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PART I THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PATHOLOGICAL ALTRUISM. . . 1

CHAPTER 1 PATHOLOGICAL ALTRUISM—AN INTRODUCTION 3

Barbara Oakley, Ariel Knafo, and Michael McGrath

- *Pathological altruism* might be thought of as any behavior or personal tendency in which either the stated aim or the implied motivation is to promote the welfare of another. But, instead of overall beneficial outcomes, the “altruism” instead has irrational (from the point of view of an outside observer) and substantial negative consequences to the other or even to the self.
- Many harmful deeds—from codependency to suicide martyrdom to genocide—are committed with the altruistic intention to help companions or one’s own in-group. Thus, it is worthwhile to study how well-meaning altruism can shade into pathology.
- Studies of pathological altruism provide for a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of altruism.

CHAPTER 2 EMPATHY-BASED PATHOGENIC GUILT, PATHOLOGICAL ALTRUISM, AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGY. 10

Lynn E. O’ Connor, Jack W. Berry, Thomas B. Lewis, and David J. Stiver

- Empathic reactions to pain or distress in others are instantaneous and begin the path to both normal and pathological altruism. These reactions move quickly to implicit empathy-based guilt, linked to a belief that one should try to relieve the suffering of others.
- Empathic guilt is further linked to evaluations of fairness, equality, and the equitable distributions of resources.
- Survivor guilt (inequity guilt) is a specific form of empathic guilt that tends to become pathogenic when based on a false belief that one’s own success, happiness, or well-being is a source of unhappiness for others, simply by comparison. People with high survivor guilt may falsely believe they are “cheaters.”
- *Pathogenic guilt leads to pathological altruism.* In pathological altruism, the altruistic behavior helps no one and potentially harms the altruist, the recipient of the altruism, or both.
- Empathic concern and empathic guilt are evolved psychological mechanisms sustaining mammalian group cohesion. Altruism may fail to favor fitness at the level of the individual in within-group competition, while increasing fitness at the level of the group in between-group competition.

- Pathogenic guilt and pathological altruism are commonly found in mental disorders, such as depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

CHAPTER 3 A CONTEXTUAL BEHAVIORAL APPROACH
TO PATHOLOGICAL ALTRUISM. 31
Roger Vilardaga and Steven C. Hayes

- In the same way that the process of natural evolution selects features of the human species, the cultural environment selects for patterns of behaviors during the lifetime of an individual or a group.
- One particular form of human behavior, language, is of great survival value. But language also amplifies the way we experience both the positive and negative aspects of the world. This can reinforce behaviors that are damaging for individuals and groups.
- Some behaviors that may play a role in pathological altruism are *experiential avoidance*, a *conceptualized self*, *perspective-taking*, and *values-based action*.
- *Acceptance and commitment therapy* and *relational frame theory* lay forth a scientific framework and provide tools to modify such behaviors, which points to their potential utility to reduce pathological altruism.

CHAPTER 4 CODEPENDENCY AND PATHOLOGICAL ALTRUISM. 49
Michael McGrath and Barbara Oakley

- Codependency is an inability to tolerate a perceived negative affect in others that leads to a dysfunctional empathic response.
- Codependency likely shares roots with pathological altruism.
- There are evolutionary, genetic, and neurobiological components to the expression and propagation of codependent behaviors.

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David Brin

- The word, “addiction” appears to limit our perception of a wider realm—*general behavioral reinforcement* within the human brain. If neurochemical processes reinforce “good” habits such as love, loyalty, joy in music or skill, then addiction should be studied in a larger context.
- If a mental state causes pleasurable reinforcement, there will be a tendency to return to it. Meditation, adoration, gambling, rage, and indignation might all, at times, be “mental addictions.”
- This more general view of reinforcement suggests potential ways to reduce or eliminate drug addiction, as well as self-induced rage.
- Self-righteousness and indignation may sometimes be as much about chemical need as valid concerns about unfair actions. Among other outcomes, this may cause “pathologically altruistic” behavior.
- Moderate-progressives who seek problem-solving pragmatism may get a boost if it were proved that dogmatic self-righteousness is often an “addiction.”

CHAPTER 6 PATHOLOGICAL ALTRUISM AND PERSONALITY DISORDER. . . . 85

Thomas A. Widiger and Jennifer Ruth Presnall

- The Five-Factor Model of personality can be used to describe adaptive and maladaptive variants of altruism.
- Research suggests that maladaptive altruism is a component of dependent personality disorder.
- Case studies illustrate how maladaptive altruism, combined with differing levels of neuroticism, may impact treatment.

