

## **ALTRUISM IN BIOLOGY REGARDING DISINTERESTED FORMS OF ACTION IN ECONOMY (SELECTED ASPECTS)**

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this paper is to analyse and seek equivalents of behaviours which in respect of living organisms are defined as altruistic, i.e. consisting of certain activities aimed at drawing advantages by other individuals, with simultaneous resignation of own advantage by one of the participants of the so-called altruistic act. Altruistic acts, as a negation of egoism, are often observed among numerous living creatures, but also within the whole human communities with their complex cultural and economic structures. The forms and mechanisms of such behaviours are interesting, as they are typically not aimed at satisfying the needs of specific individuals, ready to share their resources with other individuals, as a consequence of which they themselves may lose. In biology, altruistic behaviours are typically associated with organisms closely related to each other. Such acts are reasonable in the context of evolutionary considerations, as helping one's own relatives increases the chance of spreading one's genes. Description of such behaviours is different in economic lives of societies, where altruistic behaviours can be observed as well, whether in the form of sponsoring, or of welfare state, i.e. targeted at completely strange individuals as well. Explanation of the reason behind such behaviours seems to get us closer to understanding of certain patterns of activity in biology as well as in social and economic behaviours, which consist of acting in a manner that brings advantage to others. However, altruism of such activities depends on complex factors and is therefore complicated and oftentimes also apparent, leading to more comprehensive achievement of one's own egoistic agenda in the long-term.

**Key words:** biological altruism, sponsoring, welfare state

## INTRODUCTION

Explanation of altruistic social behaviours among animals is an important issue to understand the mechanisms of struggle for existence, which are present in the world of living creatures and which are researched by such fields of science as sociobiology, or evolutionary biology. They analyse and describe interactions between individuals, including the functioning of individuals within groups abiding by certain rules. All discussion on co-existence of organisms is based on the natural selection theory, as all living organisms have such properties and exist in such world which makes this selection unavoidable. The most important issue here is the maximisation of probability of survival and number of offspring [Łomnicki 1991]. The fact that offspring are similar to their parents but not identical is due to variability, at least in terms of certain features. Therefore, individuals having various features may differ by the probability of survival or number of offspring in certain circumstances [Kozłowski 1991]. For this reason, focus on “oneself and one’s own success” is more important than caring of the well-being of other representatives of one’s species. However, this is not always the case. A multitude of behaviours can be observed in nature which can be described as altruistic, i.e. not only those which would assure one’s own adaptation, or life in a given moment or in a short term, but also those improving adaptation among other representatives of one’s species, living in the closest surroundings, particularly among one’s relatives. Despite that sharing, e.g. food or living space, is relatively rare, for instance among primates, this is one of the strongest social features in humans. This is also why humans are the only species to create economy, which is a science dealing with management of limited resources they have or may have at their disposal. Their advanced intelligence and symbolic thinking capacity allowed for true exchange of goods and services [Wilson 2000]. However, humans try to consider and promote the need to be generous and to obey altruistic rules, somehow in order to conceal their true nature, which prefers being egoistic. It would be difficult to learn altruism in the world of animals, as this feature may be genetically programmed. The matter is becoming even more complicated with human beings, being the only species dominated by culture which may impose further rules of conduct and indicate a purpose of certain behaviours. In other living organisms, altruism and egoism is not intentional but purely behavioural. An altruistic act in the world of living creatures is an act which, even to the slightest extent, increases the chances of the altruist’s death and the chances of survival for the recipient of such act. Thus, exhibiting altruistic qualities may be seemingly counter-adaptive and make an impression of self-dedication [Maynard Smith 1992]. However, these are often fake altruistic deeds in the world of nature, which effectively turn out to be hidden egoism [Dawkins 2006]. This will probably also often refer to acting in the realm of economic behaviours of the human population, particularly with regard to various forms of conducted business activities and behaviours related to sharing of goods.

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this discussion is to critically analyse various aspects determining altruistic behaviours in the surrounding world, considering purely biological factors con-

tributing to such behaviours as well as conscious human actions integrated in the canon of reasoning in economic terms. Furthermore, an attempt has been made to compare various relationships formed through evolution in the animated world to those occurring in the sphere of economy. The initial assumption is that nature has obviously been an inexhaustible source of observation and inspiration for formation and subsequent implementation of certain rules in the lives of human individuals and of whole complex societies.

