that the label 'selfishness' carries with it. It could be further elaborated as saying that selfishness does not imply a lack of prudence or disregard for the other. A warm society with a modest exchange of communication and resources can also be built on an egoistic foundation, they argue. The same idea can be found in economics as the building block of the prominent economic model known as *homo economicus* - an extracted idea that elucidates that human beings are rational creatures by default which functions in a manner such that the pursuit of one's self-interest is their ultimate goal (Smith, 1982[1776]; Mill, 2007). Hence, the iconoclastic statement that *'There is an ontological relationship between egoism and action'* (Irwin, 2017, p. 75), irrespective of the person's realization of this fact.

If true, the implication of this idea is huge and can influence our understanding of various other theories, extending from both moral to social domains. For instance, further discussion in moral philosophy will remain incomplete unless the variable of self-interest is

taken into account. Similarly, any social discourse on policy issues, economic regulations, political paradigms, etc. will be incomplete without incorporating the same variable as one salient feature. Although it is certainly apparent that clutches of psychological egoism are not easy to break away from, the concept still needs to be reappraised. Because there are many genuine cases of altruistic instances, that can be found in the existing repository on human prosocial behavior, which proves that the universal generalization of human motivation as tautologically egoistic is not correct (Oliner & Oliner, 1988; Monroe, Barton, & Klingemann, 1990; Monroe K. , 1996; Batson D. , 2011).

5.3.2 Pure altruism

The inquiry into the existence of pure altruism differs from psychological egoism in one crucial manner, i.e., unlike psychological egoism pure altruism is not a universal generalization. Although it is a real and equally existing phenomenon it is not something that we always encounter in our everyday affairs. Despite this background, there is little doubt that when such altruism does occur it occurs in a manner that is completely devoid of self-interest. On this account, we can define pure altruism as a type of action that is completely other-regarding and selfless in terms of its approach (Monroe K. , 1996; Batson D. , 2011). A pure altruist embodies a type of exemplar who performs selfless and kind actions for others without considering one's benefit as any more significant than somebody else's. Following is a recipient of the Carnegie Medal for his outstanding rescue attempt to save a three-year-old child:

> *Van L. Anderson rescued Hazel Baldschun from the effects of hazardous acid, Chattanooga, Tennessee, February 17, 2018. Hazel, 3, was trapped in the crushed wreckage of a pickup truck driven by her mother after a tractor-trailer tanker struck their pickup head-on on a mountainside highway and forced them over an embankment.*

The tanker, containing about 5,000 gallons of monochloroacetic acid, a toxic chemical, overturned and came to rest partly atop the pickup, the roof of which was destroyed in the collision. Anderson, 54, paving equipment operator who lived nearby and heard the crash, left his home and ran to the highway at the scene where he heard Hazel crying and saw fluid, which he believed was gasoline, escaping the tanker and flowing into the pickup truck. Ignoring a 911 dispatcher's relayed warning not to approach the wreckage, Anderson moved to the pickup and located Hazel in her seat as acid continued to leak from the damaged tanker near her. Anderson, standing on a rock outcrop adjacent the driver's side of the pickup, extended his upper torso down through the opening in the pickup's roof to unfasten Hazel from the car seat and lift her from the vehicle. Anderson carried Hazel away from the wreck to safety. Hazel suffered facial burns from the acid. Her mother died in the accident (Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, Biennial Report, 2019-2020, p. 13).

It is evident in the description of the incident that the rescuer Anderson completely negated the border between one's self and the injured victims. In no visible way can it be argued that Anderson must have gotten some sort of egoistic pleasure out of jumping into the burning flame. He definitely was not aware of the existence of the heroic medal. Yet, nothing in his brain stopped him from executing his rescue attempt, which fortunately enough did help in saving the child's life. Scholars argue that this type of *spontaneity* has usually been very common among the altruists (Oliner & Oliner, 1988; Monroe K. , 1996).

An important empirical work that can be acclaimed for bringing into light the pure altruistic behavior of everyday humans is Kristen Munroe's 'The Heart of Altruism' (1996). Monroe dedicated her research in exploring the thought process of the remaining survivors who rescued many Jewish people during the second world war. Upon interviewing the rescuers, she found that most rescuers were not occupied with a self-serving interest that would have

otherwise allowed them to execute in a psychologically egoistic manner, but were deeply influenced by the perception of *shared humanity*. They temporarily suspended their idea of *self* and garnered as much altruism as they could to see someone reach home to their families, or in other cases, they tried as best as they could to not get them killed by the Nazis. They write:

> *All of our rescuers explained their actions using phrases such as the following: "You help whoever you can when you are asked". "You help people because you are human and you see that there is a need.... There are things in this life you have to do and you do it"* (Monroe, Barton, & Klingemann, 1990, p. 118).

Here are two other excerpts from the larger transcriptions of their field interviews:

> *INTERVIEWER: The idea that you could be losing your life for this, it never really affected you?*
>
> *TONY: Oh, it sunk in at times. But it's just like flying. I'm going to fly [next week]. I know we've just had three major air crashes and I really don't like flying. But what am I going to do about it? Not go on the trip?* (Monroe, Barton, & Klingemann, 1990, pp. 108-109).