CHAPTER 7 THE RELEVANCE OF PATHOLOGICAL ALTRUISM**TO EATING DISORDERS. 94**

Rachel Bachner-Melman

- Individuals with eating disorders tend to sacrifice their own needs and interests and devote themselves instead to *helping and serving others*.
- Selflessness and concern for appropriateness, concepts linked to pathological altruism, have been shown to characterize women with eating disorders.
- Developmental, interpersonal, family, cultural, genetic, personality, and social factors no doubt combine to make pathological altruism a characteristic of people who develop eating disorders.

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Jane N. Nathanson and Gary J. Patronek

- In animal hoarding, animals are used to support the hoarder's own emotional needs with respect to intimacy, self-esteem, control, identity, and fear of abandonment.
- Self- versus other-centeredness in animal hoarding reflects a lack of empathy and often leaves the true needs of animals unmet.
- Precipitating factors for animal hoarding likely include failure to develop functional attachment styles during childhood as a result of caregiver unavailability, neglect, or abuse.
- A hoarder's feeling of being a savior of animals is not the same as actually saving those animals. Although believing they are animals' saviors, rescuer hoarders fail to provide for the animals' basic life requirements.

CHAPTER 9 EVERYONE'S FRIEND? THE CASE OF**WILLIAMS SYNDROME. 116**

Deborah M. Riby, Vicki Bruce, and Ali Jawaaid

- Williams syndrome illustrates how atypical development can affect social functioning.
- Individuals with the disorder are often referred to as caring, empathetic, and hypersociable.
- The Williams syndrome style of social engagement occurs alongside high levels of anxiety and social vulnerability in adults.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believing that you are acting in another's best interest is not synonymous with acting in another's best interest. It is a belief, not a fact. • Moral judgments, such as "good intentions," arise out of basic biological drives, not out of inherent goodness or evilness. • Justifications of behavior such as "I'm just trying to help," should be used with great restraint and viewed with great skepticism. 		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals who disavow their own need for support may be vulnerable to distress in the context of medical illness, both as patients themselves and as caregivers to others. • The term "pathological altruism" has heuristic appeal, but is problematic in the context of life-threatening illness in that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The term "pathology" in this circumstance implies a categorical external judgment of behavior and motivation, based on an arbitrary threshold that does not necessarily account for the social or relational context or the degree of suffering of the other. ◦ The concept of altruism implies a dichotomy, often false, between the interests of self and those of the other. ◦ Humans are relationally organized, such that acts of caregiving, particularly toward family members or loved ones, are often intrinsically rewarding and therefore not purely altruistic. • The multiple determinants of altruism in the cancer caregiving context challenge us to develop a new nosology of such behavior and concern, informed by biological, social, and psychodynamic theory. 		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therapeutic jurisprudence and neuroimaging are valuable tools when considering the treatment of pathological altruism in the law, in cases of organ donations to strangers and cases raising "cultural defenses." • Therapeutic jurisprudence gives us a benchmark by which we can assess whether the pathological altruist (if, indeed, the altruist is pathological) has sacrificed her dignity to do the putatively pathologically altruistic act, an assessment process that can also illuminate whether the underlying behavior is irrational, harmful to others, or self-harming. • Neuroimaging gives us new tools to potentially assess whether the pathological altruist is a rational moral agent in doing such acts. 		
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- Healthy forms of altruism and pathological altruism are distinguished by the compulsion to be altruistic coupled with a maladaptive outcome.
- Pathological altruism may be found in association with criminal behavior, in which the altruist may be the victim, the victimizer, or both.
- Pathological altruism may be viewed as a manifestation of cognitive distortions resulting from genetic, chemical, environmental, or developmental factors acting alone or in concert.
- Pathologically altruistic behavior can be classified into four major types: *protective*, *defensive*, *masochistic*, and *malignant*, each having both psychotic and nonpsychotic incarnations.

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THE VICTIMOLOGY OF ALTRUISM 193

Robert J. Homant and Daniel B. Kennedy

- Pathological altruism can be briefly summarized as altruism that:
 - is unnecessary or uncalled for
 - has consequences that cause the actor to complain, yet the actor continues doing it anyway
 - is motivated by values or needs within the altruist that are irrational or are symptoms of psychological disturbance
 - is of no real benefit to anyone, and a reasonable person would have foreseen this
- The higher the level of altruistic behavior reported by subjects, the higher their level of criminal victimization.
- Self-reported altruism has been found to be a significant predictor of both property and personal crime victimization.
- The relationship between altruism and victimization has been found to be especially due to *risky altruism*, which in turn is correlated with the basic personality trait of Sensation Seeking.

