

Altruism is important in society essay



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Knowing and Knowledge 1 ACX1001 Semester 1 2009 Longer Essay: Why is kindness or altruism important for society? Roselyn Weeraratne Student: 3801157 Tutor: Joyce Tute: 17: 30 Monday Why is kindness or altruism important for society? Altruism may be defined as a basic selfless attitude that may attribute to those providing initial intervention (Ronel, 2006). For a society or community to thrive, prosper and grow minimum expectations must exist for the individuals of that community to be happy. Rules and laws are in place to govern the ways in which we should act socially, ethically and morally.

Among such principles is an expectation to be fair and kind to those around oneself, as you yourself would like to be treated.

Therefore kindness is a key factor that is important and does affect society. Societies, communities, countries and people have expanded and grown through many stages of time. From the barbaric ages to the modern industrial and technological ages, but it has not been without the expenses of others. 3rd world countries for example have suffered as the industrialized countries grew.

The industrialized peoples benefited from structured legal systems, which resulted in minimum expectations of the people to be polite and kind in society in order to remain apart of the society, even today. In 3rd world countries individuals use self-preservation to survive because there is no structured government or society to provide kindness through means of housing, food or health care.

We are all people, no matter what class, culture or background and as explained by Peter Singer in ‘ The life you can save – Acting now to end world poverty’, there are far greater moral rewards in giving more of ourselves than a bare minimal.

The example used here is that Warren Buffet contributed \$31 Billion dollars in donations. As enormous as the amount is, as the wealthiest man alive, he could afford far more. His personal wealth is worth 3 times that of the collective United States Economy.

The point made is that people die every year from preventable causes. Kindness can remedy many of these cases. Could we give a little more of ourselves? According to Phillip and Taylor’s article ‘ Kindness is the key to happiness’, the changes in mankind’s psyche to individualism may explain some of the changes. Historically it was taught to ‘ love thy neighbour as you would yourself’.

Therefore altruism was previously a trait that existed with most people, where kindness would prevail for the greater good of the society. It is documented that society today is now more based on individualist principles.

That before we can help others we must help ourselves. With this mentality this is where society has fallen down. Dividing the communities, placing people into categories of wealthy and poor. The rich get richer whilst the poor get poorer. Why did such a change in mindset occur? Charles Darwin explained that the issue for society was that its members needed to assist other members.

However those who act for selfish reasons often were at an advantage compared to those who were kind. As a result Charles Darwin whilst on his famous expedition aboard the HMS Beagle to circumnavigate the world, delivered much powerful works, of which are used as a basis for many theories today, such as Darwinism. Desmond, A (2009). Darwin believed in humanity and that all peoples deserve to be free, as at the time massive movements of slavery existed globally, which Darwin was privy too, simply inspired him more so to begin charitable movements.

Charity has grown wider in the course of civilization and is seen as an act of kindness. At higher stages of civilization the duty of charity embraces a wider group of people, in proportion to the largeness of the social unit or to the religion. Religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism make charity a duty and an act of high praise. But even in modern times, our poor are generally recognized to have a greater claim on our pity than needy strangers. (Salter, Frank 2008).

In addition we learn that there are different levels of kindness that contributes to the final outcome.

According to Hamilton's rule, where the cost of the act must be less than the benefit and genetic relatedness of the beneficiary to the actor to be worthwhile. Hamilton's rule is viewed as an expression of the benefits to a particular individual from a specific act performed for another individual. (Rubin, Paul 2007). In other words although kindness is important to society, I might not be able to help if the provider doesn't benefit in one-way or another or if it costs me too much.

As Guagnano, Stern, and Dietz (1995) interpret the Schwartz model, for a person to act altruistically, the person must be aware of negative consequences and also must attribute some responsibility to take appropriate action to persons like himself or herself.

When people hold both these beliefs, they experience a sense of obligation to act to prevent harm. However, when behaviors are difficult, expensive, or inconvenient, behavior change will be more rare. “ A central failing of the altruistic position,” according to Kaplan, “ is that it attempts to put aside the issue of gain, of self-interest, in human behavior”.

The article ‘ Is it wrong not to help? ’ is a simple example of where self interest affects the decision of Bob to choose his own benefit at the expense over another’s life.

Is this the sort of society we want to live in? Can this be justified? Is this kindness? Kindness must be amplified as an essential characteristic in humanity and in individuals as having, or else we risk sacrificing life over material objects. Altruism is essential as it provides a hope that someone is looking out for those in less favourable circumstances.