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# REFUTATION OF ALTRUISM DEMONSTRATED IN GEOMETRIC ORDER

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## Definitions

1. By **Conception** and **Definition**, I mean the same thing, i.e. the basic quality in so far it describes or tries to describe the essence of something.
2. I Define **Credit** as the necessary praise or blame that we “attribute” (or is “attributed”) to a cause because of the benefit or harm which that cause provides to us.
3. By **Will**, I mean nothing but the subsequent effect of the Credit, which necessarily causes a specific action.
4. That action of the Will is called an **Attempt** or **Volition**, which is an inevitable consequence of the Will, i.e. which if follows, follows necessarily and only from Will.

(Explanation- The Will to do anything arises ultimately from a self-Credit or a Credit attributed by someone to us. For it is clear from the Definition of Credit that unless we don't praise or blame ourselves (pre)consciously or the (external) cause leading to this effect, it is not feasible that a person may react (Attempt) or act. Therefore, the Will which is the reason for our actions is actually a necessary result of the Credit and nothing else. Further, the word “attribute” above is used with a caution, for at the face of it seems that we are voluntary Crediting or choosing ourselves as if we are free; however as Spinoza (1632-77) says “.. *(Man) thinks himself free because he is conscious of his wishes and appetites, whilst at the same time he is ignorant of the causes by which he is led to wish and desire, not dreaming what they are.*”<sup>1</sup> As he somewhere else explains that if a stone could think, then while receiving an external cause it would be impelled to a certain quantity of motion, and afterwards necessarily will continue to move even

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<sup>1</sup> Spinoza. Ethics Part 1, Appendix. 1677

when the impact of the external cause has ceased. But in so far it is conscious of this motion; it would wrongly think that it is moving freely.<sup>2</sup>)

**Note.** There may be few readers who due to certain reasons or due to their own criteria may stick to the definition of the will, which is generally defined by the philosophers (obviously if at all they consider my Definition of Will or Volition to be in disparity with the meaning of the same), or assume the Definition of the Credit disassociated with the Definition of the Will, or even may invent a discrete concept and define it to be as Volition. However, if they go by any other definition of the will, where my Definition may be in some ways slightly variant by their own standpoint, then they may not confuse these two definitions either, for if according to them the meaning of their and the given concept differs and if they are right in comprehending this distinction, then it should be clear to them that the two concepts are not alike by nature. If they Attempt to establish a disassociation of Volition with the Definition of Credit in order to make Volition least dependent, then I have already defined that the Will is dependent on Credit. Lastly, if they have framed a new Conception of the will, then as I have already said just now, the two concepts are simply unlike in nature and thus shall not be confused merely because the word '*Will*' that is used here is the same as that of the word used by them for their own novel concept. Therefore, I have sufficiently tried to clear the decks and the related ambiguities that may arise due to the Conception of the Credit, Will and the like, and hope that at least no doubt or trouble remain regarding the term Will and Volition.

5. By **Living thing**, I mean a thing possessing the ability of Attempt, and likewise a **Dead thing** does not possess this ability.

(Explanation- Living things are distinct from Dead things in so far they Attempt, or have the ability of Attempt. Such things as far as they Attempt and act or possess this ability are said to be living, and the duration of their living is called **Life**.)

**Note.** In the above Definition, by Living thing I generally mean a Human being. My argument is neutral over the empirical question

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<sup>2</sup> Spinoza. Letter to G.H. Schaller. 1674

whether other animate entities including higher primates can be placed on the human side of the *Homo sapiens* or not. If it turns out that some of them such as Orangutans are more human like than what they are presently supposed to be, this new discovery would not alter the broad outlines of my argument.

6. I Define **Acceptance**, a Volitional act of agreeing, believing or apprehending something as valid or correct, i.e. to regard something as agreeable or at least neutral. This Acceptance, if seriously adopted can also be regarded as Life, a sensible form of passionless love.

### **Spinoza's Definition of *Good***

1. By *good*, I understand that which we certainly know is useful to us.<sup>3</sup>

### **Axioms**

1. A thing is either Living or Dead.
2. A thing cannot be opposite of what it is.

**Proposition 1. The nature of Living things is such that it Attempts and acts only for its self-preservation or for whatever is Acceptable directly for their *good*.**

Demonstration. Acceptance is nothing but a Volitional act of regarding something as agreeable or neutral (per Definition 6), where something as agreeable and Acceptable has to be *good*, which at least will not be against itself (per Axiom 2). And since Living things ought to be ethical and *good* for themselves and for other things (as is self-evident). Therefore, Living things Attempts for self-preservation and for whatever is directly *good* for them. - Q.E.D.

**Proposition 2. If Living things Attempts for the *good* of other (Living or Dead) things, then this is only possible when they themselves Accept that this *good* to other things will benefit them at least indirectly.**

Demonstration. If within an aspect we regard something as *good*, then that good is good, whether received directly or indirectly (as is self-evident).

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<sup>3</sup> Spinoza. *Ethics*, Part 4, Definition 1



And by the nature of Definition (per Definition 1), if something within an aspect is called good, then this good within that same aspect will not be evil (i.e. its contrary), even if it is received indirectly (per Axiom 2). And since Living things Attempt or act only for their self-preservation and benefits (per Proposition 1), they will act to benefit other things as far as they will benefit by helping them at least indirectly. - Q.E.D.

