



The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love (Moral Traditions series)

Stephen J. Pope

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In this book, Stephen J. Pope argues that contemporary scientifically-based theories of the evolution of altruism provide important insights into one of the fundamental moral problems of Christian ethics, the natural basis of love and its ordering. He explores the contributions evolutionary theory makes to our understanding of the biological foundations of kin preference and reciprocal care, the limits of love, and the need for an ordering of love?issues relevant to any ethic that accords a central role to the deeply natural affections found in friendship, marriage, and the family. He proposes that understanding human nature in its broader evolutionary context brings to ethics a needed balance between the personal and biological dimensions of human nature.

In the context of Catholic ethics, Pope points out functional similarities between Thomas Aquinas's use of then-available scientific theories in his interpretation of the natural basis of primary relationships and Pope's own efforts to avoid the deficiencies that characterize contemporary Catholic interpretations of love based on personalism and existentialism. He concludes with a call for a multidimensional interpretation of love, one that incorporates scientifically-based theories about human nature together with an appreciation of the significance of motives, intentions, and freedom, for the ordering of human affections and moral responsibility. This book will be of interest to moral theologians, especially those concerned with the topics of love, justice, and natural law ethics.

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