Altruistic behaviours in biology were analysed on the basis of several example types, including:

- apparently altruistic behaviours which in reality served the purpose of securing one's safety or improving accessibility of certain resources;
- kin altruism in eusocial animals, such as bees or ants where relations of kin are slightly different than in other organisms;
- fair play behaviours, which are not expressly altruistic but may nevertheless cause harm to the individual exercising them in favour of another individual;
- altruism as a kind of symbiosis where both parties draw advantages from cooperation;
- reciprocal altruism – behaviours involving reciprocal rendering of services to each other, most commonly by individuals of species which are capable of recognising each other.

Altruistic behaviours in the economy were studied on the basis of two example forms of behaviours and transaction mechanisms, namely:

- sponsoring, or augmentation of assets, albeit for a consideration (i.e. remuneration), but frequently non-equivalent, at least for the party enriched through such support;
- activities of the so-called welfare state, consisting of multifaceted undertakings to secure the existence of selected individuals in human societies. Such activities generally consist of protecting individuals against various risks occurring in life, such as sickness, unemployment, accidents.

Analogies were also sought between altruistic behaviours present in the animal world and altruism in the realm of economy.

## **RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SPECIES IN THE NATURAL SELECTION THEORY VS. BIOLOGICAL ALTRUISM**

Today, we are able to observe a multitude of diversity of plant and animal species, which exploded around 600 million years ago. It is estimated that there are millions of species living on the Earth – an enormous number within an equally broad range, between 5 and 50 million [Weiner 1999]. In natural science, in order to grasp the complex interactions of such diverse organisms as separate species, it is a matter of key importance to understand Darwin's theory. This is a still valid philosophy of scientific thinking, a foundation for research on cooperation and variability of living organisms, plants and animals [Falińska 2010]. Its origins are perceived in a voyage Charles Darwin took as a young man on board of *Beagle*, as the "royal naturalist". An unexpected result of that journey was a theory of evolution through natural selection, revolutionary for its times, which has become an inspiration for reflection on the issues of origin and co-existence of various

species [Piekielko-Zemanek 1983, Szafer 1959]. Darwinism has quite soon become not only a popular biological theory but also a tool for explaining various common social phenomena. This theory was slowly and arduously transposed to incomparably broader discussions, which would often refer to the level of human individuals' ethics realising in specific tasks and relations referred to entire social groups [Mirek 2010]. Nature is practically an inexhaustible source of inspiration in this respect, as there are various adaptations serving various organisms to survive in specific ecological niches. Animals, as organisms endowed with highly developed nervous systems and often with the ability to move, have developed a multitude of various living strategies, also relating to their existence on the social level, which is regulated by a number of individual behaviours. The world of plants, perceived by many as incomparably simpler in terms of ways of life and so-called social interactions, treated in terms of social behaviours, is determined by lack of nervous system, typical of animals. But plants also compete with each other in various ways, e.g. for accessibility of light, water or organic substances, which makes them ultimately egoistic creatures. An interesting example of certain plants' co-existence with their surroundings is the development of so-called carnivorousness in certain species. They are able to attract, retain, kill and digest their prey, typically insects, thus supplying themselves with useful substances from the victim's body [Płachno 2010]. They are not therefore only passive observers of the interactions surrounding them, between animal species, but are able to actively participate in the struggle for existence, realising their purely egoistic causes, deceiving the insects through attracting them with a promised profit from a visit, to then never let them out of their bodies.

A multitude of evolutionary strategies applied by various animals are associated with the Darwinian concept of natural selection. One of such strategies is the phenomenon of so-called altruism, whether between individuals of the same or of different species. This may show in various types of cooperation between individuals, but also with low virulence of parasites and diseases [Krzanowska et al. 1997]. Highly diverse altruistic or pseudo-altruistic behaviours are observed in the animal world. Particularly for species living in herds or flocks, such behaviours are strongly developed through the natural selection process, and their purpose is to improve the chances of survival and leaving offspring by individuals. Generally, in order to understand the phenomenon of biological altruism, one should be aware of the fact that the outcome of such act, when assessed in somehow economic terms, will show that the altruist's losses will be lower than the gains of the neighbour-recipient. In such discussions, gains and losses are always measured by the ability to survive and the number of offspring. A theory of such implementation of natural selection, which is known as kin selection, was formulated in 1964 by W.D. Hamilton. It explains numerous phenomena of animals' social life, including evolution of bee or ant communities [Łomnicki 1991].