> *INTERVIEWER: How did your rescue activities make you feel about yourself? [Margot' shook her head.] It didn't affect you?*
>
> *MARGOT: Nothing special, no.*
>
> *INTERVIEWER: Was it important to you that you were the one who saved the people?*

MARGOT: No. They just had to be saved (Monroe, Barton, & Klingemann, 1990, p. 110).

In both the interviews the responses given to the questions by the rescuers suggest a very unselfish but a humanitarian attitude. They were neither concerned about material benefit as a return for their kindness nor did they prioritize one's life over others. We could probably summarize—if the consequence of their action benefited the recipient, and if that consequence was brought into existence under a prior motive that was purely other-regarding in nature then there should be no objection against the proposition that rescuers were motivated by pure altruism.

Having said this, we can say that two conditions are required for an action to be considered motivated by pure altruism. The first condition has to be the basic idea that *an act of goodwill is directed towards an individual other who is not oneself.* Although it needs to be explicated that the word 'other' can carry multiple relational meanings such as it can mean one's mother, spouse, or siblings, etc. making the nature of the action less altruistic, for such actions can be explained through the concept such as kin altruism or reciprocal altruism (Hamilton, 1964; Trivers, 1971). Still considering these dynamics as parameters beyond the point of argument for a while, we will be viewing 'other' as one general subset who is anyone beyond oneself.

Moving on to the second condition some reflections need to be made regarding what goes in the background when we act for the 'other'. It seems that given the all-pervading foothold of psychological egoism making a case for altruism merely based on the notion of *acting for others* is not enough, especially if what we are trying to argue for is *pure* altruism. Hence, the notion of *motive* needs to be brought into the light– Is the seemingly altruistic action

hiding behind an ulterior motive? Or is the actor looking for some sort of psychological happiness when they are acting altruistically? As long as the person's motive behind their action is not stated clearly such presuppositions can always lurk in the background as a phenomenon behind the overt action. So, the second condition that needs to be fulfilled for an act to be recognized as pure altruism perhaps must be that *an act of goodwill should primarily be motivated by concern for the other, whose motive should, at the same time, be free of any ulterior objectives.* Based on the second condition an action is purely altruistic if and only if it is performed without an ulterior motive to benefit oneself.

Both the Carnegie Hero Medal recipients and Monroe's rescuers' actions display well-intended prosocial gestures that need not be assumed to be motivated by psychological egoism out rightly, yet we will rest the conclusion aside for now keeping alive the skepticism that anything can be built on top of the foundation of self-interest. Perhaps gazing into a different dimension may provide us with additional proof of pure altruism.

5.4 Organ donors as exemplars of pure altruism

Among the various advancements that have been furthered by human beings in medical science organ transplantation could perhaps be taken as one of the most remarkable accomplishments. The complexity of the organ donation system lies in the fact that, unlike other medical surgeries or operations where the treatment begins and ends in the person itself, in transplant surgeries organs are either entirely extracted or a certain portion is cut out from one person and given to the other person who is in need. Hence, the procedure involves not only one party under the radar but also the second party i.e., the donor whose involvement is as necessary as the target patient for the procedure to be successful. This entire framework brings along different ethical questions and moral insights (Maclean, 2002; Oliver, Woywodt, Ahmed, & Saif, 2011; Levitt,

2015; Lukow, 2020). One such insight that could be generated about the organ donation scenario is that– it is a solid expression of pure altruism, provided it takes place in a certain manner. Such donors demonstrate the epitome of human altruistic behavior that is not very common in our society.

Although, it needs to be reminded here that this proposition cannot be stated in such a straightforward way given the precarity produced by the universal tenets of psychological egoism. So, in the context of organ donation, their argument will likewise suggest the idea that even though the donor donates a part of their body they are only doing it because it is somewhere in their self-interest to do so. For example, a recent review on the topic suggested that organ donation, even if it is anonymous, cannot be considered as an act of pure altruism since the overall expected value that the donor receives is higher than those of non-donors. This is because in United Kingdom the medical system prioritizes the previous donors for organ donation should they ever need one themselves. The author concludes that donating one's organs acts more like taking out an insurance policy than engaging in an altruistic action (Armitage, 2023). It seems like the author here is arguing against the altruistic nature of organ donation particularly in the context of the existing policy of the UK. But organ donation is most likely not limited to one country. It is also in practice in places where such policies do not exist. Moreover, the practice of organ donation was prevalent in UK even before the current policy took its shape (Nuffield Council on Bioethics, 2011). Hence, it may not be an insurance security all the time. Therefore, to argue for the position that an organ donation is an act of pure altruism I will show that the donor is not motivated by the concern for their self-interest but rather has a genuine concern for the benefit of the recipient.

It ought to be noted that different international bodies on organ procurement and transplantation ethics have utilized the principle of altruism to navigate many of their policies (The Declaration of Istanbul on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism, 2008; Guiding

principles on human organ transplantation, 2010; Nuffield Council on Bioethics, 2011). However, these organizations' aims are limited to the monitoring of immoral practices and close moderation of illegal organ trafficking.

