

# On the Importance of Altruism, Prosocial Behavior and Christian Love in Behavioral Economics research

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## Abstract

The article discusses the concepts of altruism and prosocial behavior and their importance in interdisciplinary studies of behavioral economics. The basic theoretical models and concepts of altruism in Behavioral Economics are reviewed. Altruism is shown to be a hidden and complicated form of selfishness. In essence, altruism and prosociality are therefore not fundamentally different concepts: both are ultimately self-oriented. In the article, we take the Christian worldview and compare altruism with Christian love and discuss their differences and the importance of their theoretical and practical implications. We show that altruism and Christian love are not only diverse but contradictory concepts, which in our opinion is of great importance at least in terms of promoting a well-being of human society.

## Keywords:

Altruism, Prosocial Behavior, Christian Love, Christian Worldview, Evolutionary Worldview, Behavioral Economics.

## 1. Introduction

Reading the title of our article one might wonder what the notion of altruism, prosocial behavior, and Christian love has to do with science, and in particular with the field of economics. Or even, what do these concepts have to do with each other, and why do pay attention at all to these concepts? In our opinion, first of all, it is important to understand the true definitions of these concepts. A correct understanding of the concepts, I think, gains even more important as understanding the spirit of the evolutionary worldview behind today's interdisciplinary scientific research. The "mainstream" theoretical economy is having theoretical challenges and one of the solutions might lie in an interdisciplinary approach to these challenges (Papava 2018). Indeed, a large part of scientific research today is an interdisciplinary one, and if the twentieth century can be called the era of specialization within disciplines, the twenty-first century can boldly be called the era of interdisciplinary synthesis.

Evidence collected by experimental economic research led at least part of economists to "turn to humans" again and put on the agenda the need to revise the main assumptions of "mainstream" neoclassical economics (Camerer 2003, Colander 2005, Kahneman and Tversky 2013, Thaler and Ganser 2015, Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler 1991, Thaler and Sunstein 2009, Белянин 2017). However, "mainstream" theoretical economics still maintains a dominant position in both scientific research and economic education (Gintis et al. 2005, Renegade 2013). Some economists believe that combining economic science with other disciplines such as

sociology, biology, social psychology, anthropology, etc. will be able to study human behavior in a more fruitful way (Gintis et al. 2005, Van Dijk 2015). In addition to the above interdisciplinary synthesis, there are also attempts to synthesize science and theology, in which human altruism and prosocial behavior play an important role (Meisinger 2000).

Development of interdisciplinary studies of behavioral economics, altruism and prosociality gained special attention from researchers. One can question: How should modern science find common ground with theology when most of the leading scientists believe in evolutionary theory? (Clément 2015, Masci 2019). Why has altruism gained interest in the economic research of behavioral economics? What do prosocial behavior and altruism mean? How do altruism and Christian love relate to each other? And does it have any theoretical or practical significance to distinguish these two concepts?

To answer these questions, first of all, a brief overview of the essential aspects of the theoretical models of altruism in behavioral economics is required. After, I discuss the differences between the concepts of altruism and Christian love and the importance of their theoretical and practical implications.

## **2. Importance of altruism and prosocial behavior in behavioral economics research**

Since the 1970s, the interest of researchers in the social sciences, including economics, has shifted from the study of antisocial behavior to the study of prosocial behavioral (Bierhoff 2002, Batson 2012, Spinrad 2015, Eisenberg and Beilin 1982). Probably one of the reasons why prosocial behavior has become a subject of special research interest is that it is directly related to the fundamental issues of human nature, which have been the subject of philosophical judgment for centuries. Thinkers and scientists have faced, and still face, the following questions: What is human nature like? Is it good? Is man by nature selfish or altruistic? Can a person act with purely altruistic intentions or his behaviour is always accompanied by selfish motives? (Stürmer and Snyder 2010).

