

Meaning and Construction of Altruism in New Religious Movements

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Religion has been contributing to altruistic activities and social welfare. Religion in modern society, however, loses a major role in providing a moral order for the society. Although traditional religions may have lost the function in moral order, new religious movements may exercise influence over an individual's private life by supplying shared moral values. By presenting a case study based on the sixty interviews in 1997-1999 in the Jesus Army and the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order in Britain, this paper will consider the meanings and constructions the new religious movements give to their altruism. This research showed that altruism among the members of the groups had some unique meanings and constructions.

Key words: altruism, new religious movements, the Jesus Army, the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

1 . Introduction

In Britain, a large number of people are involved in charities which care for people in need and serve their communities. In England and Wales, there were 185,381 registered charities at the end of 2000. To be registered as a charity, an organisation must engage in at least one of four altruistic aims: the relief of poverty, the advancement of education, the advancement of religion, and other purposes beneficial to the community. Although it received only indirect mention in the preamble of the Statute of Elizabeth I (the Charitable Uses Act 1601), the advancement of religion has always been a charitable object. Religion has been contributing to altruistic activities and social welfare in numerous ways such as welfare projects, informal care, mutual aid and social integration. Religion in modern society, however, loses a major role in providing a moral order for the society. Although traditional religions may have lost the function in moral order, new religious movements (henceforth NRMs) may exercise influence over an individual's private life by supplying shared moral values.

By presenting a case study of the Jesus Army and the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (henceforth the FWBO) in the U.K., this paper will consider if the NRMs provide their members with a religiously based moral order after exploring the meanings and construction

the NRMs give to their altruism. Sixty interviews were carried out in the two NRMs in 1997-1999 with special care to ensure that the sample of interviewees had a diversity of characteristics through a quota sample method. The mean age of thirty interviewees of the Jesus Army is 32.1 years old, whilst that of thirty interviewees of the FWBO is 38.0 years old. The interviews took place in one of the guest rooms or a living room at one of their community houses at an arranged day and time. All names of interviewees in this paper are fictitious. With fictitious names, as a matter of convenience, numbers will be used such as J1, J2 and J3 in the case of the Jesus Army and F1, F2 and F3 in the case of the FWBO.

2 . Defining altruism

Originally, August Comte (1798-1857) used altruism to denote the unselfish regard for the welfare of others, or a devotion to the interests of others as an action-guiding principle (Wispe, 1978: 304). Since then, altruism has been defined in numerous ways (Inaba 2001: 10, 11). Apart from external forces such as increased status, social desirability or social approval, it has also been pointed out that feelings of guilt can motivate altruism and that feelings of guilt seek compensation that can be achieved through altruistic acts (Carlsmith & Gross, 1968; Regan et al., 1972). If altruism is, however, defined as the willingness to help others without normative obligation and without expecting benefits at a later time, we could rarely find actions altruistically motivated. Montada and Bierhoff (1991: 18) defined altruism as 'behaviour that aims at a termination or reduction of an emergency, a neediness, or disadvantage of others and that primarily does not aim at the fulfilment of own interests', adding that 'the behaviour has to be carried out voluntarily' (ibid.: 18). This behavioural definition by Montada and Bierhoff solves the endless debate as to whether such a thing as true altruism exists (Rushton, 1980: 10), and I have accordingly adopted it as a working definition for my research, and the meanings and constructions of altruism among the members of the two NRMs will be examined in this study by analysing interviews with the members.

The situations in which altruistic behaviour is observed can be divided into two categories: disaster situations and ordinary situations. Practically speaking, it is difficult to investigate altruistic behaviour under disaster situations because such situations rarely occur. Theoretically speaking, altruistic behaviour under ordinary situations may be more meaningful for this study than that under disaster situations. This is expressed best by Nelson and Dynes (1976: 49) when they say "That social norms support emergency helping behaviour more strongly than ordinary helping behaviour implies that the reinforcement potential of religious reality construction may be most efficacious under ordinary circumstances.' In this study, however, interviewees were encouraged to talk freely about their altruistic activities without making a distinction between disaster situations and ordinary situations, in order to find out what kinds of activities and acts are altruistic for the members of both the movements.