There is also a multitude of behaviours in nature which only seem to be altruistic. One can mention, for instance, female lions who not only feed their cubs but also other cubs in their pride. However, male lions would kill all the cubs after taking over a new pride from other males, while females do not even try to intervene. This is because the males taking over the pride are not related to the females, or even less to the cubs, while females feeding their neighbours' cubs are often closely related to each other. There is another example of a seemingly altruistic behaviour among certain antelopes which, when they

notice they are being attacked, for instance by hyenas, will not escape but will first make a series of jumps. Such a behaviour may be perceived from outside as aiming at other animals' good, as antelopes live in herds and therefore are expected to warn their compatriots of an approaching predator. In fact, this is an extremely egoistic behaviour, as the jumping antelopes send signals to convince the predator of their own strength, which shows in the high jumps; the jumps also prove the animal's health, which will make it more difficult to catch. These signals are also comprehensible for the predators themselves, who have learned that it is harder to catch a high-jumping prey [Kozłowski 1996]. Another example can be a situation of social behaviours in the animal world that has straightforward equivalents in the realm of human behaviours, occurring for example in numerous bird species. Offspring of many bird species, e.g. wild pigeons, will not always grow independent or leave their parents at an adult age, but will rather help raising their siblings for a few years. This is the case in areas with scarce food resources or those which are difficult to settle, where there is little chance to build one's own nest but there is a chance of taking over a nest after deceased parents [Kozłowski 1998].

Another aspect of altruism shows in eusocial animals, including Hymenoptera, such as bees, wasps or ants, but also African naked mole rats, classified as mammals. Altruism in Hymenoptera is supported by unique sex determination. Here, males hatch from unfertilised eggs and have 50% less genetic material; sisters from fertilised eggs are 75% related while mothers and daughters are only 50% related. Therefore, these insects have evolved a behaviour consisting of abandonment of reproduction among the so-called workers, in favour of taking care of their sisters, as this is the way for them to contribute stronger to propagation of their own genes [Łomnicki 1991].

Another form of biological altruism are the so-called fair play behaviours, numerous in the world of nature. An example can be genus *Nucifraga* birds which, despite that they know their neighbours' hiding places for food, they will not steal that food. However, they will soon manage the resources after these individuals die [Kozłowski 1996].

Altruism may also appear in the form of symbiosis, where both parties draw advantages from cooperation. It can be observed, for example, in certain New World ant species which "discovered" much earlier than humans that farming food can be more efficient than hunting or gathering [Dawkins 2006]. Such "home-bred animals" for ants are aphids, specialising in sucking on plant juices. As they release more fluid than they actually need for their metabolism, it can be intercepted by ants, which somehow "milk" the aphids and provide themselves with highly nutritional substance. Aphids draw advantage from this cooperation in the form of defence against natural enemies.

Reciprocal altruism, which is important for the references in the realm of economy, describes the relationships existing when two unrelated individuals cooperate. Here, an individual may reduce its chance of survival in favour of its partner as well as achieve something from that partner. An example of this type of strategy is sharing food by vampire bats. An individual that succeeded on a given night has gathered resources he will not be able to wholly utilise. Through sharing some of these resources with a peer that did not have a successful hunt that night, he may share the latter's life. Such altruism as presented by Trivers (1985) may form through natural selection if the individuals know each other, and their contact must be recurrent so that there is a chance of exchange of services [Krzanowska et al. 1997].

## SPONSORING AND WELFARE STATE AS THE MAIN FORMS OF ALTRUISM IN THE ECONOMY

Humans as representatives of primates exhibit a whole range of features referring to their animal relatives. One of these features is living in groups, which involves numerous advantages but often also certain costs, arising from continuous need for cooperation [Lewin 2002]. Social and cultural realities often require being altruistic to one's compatriots, although it sometimes seems to be unprofitable. In human societies, including the advanced and modern ones, behaviours similar to those which in biology are identified as natural selection can be observed, particularly one of the crucial aspects of natural selection, namely struggle for existence. These are frequently unconscious behaviours, driven by animal instincts, as humans are animals as well. However, it is important for humans as creatures endowed with consciousness and intelligence to abide by certain moral and cultural rules, which are perceived as acts of altruism towards other individuals. Darwin already believed that the moral code of humans has its origin in their social instincts. Accordingly, every human fights an internal struggle between desiring material conveniences for himself and the sense of obligation towards people from his surroundings, e.g. his relatives, acquaintances, colleagues, workers or subordinates. This can be perceived as a remnant of the struggle between egoistic instincts of the "former man" and the social instincts of "man created by the society" [Timiriasiev 1952]. It is an open question whether such moral and social evolution of humans is true. For economic science, but perhaps for social science as well, it is important to seek an answer to the question whether we as a species have developed towards satisfying the needs of our surroundings and expanding our altruism. Or, perhaps, on the contrary – with the growth of complex civil structures and highly organised societies, a matter of importance was a concealed pursuit of one's own advantage under false pretences of care of others.