Introduction the encouraging mechanisms of altruism and prosocial behavior in society has also significant practical economic importance. Assuming we remain in the "mainstream" economics paradigm of selfish "Homo Economicus", there is no room left for altruism and prosocial behavior. In the society of such individuals, to reduce unethical and antisocial behavior, standard neoclassical economics indicates the need for sanctions, penalties, and similar economic policies, which in itself is associated with high costs (Gintis et al. 2005). In this way, combating opportunistic and antisocial behavior places a heavy tax burden on the economy. The maintenance of many state institutions (i.e. police, court, etc.) is associated with higher taxes, not to mention the economic costs incurred by bureaucratic and legal procedures. Society and economy dominated by prosocial behavior are much more efficient and state institutions bear much fewer costs to constrain antisocial behavior.

As psychology joined the field of economics, that eventually led to a critical revision of the main assumptions of the neoclassical, "mainstream" economy. Numerous economic experiments indicated on non-selfish nature of humans and its importance in economic behavior (Andreoni 1995, Camerer and Fehr 2004, Cameron 1999, Henrich et al. 2001, Fehr and Rockenbach 2003, Fehr, Kirchsteiger, and Riedl 1993, Andreoni, Harbaugh, and Vesterlund 2010, Falk,

Fehr, and Fischbacher 2008). In the interdisciplinary studies of behavioral economics, the cornerstone of the well-being of society has become the altruist type. In the study of prosocial behavior, altruism is of the main interest of research. This is not surprising, since initially prosocial behavior was equated with altruism, but later these two concepts were separated (Batson 2012, Batson and Powell 2003).

The experimental evidence on human altruistic behavior has become an inspiration for theoretical models of social preferences. The economist James Andreoni developed the theory of impure altruism, in which the individual is characterized by both selfish and non-selfish behaviour (Andreoni 1990). Soon followed a Theory of Fairness, where an economic agent does not like inequality, especially when she has much less income than others, and for that reason she is willing to reduce the income of others (Fehr and Schmidt 1999, Bolton and Ockenf 2000). The theory of reciprocity or "The Theory of Altruistic Reciprocity" was also developed (Rabin 1993, Falk and Fischbacher 2006). In this model, special attention was paid to the intention behind the behavior. According to the theoretical model, people evaluate behaviour according to whether it was guided by good or bad intentions. As a result, altruism has been guided by principle of "tit for tat". According to this principle, a person treats another person altruistically only if she responds altruistically as well.

The path of behavioral economics' interdisciplinary research of human altruism was significantly influenced by evolutionary biology. This should come as no surprise, since biology, with its evolutionary theory and natural selection, had much in common with the "mainstream" theoretical economy, in which selfishness was a key assumption. On the analytical base of game theory, gene- evolutionary theoretical approaches have emerged. The common theoretical challenge of both disciplines was the existence of the phenomenon of altruism and cooperation among species. Large-scale cooperation between strangers remains one of the most open and challenging questions that modern science faces (Pennisi 2005, Kennedy and Norman 2005).

The "Theory of Reciprocal Altruism" developed by Robert Trivers has influenced behavioral economics. In evolutionary biology, reciprocal altruism is a behavior in which an organism reduces its fitness and increases the fitness of another organism, expecting that this organism will reciprocate in the future (Trivers 1971). According to the model, altruistic behavior can also occur between individuals who are strangers to each other in a particular situation of natural selection. This behavior is based on the profit-loss ratio mechanism and receiving an altruistic response from another individual (Trivers 1971). A similar concept of reciprocity based on evolutionary cooperation was developed by R. Axelrod and W. Hamilton (Axelrod and Hamilton 1981). In their model, a person will only behave altruistically toward another person if the costs (time, energy, etc.) associated with her altruistic behavior will be less than the future benefits. Unlike models of fairness, the theory of reciprocity rewards good behavior and punishes bad behavior, even when equality cannot be restored. However, the principles of fairness in these models and their origin remain an open question.