3 . Altruism and NRMs

Wilson (1976) regards the presence of NRMs as confirmation of secularisation, Wuthnow (1978) interprets NRMs as a form of experimental religion, and Stark and Bainbridge (1985) regards NRMs as religious revivals. It is worth noting that society lost some moral values through secularisation and NRMs may exercise influence over an individual's private life by supplying shared moral values.

Religion used to serve as the symbolic basis for societal stability, solidarity and integration. Biblical religion used to embody an authoritative style of moral order (Tipton, 1979). Religion has lost its overarching authority over social activities and has become one of the sub-systems of society such as the economy. During the long-term process, society has changed from the one which is based on the local community (*Gemeinschaft*) to the one based on the impersonal association (*Gesellschaft*). This radical process of secularisation, Wilson (1988: 196) notes, 'brought consequential changes in other social institutions and in their value-orientations.' The social system no longer functions to fulfil the will of God. Wilson (1988: 197) states that 'the transcendent and overarching social values are more likely to canvass the welfare of the people.'

Although religion has lost its traditional function of providing a religiously based moral order for society and may not regain the direct power that it held in pre-modern times, NRMs may contribute to the solution of new kinds of social problems such as equality of rights and respect for life which are specific to advanced industrial or late-capitalist societies, whilst NRMs themselves may become a social problem (see Beckford, 1990). Moreover, there is a possibility that altruism in NRMs creates conflicts with society, because altruistic activities based on religious belief can be regarded as intrusive by a society which does not expect religion to play a major role in cultural integration or moral order.

Numerous NRMs emerged in the late 1960s. There has been much research into NRMs since the 1970s, whilst empirical research has increasingly emerged concerning the relationship between Judeo-Christian religiosity and altruism since the same date. However, altruism has not been given heed in research on NRMs. There must have been reasons for this. One possibility is that researchers on NRMs may have been so much preoccupied by the typology of the movements, the charismatic role of the founder, and the motivation of the members for joining NRMs. Another possibility is that some researchers on NRMs may have considered that they are a social problem or they do not contribute to society.

NRMs have been pictured in the mass media as controversial and threatening. No matter what the different groups did, they were marked as basically all the same and all problematic. Beckford (1985: 6) lists two reasons for it: (1) lack of Information; information about the movements is simply not available to the public and most people are ignorant about the history of minority religious groups; (2) The general public were indifferent to organised religion and did not make any independent assessment of the movements' religious merits or demerits. Robbins (1988: 166) points out another reason for it: NRMs are particularly

controversial because 'they tend to constitute highly diversified and multifunctional enclaves lying outside of the web of governmental supervision.'

All of these factors may account for the fact that up until now little research concerning altruism in NRMs has been carried out. Up until now, no research concerning altruism in NRMs has been carried out, except in Japan (i.e. Shimazono (ed.), 1992; Kisala, 1992, Inaba, 1998). Shimazono (ed., 1992) analyses altruism in Japanese New Religions by two concepts, namely, 'Harmony Ethics' and 'Vitalism', which are the common structure and the world view of the beliefs and teachings of Japanese New Religions. Kisala (1992) examines the social ethic of Japanese New Religions, focusing on the social welfare activities of two Japanese New Religions, namely, Tenrikyo and Rissho Kosei Kai. He presents the results of interviews undertaken with thirty members who are themselves active in social work, exploring their religious beliefs and the motivation for their involvement in welfare activities. Inaba (1998) distributed a questionnaire on altruism in a Japanese New Religion, Rissho Kosei Kai in 1994. The survey data showed that the more intensely a member was committed to the religious practices of the religious organisation, the more interested he or she was in social problems and the more he or she took part in charitable activities.

As mentioned, up until now, no research concerning altruism in NRMs has been carried out except in Japan. Clearly, then, it becomes apparent that new research is required on altruism in NRMs in order to investigate if NRMs provide their members with a religiously based moral order in modern society where religion loses a major role in providing a moral order for the society and that is why this study has been undertaken.