Altruism, particularly when perceived as sponsoring, is a continuously valid object of analysis for economic sciences, particularly marketing, but it is also within the realm of interest of the so-called behavioural economy. Adam Smith was its distinguished founder, also known as the father of traditional scientific economy, and considered in the past to be an outstanding ethicist, psychologist and sociologist. Thus, he would base his scientific studies, largely philosophical in nature, on extensive and diversified scientific grounds. He was also the author of a less known and later forgotten work entitled *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1985) [Smith 1989]. In this work, he not only mentioned the issue of egoistic behaviours, which are somehow naturally associated with economy, but also the "love the neighbour" phenomenon and the essence of altruism. Later questioning of this work and finally oblivion was caused by popularisation of the concepts by Walras and Pareto in economy. These have eliminated the hardly measurable or at times even metaphysical psychology and moral philosophy introduced to the discussion of economic development of humans. Elimination of such assessments in the economy is called the Pareto revolution [Wojtyna 2008]. It has been proven on the basis of Pareto's optimum that neither hostility nor kindness ever emerges within a given system. Smith in his work emphasized the human being as a living creature and the most socially developed representative of the animal world [Polowczyk 2010]. Assuming that the general moral rules derive from divine laws, he believed that religion supported the innate sense of duty. Also in the first

half of the 19th century, J.M. Keynes and J. Fisher would explain many economic behaviours of humans through applying social, including psychological, assessments in their research. Such “purification” of economy from the humanities does not seem to have made economy more scientific and the science more certain, even taking account of the current global economic crisis, which probably has ordinary greed and egoism among its reasons. However, as emphasized by Kowalski [2001], human behaviours and decisions strongly deviate from the activity pattern of *homo oeconomicus* as assumed by traditional economy. Nevertheless, almost the whole structure of contemporary economy is based on a model of human nature describing reason as a pursuit of maximising one’s own advantage, i.e. behaviours which are essentially egoistic and leading to gaining maximum material wealth. Without questioning these generally accepted human behaviours and their repeatability, leading to certain regularities [Fukuyama 1997] also perceives certain actions which may be considered unreasonable from the viewpoint of one’s own advantage. This is clearly visible in the so-called cost-benefit economy and therefore disregarding them would lead to a probably incomplete model of human economic behaviours. However, Thaler foresees that *homo oeconomicus* will evaluate towards *homo sapiens*, “to lose his high IQ and to become more emotional” [quoted by Polowczyk 2010].

In his work entitled *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1989], Smith points out that man, despite his innate egoism, is still capable of being selfless. According to the author, “Nature, it seems, when she loaded us with our own sorrows, thought that they were enough, and therefore did not command us to take any further share in those of others, than what was necessary to prompt us to relieve them”. Also in the neoclassical theory of utility, egoism is the natural, pragmatic and verified attitude of human beings in their life behaviours, including economic behaviours. Here, egoism not only means the strive to survive but also to maximise one’s utility for the society, drawing benefits and satisfaction therefrom. However, Simon [2005] believes that one of the forms of altruism, typically neutral and therefore disregarded in economists’ discussions, can be considered reasonable, namely the reciprocal altruism known from the animal world, which in fact constitutes far-sighted (deferred) egoism. According to that author, altruism interpreted as sacrificing oneself for others is fully compliant with the assumptions of neo-Darwinism and the theory of evolution based on natural selection. This unique parable is explained here by reference and analysis of behaviours of people functioning as members of large economic or business organisations, e.g. corporations. In this case, learning social behaviours and relations is important, like in gregarious animals. Reasonableness of individual behaviours is a matter of secondary importance, or utterly negligible.