William Hamilton attempted to explain altruistic cooperation by presenting a theory of kinship (Hamilton 1964). The theory of inclusive fitness offered a new solution to the question of why humans behave altruistically. Based on mathematical calculations, W. Hamilton showed that in the evolutionary process, genetically related individuals help each other in the survival and reproduction of genes. In the evolutionary process, altruism is preferred only when it brings

personal benefit to the individual. Given this fact, the main question of the "kinship theory" is: when does the benefit exceed the costs? Or in other words, when the altruistic action will take place? According to the theory, the mechanism of inclusive fitness in the selection process precisely gives preference to those individuals who maximize inclusive fitness, which in turn is achieved through altruistic interactions. However, kinship theory is limited to relatives and has little to say about large-scale cooperation among strangers.

Economics was also influenced by anthropology and culture (Gächter, Herrmann, and Thoni 2010). Researchers tried to find an explanation for the origin of human altruism using "group selection" and "gen-culture coevolution" approaches (S. Bowles, H. Gintis, P. Richerson, J. Henrich, R. Boyd). This direction of research, also known as the "cultural group selection", is the most widely researched area with several theoretical models (Boyd and Richerson 1990, Bowles and Gintis 2013, Henrich and Henrich 2007, Henrich 2004, Richerson and Boyd 1978, 2008, Gintis et al. 2003, Gintis et al. 2005, Gintis 2000). According to this approach, two processes - cultural and gene - interact with each other and ultimately shape human behavior in society. "Cultural learning" process influences the natural selection forces of the human genome, while the genome evolving under the influence of culture, in turn, shapes the human mind, which, as a result of this co-evolution process, returns the updated information to its cultural consciousness (Henrich and Henrich 2007). This kind of co-evolution directly affects human altruistic behavior. Altruism is the answer to the question of why strangers cooperate (Fehr and Fischbacher 2003).

The existence of different norms and altruistic behavior in different cultures, researchers try to explain with help of "cultural group selection". Namely, according to this concept, the norms that are established in one group of individuals can be extended to other groups. Norms of one kind are spread through competition and selection between groups that have different norms gained from "cultural evolution". Thus, if one group defeats the other group, they spread their norms in the group that lost. Maintaining a norm of altruistic behavior within a group is associated with costs. The mechanisms of "cultural learning" determine the choice to be made by the individual: to obey the norm established in the group or to break it. The decision is made based on a cost-benefit analysis related to compliance and violation of the norm. In a group where most of the members are altruists and at the same time are willing to punish at their own expense the violator of the altruistic norm, in such case prosocial behavior is sustained in the group.

Behavioral economics research focuses on the interaction of two key types of individuals: the strong reciprocal and the selfish. The main object of interest is a "strong reciprocal" type. A strong reciprocal type of economic agent does not belong to either the selfish type or the purely altruistic type but is a mixture of these two types. A strong reciprocal type can be at the same time a "conditional cooperator" in the sense that she acts altruistically if others do so, and she is also an "altruistic punisher": she is willing to punish selfish ones.

Altruistic punishment is of critical importance. If there is no altruistic punishment, prosocial behavior cannot be sustained, particularly in large groups (Fehr and Fischbacher 2003). The interaction of culture and genes is continuous (Henrich 2015). The explanation for such an evolution of the altruistic norm is that they are largely based on "cultural learning" and cognitive adaptation, through which the individual aligns her behavior to those established in the group. Thus, when the punishment of individuals who violate altruistic norms is influenced by "cultural learning", then we get a stable equilibrium and altruistic norms are sustained. J. Henrich notes:

“This intellectual move dissolves the destructive dichotomy between ‘evolutionary’ and ‘cultural’ explanations and fully incorporates cultural explanations under an expanded Darwinian umbrella” (Henrich 2015, p.87).

The theories of "cultural group selection" leave unanswered a key question: If altruism is achieved through the selection process of "gen-culture co-evolution", why then a punishment is necessary to maintain altruism? In "cultural group selection" theories, everything depends on "strongly reciprocal" individual and "altruistic punishment", without it altruistic behavior cannot be sustained. In turn, altruistic punishment largely depends on the profit-loss ratio: if the costs associated with "altruistic punishment" exceed the expected benefits, "altruistic punishment" does not take place. Researchers recognize that attempts to study the phenomenon of human altruism and to establish a common theoretical basis are still in their infancy and that answers to the questions remain far from satisfactory (Kimbrough and Vostroknutov 2016, Henrich 2015, Fehr and Fischbacher 2003, Gächter, Herrmann and Thöni 2010, Fernández 2008).

