

Essay #2: Altruism or the Sources of Moral Judgment

Write an answer that addresses **one** of the following two sets of questions:

1. The Nature of Altruism

What conditions must an individual meet if she is to be properly credited with acting altruistically? Explain how Sober and Wilson answer this question and critically evaluate their answer. Describe and evaluate Batson's attempts to show that empathy causes altruism (so conceived). Does Batson succeed in showing that empathy causes altruism? Are there altruistic actions that have their source in something other than empathy? Once you have answered these questions conclude by putting Sober and Wilson's discussion of altruism in context: What role does altruism seem to play in shaping human interactions and maintaining families, communities and states over time? How strong a motivational force is altruism in comparison to perceived self-interest? What do the relative strengths of altruism and self-interest imply for economics and public policy?

2. Theories of Moral Judgment

Describe some of the experiments Haidt uses to argue that moral judgments are typically caused by cognitive impressions (or immediate emotional reactions) rather than reasoning (or the application of general principles). Do the experiments Haidt discusses successfully support the hypothesis that moral judgments are typically caused by intuitions rather than reasoning? What evidence would we need to justify this more general hypothesis? What role does disgust play in explaining our moral intuitions? What role is played by "pro-social" emotions like compassion? What role is played by reflection, perspective taking, and the kinds of reputational concerns Darwin incorporates into his analysis of "conscience"? Do Kennett and Fine successfully demonstrate that system 2 processes of reasoning and self-conscious control play a larger role in our moral lives than Haidt's account attributes to these processes?

5-6 pages double-spaced, normal font and margins (e.g. Word default settings Times 12 point).

Due February 26, 2020