In the standard medical practice, there are two ways in which organs are generally extracted and donated to another person. These are cadaveric donation and living donation. In the former, an organ is extracted from a medically certified brain-dead patient and donated to the needy recipient, mostly those who are diagnosed with end-stage renal disease. In the latter, the same process is carried out on a healthy living person who willingly donates a part of his or her body. The living donation will be the main focus of our analysis. Living organ donation can take place in a variety of ways and contexts. We exclude those donations which are directed to our family members or a spouse since these types of donations could be explained through a different kind of altruism such as kin altruism. As Dawkins would say *'If an individual dies in order to save ten close relatives, one copy of the kin-altruism gene may be lost, but a larger number of copies of the same gene is saved'* (Dawkins, 2016 [1976], p. 116). So, if a sibling or a spouse donates a part of their body, they might be at a physical loss but since the donation will benefit someone who is closely associated with them, they would not entirely be at the losing end. Thus, we could say donations in closed circles are mostly motivated by psychological egoistic tendencies.

The other type of donation which can potentially be taken as a case in point for pure altruism is anonymous organ donation. Anonymous donation takes place between two strangers who had no previous interactions with each other. In such donation donors voluntarily decide to donate either a lobe of their organ or an entire organ such as a kidney to a recipient with whom they have never had a relationship. Although among all categories of living donation, anonymous donation might not be the most prevalent one but still it needs to be informed that a lot of donors have donated their organs through this procedure, and also lot

many constantly keep showing their interest in becoming one such donor. Anonymous organ donation is also known by other labels such as non-directed donation or good Samaritan donation (Landolt, et al., 2001; Henderson, et al., 2003; Morrissey, et al., 2005; Living Non-Directed Organ Donation, 2015). Having said this, we can perhaps compare and analyze the contents of pure altruism and anonymous organ donation as— an *idea* on one hand and a *practice* on the other that closely resemble each other. Thus, the discussion maintains the view that non-directed organ donation to a stranger is pure altruism in practice.

We can verify the validity of this proposition by going through the above two conditions which are required for an act to be considered pure altruism. The first condition states that *an act of goodwill has to be directed towards an individual other who is not oneself.* It is a given fact that we do not donate organs to ourselves, but always to an individual other who is in a dire medical condition. Among the many ways in which we practice other-regarding behavior organ donors goes to the extent of generously welcoming an invasion of sharp needles and scissors inside their body for the organs to be removed and given to somebody else. This is unlike other altruistic acts such as donating money or helping an old person cross the road. Although it does not mean to say that other such altruistic acts are not as valuable, it is just that in comparison, the altruism of organ donation incurs a permanent loss on the agent's physical well-being. Despite all the risks involved many donors donate their vital organs for the cause of the recipient's survival. We can conclude that all categories of donors qualify the criteria of the first condition.

The second condition states– *an act of goodwill should primarily be motivated by concern for the other, whose motive should, at the same time, be free of any ulterior objectives.* The second condition is strict. Here it is not just the directedness of an action that is under inquiry but also the nature of the motivation behind the action. In anonymous organ donation, we find that it is unlikely for the donor to be procuring any kind of personal benefit, except for

the knowledge perhaps that he or she has donated one's organ to someone for good. But that is hardly ever a tangible benefit worthy of judging as egoistic. Anonymous organ donor's action benefits neither the family members since the recipient is a stranger with whom no form of reciprocity can be established, nor the donor themselves, for they are left with one organ less post-surgery while leaving a permanent scar in their body let alone any greater benefit. A study also suggested that donors, once they have donated their organs, are at a greater risk of declining health than those who have never donated (Kiberd & Tennankore, 2017). Given the lack of any substantive advantage to the donor, the derivation that we can make from this situation is that it is an act of pure altruism, a peculiar yet an exemplary act of a very sublime kind.

Here, we could suspect the donor to be influenced by some sort of pathological or supernatural beliefs. In both cases, motivation behind the donation of an organ goes beyond the standard framework of how we perceive the world. For instance, donors influenced by pathological beliefs might hold irrational ideas like 'we have two kidneys because one has to be given away' or 'giving away one of my kidneys can make me a more confident person' and so on. On the other hand, some donors could be influenced by faulty supernatural reasons like– karma or reward in heaven. However, these assumptions may not entirely apply to pure altruists. In a study, Henderson et al (2003) assessed the psychosocial makeup of the volunteers who displayed keenness toward becoming anonymous donors. Based on the results of their initial psychological tests they categorized the participants into two groups – potential living anonymous donor LADs who met *'an appropriate standard of well-being, and were found to be suitable and committed candidates'* (Henderson, et al., 2003, p. 205), and non-LADs who could not qualify for these standards. They found that potential LADs' motivation to show interest in anonymous donation was much more devoid of ulterior motives than the non-LADs. Non-LADs on the other hand were found to be more engrossed in the self-benefit approach

that can further their positions in the world, both socially and existentially such as to increase one's self-esteem or anticipate some sort of karmic benefits, etc. It was visibly found that potential LADs were significantly mindful of their internal whims as compared to their non-LADs counterparts. They made it as clear as possible that the motivation behind their readiness to donate to strangers were not influenced by pathological desires but rather were genuinely motivated by a selfless tendency to do for the 'other'. This study throws light into the hidden supposition that could miss our external judgement.