The theoretical models such as "Impure Altruism", "Theory of Fairness", "Theory of Reciprocal Altruism", "Theory of kinship" and "Cultural Group Selection", have different types of shortcomings, be they empirical or conceptual (Burnham, 2005, Binmore and Shaked 2010, Binmore 2010). For example, from an empirical point of view, it is difficult to argue about the robustness of the "kin selection" model, when its basic experimental data are obtained from observations based on non-relative individuals. By the same logic, it is prudent to use experimental results in favor of "gen-culture co-evolution" models when the participants in the experiment do not know each other, do not belong to the same evolutionary group, and do not continue any relationship after the experiment (Binmore and Shaked 2010). In addition, theoretical models and their results depend significantly on the number of individuals: the more the number of individuals in a group the more difficult it is to maintain norms (Binmore and Shaked 2010). In addition, theoretical modeling of psychological, cultural, or other factors has greatly complicated these models.

In terms of theoretical concepts, all models ignore the existence of a moral system behind behavior and its origins. Thus, whether it is an altruist, a reciprocal altruist, or a strong reciprocal individual, their behavior is analyzed without the moral system. In all models, the unanswered question remains as to where the altruist comes from and how the criteria emerged by which she can distinguish altruistic behavior from selfish and fair from unfair.

### **3. Christian love and altruism**

What is the difference between altruism and Christian love, and what is the significance of this difference from a theoretical and practical point of view? To answer this question requires a substantial analysis of both concepts first and I will try to do so.

Modern science seeks to "turn to humans", to improve their well-being and to be able to promote prosocial behavior. Therefore, questions arise: What type of human is today's science trying to "turn to"? Towards an altruist? Towards a strong reciprocator? Toward an evolutionary species derived from gen culture co-evolution? Or to the creation of God? We think the answer is straightforward: the evolutionary worldview remains dominant in modern science. Thus, modern science is non-Christian in terms of worldview. Although, there are attempts in science to go

beyond the paradigm of selfish "Homo Economicus", in its essence it remains "under an expanded Darwinian umbrella".

Since a human being is composed of flesh and spirit, in my opinion, it is impossible to have a correct idea of humankind and social behavior by neglecting spiritual part. If we step out from the evolutionary paradigm and turn to the Christian worldview, we can acquire more understanding of human nature. The Christian teachings and the teachings of the Holy Fathers convey comprehensive and depth knowledge of true human nature. Indeed, modern science has very few facts about human nature, since the spiritual part of humans is beyond the material world (Veter Vasa 2017). Human is the union of two worlds: the visible and the invisible, the material and the spiritual (Данил 2016а). St. Blessed Theophylact of Ochrid explains: "the love of neighbor is conducted through the flesh and largely through the spirit, since man is made up of flesh and spirit (Блаж. Феофилакт (Болгарский) 2015, p.229).

One can question whether it is correct to discuss science and religion since they belong to different fields and categories. First of all, in my opinion, true science and true Christian teaching cannot contradict each other, since truth is one. In other words, true science discovers the laws of neuter and mechanisms of universe created by GOD. The St. Gregory Palamas points out that scientific research is useful when it is carried out in the light of Scripture (Св. Григорий Палама 1995). Furthermore, when talking about the theory of evolution, it should be well understood that scientifically the theory of evolution can neither be approved nor rejected and thus it is purely a product of worldview and philosophy (Hieromonk Seraphim (Rose) 2000, p.317), Протоиерей Константин (Буфеев) 2014, p.18, Altukhov 2002). One important circumstance should not be overlooked: any theoretical economic doctrine has an ideological content, which is a product of the creative thinking of men of certain moral and value systems (მეცნიერებათა აკადემია 2018, Schumpeter 1949, Javdani and Chang 2019, Colander 2005). Therefore, the subject of discussion is not any scientific fact, but rather a worldview and beliefs.

