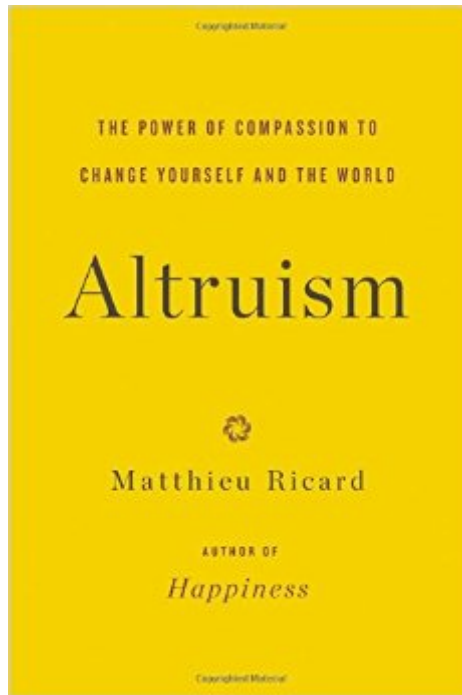


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# Altruism: The Power Of Compassion To Change Yourself And The World



## Synopsis

The author of the international bestseller *Happiness* makes a passionate case for altruism--and why we need it now more than ever. In *Happiness*, Matthieu Ricard demonstrated that true happiness is not tied to fleeting moments or sensations, but is an enduring state of soul rooted in mindfulness and compassion for others. Now he turns his lens from the personal to the global, with a rousing argument that altruism--genuine concern for the well-being of others--could be the saving grace of the 21st century. It is, he believes, the vital thread that can answer the main challenges of our time: the economy in the short term, life satisfaction in the mid-term, and environment in the long term. Ricard's message has been taken up by major economists and thinkers, including Dennis Snower, Amartya Sen, Joseph Stiglitz, and George Soros. Matthieu Ricard makes a robust and passionate case for cultivating altruistic love and compassion as the best means for simultaneously benefitting ourselves and our society. It's a fresh outlook on an ardent struggle--and one that just might make the world a better place.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 864 pages

Publisher: Little, Brown and Company; Tra edition (June 2, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0316208248

ISBN-13: 978-0316208246

Product Dimensions: 6.5 x 2 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (34 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #247,712 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #182 in Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Movements > Humanism #1138 in Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Ethics & Morality #1385 in Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Eastern > Buddhism

## Customer Reviews

The basic thesis of this comprehensive book is that altruism is a vital idea that can help us to recognize and to respond to the major challenges of our time. It is very well-documented and it took the author five years to prepare this absorbing work. Matthieu Ricard is a celebrated Buddhist monk and scientist who received a PhD in cellular genetics at the Institut Pasteur in Paris. He left his home in France, 35 years ago and lives in Nepal, where he has been working in various

humanitarian projects in the Himalayas. He has been an active participant in the study of the effects of meditation on the brain and is author of various best-selling books, including "Happiness," and "Why Meditate?" From the first page, Ricard introduces the reader to the various forms of altruism and portrays "true love" as a supreme form of compassion. He recognizes that individualism, greediness, egocentrism, and narcissism are human forces that oppose altruism, and brings up the famous Groucho Marx quip, "why should I care about future generations? What have they ever done for me?" Nevertheless, through the entire book, he conveys an astonishing and varied amount of information, ranging from historical analyses, comparative biology, the role of the hormone oxytocin, the functioning of "mirror neurons," and the effects of vagal tone on the parasympathetic nervous system, to explain that humans are social animals that have a natural tendency to cooperate; such a view is opposite to the well-known concept that humans are by nature competitive, selfish and behave like wolves. The book gives a particular emphasis to two central themes, the demonstration that altruism exists, and how to cultivate it. The book arrives at a most propitious moment when the United Nations is holding negotiations to adopt a new strategy for the next 15 years, called "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs). It is also the time when many religious groups are intensifying their teachings about tolerance and cooperation to deal with the modern world, and particularly the affirmation that we have the moral obligation to act, as stated in the recent papal encyclical about climate change. Ricard expands the notion of altruism to deal with its social dimension and devotes many pages to explain the concepts of interdependence and interconnectedness, which are at the core of the yoga tradition. Based on solid scientific research, he brings the well-known concept of "planetary boundaries" to explain the magnitude of the current planetary challenges. The fifth part of the book is devoted to discuss the basis of a future altruistic society. Altruism is a dense encyclopaedic and documented work that demands deep study and reflection. It has 1,769 references, printed in the last 131 pages as end-notes. It will remain for many years a major reference on the subject. We hope that in a new edition the publishers will include an alphabetical index of authors and subjects as this scholarly work will be an indispensable source of information. His major concluding remarks are a clear message: "We must dare to embrace altruism. Dare to say that real altruism exists, that it can be cultivated and that the evolution of cultures can favour its expansion. Dare to teach it in schools. .. Dare to proclaim that altruism is not a luxury, but a necessity."