A different approach through which we may question the purity of an organ donor's action is by considering the possibility that the donor experiences a 'warm glow' upon donating their organs. The concept of warm glow suggests that when individuals engage in selfless or extrinsically costly actions, they derive internal pleasure from the sense of accomplishment of that action.[11] We have already discussed that the donor, at the time of their action, benefits neither their friends nor close family members, nor themselves. Since the cost they bear is substantial, we have dispelled many egoistic suppositions at this stage. If the question of 'warm glow' persists, I would argue that it arises only as a consequence, not as an intention per se. Although we lack empirical studies to support this supposition, my argument rests on distinguishing between the intention behind an action and its consequences. As we have stipulated in our second condition that an act of goodwill should primarily be motivated by concern for the other without ulterior intentions so considering this condition and the enduring loss of well-being experienced by the donor, it can be asserted that donors do not act out of a motivation for 'warm glow'. And even if donors experience any semblance of warm glow, it would only be a byproduct of the action, not the primary goal that they are motivated by. Hence,

[11] https://thedecisionlab.com/reference-guide/psychology/warm-glow-giving

the proposition does not outrightly dismiss the possible experience of warm-glow feelings, but rebuts the way it comes to pass.

Therefore, if we consider anonymous organ donors as meeting the criteria of the two given conditions, we might also conclude that pure altruism is realized by them.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I tried to show that the universal generalization of human motive as always egoistic is not correct. In many contexts, people act in manners where the point of view is completely towards the other person with no intention to incur benefit to oneself. I introduced the example of anonymous organ donation to substantiate my point. I found anonymous organ donors to be agents who autonomously took care of both the consequence and the motive when administering their life-saving acts, thereby reinforcing the hypothesis that pure altruism can also exist.

This is not to say that all human actions are purely altruistic. This chapter does not commit to the view that human beings are never egoistic and never act in an egotistical manner. In many cases, we see that we act selfishly more explicitly than we act selflessly. The primary point of contention is concerning the notion that we *always* act selfishly, the idea of which this section has attempted to invalidate. We are creatures of a diverse set of behaviors. Psychological egoism need not be the ultimate reduction of all of our behaviors, at the same time it is also not the case that all individuals are capable of performing extraordinary rescue activities or donating one's organ to a stranger. Many are even hesitant to donate their organs to their loved ones even if the person's organ exactly matches the requirement of the patient. These factors do go on to prove that we are probably leaning mostly towards the selfish side of our personality. But to put it differently–may be more than our selfishness it has to do with our

limitations as humans. Regardless of the different causes behind our actions we can see that moral exemplars such as those that have been discussed above have a critical role to play in the community. Since most individuals are incapable of identifying the right set of moral actions (let alone altruistic actions) such exemplars can become the bridge that can connect the masses to the ideal of altruism by inspiring them practically into taking actions wherever appropriate, without subjecting themselves to the allegation of egoism.

In the next chapter, I will move from the applied discussion on altruism to the spiritual discussion of the nature of the ultimate self. The Vedantic notion of 'jivanmukti' delves deep into the discourse of self and liberation which carries significant implications for our assessment of altruism and egoism.

Chapter VI: Some thoughts on *passive altruism*: cues from the idea of 'jivanmukti'

6.1 Introduction

The psychological egoism and altruism debate shall exist only when there is the duality of the 'self' and the 'other'. But does this duality of self and the other always exists? If not so then actions performed by the agent will always be for the benefit of the other. I shall explore if such a position is possible and for this, I take a cue from Indian philosophical literature called *Jivanmukti*. The notion of Jivanmukti was brought to light in the ancient Indian philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, but the traces of its idea were available in various older Indian texts such as the Upanishads, Brahma sutra, and the Bhagavad-Gita (Vidyaranya, 2022; Easwaran, 1996). It is the idea that a person can attain liberation while living as opposed to liberation after death which is traditionally known as *videhamukti* (Fort, 1991; Vachatimanont, 2005; Anderson, 2012). A jivanmukta is someone who has successfully attained their liberation. They are someone who has become desireless and has ultimately detached oneself from the body (while still living in it). They have dissolved the duality between the 'I' and 'other'. Identification of oneself with the ego is not real for jivanmuktas for they have realized the oneness of self (atman) with the ultimate reality (brahman). The knower of this realization knows that one singular brahman subsists in every single atman and vice versa. This is akin to the realization that limbs are not separate from the body but are a part of it. Extension of this idea to the social domain is the realization that in all 'I' there is 'we' and similarly in all 'we' there is 'I'. This unity is accessible to the aspirant who has attained this *mukti* in their ongoing life.

Given these characteristics we can perhaps inquire whether jivanmukti provides alternative perspective to the idea of egoism. While psychological egoism deliberates on the common human experiences, perspective brought out through spiritual experiences may differ.