When analysing analogies of altruistic behaviours in biology or eco-sociology of animals and in human behaviours, one should again refer to A. Smith, the classic of economy [1989]. He made a distinction between two types of sentiments, i.e. “sentiments that are common to people and animals”, “having their origin in the human organism” and the “sentiment through which nature joins the two sexes”. The second group of sentiments include generosity, politeness, mutual respect, friendship, social sentiments, including kindness. These are the emotions that determine those human behaviours which are altruistic by nature. He would also emphasize that “a man can only exist in a community”. However, for a community to emerge, there must be mutual trust and cooperation between the individuals forming the community, as well as mutual support, which can be

referenced to the relationships existing, for instance, in case of sponsoring. When the concept of sponsoring is analysed from the perspective of economic science, one should pay attention to the semantic field of this word, which is frequently too broad. It is most often identified with supporting various types of activities and projects to build one's own trustworthy image and in this way gaining public sympathy [Kujawa, Polakowska-Kujawa 1994]. Its historical and social roots are probably in patronage, which is today a strongly distinguished concept. The difference between sponsoring and patronage relies both on the intentions and the relationships between the partners. Patronage is predominantly (or even exclusively) based on altruism, i.e. actions where donations are given in a selfless way. Altruism is therefore targeted at achievement of diverse goals, none of which are personal. It is typically the care of other people's well-being, which can be achieved almost immediately or postponed. An altruistic behaviour is thus typically pro-social and consists in waiver of certain personal rights and benefits which are transferred to other people. Sponsoring, although it is quite commonly identified with aid targeted at various entities and areas of life which will draw benefits from this in an easier way than if they take other equally demanding actions, but it is not an activity without consideration or gratification. The goal of sponsoring is to obtain measurable benefits from such cooperation, not only by the sponsored party but by the sponsor as well. This is an arrangement between the sponsor and the sponsored party, in which one party (the sponsor) grants certain funds, goods or services to the other party. However, both parties benefit from the arrangement, as the sponsored party agrees to render certain reciprocal services envisaged (in the arrangement). Such benefits may include social recognition of the sponsor, or facilitated communication with new groups of recipients. Thus, it has economic reasons and is therefore within the realm of interest of economy as science. Patronage, on the other hand, as there is no expectation of an equivalent service and therefore it is an entirely altruistic deed, is somehow outside the scope of interest of economy, or at least mainstream economy. It is not targeted at managing goods in order to draw benefits, or even reducing one's own goods [Perlak 2010]. Patronage can be inspired by various attitudes of the party reducing its assets. Usually it has idealistic motivations and it is based on humanist and social motives of action, while at the same time carrying the message of charity, or generosity. While sponsoring is based on the principle "I give so that you give, too", patronage emphasizes the approach "I give you so that you can be" [Datko 2012]. For economy and related sciences, altruistic pursuits realised through patronage have certain features which clearly distinguish them from undertakings classified as sponsoring. In the case of altruism, these features include disinterested aid, typically anonymous (although not necessarily), aid transferred through donations (and not under commercial contracts). Another characteristic features is that benefits are one-sided and typically highly valued in ethical terms, but not usually in economic terms [Breczko 2011].

Another instance of altruistic activity can be the idea of welfare state. In this context, it can be considered the largest altruistic system with respect to its citizens. This shows, for example, in financially supporting families with many children so that they are able to raise their offspring more easily and when the children become adults, they will work for the development of the state which has "fed" them. Does welfare state actually follow the rules of complete altruism, or is this rather an expression of transient sponsoring, or a form of loan which will more than pay for itself in the future. Generally, what reciprocal



altruism is for the animal world, in the name of the rule “a service for a service”, is the money as the medium of deferred altruism for human societies [Dawkins 2006].

Money is the one, although not the only, carrier of values and ability to function in the society, including its economic life. The historically formed welfare state was expected to protect citizens, through the ever-expanding area of protective intervention, against basic risks of life, such as, for instance, disability, inability to work, homelessness. State support today is typically a transfer, i.e. the state itself, without producing any goods (such production is a domain of communist states) determines the rules of taxation in the legislative process (from those who are capable of paying the taxes) and of transferring these money to those groups for which they are indispensable to survive or to live to a standard assumed as socially acceptable. This is a so-called milling state, in which the strength of the parties' interests is also essential, including the strength of taxpayers, of the state (often of politicians), of recipients of the transfers, but also of the bureaucracy then formed. Therefore, one may conclude that the welfare state functions are rooted in own interests of at least some of the stakeholders. Transfer payments, or transfer of rights to consumption, selection from one person to others, typically have the form of various state-funded social aid programmes and may also apply to social security, with contributions being inadequate to benefits gained by the insured [Stiglitz 2004].

Welfare state can also be perceived as a unique egoistic product, serving the purpose of expansion policy and creation of global demand, meaning that the business cycles are reduced or eliminated, at least in theory. Budgetary transfers are therefore not only aimed at supporting those in needs but also at ensuring growth of businesses, sales, and long-term profits. However, realisation of the concept of welfare state contributes at the same time to lower discipline among employees, their availability, and provides good grounds for formation of politically driven business cycles [Acocella 2002].