CHAPTER 15 SUICIDE ATTACK MARTYRDOMS: TEMPERAMENT

AND MINDSET OF ALTRUISTIC WARRIORS. 207

Adolf Tobeña

- Suicide attacks are a combative tactic arising from a lethal, nonpathological altruism in some warfare contexts.
- Altruism is the only widely agreed upon temperamental attributes of suicide attackers.
- Strong altruistic dispositions are increasingly being found to have underlying biological mediators.
- Understanding the neurocognitive underpinnings of willingness to commit extreme altruistic acts may help us understand suicide attacks.

CHAPTER 16 GENOCIDE: FROM PATHOLOGICAL ALTRUISM

TO PATHOLOGICAL OBEDIENCE. 225

Augustine Brannigan

- Low self-control, which is a major covariate of criminal behavior, appears early in life and is relatively stable over the life course.
- Levels of self-control may vary across historical periods as people become more sensitive to socially intrusive behavior.
- The perplexing levels of obedience in major genocides do not reflect deficiencies in self-control but suggest the oversocialization of the internal executive function by external social hierarchies.

**CHAPTER 17 TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING? FOREIGN AID
AND PATHOLOGICAL ALTRUISM 237**
Guruprasad Madhavan and Barbara Oakley

- Altruism and emotional contagion have a powerful capacity to mobilize financial and humanitarian aid to impoverished nations.
- Although external economic assistance has been helpful for many countries, a large number of altruistic, non-strategic, foreign aid programs over the past several decades have failed—worsening the very situation they were meant to help. Many other humanitarian programs have also been ineffective at enormous cost.
- Altruistic efforts for social improvements must be guided, not purely by emotion, but with a well thought-out objective strategy and endpoint.
- Neuroscience is allowing us to understand how default emotional approaches to helping others can backfire and cripple otherwise noble intentions.
- Public policies and interventions that have incorporated smart, strategic, and tempered altruism may be effective in alleviating poverty and stimulating economic development.
- There may be value in recruiting a new breed of non-traditional talent that is capable of reframing the way development assistance is carried out.

CHAPTER 18 WAS GANDHI A “PATHOLOGICAL ALTRUIST”? 246
Arun Gandhi

- Finding Truth was Gandhi’s ultimate objective.
- Nonviolence is a key means for obtaining Truth.
- Nonviolence can, on occasion, become a pathologically altruistic enterprise, unnecessarily hurting others, and it cannot be dogmatically followed if the greater good of Truth is to be attained.

**CHAPTER 19 A CONTRARIAN PERSPECTIVE ON ALTRUISM:
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David Brin

- Much of what is called “altruistic” behavior in nature can have self-serving, kinship, or game-based roots that we should not ignore simply out of aesthetic Puritanism.
- Unselfish altruism can emerge out of satiability, satiation, empathy, and sympathy, as well as cultural and individual values. Although sometimes implemented in ways that are ill-conceived or pathological, this trait is viewed as a high feature of intelligence.
- Occasionally, altruism *between species* seems to be unleashed by full bellies and sympathy, (sometimes) along with enlightened self-interest in the long-term survival of an entire world.
- Modern Western society disavows the notion that ideas are inherently dangerous or toxic, or that an elite should guide gullible masses toward correct thinking. However, virtually every other culture held the older, prevalent belief in “toxic memes.” As yet, there is no decisive proof supporting one side over the other.
- Western assumptions color the “search for extra-terrestrial intelligence” (SETI), just as previous “first-contact” events were driven by cultural assumptions of past eras. Especially pervasive—and unwarranted—is the belief that all advanced civilizations will automatically be altruistic.

CHAPTER 20 IS PATHOLOGICAL ALTRUISM ALTRUISM? 262

Bernard Berofsky

- Ethical altruism can be defined either as the view that we have obligations to others or that altruism is a virtue. Ethical egoists believe that we have obligations only to ourselves and that altruism is not a virtue.
- Psychological egoists deny that there are altruists. Since altruism is characterized by intention rather than outcome, and there are people who act with the intention to help others at their own expense, psychological egoism seems clearly false.
- Since a conscious intention to help can conceal an unconscious motivation to harm, one can redefine psychological egoism more plausibly as the view that no one is really motivated to sacrifice his or her own interests to help others.
- If the psychological egoist is right and there are no altruists, how can there be pathological altruists?
 - First answer: Pathological types have some common characteristics—compulsiveness, destructiveness, ignorance of motivation.
 - Second answer: More importantly, the pathological altruist's altruistic *intention* is an essential expression of his self-regarding *motivation*. He must intend to help in order to serve his own destructive needs.