Although the relation between the two is not exactly clear it could be a fruitful endeavor to explore how much do their ideas inform each other, or rather oppose one another. In this chapter it will be asserted that jivanmukti cannot be subjected to the framework of egoism (Anderson, 2012). Rather it can be established as a metaphysical counter-position against it. The nature of jivanmukti promotes a subtle form of holistic consciousness. The knower becomes aware of the oneness of the universe. Since the realization of oneness with *brahman* is not by itself an active form of altruism it can be understood as a kind of passive altruism. It is passive because, unlike the ordinary practice of altruism where there is an actor-recipient relationship, a jivanmukta performs altruism without the duality of subject and object. Their altruism is a manifestation of consciously being in the world where the self realizes its oneness with Brahman.

6.2 Is jivanmukti selfish? Or is (psychological) egoism invalid?

Even though it appears universal and obvious, egoism needs to substantiate its theory. For it is not so straightforward a situation that we can just explain away all motives as egocentric and self-interested. There have been many instances when people faced critical circumstances where their ego did not respond but rather their absence of it did (Oliner & Oliner, 1988). Moreover, what makes (psychological) egoism most vulnerable to becoming an invalid thesis is the tautology that is in association with it. Its tautology is explained by the fact that all of our actions—not just some of them—are selfish in nature.

Turning our focus now to a different place let us inquire if jivanmukti (liberation while living) commits egoism. Consequentially we can also explore if jivanmukti entails any threat to the validity of egoism. As explicated above jivanmukti is a state where the liberated aspirants (jivanmukta) realize their oneness with that of the brahman (ultimate reality). Jivanmukta

attains a level of consciousness that exalts them beyond ordinary perception. In this stage, the self (atman) dissolves into the vastness of ultimate reality (brahman), free from bondage (samsara), while still living in the world amongst common people.

By taking egoism for granted, putting aside some of its philosophical issues, we can question: Is not the aspirant's desire to attain jivanmukti egoistic? After all the aspirant is *desiring* something here, i.e., mukti (liberation). Irrespective of what the desirer is desiring to attain, a desire is still a desire. And this leads us to the judgement that perhaps the nature of jivanmukti is also selfish.

Although the temptation is strong to settle for the conclusion that jivanmukta (aspirant) is motivated by egoism (since they are overpowered by the desire to attain liberation) it might not entirely be valid. Firstly, this insinuation cannot be made because irrespective of the way a jivanmukta tries to attain this stage the very *end* of the procedure is to desensitize the desire itself. For once the desire for worldly pleasures is removed from within oneself, and is realized as nothing more than the creation of momentary fluctuations the self becomes completely free of any form of egoism. We refer to jivanmukta as the one who has attained the realized state. It doesn't refer to a person who is aspiring for liberation. That being is emancipated at that stage, floating in the equilibrium of blissfulness, unmoved by the noise of the world.

> *Possessing the highest knowledge, such a person is deprived of any preferences, indifferent to the things of the material world and "does not see the difference between a lump of clay and a piece of gold" …. ….. In his mind, the distinctions between the pure and impure, sacred and profane, sublime and insignificant disappear* (Pakhomov, 2019, p. 2043).

Secondly, jivanmukta disjuncts themselves from committing egoism because their self (atman) has become one with the ultimate reality (brahman). In this stage, the ego has dissolved into

the unchanging brahman. And the apparent separation between one's self from the world has ultimately been realized as only a product of ignorance (avidya). Knowing that ignorance creates this duality between self and the world (self and other) one now knows that every action that one will perform will be inclusive of all beings (jivas) in this world, and all beings will be inclusive of oneself. This is the consequence of the dissolution of ego into the higher reality. Contrary to videhamukti (which is the notion that absolute liberation only comes once we leave this world at the time of our death) jivanmukti pronounces that this realization is possible while we are still living in the body. An enlightened self can see beyond the duality of ego and the world, and perceive the interconnectedness between all atmans under one brahman, without having to first die to experience it.

> *Briefly, Sankara argues that liberation arises from knowledge of brahman/atman identity; it does not come from, and is not the same as, the fall of the body or even becoming immortal in heaven. The highest knowledge is that you are the self, not a body/mind entity; in fact, belief in the body's reality causes (re)embodiment and ending identification of body and self brings liberation. Since one achieves knowledge while embodied, one can (actually, must) become liberated while living* (Fort, 1991, p. 369).

Since egoism has described all human activity as motivated by selfish desire, where ego plays the primary role, it contradicts with the nature of jivanmukti. An egoist sees the world in a solipsistic manner. This way of seeing the world presupposes an existing duality between the self and the other beyond which no egoist can break through. Unlike the outlook of an egoist, a jivanmukta perceives the world, rather exists in the world, in such a way that their egoism submerges into oneness amongst other individuals under the supreme reality of brahman. This removes the element of selfishness in the conduct of a person who is in the state of jivanmukti. On the contrary, egoism blatantly extends the idea of selfishness as a universal property to all individuals.

Since, the logical rule states that for any tautological proposition, for it to become invalid, one instance of falsity is enough, so we can infer that egoism is falsified by the same rule. For example, if we assume the truth value of the proposition: 'All chairs are four-legged' as valid then it would not be long enough until a chair made up of three legs (or five or six legs) will invalidate the universality of this proposition. In our case here universality of egoism is invalidated by the fact that among the sections of 'all individuals' there is a section of individuals particularly jivanmuktas who have dissolved the existence of ego from oneself. Hence, the dissolution of the ego under the supreme reality of brahman (where all things become one) indicates that the proposition of (psychological) egoism is invalid. Although it needs to be stated that it will not be valid to say that individuals never act selfishly, for many do act. Selfishness and egoism are not non-existent; they just are not tautologically existent. In other words, selfishness exists but they do not exist as a universal reality.