#### **4. About altruism**

The term altruism was coined by Auguste Comte, a French sociologist and founder of the "philosophical of positivism". The term "altruism" is derived from the French word "altrui", which means "other people", "others", and the French word itself is derived from the Latin word "alter", which is also interpreted as "other" (Online Etymology Dictionary). According to the French philosopher A. Comte, a man had a moral obligation to renounce personal interests and live for others (Online Etymology Dictionary). Thus, according to A. Comte, altruism in its essence implies self-sacrifice for the welfare of others, without any personal benefit. According to A. Comte, social relations should have become a source of moral ethics (Scott and Seglow 2007). The philosophy of positivism utilizing science aimed to reorganize and contribute to the progress of society, where a "positive society" is the religion of the people. The main commandment of the "human religion" of this positive society was "vivre pour autrui" or "live for others" or so-called altruism. Interestingly, the churches were built in Paris and New York to worship this new "human religion" (Harp 1991).

Altruism in contemporary science is defined as a behavior where one person acts voluntarily for the benefit of another person, and his target is not himself but another person (Batson and

Powell 2003). Altruism manifests itself in prosocial behaviors such as: helping, cooperation, charity, and sharing (Batson 2012). Although once altruism and prosociality were equated with each other, they are different (Clarke 2003). Prosocial behavior is ultimately self-centered behavior. According to most researchers, that is the main distinction between prosociality and altruism. Altruism is a motivational concept and appears to be the main and necessary condition of prosocial behavior (Clarke 2003, Schroeder and Graziano 2015, Batson and Powell 2003).

The evolutionary definition of altruism is that it is the best choice for the individual in the case of a group of altruistic individuals, but if a group is dominated by selfish ones, the altruism act is abandoned. As far as a source of the moral system is concerned, according to the Darwinist perspective, it stems from feelings of sympathy inherent in human nature (Scott and Seglow 2007). Evolutionary theory does not fully explain the origin of altruism as a moral system and leaves the main open question: How did altruism evolve if it is impossible to "select" at all? (Pope 2007). Moreover, even if moral norms evolve, then its normative power is completely useless (Scott and Seglow 2007). This should come as no surprise since the moral system as an integral part of human dignity is alien to evolution and is considered only at the level of human-animal spirits (Архимандрит Рафаил (Карелин) 2011а). Altruism as a moral concept inevitably involves definitions of good and evil, right and wrong, fair and unfair behavior (Scott and Seglow 2007).

Although, altruism is a moral concept, from the point of view of Christian morality, it is at least controversial if not contradictory (Pope 2007). We would like to emphasize that as a result of the synthesis attempts of science and religion, many false approaches can be observed. Namely, Christian love appears as a source of altruism (Grant 2000, p.167). In one place, evolution appears as an action of God and God as the source of altruism (Meisinger 2000). We even find such misconceptions as if gospel and sociobiology study the same phenomenon of prosociality and altruism, and in this respect, scientific and religious approaches complement each other (Meisinger 2000 p.749, Pope 2007).

## **5. About Christian love**

In the Christian religion, the love of God and neighbor is two intertwined commandments in which all other commandments are combined. Since love is God, man cannot express with his bounded mind and define what love is. The exact definition of God is a precarious task and unfeasible to the human mind (Данил 2016b, წმ. იოანე სინელი 2011 (VI-VII centuries)). When defining love, we can draw certain boundaries and outline only certain characters of true love. Such a partial description of Christian love can be found in St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, St. John Sinaites' "Ladder of Divine Ascent" and in works of St. Basil the Great.