4 . The Jesus Army and the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

One of the NRMs researched in this study is the Jesus Army. The Jesus Army is a Christian group called the Jesus Fellowship Church which is characterised by intense commitment to biblical fundamentalism of belief and practice, communal living, strict supervision of members' lives and evangelism. It has its origins in the Charismatic renewal of the Baptist Church in Bugbrooke, a small village which is located several miles outside Northampton. The founder, Noel Stanton became the pastor of the congregation of Bugbrooke in 1957. In 1969 he claimed that he received an experience of Baptism in the Holy Spirit. After this charismatic experience, he encouraged others to speak in tongues and to accept baptism in the Spirit, and the church grew in numbers and people at the church became interested in the idea of a Christian community. In 1973, they decided to create a residential community and the first community house was inaugurated in 1974. In 1987, the Jesus Army was set up as the evangelising wing of the Jesus Fellowship Church to mobilise outreach work in towns and cities. The Jesus Army makes particular efforts to evangelise those in need, especially homeless young people, those involved in drug or alcohol abuse, prisoners and ex-prisoners.

The other NRM researched in this study is the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. The FWBO draws on various Buddhist traditions such as Theravada, and Tibetan Buddhism

for its doctrines and practices. The FWBO was founded in 1967 by Sangharakshita (Dennis Philip Edward Lingwood), an Englishman who lived in India for twenty years where he learned the traditions of Buddhism and practised them. The FWBO claims that since its foundation it has been committed to developing ways of practising Buddhism which meet the needs of people in the modern Western world. There are now about eighty FWBO centres around the world, thirty of them in the UK. These centres usually run introductory classes for the public and other activities for more experienced practitioners. Most people come into contact with the FWBO centres by attending a meditation class or a talk and then become involved with its other activities. Each centre composes a sangha or community of practising Buddhists who participate together in the study of Buddhism, meditation and devotional practices. Many of the members live in community houses or flats, because they find living and working with other Buddhists helpful.

There are two main reasons why these two NRMs have been selected in this study. First, the Jesus Army and the FWBO are similar in several important ways. Historically, they both have their origins in the same period, and because of these historical backgrounds, both of the movements are sociologically classed as NRMs. Demographically, both of the two movements are the same size; around 2,500 members who are involved in the Jesus Army in different ways and about 700 of them live in the community houses, and the FWBO has several thousand regular participants and about 800 fully committed members in the UK. Moreover, both of the movements value communal life-styles and have a policy of economic self-sufficiency. These similarities afford the opportunity of considering whether or not there are common structures which relate to altruism. The second reason is that the Jesus Army and the FWBO are derived from different religions, Christianity and Buddhism respectively. This provides the opportunity of how different the interpretations of altruism by the members who pursue these different religions are.

5 . Altruistic acts of the Jesus Army

The members of the Jesus Army regard their life as so committed to the vision of movement and evangelism that they do not get involved in other charities outside of the Jesus Army. The Jesus Army makes particular efforts to evangelise people in need, including homeless young people, those involved in drug or alcohol abuse, and prisoners and ex-prisoners. John Campbell, a spokesman of the Jesus Army wrote about their activities for public benefit:

Our main aim is to be a church of Jesus Christ and to worship Him. Consequences of this include the way that individual's lives are changed, often dramatically, through faith in Jesus Christ and finding a place in a living church with loving and supportive relationships. These include prisoners and ex-prisoners, homeless young people, those with drug or alcohol dependency, dysfunctional families etc. This clearly benefits

society (a) in terms of individuals (b) in terms of the quality of life of society in general (c) in terms of quality of life of those who would otherwise be affected by the antisocial behaviour of such individuals (d) financially because (i) these people will often now become wage earners and contribute to the nation's wealth (ii) and also cease being a drain on the nation's social services.

(John Campbell, e-mail on 25th of September, 1997)

EDP, an acronym of 'Eat, Drink, Pray', is one of those activities. Once a month the Jesus Army runs four-day EDP in London. They walk the streets for a few hours befriending night-clubbers and the homeless. At intervals they return to their bus at Trafalgar Square, sit newcomers down with a cup of tea and provide them with a hot meal. Not all of the members of the Jesus Army join EDP; this is on a voluntary basis. Tony, a 49-year-old ex-homeless man, joins EDP on Wednesdays and Fridays. One Friday night, when he was doing EDP with other members in Leicester Square in London, a man came to their bus. Tony said, 'Would you like a cup of tea or coffee?' The man replied, 'No. I want something deeper, spiritual.' Tony told the man about Jesus. Tony recalls:

It was just a conversation, but the guy changed from despair to hope. He knew he had a saviour. He was on his way to rob somebody to get money to buy more drugs when he saw our bus. We prayed for him. He went home and he told his mother that he found Jesus. He lives in this community [house] now. It is amazing, isn't it? (J30).