6.3 Jivanmukti as passive altruism

Altruism is a concept that explains the selfless and charitable behavior performed for the well-being of others. A person can be called altruistic if he or she performs solely for the benefit of someone else. Furthermore, we can say that altruism, and different types of altruistic actions, can be classified under different categories. Selfless actions which are performed with the intention to benefit oneself can be called rational or enlightened altruism. Whereas selfless actions which are performed entirely for someone else's welfare can perhaps be called genuine or pure altruism. Similarly, we can also say, to a different degree, that those actions which bring altruism as a consequence or an outcome are unintentional altruism. Whereas those actions which are explicitly performed to produce altruism can be called intentional or pure

altruism. We will not be wrong to bring out other different categories of altruism that exist in such binary fashion.

Given the features of jivanmukti, one particular classification that might fit its characteristics is passive altruism. This is a conceptual substitution for active altruism. Although the word 'passive' rings a regressive tone in our ears it should not be taken to mean a radically different kind than an active form of altruism. The passive here is applied simply with respect to the view that there is no presence of subject-object distinction in the altruism of a jivanmukta. The enlightened one honors the value of altruism and brings it into the light by being at rest with brahman. This entails the evocation of goodwill and compassion amongst all sentient as well as non-sentient beings. Once an aspirant attains this state of jivanmukti their remaining days in the temporal existence of their body are dedicated to bring forth the same enlightenment to other sentient beings so that they can also free themselves from the momentary illusions of this life while living. On the other hand, an active altruist, who although performs selfless behavior, performs in a manner where the giver-receiver relationship is explicitly present. Here the giver knows that he or she is a self (who is situated in a point) in relation to a receiver who is situated in some other point, and all points have their own autonomous reality. Hence, the *active* nature of altruism is visible in an altruistic exchange between normal individuals.

The same analogy, when applied in the context of an enlightened jivanmukta, tends to break apart because here the giver-receiver relation is only a visible phenomenon. In reality, everyone is under one supreme being and separation is only an illusion. The way the appearance of snake in a rope is not a reality but a momentary illusion that is produced because of the illumination of the object under a dimly burning light. An enlightened one reaches out to their own true self when they reach out to others. And just as they reach out to their own true self when they reach out to others they equally reach out to others when they reach out to

themselves. Therefore, it is a passive, mindful form of altruism that promotes peace and that only those who have attained enlightenment inwardly confess to the world. Zwick and Fletcher (2014) outlined a hierarchical model of eight types of altruism which extends in an upward spiral from the most basic biological realm to the more complex sociocultural realm. At the pinnacle of their model, as something that is of the highest kind, they put 'BEING ALTRUISM' which goes beyond all other levels of altruism. Although they do not discredit the functionality of altruism at other levels, they consider them as types that are limited by boundaries. BEING ALTRUISM is very similar to the nature of the being of a jivanmukta: "The possibility of an 'I-Thou' relationship …. extends beyond life. It may be that species, sentience, and life altruisms must be rooted also from above in such being altruism" (Zwick & fletcher, 2014, p. 105). Enlightenment is not experienced when we disappear permanently but when we are well-equipped with tools to differentiate between illusion and reality while being present. These same tools prepare us with the capacity to bring forth passive altruism into the world. A kind that extends beyond life, and is energized by the union between self and the world. This altruism crosses the interpersonal borders of human existence through the depths of silence.

6.4 Conclusion

I looked at the philosophy of egoism and attempted to disprove the notion of (psychological) egoism which predicts that we always act selfishly. Since a tautological proposition is invalidated if one contrary evidence is found against it so egoism can be disproved by the evidence found in the literature of jivanmukti. Although the essay did not touch upon the other two types of egoism it can be insisted that jivanmukti poses a theoretical challenge for both ethical egoism and rational egoism also. For, egoism can only be ethical if the condition for enlightenment requires that we include the existence of others too in our being. Similarly, it

cannot be considered reasonable to say that a self-preferential attitude is better than an other-regarding attitude. A higher perspective makes us realize that it is not a question of preferring oneself over others but perceiving every other as one. The value of altruism is embodied in an enlightened person's state of being. A focused mind of a jivanmukta, who has dissolved the borders of one's identity and self, acts as altruistically as an ordinary altruist who consciously helps an old man cross the street or generously donates to a charity. This is a departure from the standard way in which altruism is apprehended. Because in the case of jivanmukti, there is no visible causation between the act of an altruist and the recipient. Hence, the presence of altruism in the philosophy of jivanmukti could perhaps also be doubted as having any true sense. But until such propositions are made entirely valid and external it is probably safe to draw a close parallel between jivanmukti and altruism.