CHAPTER 21 ALTRUISM, PATHOLOGY, AND CULTURE 272

John W. Traphagan

- Altruism and pathology are concepts that do not necessarily translate well from one culture to another; this raises questions for how biological and cultural aspects of these concepts influence behavior.
- Certain features of altruistic behavior may be relatively consistent across different cultures, but nuances of meaning vary, necessarily implying that deviation from the "norm" will vary as well.
- Pathological altruism is behavior that deviates from norms of action that shape concepts of altruism in particular cultures, but those acts themselves have no moral value and are not necessarily parallel from one culture to another.

PART IV CULTURAL AND EVOLUTIONARY DIMENSIONS OF PATHOLOGICAL ALTRUISM. 289**CHAPTER 22 CULTURE–GENE COEVOLUTION OF EMPATHY AND ALTRUISM 291**

Joan Y. Chiao, Katherine D. Blizinsky, Vani A. Mathur, and Bobby K. Cheon

- Western and East Asian cultures vary in individualism and collectivism, or cultural values that influence how people think about themselves in relation to others.
- Cultural differences in social behavior are associated with cultural differences in allelic frequency of serotonin transporter-linked polymorphic region v (*5-HTTLPR*) variants.
- Culture–gene coevolution between individualism–collectivism and the *5-HTTLPR* may influence brain regions associated with empathy and altruism.

CHAPTER 23 THE MESSIANIC EFFECT OF PATHOLOGICAL ALTRUISM 300

Jorge M. Pacheco and Francisco C. Santos

- Without additional mechanisms, cooperation is not an evolutionarily viable behavior, as the *tragedy of the commons* often emerges as the final doomsday scenario.

- In a black-and-white world in which individuals' actions are limited to cooperate or to defect, pathological altruists can be seen as obstinate cooperators, who go to all lengths to maintain their behavior.
- Pathological altruists cooperate indiscriminately, being unmoved by the temptations of greed and fear that lead to defection.
- A single pathological altruist can obliterate the evolutionary advantage of defectors, letting others ignore the temptation to cheat and become, themselves, cooperators. Hence, they generate a messianic effect, which spreads through the entire community.
- Pathological altruists catalyze social cohesion, as their presence benefits the entire community even when defection remains as the single rational option and individuals act in their own selfish interest.

**CHAPTER 24 BATTERED WOMEN, HAPPY GENES: THERE IS NO SUCH
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Satoshi Kanazawa

- Psychologically altruistic acts may not necessarily be evolutionarily altruistic.
- Battered women and their violent mates have more sons than others.
- Therefore, battered women's decision to stay with their abusers may be psychologically altruistic, but evolutionarily self-interested, as they gain the genetic benefit of producing violent sons.

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**CHAPTER 25 EMPATHY, GUILT, AND DEPRESSION: WHEN CARING
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Carolyn Zahn-Waxler and Carol Van Hulle

- Empathy emerges early in life and often motivates caring, prosocial actions toward others. This leads to social competence and healthy emotional development.
- Children's empathy can lead to pathogenic guilt, anxiety, and a sense of personal failure when early family environments require too much of them.
- Parental depression contributes to pathogenic guilt in children which, in turn, creates conditions conducive to risk for developing depression.
- Genetic and environmental factors combine to determine why some children, especially girls, are likely to develop empathy-based pathogenic guilt and depression.

**CHAPTER 26 AUTISM, EMPATHIZING-SYSTEMIZING (E-S) THEORY,
AND PATHOLOGICAL ALTRUISM 345**
Simon Baron-Cohen

- Empathy involves two very different neural processes: affective (feeling an emotion appropriate in response to another person's thoughts and feelings), and cognitive (also called Theory of Mind—that is, being able to imagine someone else's thoughts or feelings).
- The ability to empathize forms one pole of a personality-related dimension—the opposite pole is the ability to systemize. (Put briefly, systemizing is the drive to create and understand systems, for example, the mechanical system of an old-fashioned clock).
- On average, empathizing is stronger in females, whereas systemizing is stronger in males.

- Empathizing-Systemizing theory can be used to quantify people's drive to empathize and systemize. More importantly, it makes predictions regarding the origins of conditions such as autism, which involves intact or even strong systemizing alongside difficulties in empathy.
- Empathizing-Systemizing theory also predicts that some individuals will have difficulties systemizing, but an intact or even a strong drive to empathize. These "hyper-empathizers" may escape clinical notice.