St. John Sinaites writes: "Love is assimilation in nature of God as much as it is possible and accessible to human" (წმ. იოანე სინელი 2011 (VI-VII centuries), p.142). For man, love is not a state or feeling, but love in its essence is a certain state of human will that is achieved through the fulfillment of the commandments (Даниил свщмч 2016с, წმ. იოანე სინელი 2011 (VI-VII centuries)). St. John Sinaites points out that to understand the love we must first understand what liberation from passions is. Liberation from passions is the purification of our heart or when the senses are subdued by the mind (წმ. იოანე სინელი 2011 (VI-VII centuries)). Without this,

love will remain illusory, emotional, and far from true Christian love (Архимандрит Рафаил (Карелин) 2013).

In his Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Apostol Paul teaches us that virtues, if not accompanied by love, are useless for man, and proceeds with a description of love: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hope, always perseveres" (I Cor. 13; 4-7).

St. Basil the Great explains that with the acceptance of the commandment of love, man also received the power of love, which was rooted in his nature as soon as he was created, and its approval is not placed outside, but its approval rests inside of human nature (Св. Василий Великий 2009, p.157). A man was created as kind, not evil, evil does not exist by nature, it is a behavioral category that can be chosen by man's free will (წმ. იოანე დამასკელი 2000 (VIII century)). Thus, it is organic and natural for human nature to strive for beauty, love, and voluntary goodness (Св. Василий Великий 2009, p. 157).

Therefore, love is not learned, nor it is comprehended from outside environment, it is an aspiration embedded in human nature, which includes the desire to have a relationship with God (Св. Василий Великий 2009, p.156) It is this sown seed of love that needs to be sprouted, cultivated, and perfected by further obedience to the commandments and by the grace of God. We will not succeed in fulfilling the commandments if we do not obey the will of God, just as the craftsman does the job according to the client's order (Св. Василий Великий 2009). St. Basil the Great points out that since a person is obliged to love everyone equally, the one who loves one person more than another, indicates his incomplete love, and where love diminishes, hatred inevitably takes its place (Св. Василий Великий 2009, p.146).

According to Christian teaching, selfishness is a direct result of man's fall. The fall was followed by the reversal of the hierarchy that originally existed in human nature: the soul starts to dominate the spirit, and the body dominated the soul. In this sense, overcoming selfishness and egocentrism is the restoration of a destroyed hierarchy of human nature and a return to God (Архимандрит Рафаил (Карелин) 2013). Restoring this broken condition and learning and cultivating the right love is the work of a person's whole life (Киностудия МДА БОГОСЛОВ 2015). The essence of love becomes more understandable for a person when he starts to keep the commandments and learns about love through personal experience (Игумен Нектарий (Морозов) 2019; Архимандрит Иоанн (Крестьянкин) 2014, p.166).

Selfishness is a corrupt virtue or wrong self-love. Thus, overcoming selfishness should not be understood as a denial of human self-love. Christianity is not opposed to self-love, we just need to know our true, Christian love (Роупе 2007, Игумен Нектарий (Морозов) 2019, Киностудия МДА БОГОСЛОВ 2015). From the beginning, self-love was probably an appreciation of God for how He created us (Игумен Нектарий (Морозов) 2019). A man could not oversee that he was kindly and perfectly created as the crown of the universe. The notion of neighborly love implies that a person should love himself, and love in a Christian way. It means to love himself as he was created by God (Киностудия МДА БОГОСЛОВ 2015). Wrong love is love with oneself who has been torn from God as a result of sins (Киностудия МДА БОГОСЛОВ 2015). After the fall into sin, when God no longer became the center of existence for the fallen



man, man made himself the center of the universe. And at this point, the self-love once derived from a sense of gratitude has taken a distorted form. For a person who is distorted by sin, it is difficult to understand what is good for him and what is good for his neighbor. A fallen man has limited power and without the help of God, he cannot do true goodness (Данил 2016b). Striving for God, His true love, and doing goodness converts man and teaches right love (Pope 2007).