Tony has been living in one of the community houses since 1994 when he himself met the Jesus Army on the street. After doing EDP, he always feels joyful and exalted. He says, 'This is what God wants me to do. God has given me a ministry' (J30).

More than 500 religious professionals, lay workers and volunteers from various religious traditions deliver religious and pastoral care on a daily basis in every one of the more than 130 prisons in England and Wales (Beckford & Gilliat, 1998). Tony also visits prisons. He says, 'Christians can make mistakes. Some people find God and Jesus in prisons. We have a good relationship with a chaplain in a prison, we have a Gospel meeting there. We visit other prisons and just talk there' (J30). The research by Beckford and Gilliat (1998: 120) showed that proselytism was not a frequent occurrence. The Jesus Army itself regards helping prisoners as a part of its ministry.

Drusilla, a nurse, visits the Holloway women's prison in London with other female members. She says, 'we make friends with the women there, and if they need clothes or a rug for their cell or whatever, we try to meet their needs' (J3). She goes to the Swaleside prison in Kent as well. The prison holds about 650 prisoners, and the Jesus Army has been involved with it for many years and have been taking regular meetings for over two years. Drusilla sees that kind of activity as 'part of ministry and befriending, like Jesus was a friend to many.' Initially one of the members asked her to come along but she recalls, 'I think the Lord had been preparing my heart to do that sort of work, and offer friendship. God gives me the

heart for this work' (J3). Drusilla talks about compassion:

I feel their pain, their despair, and I know how they are feeling day to day, and what is happening in their lives. I hope that they can see Jesus in themselves, and that they would like to get to know Jesus themselves. But, just to be friends with them really, you know, because some people have nobody, no family, no friends in this country. Many have not had a visit for many years (J3).

After visiting the prison, she always feels happiness. She says, 'I feel happiness that God can use me, rather than anything else, also that God has chosen me to do this. I feel the joy and fulfilment that God has chosen me' (J3).

Sally, 34-year-old, claims that she shows love to prisoners in the same way to people outside prisons. She gives a little talk, prays to God for them, and talks about Jesus, if prisoners want. Sally visits prisons with five other members once a month. She says:

They are needy people. They committed crimes, but they have a great sense of guilt in prisons. We visit them because they are sitting there probably feeling more guilty than anybody outside of the prison. They are in prisons and cannot go out. They have no freedom, so we try to bring freedom that comes from within themselves. Physically they cannot go out, but within hearts and their mind, we try to bring a sense of release, so they can free before they leave prisons (J23).

6 . Altruistic acts of the FWBO

Let us begin with the Karuna Trust (originally 'Aid For India'; 'Karuna' means 'compassion'), which is a fund-raising charity founded and supported by the FWBO. To date it has raised several million pounds for supporting work done in India through its sister organisation there, 'Bahujan Hitay', promoting social development programmes with the ex-untouchable communities. These include educational, health, and job training projects. The Karuna Trust also separately supports Buddhist activities for ex-untouchables who have converted to Buddhism; these include retreat centres and Buddhist classes.

Lee, 33-year-old, gave up his job as an accountant and started working for the Karuna Trust four years ago, because he was fed up with working in a commercial company and the Karuna Trust needed an accountant. He took a huge drop in salary, but the working environment is much better for him. Lee explains, 'everybody in the office has their views and thoughts taken into account. We try to do everything by a consensus. You get involved in everything, so you feel you are contributing to everything' (F17). Lee thinks charitable work by religious organisations can be better than non-religious charitable work:

The purpose of the Karuna Trust is to organise social activities and also Buddhist activities, so it has got that remit to spread Buddhism as well as to carry out the social activities. Also people with ethics, morality,

maturity and wisdom, may be able to use their talents to develop useful projects which help people. So I think that people who are working on their own self development bring more than people who are not. So a charity run by a religious organisation can be better than one that isn't. I think ours is one which is better than a lot of the others, because people are working on their spirituality and bringing that to their work (F17).