This chapter has been an attempt to step out from the standard methodology (i.e. pragmatism) that was employed in the preceding chapters of this thesis to something more spiritual. The versatile ideal of altruism is ever-present in different areas of inquiry and some approaches require an honorable mention. Hence, this chapter particularly was motivated by the goal of diversifying the critique that can be generated against egoism.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

I delved into the concept of altruism, exploring its definition, philosophical debates, and implications within morality. The discussion emphasized the importance of intention in defining genuine altruism. The text scrutinized differing viewpoints across disciplines and philosophical standpoints. The narrative contrasted altruism with egoism, wherein actions stem from self-interest. Philosophers like Hobbes and Plato weighed in on this debate, while Kropotkin challenged the assumption that altruism is unnatural by highlighting cooperation in nature. The interplay between reason and intuition in moral judgment was explored through Hume and Kant's perspectives. While Hume emphasized emotions and passions as primary, Kant contended that reason and universal principles are essential. The introduction raised questions about the essence and significance of altruism, leading to the creation of an approach that can help us comprehensively understand this complex moral concept.

In chapter 2 ‘Normative Ethics and Altruism’ I discussed various normative moral theories. In this chapter, I have examined categorical imperative, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, and Humean/Smithian sentimental thesis to explore their perspectives on altruism. In categorical imperative, moral duty is treated as an absolute command, but altruism is not explicitly stated as a requirement. Altruistic actions can occur while violating absolute moral laws. Utilitarianism, a consequentialist theory, focuses on maximizing overall well-being by aiding the largest number of people. Although it succeeds in diversifying recipients, the theory might reduce intimacy and proximal bonds among individuals due to its impartial approach. Virtue ethics emphasizes the development of a person's intellectual and moral character. Altruism, in this framework, is connected to the motivation for personal improvement and self-respect, as individuals strive to cultivate virtues. Hence, it is a self-oriented approach. In Humean/Smithian Sentimental Thesis altruism revolves around empathy and sentiments.

Empathy leads to altruistic actions, but there are limitations based on familiarity. It is easier to empathize and act altruistically toward those who are more familiar, like immediate family or acquaintances. I concluded that altruism is not exclusively required by any major moral theory. Normative theories aim for objectivity, equity, and common good, while altruism operates more autonomously. The willingness of an agent plays a pivotal role in determining the nature of altruism. Different moral theories approach altruism differently and each theory's unique characteristics influence the extent and nature of altruistic actions limitedly.

In chapter 3 ‘Altruism and Egoism: A Possible Conjunction?’ I delve into the intricate complexities that arise when attempting to classify human actions within the rigid boundaries of altruism and egoism. These seemingly straightforward categories often fail to encapsulate the nuanced nature of our behaviors. Many actions that we instinctively label as altruistic may, upon closer inspection, reveal underlying motives that challenge their classification. Take, for instance, the act of donating to a charitable cause. On the surface, this act seems altruistic, driven by a genuine desire to help others. However, when we consider factors such as personal recognition, social status, or even tax deductions, the line between selflessness and self-interest becomes blurred. This prompts us to question whether such actions are truly altruistic or if they are subtly driven by egoistic incentives. Conversely, actions that are often categorized as egoistic might possess hidden layers of altruistic intent. Consider the pursuit of a fulfilling career. While this endeavour may seem driven by personal ambition and success, it could also be fuelled by a genuine desire to contribute positively to society, provide for one's family, or inspire others to follow their passions. In this light, what appears as egoism might actually carry significant altruistic implications. The chapter challenges the dichotomy of altruism and egoism, highlighting the inherent difficulties in neatly classifying human actions. It encourages readers to view these concepts as fluid rather than fixed, acknowledging the intricate interplay of motives and the impact of context. By embracing this more holistic perspective, we gain a

deeper understanding of the complexities that underlie our behaviors, ultimately enriching our comprehension of human nature.

In chapter 4 ‘Evolution, Psychology, and Altruism’ I continued my exploration of altruism within evolutionary sciences, anthropology, and biology, highlighting the interconnectedness of these perspectives. By analyzing altruism through multiple lenses, we can derive valuable insights into the nature of morality and its broader significance. In the realm of evolutionary sciences, altruism presents an intriguing paradox. Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection suggests that organisms are driven by the desire to propagate their own genes. However, instances of altruistic behavior, where an individual sacrifices its own well-being for the benefit of others, challenge this concept. Researchers have proposed explanations such as inclusive fitness and kin selection to account for the emergence of altruism. Inclusive fitness theory posits that individuals may help close relatives to enhance the survival of shared genes. This idea aligns with the notion that altruism can be understood as a mechanism to ensure the preservation of genetic lineage. However, Anthropological studies reveal that altruism has played a significant role in shaping human societies. From hunter-gatherer communities to complex civilizations, acts of altruism are evident in various cultural contexts. Altruistic behavior can strengthen social bonds, enhance cooperation, and contribute to the overall stability of communities. Cultural norms and social structures often encourage altruism, as it fosters reciprocal relationships and contributes to the well-being of the group. Anthropological perspectives provide insights into how altruism has been integrated into human cultures and societies as a means of promoting harmony and cooperation. At the biological level, altruism can be observed not only in humans but also in various animal species. The study of animal behavior has revealed instances of altruistic acts, where individuals assist others without an immediate personal benefit. These behaviors raise questions about the evolutionary origins of altruism and whether similar mechanisms to those proposed for humans are at play in the

animal kingdom. Research in this field explores the ecological and genetic factors that influence altruistic behavior in different species, shedding light on the broader evolutionary implications of such behaviors. I also examined the intricate subject of altruism within the realm of psychology. I highlighted some extensive research conducted over the past few decades, exploring how individuals respond to situations demanding prosocial behavior.