The way to teach yourself the right love goes through learning the love of neighbor and God. In this way, there is a constant conflict between love for oneself, the neighbor, and God. When in this struggle man chooses for love of neighbor and God, he not only loves himself less but begins to love himself in the right way (Игумен Нектарий (Морозов) 2019). We should look at our neighbor not as a stranger, but as a creature of God of our kind (Православни Центар 2011). The Christian love of neighbor is one-sided, unconditional, and selfless, and expects nothing in return, he is not like reciprocal altruism expecting anything in return. Love for one's neighbor requires hard work, effort, and struggle with oneself (Архимандрит Иоанн (Крестьянкин) 2014). It is much harder to love people whom we know and meet in our life than it is to love distant and unknown people, such as the people under starvation in Africa, the homeless people, the refugees, and the like (Данил 2016c).

The above description of Christian love should not be understood as if feelings, emotions, man's soul, and biological structure were unknown to Christian teaching. The Holy Fathers knew thoroughly and deeply about the action of the biological and psychic parts of human nature. St. Basil the Great notes: "Who does not know that man is a tame and sociable animal, and not a solitary and fierce one? For nothing is so characteristic of our nature as to associate with one another, to need one another, and to love our kind." (Св. Василий Великий 2009, p. 160). Exactly, from embedded striving for love and goodness in the creation of all humans, despite the diverse culture and history of humankind, follows that everyone knew good and evil, greed and generosity, false and truth, cowardice and bravery (Архимандрит Рафаил (Карелин) 2011a). Hieromonk Raphael (Karelin) notes that without the universal moral system of humankind, it would have been impossible to spread the gospel worldwide, or that ancient and contemporary man to comprehend alike the epic poems such as the "Iliad" or the "Odyssey".

These embedded characteristics of humankind can be regarded as a response of the Christian teaching to the puzzle of modern science today: How come human qualities such as large-scale cooperation, and other forms of prosociality are common and universal? The evolutionary worldview tries to explain the existence of different norms of people of different times and cultures by the "gene-cultural co-evolutionary" process. But can we, for example, explain the cannibalism that was the norm in tribes of Papua New Guinea and the cannibalism that was observed during the blockade of Leningrad in WWII by this gene-cultural co-evolutionary process? Can we explain differences by diverse notions of good and evil?

St. Basil the Great writes that these animal instincts embedded in human nature are the ground on which Christian love must grow. Logically, the New Testament given to Christianity could not be "new" if it was an equal notion of the animal instincts of a "tame and sociable animal" being (Тихомиров 1906). Love on the level of soul of a man is a natural human trait, while Christian love is spiritual, an opportunity that has to be achieved through the grace of God (Архимандрит Рафаил (Карелин) 2011b).

## **6. The Differences between Altruism and Christian Love and their Significance**

From the above characteristics of altruism and Christian love, it is already clear that equating them with each other is not even a misconception (Pope 2007, p. 234), but they are opposite concepts (Тихомиров 1906).

The love in a soul and on the level of human instincts is the highest point that the evolutionary approach can reach (Pope 2007). Thus, the feelings embedded at the level of instincts, which is altruism, are part of human-animal nature. An evolutionary approach considers altruism precisely at the level of human instincts and at the level of soul (Архимандрит Рафаил (Карелин) 2011а, Тихомиров 1906). According to Christian teaching, these feelings are embedded in human nature as the only necessary ground for the emergence of true love. It stands at a much lower level than Christian love. Altruism belongs to human instincts, while Christian love belongs to the spiritual part of human nature. Thus, altruism would be a part of both human nature and the nature of other animal beings, even without the New Testament, and Christian love could not, since its source is God. Without God, there would be no love.

The question arises: what is the source of altruism? The source of altruism is society, which influences human nature. For the altruist God was replaced by "society" and it is for the welfare of society that she strives. The altruist is ready to punish those who do not contribute to the welfare of this society and to reward those who contribute (Тихомиров 1906). An altruist might commit an act unacceptable to Christian morality and even contrary to it. The contradiction between altruism and Christian love is less noticeable in the case of a "bad" altruist and a "bad" Christian but is obvious between a "good" altruist and a "good" Christian (Тихомиров 1906). For example, if we take extreme cases, an altruist can be a racist who is willing to transplant his organ to another, but will only do so if he belongs to his race. An altruist can also be a terrorist who sacrifices his own life and the lives of other innocent people for the benefit of his people. There are misconceptions that the parable Good Samaritan is presented as an altruistic act (DSPT - Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology 2017). A Good Samaritan cannot be an altruist, simply because he shows Christian love for a historical enemy that an altruist cannot. Christian love does not divide people into groups or as "others", as altruist does.