On the other hand, he is careful about religious charities. He says, 'if people run a charity and they are religious, they need to be careful not to force the people they are helping to conform to their religion, unless one of their purposes of the charity is to spread their religion' (F17).

Melanie, 68-year-old, has been in the FWBO for 30 years. She does not officially do any charitable activities. She says:

I am very aware of the community [house] which I live in with my husband. I suppose you could say that we perform acts of charity in helping our elderly neighbours, in doing shopping for them, in many ways like that. I don't belong to an actual charity. I certainly would hope that I perform charitable acts just as an act of kindness (F9).

It is natural for Melanie to think that 'people need help, and if I can help them, then I want to do that' (F9).

Charity is about giving and religion is about giving. In Buddhism, generosity is very important. So if you are to practice Buddhism, then you give in a charitable way. The meaning of charity is giving without seeking recompense or a return for it. I think there is a similarity in religions and charity in the giving, whether it is giving the teaching or giving in other ways. But I think it is important that we give what people need, not what we think they should have (F9).

For Melanie, daily acts of kindness are charitable acts, and she considers not only the act itself but also the contents of the kindness and giving in order not to be intrusive but to be effective.

Tracy, 35-year-old, used to attend Sunday school when she was a child. However, she was not attracted by that and became an atheist. Her parents were atheists, but were 'very caring persons'. She recognises their positive effects on her. As a teenager she was aware that she did not want to live a purely materialistic life. She wanted to help people and to put her energy into beneficial work. She studied psychology at university. When she joined and started the practice in the FWBO in 1984, she had already had a sense of caring towards others and an interest in social work. Tracy meditates for half an hour at the London Buddhist Centre five days a week and goes to work in 'Evolution', which is a gift shop providing money for the FWBO. She started working there in 1996. Before that, she worked for a charity for housing homeless people which was started by the FWBO, but grew away from the FWBO and became independent because many people and money came from outside the FWBO to support the charity. She worked there for seven years. She enjoyed it very much

but she felt increasingly that she wanted to put her energy to benefit to the FWBO more directly. At the time 'Evolution' shop was not doing well and they asked her to help organise it.

Tracy previously worked directly for society, but now she is working in a gift shop of the FWBO. Previous social work was for the homeless people in need but now the customers are of a different class and financial status. She believes that she is experiencing a 'broader selection of society'. However, she does not think her vision of people has changed. Although she is not directly helping people in need, she does not think she is less caring. She is still conscious of serving people whom she meets. She says, 'I am quite interested in the ordinary acts of kindness rather than social work. I am still interested in social work too, but I just think a lot of ordinary people can give to one another in quite simple ways' (F28).

Colette, 25-year-old, works for a vegetarian restaurant of the FWBO called 'The Cherry Orchard'. She saw an advertisement for the meditation course of the FWBO in 1994, and found meditation very pragmatic, practical and 'very down to earth'. She was impressed by the humanity, friendliness, and the lack of artifice. She has never done any social work, but she considers small kindnesses in daily life more important. When she is working in the vegetarian restaurant and meets someone who looks grumpy, she thinks that this person might be very tired or have had a hard time, and she attends to the person kindly and generously. Colette says, 'That does not necessarily mean that you have to be acting physically with generosity. It is more attitude of mind' (F26).

