

Excerpt from:

Eckhart Arnold:

Explaining Altruism. A Simulation-Based Approach and its Limits,

ontos Verlag Heusenstamm 2008.

Abstract:

Employing computer simulations for the study of the evolution of altruism has been popular since Axelrod's book "The Evolution of Cooperation". But have the myriads of simulation studies that followed in Axelrod's footsteps really increased our knowledge about the evolution of altruism or cooperation? This book examines in detail the working mechanisms of simulation based evolutionary explanations of altruism. It shows that the "theoretical insights" that can be derived from simulation studies are often quite arbitrary and of little use for the empirical research. In the final chapter of the book, therefore, a set of epistemological requirements for computer simulations is proposed and recommendations for the proper research design of simulation studies are made.