When making a comparison to altruistic behaviours in the animal world, one may conclude that the welfare state is a certain combination of several types of altruism. These include both pseudo-altruistic behaviours, i.e. acts by decision-makers or business influence groups to maintain their own economic and physical safety. One may seek here certain legal behaviours comparable to quasi-kin altruism, i.e. taking care of one's own vocational group's interests through syndicate organisations representing the given community and willing to support that group with their own resources, preferably at the expense of others, believing that such support will cover themselves in the future. Fair play altruistic behaviours show in a very extensive range of behaviours in the society and has a rather limited reference to welfare state. Perhaps an extreme example of these can be quick management by state-owned insurance organisations of funds unpaid but due and payable, gathered in pension accounts, in the event of the insured's early death. This is at least a partial realisation of the ideal of social solidarity (here: of the insured).

High level of caution or even apparent quality of altruistic behaviours of the welfare states is probably determined by multiple factors and conditions, of which the most important ones seem to be outside the realm of economy, related to social behaviours, including egoism and social calculation. This is particularly visible during a period of recession or crisis when the rich seem to defend their economic interests very strongly and they are not willing to share at least part of their incomes with the poor if they are not expressly forced to do so.

## SUMMARY

It is possible to refer various forms of biological altruism to similar behaviours in the realm of economy through an attempt at establishing their mutual relations. Sponsoring in economic terms may be referenced to biology, for example as a seemingly altruistic behaviour which is in fact guided by egoistic causes. On the other hand, it can be perceived as a type of symbiosis, i.e. provision of resources and options without losing anything by oneself. An interesting form of sponsoring could be noted in kin altruism. This is the case because supporting one's kin may contribute to propagation of one's genes, which is therefore also a kind of investment. An important form of reciprocated altruism with reference to the economic perspective can be the institution of welfare state which helps citizens from egoistic reasons, knowing that the invested resources will pay back in the future. So-called fair play attitude of the state towards the society may also be included here, as the state – even without offering specific help – often remains neutral without causing any harm or loss to individuals. Welfare state typically combines in its actions multiple types of behaviours defined as altruistic, which can be encountered in biology and which have been developed through long-term evolutionary processes.

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#### ALTRUIZM W BIOLOGII A BEZINTERESOWNE FORMY DZIAŁANIA W EKONOMII – WYBRANE ASPEKTY

**Streszczenie.** Celem opracowania jest analiza i poszukiwanie analogii zachowań w świecie ożywionym określanych jako altruistyczne, czyli polegających na wykazywaniu działań mających na celu odniesienie korzyści przez inne jednostki, przy jednoczesnej rezygnacji z własnych korzyści przez jednego z uczestników tzw. aktu altruistycznego. Działania altruistyczne, jako zaprzeczenie egoizmu, obserwowane są wśród organizmów żywych, w tym również w skomplikowanych kulturowo i ekonomicznie społecznościach ludzkich. Interesujące są formy i mechanizmy takich zachowań, które z reguły nie dążą do zaspokojenia potrzeb konkretnych jednostek, które są gotowe dzielić się swymi zasobami z innymi jednostkami, w wyniku czego same mogą tracić. W biologii zachowania altruistyczne przypisywane są zwłaszcza organizmom blisko spokrewnionym. Tego typu działania mają sens w aspekcie rozważań ewolucyjnych, gdyż pomaganie własnym krewnym zwiększa szansę na dalsze rozprzestrzenienie swoich genów. Inaczej kształtuje się opis takich zachowań w życiu ekonomicznym społeczeństw, gdzie również obserwowane są zachowania altruistyczne, występujące w formie sponsoringu, czy koncepcji państwa opiekuńczego, to znaczy skierowane również w stosunku do jednostek zupełnie obcych. Wyjaśnienie sensu tego typu zachowania wydaje się przybliżać zrozumienie pewnych schematów działalności w biologii oraz w zachowaniach społecznych i ekonomicznych, polegających na postępowaniu przynoszącym korzyść innym. Jednakże bezinteresowność tego typu poczynań jest kwestią warunkowaną w złożony sposób a przez to skomplikowaną, a także często pozorną, pozwalającą na pełniejsze osiągnięcie w długim okresie własnych, egoistycznych celów.

**Słowa kluczowe:** altruizm biologiczny, sponsoring, państwo opiekuńcze