7 . Implications of altruism in the Jesus Army

Liam, who has been a member of the Jesus Army for over 20 years, used to be a teacher and did some fund raising connected with the school before he became a full-time member. Nowadays he does not do any charitable activities apart from the activities to do with the Jesus Army. However, this does not mean that he is not altruistic at all. Liam regards altruism as activities 'to help benefit humanity, to do something good for mankind.' He thinks of himself as altruistic in 'the Christian sense rather than humanistic altruism.' 'I think that genuine Christianity is altruistic, but not in a sentimental sense and not in a humanistic sense,' he says. He distinguishes Christian altruism from humanistic altruism: 'my motive for doing it isn't just to benefit mankind but to see God glorified in helping mankind. Humanistic altruism can take you down a path of doing good for the sake of doing good, often to please your own self' (J13). Liam points out that humanistic altruism can be 'self-motivated'. On the other hand, Christian altruism to him is motivated by 'desire to see God glorified and honoured'. Has Liam changed since he joined the Jesus Army? He says:

The Bible speaks about doing well to all men. I have a heart that is ready to give to any one and every one. People we have helped with drink and drugs problems over the years have been enormous. People who have nowhere else to go and need to stay with you for a time. I have become

more and more open hearted towards those people. Before I had no contact with those people at all (J13).

Liam sees helping those people as an important part of their 'life and ministry.' His model is Jesus. He says, 'Jesus to me was a servant to mankind, and my vision is to be a servant to people' (J13). When he behaves altruistically, he is behaving like Jesus. If it is important for the members to try to do what Jesus did, the recognition that one's behaviour corresponds with the behaviour of Jesus should be reinforcing. In other words, the satisfaction of knowing that helping people is an imitation of Jesus encourages the members to help others (cf., Chen, 1988: 47). Liam's altruistic acts are to serve people not only in practical ways but also 'in spiritual ways'. He says, 'To provide them with food, give them a place to sleep. We do that, although we have to be realistic. If people don't really want God then there comes a time when they must choose for themselves' (J13). But nevertheless 'we are open to helping to all sorts of people. I do this in a way that I would never have done 20 years ago,' he recalls (J13).

Jean, 45-year-old, relates the parable of the Good Samaritan in the Bible to explain altruism:

The Good Samaritan story in the Bible shows what altruism is. For instance, if we were going to church and there was someone waiting for a bus, we would stop and bring them with us, even if it meant being late ourselves, even if it was not to our own church, as long as they were worshipping the Lord, and in fact we would stop for anyone in need. In other words we were in our way being Good Samaritans (J8).

Jean thinks being the Good Samaritan is a part of her life as a Christian.

As Ritzema (1979: 106, 107) points out, in a few instances in the Bible (e.g. Matt 25: 41-46) the punishments which will follow lack of altruism are mentioned, but a member, Drusilla says:

Well, it is good to fear God, but God loves you and doesn't want you to act out of fear of Him. You love God and you want to please Jesus, and that is why you do things and obey God. If you don't know the love of God and you have not come to know Jesus, then you might live in a fear, a wrong fear. But it is good to fear the Lord, to respect and have a reverence for God. I do have a fear of God, but the longer I am a Christian, the more I get to know the love of God, and know that God is a just God. God gives sunshine for everyone, those who do or do not love God. God gives the sunshine and the rain too (J3).

For the most part of the Bible, the emphasis is on the rewards received by those who do behave helpfully. They believe that reward will be given by God (e.g. Matt 6:1-4', Luke 14: 12-14). Jean says, 'The Bible teaches us that it is good to exalt people other than yourself, not to see yourself as the main person, in this way the Lord will exalt you' (J8). Meg, 23-year-old, also regards altruism as 'a drive to see the welfare of other's needs rather than seeking your own gratification and satisfaction all the time. It is to see someone else lifted up rather than

yourself' (J7).

Sally, 34-year-old, considers altruism as 'something you do for somebody because you think they might do something for you'. She says, 'I think what altruism means is being helpful towards others and looking out for their needs. I think that if they do good to others then they will get good done back to them' (J23). Sally thinks of herself as a very giving person. She likes to help others, 'if altruistic means liking to help others, then I think I am very altruistic. There are times when I probably don't want to be altruistic. It depends if you are feeling a bit down or not. I wouldn't say I only want to help and give, but basically I do' (J23). Sally repeats that there is a reward. She says:

We are here really to help other people, and the more we go out to others the more you receive. In giving you receive in a way. I am better at giving than I am at receiving. But I am learning more to receive help from others. I find it much easier to give (J23).

Sally thinks that it is natural for her to like to help others because of her occupation as a nurse.