An altruist obeys society, he is afraid of public opinion, its social sanctions, and laws. At the same time, the moral system of a man under influence of society becomes unstable and variable. Replacing God with society leads to the destruction of man's dignity and his morality, and subordinating to the abstract and variable society she loses her freedom (Тихомиров 1906). The replacement of God's relationship and love with an impersonal, abstract society the altruist at the end arrives at some abstract love. An altruist avoids a personal relationship with a man and her satisfaction manifests itself in good citizenship. For example, the altruist might believe that it is not necessary to provide direct help to her neighbor pensioner who is in need since as a good citizen she pays the taxes from which the pensions are financed. A particular neighbor and person are replaced by a generalized and abstract person. Thus, altruism preaches the love of an abstract, non-existent person when Christian love is concrete and begins with the closest people around (Архимандрит Рафаил (Карелин) 2006; Тихомиров 1906). It is obvious that such an abstract person does not exist and cannot exist. Finally, we come to the logical conclusion that

the altruist is not interested in the "other", but only in herself (Тихомиров 1906). Thus, the altruist on the path of love of an abstract and generalized man returns back to her selfishness, but not to the original and natural one that she initially owned, but more "polished" and powerful, mixed with self-deception and self-glorification (Тихомиров 1906). The differences between the above characteristics of altruism and Christian love are summarized in the table below (see Table N1).

*Table N1- Differences between Characteristics of Altruism and Christian Love*

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Altruism (Prosociality)</b>	<b>Christian Love</b>
Category	Soul	Spirit
The center of the universe	Man	God
Source	Society	God
Subordinate	Society	God
The moral system	Variable	Absolute
Human	Imperfect	Perfect
The object of love	Abstract	Concrete
Love	Conditional	Unconditional
Love	Unequal	Equal

The question is: what kind of society do we want to build? One where altruists will be or one where people with Christian love? Note that altruism is not a precondition for well-being, some studies have shown that altruism, like selfishness, can also harm the well-being of society (Batson et al. 1999). To answer the above question, we consider the distinction between these two moral systems to be an important one, with their practical and theoretical consequences. And which one is preferable, we leave this choice to the reader.

## **7. Conclusion**

Although economics, and primarily behavioral economics, seeks to "turn to human" and go beyond the paradigm of selfish "Homo Economicus", it offers nothing fundamentally new. As a result of our analysis, altruism is a hidden and complicated form of selfishness. Therefore, the

view established in interdisciplinary studies of behavioral economics that altruism and prosocial behavior differ primarily in the sense that the first is focused on the well-being of the "other" and the latter on self-interest, is misleading: both altruism and prosocial behavior are ultimately self-centered concepts.

It is also a fact that evolutionary theory and its modifications are not based on scientific facts and belong to a purely philosophical category. For modern science, many puzzles, such as the origins of altruism or large-scale prosocial cooperation between strangers, are driven by the evolutionary paradigm itself. If we go beyond the "imprisonment" of this paradigm and are guided by the Christian worldview, we think that scientific research would bring more fruitful solutions to many such puzzles. We believe that it is time for science to return to Christian teaching and the rich intellectual heritage of the Holy Fathers. Without the true Christian teaching of the nature of man, we cannot consider any economic approach and mechanism to benefit the welfare of man. There is no doubt that evolutionary and Christian worldviews, altruism, and Christian love are contradictory concepts, and thus any compromise or synthesis between them is impossible. By comparing altruism and Christian love and analyzing their theoretical and practical implications, we at least should admit that the evolutionary worldview is anti-Christian, and thus, in our opinion, cannot bring any goodness and prosperity to humankind.

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