A highly readable and yet profound book on altruism, compassion and empathy by a noted biologist Tibetan monk, commonly referred to the "happiest man" on earth. The book is lucidly written with

poignant warnings against our individualistic, and often narcissistic, tendencies in favor of more egalitarian and altruistic society and behavior. Highly recommended.

Exceptional, bright, perhaps the best essay I have ever read. Easy to read, even if written with an amazing compilation of data and scientific rigour. This book encourages both happiness and the conviction that we can and must improve our world. A book to offer and share pervasively. For me, it has become my bedtime book, and for a great business consultant among my friends, his new professional guide to provide meaning and counselling to his customers.

I could say a lot about this book but if you were to read it then it says it all. Such a powerful book, so well written and researched. The truths on Altruism could not be more clear. Written with great intelligence, heart and clarity. Personally I highlighted over 300 passages in this book. Sometime I wondered if I should just highlight the whole book it is so profound and informative. I would highly recommend this book to anyone. I have heard that a mind that has been stretched rarely snaps back. My mind has been stretched.

This is one of the best books I have ever read. I had the privileged of hearing Matthieu Ricard speak at Princeton alongside Peter Singer. Reading Ricard's work gives me renewed faith in humanity and the potential to do better than we have throughout history. Sometimes when I think of a Buddhist monk, I think of someone living secluded in the hills, wearing a robe and chanting ancient songs. This book debunks that myth in the most forceful way possible. This "monk" knows more about the world and how to solve the world's problems than I would venture to say most world leaders and politicians.

I just finished reading this 850 pages long book and I recommend every single page of it.

Altruism was written by cellular biologist, Matthieu Ricard, better known as a Buddhist monk. It is filled with detailed information about what ails the world from violence at school to environmental degradation, to the ruthlessness of financial markets, to unabated consumption. It is not a doom book, quite opposite. It proposes solutions and lists scores of areas of progress, cooperation and environmental success stories. It starts rather appropriately with defining altruism, the neuroscience behind it, how it emerges and how it can be cultivated. I found all the information offered absolutely fascinating. It concludes with an array of concrete proposals to change our world into one of respect, cooperation and kindness, where harmony becomes the modus vivendi for this

planet, for humanity and for us as individuals. I highly recommend it. I know many will shy from such a large book, but it is worth it. The various topics are very well organized and one can just pick the ones of most interest, and refer to them at a later stage. I believe every decision maker in whatever capacity should read it. And all of us as well if we really care about this little blue planet of ours and all that inhabits it. Thank you.

At more than 800 pages, *Altruism* by Mathieu Ricard is an extensive look at the subject. His writing draws from an in-depth examination of scientific research. I found his chapter "Altruism Among Children" particularly interesting. He highlights some experiments involving young children and it was determined that the tendency to help others is innate. Although the book is lengthy, it is best to read a few chapters at a time; absorb the concepts and appreciate the research that has been done involving altruism. Thank you GoodReads for the book.

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