Verona, 43-year-old, considers altruism as compassion. She says:

As a Christian, God does call us to be compassionate towards people and that is one of the things we would seek to become. We would seek to understand people, to be able to feel with them, whether happy or sad, and to be able to pray with them. That is to have, as we would say, a bigger heart (J20).

There are not many members in the Jesus Army who are familiar with the term 'altruism'. Indeed, the term 'altruism' has never been mentioned in their sermons during the period of this research. Instead, they use the term 'love'.

8 . Implications of altruism in the FWBO

The FWBO states in its brochure (Vessantara 'The FWBO: An Introduction', 1996: 6) that 'Buddhism is a tradition of teaching and practice that helps people to unfold the inner riches of love, wisdom, and energy that lie within us all' and that one of the facets of Enlightenment is 'a source of infinite compassion, of boundless love for all beings.' Altruism is one of the important issues in the FWBO.

Caroline, 36-year-old, regards altruism as 'acts for the benefit of other human beings, probably over and above yourself'. She says, 'I see altruism as personally rewarding as well as rewarding for other people. It could be putting others' needs before your own' (F11). She is involved with a charity called TELCO, which is an East London community organisation involving different faith groups. The organisation is concerned with social change and changing conditions for people living in East London. Caroline considers the work as an altruistic activity, and thinks that teaching meditation is also an altruistic activity. She says:

Altruism is a formalised way of expressing one's wish to help all other

sentient beings. So it is a particular aspect of one's practice as a Buddhist. You have your personal practice of meditation, but even in that you begin to reflect on your relationship to other human beings and to change that relationship. It is a natural expression of feeling more connected to other human beings. It is not just trying to get happiness for myself; I also want other beings to be happy as well. To do charitable activities, to teach or to work with other groups of people are a way of possibly having a positive effect on others (F11).

Sabina, 36-year-old, says, 'altruism is a going beyond oneself in a way. Trying to improve a situation or do something for a good effect to benefit everybody. It might mean that one has to put one's own needs or desires aside' (F12). She gives an example of altruism: 'It is a bit like giving money to a charity, instead of buying something for yourself you give it' (F12).

Patrick, 41-year-old, considers 'altruism is about other rather than self.' He thinks there are two sides to his practice; one is altruistic and the other is selfish, but these two sides feed each other. Patrick says, 'By working on myself I can be altruistic, and by being altruistic I can feed myself. Sometimes the distinction is not so clear. By helping others you are definitely helping yourself and by helping yourself you are helping others' (F13). Patrick talks about reciprocity:

I want to provide the situation for others. Ultimately we are not separate. I suffer, the other suffers. If I can help to relieve the other suffering, it helps me as well. Others want to be happy and I want to be happy. It is just the appreciation of those basic facts. When I am not in a very happy state, going out to somebody else can actually shift that for me, it can put me back into a reasonably positive state. Obviously around the movement I receive acts of generosity from others (F13).

For Patrick, altruism is not necessarily having to do anything. He explains:

Sometimes altruism may just be being a friend to people. You don't have to do anything obviously overt. You can just stay close when they are in trouble. The actual act of altruism could be giving an object, giving money, and giving advice, which are not always so good. Just being there as a friendly person might be better. I think just smiling to another person is an altruistic act (F13).

Terry, 34-year-old, sees altruism 'in terms of oneself having a positive affect on other people'. He says, 'Operating from the view that you can positively effect other people and, in terms of the Dharma, you can improve the circumstances of their lives materially and spiritually. Altruism is an emotional response to other people in terms of trying to orientate them into a more positive direction' (F14). Terry thinks that altruism involves compassion: 'Altruism is related to compassion, and one has a natural internal emotional response to other people's suffering. Your response actually moves towards other people with the intention of improving them, or helping them to improve themselves' (F14).

Glen, 28-year-old, regards altruism as 'an orientation towards others as opposed to towards oneself'. However, he does not think that altruism is totally orientated towards other people. He explains, 'we have to take ourselves into account. We have to feed ourselves and look after ourselves. I would see altruistic persons as being more focused on other people, on the welfare of other people rather than everything revolving around their own needs, wants and desires'(F15). Lee, 33-year- old, sees altruism in a more strict sense. He says:

The opposite of altruism is selfishness. Altruism to me would be ensuring that I was aware of the wider society and that I wasn't engrossed in my own little circular world. I would need to be aware of the environment, other people, other nations and that, as far as possible I would take that into account in my activities. For instance not wasting water, just giving away some of my salary, or giving some of my time to do some charitable activity (F17).