CHAPTER 27 SEDUCTION SUPER-RESPONDERS AND HYPER-TRUSTERS:

THE BIOLOGY OF AFFILIATIVE BEHAVIOR 349

Karol M. Pessin

- People are social animals who go to great lengths to belong—a need that may be rooted in biology. This behavior and biology directed toward social belonging may result in heightened altruism toward some and diminished empathy toward others.
- Whether altruism is pathological depends on its context, as empathy may be selective toward particular individuals or one's own in-group, at the expense of other individuals or groups.
- Oxytocin and vasopressin systems, structurally flexible and capable of rapid changes, appear to be key in understanding social behaviors in rapidly changing human societies.
- A "seduction super-response" may be rooted in biological systems for how receptive one is to social signals, such as vocalizing. Similarly, impaired sensitivity to social signals may lead to "hyper-trust" in failing to detect social threats.
- More broadly, social signals are transmitted through groups; a seduction super-response or undue hyper-trust may be a response to social contagions involving neurosensory or chemosensory means yet to be discovered.

CHAPTER 28 EMPATHIC DISTRESS FATIGUE RATHER THAN COMPASSION FATIGUE? INTEGRATING FINDINGS FROM EMPATHY RESEARCH

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Olga Klimecki and Tania Singer

- Compassion fatigue is introduced as a form of pathological altruism since it is altruistically motivated and gives rise to symptoms of burnout.
- Empirical findings are discussed that dissociate different forms of vicarious responses.
- We conclude that the term *compassion fatigue* should be replaced by the term *empathic distress fatigue*.

PART VI SYNTHESIS OF VIEWS ON

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CHAPTER 29 HELL'S ANGELS: A RUNAWAY MODEL OF

PATHOLOGICAL ALTRUISM 387

Marc D. Hauser

- Pathological altruism emerges as a by-product of a runaway process of selection for in-group favoritism and self-deception.
- In-group favoritism coupled with self-deception or denial of the other, leads to pathological commitment to one group's ideology, coupled with out-group antagonism that can lead to mass genocides.
- Self-sacrifice and martyrdom represent the ultimate forms of pathological altruism, at least from the perspective of the victims. From the perspective of the pathological altruist's group (e.g., religion), however, it is divine altruism, revered, and adaptive for the martyr's faith.

- When pathological altruism runs away, it can lead to mass genocides, as obstinate cooperators disregard the humanity—and human rights—of all who interfere with the ideological cause.

CHAPTER 30 ALTRUISM GONE MAD. 395

Joachim I. Krueger

- Personality-based approaches to pathological altruism are either typological or dimensional, with distinct implications for the question of how pathological altruism is propagated.
- In a mixed population of individuals with different social preferences, altruists do poorly. They may not see it that way, however, which makes their behavior pathological.
- In a Volunteer’s Dilemma, altruists suffer when interacting with other altruists.
- When interpersonal dilemmas are nested within intergroup dilemmas, the meaning of altruism is contingent on perspective.
- Evolution has favored parochial morality (altruism), leaving us with the intractable problem of how to satisfy the local group and the general population at the same time.

CHAPTER 31 PATHOLOGY, EVOLUTION, AND ALTRUISM 406

David Sloan Wilson

- The concept of a pathological adaptation might seem like a contradiction of terms, but traits that count as adaptive in the evolutionary sense can be harmful to others and even to oneself over the long term.
- When altruism is defined in terms of behavioral consequences, it is inherently vulnerable to exploitation by selfishness and evolves only when altruists manage to confine their interactions with each other. Even when altruism evolves because it is more successful than selfishness, on average, some altruists still encounter selfish individuals and are harmed by their own behavior.
- Social environments are pathological when they are structured to make altruists vulnerable to exploitation. Much can be done to create social environments that favor altruism as a successful behavioral strategy.
- Altruism at one level of a multitiered hierarchy (e.g., within groups) can be used for selfish purposes at higher levels (e.g., between-group conflict). The costs and benefits of altruism are repeated at all levels.
- When altruism is defined in psychological terms, it can be regarded as a proximate mechanism for motivating altruistic behavior. Just as there are many ways to skin a cat, there are many proximate mechanisms for motivating altruistic behavior that can be expected to vary among individuals and cultures.
- The analysis of pathological altruism in this volume should be extended to other traits associated with morality and group-level functional organization.

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