To understand altruism within its natural and historical context, Philip Kitcher's pragmatic naturalism provides a valuable framework. This methodology encourages an interdisciplinary approach that combines empirical research, historical analysis, and philosophical inquiry. By examining the evolutionary foundations of altruism, its cultural significance, and the moral implications it carries, Kitcher's approach facilitates a nuanced understanding of morality as a product of both natural processes and cultural developments. The exploration of altruism across evolutionary sciences, anthropology, and biology highlights the complexity and universality of this phenomenon. This chapter synthesized these diverse perspectives and used Philip Kitcher's pragmatic naturalism as a lens to understand altruism's role in shaping human nature and morality.

In chapter 5 ‘Altruistic Moral Exemplars: Pure Altruism Versus Psychological Egoism’ I delved into the concept of pure altruism and explored the pivotal role that moral exemplars play in substantiating its existence. My primary focus revolved around the paradigm of organ donation, a profound exemplar of altruistic behavior. The central contention of my discourse was a systematic rebuttal of psychological egoism—an ideological premise suggesting that all our actions, irrespective of their seemingly altruistic nature, inherently stem from self-serving motives. To substantiate my argument against psychological egoism, I analyzed the realm of anonymous organ donation—an act that exemplifies the epitome of altruism. I commenced by establishing two fundamental conditions requisite for an act to be deemed as pure altruism: firstly, the beneficent gesture must be directed towards a distinct recipient other than myself;

secondly, the motivating force behind this benevolence should be an authentic concern for the well-being of the recipient, devoid of any veiled ulterior incentives. Through an incisive examination, I asserted that anonymous organ donation impeccably aligns with these stringent conditions for pure altruism. By underscoring the exceptional deeds of moral exemplars who engage in anonymous organ donation, I demonstrated the inherent contradiction that this phenomenon poses to the notion of psychological egoism. These remarkable individuals selflessly relinquish their own well-functioning organs, not driven by personal gain or acclaim, but by an unequivocal desire to alleviate the suffering of another. The extraordinary actions of these self-effacing moral paragons significantly bolster the hypothesis of altruism that stands diametrically opposed to the egoistic underpinnings of psychological egoism. In essence, this chapter served to provide a comprehensive explication of the concept of pure altruism, fortified by a contextualized analysis of anonymous organ donation and the exemplary individuals who embody this altruistic spirit.

In chapter 6 'Some thoughts on *passive altruism*: cues from the idea of "jivanmukti"' I focused on the philosophical notion of 'jivanmukti' rooted in Indian thought. This intricate concept denotes a state of profound enlightenment, characterized by the dissolution of boundaries between self and others. Within this enlightened state, the conventional understanding of the self is overshadowed by a more expansive reality, and the ego is recognized as a deceptive illusion. It is within this intricate framework that the chapter extended its exploration, suggesting that jivanmukti not only pertains to a transformation in the individual's perception of self and reality but also provides a fertile ground for the germination of a unique brand of altruism – one that can be aptly described as passive in nature. This intriguing notion of altruism springs forth from the vantage point of an individual who has attained the exalted status of a 'jivanmukta'. This term encapsulates an aspirant who has scaled

the pinnacles of enlightenment, and in doing so, has unfurled a panoramic perspective of existence characterized by interconnectedness.

In essence, the altruism that flourishes within the paradigm of jivanmukti is an extension of the enlightened individual's own experiential reality. Their internal transformation fosters an intuitive inclination towards the welfare of others, for they see others not as distinct entities, but as integral expressions of the same unified cosmic tapestry. Therefore, the passive altruism that emanates from a jivanmukta is not merely an action; it is an expression of the profound wisdom that arises when one transcends the confines of the egoic self and merges with the boundless expanse of interconnected existence.

In the thesis I explored altruism and its relative concepts from a philosophically holistic perspective by carrying out a plural analysis of altruism across different domains. The research takes a slightly different turn from the standard approach in moral philosophy where the focus is primarily concentrated on the analytical notion of the *objectivity* and the question of the 'ought'. I do this by going beyond the analytical tradition and incorporating a multi-disciplinary and empirical evaluation of the topic. My research also provides a panoramic understanding of the idea of 'selflessness' by revealing the nuances that are involved in any simple act of giving. My overall aim of the thesis is to support and argue for altruism. Additionally, the fact also remains that greater amount of good can be brought into this world if altruism can be practiced by each one of us than if egoism were to become the primary law of our society. This in itself is one good reason to promote altruism in whatever shape or form it may come. Hence, my research intends to contribute to an understanding of practical and applied ethics which is selfless and prosocial in nature. Since, altruism is such a fluid and charitable concept its applications can be realized across different domains of research in the field of ethics and social policies.

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