**Lemma. If a change of a Living thing into a Dead thing takes place, then the change is not freely caused by the Living thing itself.**

Demonstration. This proposition is self-evident, for the Definition of Living things (or anything) affirms and does not deny any concept that belongs to that thing, i.e. it describes or tries to describe the essence of the thing and does not negate it (per Definition 1). Now a Living thing has the ability to Attempt (per Definition 5), but a Dead thing does not have this ability and since a thing can either be Living or Dead (per Axiom 1), a Dead thing is simply a negation of a Living thing. Thus in so far we simply consider a Living thing, we find in it nothing which can make it disable of its own quality or ability, but only due to a cause other than itself. Therefore, if a change of a Living thing, etc. - Q.E.D.

**Corollary. It follows therefore that transformation of something from Living to Dead and vice versa can never be a free or self-determining cause, but only a dependent or an external cause.**

Demonstration. This corollary can be demonstrated in the same way as its proposition is demonstrated.

**Proposition 3. The nature of Attempt of Living things is such that it acts only to retain their own nature or to prevent them from getting transformed into Dead things.**

Demonstration. The nature of Living things is such that they Attempt and act only for its self-preservation or for whatever is Acceptable directly for their *good* (per Proposition 1). And since if a change of a Living thing into a Dead thing takes place, then the change is not freely caused by the Living thing itself (per Lemma), but is due to an external cause (per Lemma, Corollary). Therefore, the nature of Attempt of Living things is such that it acts only to retain their own nature or to prevent them from getting transformed into Dead things. - Q.E.D.

**Note.** In the above propositions, I have Attempted to demonstrate the particular nature of Living things, which we call **Selfishness**, where I define it as an Attempt to get something that is essential or important for Living things for their self preservation and benefit. In fact, all the actions, even the simplest and ignorant ones like locomotion, breathing, food production and consumption et cetera are all due to selfishness only, and the fundamental reason behind this selfishness up to quite an extent is the self-preservation or to evade the death. It is an outlook governed by every Living thing in life. And what conventional moralists define as Altruism is nothing but a form of an indirect selfishness as described in Proposition 2 and about which I comment below.

When we or Living things consider and fulfil their deed, it is called Selfishness or Direct Selfishness, which for the world and especially for a traditional moralist will be considered to be unethical. However, it is the basic nature which is generally noticed everywhere. The other form of selfishness is **Altruism** or Indirect Selfishness (also generally known as Selflessness). This selfishness is the result of the deed that you perform for others wilfully, such as mercy, sympathy, pity, help, sacrifice etc. Such deeds provide you with internal satisfaction and nothing else is returned directly. For when we benefit others or behave altruistically, we actually receive an internal peace and satisfaction where although some other Living thing benefits, still you are relieved and profited indirectly. Even if someone puts his life at stake for someone else's benefit (or may be life), then he can take this extreme step only because the idea of sacrificing his life is more pleasurable than the fear of death, and likewise this situation can only arise when that person starts identifying himself with the other, i.e. when there is no distinction left between the self and the other. An individual cannot be purely altruistic, for what he Credits and consequently Wills is not due to him, but as we have already demonstrated, is due to reasons external to him<sup>4</sup> and due to one's self preservation<sup>5</sup>.

To simplify the case further let's take the example of a mother's response towards her child. Mother without any direct selfishness seeks to benefit her child, which however is Acceptable and plain indeed. However, when her

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<sup>4</sup> See Spinoza. *Ethics*, Part 2, Proposition 48

<sup>5</sup> See Spinoza. *Ethics*, Part 3, Proposition 6

child benefits and receives on what is considered as *good*, then mother indirectly receive a sense of satisfaction and relief in return. She does not get any benefit directly, yet gains internal profit and good indirectly, which is nothing but altruism. Further, let's take the the case of soldier, a soldier's duty is non-altruistic because though his love is for his country and out of patriotism and this decision of his that comes to martyr himself for the nation comes from his own, i.e. causes which leads him to Credit himself to Will to be a soldier. And likewise this idea of serving for military gives him pleasure and this pleasure is not an ordinary pleasure but in fact something which could be greater than his life. Now apparently it seems that a soldier gains nothing out of it, as he dies, but it is interesting to note here that before he dies if he dies, he rejoice the fact that he is ready to die for his nation. Now is the nation actually separate from his identity? Moralists define Selflessness or Altruism as a complete unselfish concern for others, whereby leading to no personal benefit for the person who helps. But if we scrutinise we easily can see that this Definition is confusing, for a person even though if he claims to be an altruist is never in pain when he Wills to help someone. And even though he may feel pain later, but this pain will not be pain for him in so far he considers the idea of helping pleasurable, and this idea of pleasure could be far more greater than the pain he may receive later, even death. The pleasure may be of prestige, honour, or to raise his self-esteem etc. And as I pointed above, the main reason why someone can do such a deed is only when he doesn't see any disparity between himself and the object he helps. So this identification of self with others in fact makes them to help not any other person but themselves. Thus, happiness of someone is in fact happiness of ours. So in this way a person is selfish, for he is now concerned with happiness of self only. And ergo whether direct or indirect, only selfishness follows.

Thus I have explained and demonstrated the attributes of Attempt especially that Living things Attempt for what benefits them and if they act in such a way so as to benefit other things, then they themselves gain an indirect return of happiness. And further, all these Attempts have a prime goal to prevent them from becoming Dead things, whereby not to lose this attribute as long as they can. This is why I have not defined Altruism (among above Definitions), as it cannot be essentially defined. Thus, Selfishness and Altruism are same, and this shall be Accepted without any objections as it is an integral attribute of the Living things.