Lee claims that altruism may be expressed in various ways.

9 . Conclusion

The working definition of altruism in this research was that 'altruism is behaviour that aims at a termination or reduction of an emergency, a neediness, or disadvantage of others and that primarily does not aim at the fulfilment of own interests', adding that 'the behaviour has to be carried out voluntarily' (Montada & Bierhoff 1991: 18). Many members of the Jesus Army and the FWBO referred to their altruistic activities and acts, which conform to the above working definition. The similarities between the Jesus Army and the FWBO were the first reason for selecting the two movements for this research. The members value friendship and communal living where they share many things with other members and pursue religious life. The Jesus Army has intense commitment to biblical fundamentalism of belief and practice, whereas the FWBO puts emphasis on Buddhist ethics. Overall, both movements have an ideal of altruism to reach out to the suffering of the world.

This research, however, revealed that altruism among the members of the two NRMs had some unique meanings and constructions. Members of the Jesus Army believe that their activities such as EDP and visiting prisons are altruistic activities. They claimed that their altruistic activities aimed to help people not so much in practical ways as in spiritual ways. For the members of the Jesus Army, altruism is to exalt people other than themselves and to see the welfare of others' needs rather than seeking their own. When they talked about altruism, some of them referred to reward. Members of the Jesus Army believe that God will reward their altruistic acts and their altruistic deeds towards others are ultimately directed to God. In contrast, a member of the FWBO pointed out that it is more important to give what others need rather than what one thinks they should have. Some members of the FWBO distinguished religious charitable work from non-religious charitable work. On the other hand, some members of the FWBO think that people can perform charitable acts just as

ordinary acts of kindness. For them, however, altruism is not totally oriented towards other people. In this case altruism is seen as both personally rewarding as well as rewarding for other people. It is emphasised that people who perform altruistic activities should also take their own spiritual and material well-being into account.

The love of the Jesus Army and the loving kindness of the FWBO arise out of radically different paths and are based on different religious visions on human beings and the world. These differences seem to be related to the differences of religion in the second reason for choosing the Jesus Army and the FWBO for this research: the Jesus Army and the FWBO are derived from different religions, Christianity and Buddhism respectively. The meanings and constructions of altruism in the Jesus Army are coloured by ethical duty such as acts of service to God, and the members believe that the reward will be given by God. In contrast, altruism of the members of the FWBO does not involve obedience to anything, and many interviewees talked about reciprocity.

Religion have lost its traditional function of providing a religiously based moral order for society. This research, however, shows that NRMs may exercise influence over an individual's private life by supplying shared moral values and that they may contribute to the solution of social problems such as equality of rights and respect for life which are specific to contemporary society, whereas NRMs have been considered a social problem and pictured in the mass media as controversial and threatening. There remains a question which is beyond the scope of this paper: whether there are differences and similarities on altruism between NRMs and traditional religions. One of the future directions of research on altruism and religion could encompass the examination of the point.

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新宗教における利他主義の意味と構造

稲場圭信

宗教は、歴史的に見て、利他的な活動や社会福祉に貢献してきた。しかし、現代社会において、伝統的宗教は道德秩序を社会に提供するという役割を失いつつあると考えられる。伝統宗教がその機能を失う一方で、新宗教が道德的価値を提供することにより個人の生き方に影響を与えている。本稿では、イギリスにおけるふたつの新宗教、ジーザス・アーミーとザ・フレンズ・オブ・ザ・ウェスタン・ブディスト・オーダーを事例に、両教団において1997年から1999年に実施したインタビューをもとに新宗教における利他主義の意味と構造を探究する。インタビューの分析により、新宗教教団における利他主義の意味と構造の特殊性が明らかになった。

キーワード：利他主義、新宗教、ジーザス・アーミー、ザ・フレンズ・オブ・ザ・ウェスタン・ブディスト・オーダー

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