Altruism as a Psychiatric Disorder

Definitions of Altruism:

1. The philosophical doctrine that the right action is that which produces the greatest benefit to others;
2. A concern or regard for the needs of others, entirely without ulterior motive. Selflessness;
3. Instinctive behaviour that is detrimental to the individual but maintains the principle or practice of unselfish concern for the welfare of others.

I have never mattered. That's how it's always been.

I've always possessed a strong empathy for others. I feel their pain. I always want to take the pain away; draw it into myself. I would rather possess the pain myself than see someone else in pain.

When you are young you believe that everybody feels the way you do. If you are selfless you cannot understand the selfish. If you are generous and benevolent then you cannot understand the greedy. As you pass through life you slowly understand that people do feel different from you, maybe very different, however you can never understand quite what makes the greedy or selfish tick; it is a continual confusion. You are made the way you are and you have to learn to live with it. Sometimes it is a long hard lesson.

Of the three definitions listed above the key word to me is in the last definition; that is the word "instinctive."

For altruism to be regarded as a psychiatric condition it has to be that the sufferer cannot help himself; that there is a mental force that overwhelmingly drives the sufferer to commit altruistic acts.

Since my therapist in prison back in 2004 suggested that I write down my story in order to exorcise my demons, I have effectively ended up writing my autobiography. Without really noticing as I was writing, the document reads almost like a list of instinctive, uncontrollable altruistic acts that have deeply and detrimentally affected my life ever since I was a teenager. Despite writing since 2004, between bouts of depression, it is only in recent months have I discovered that the psychiatric world has now recognised extreme altruism as a psychiatric disorder. Some psychiatrists refer to the condition as a psychiatric weakness, whilst others refer to it as a far more serious disorder.

There are two sides to this strange disorder. For the purpose of this explanation I will refer to "me" but it will apply to any sufferer of this condition.

The first, as demonstrated, is the overwhelming compulsion to help others, particularly if they are in trouble or worse off than me. The second is the emotion of uncontrollable anger when I see manifest greed at the expense of others. The first symptom of this disorder has caused me to lose most of my money as well as many other important things in my life, including my wife. The second symptom, the dreadful anger, has caused severe psychological damage and for me has occasioned a series of mental breakdowns, periods of depression and three periods in psychiatric care.

I have often asked a couple of linked questions of the many people involved in this story and have never managed to get any attempt at an answer. The questions are, 1) Why on earth would a perfectly sane and honest man steal over $1,000,000, just to give it away? And, 2) Why would he take such a risk for no personal benefit?

I have described the anger that I feel when I see outrageous selfish greed. That anger is further compounded by two other sources of frustration. The confusion that no one else appears to think the way I do. No one else seems to care about others. There just seems to be so much greed. I just don't understand it and it adds to my mental problems. Apart from the fact that no one appears to think like me, I also get angry because no one appears to understand me or even tries to understand me.

In the NCR case, nobody from within the justice system or from within NCR or it's solicitors has ever attempted to answer the questions or face the realities of the case, preferring to follow the black and white line of the law. An application of the law that is devoid of any morality. NCR simply turns a blind eye to the realities of the case.

Nobody wants to try to understand and I am therefore punished continually for my condition. The discovery that extreme altruism is now an acknowledged disorder has given me tears of joy. I now understand myself a little better, and understand what it is that has driven me to effectively destroy my life, and that maybe I am not alone. I only wish that some other parties, particularly NCR would look at the facts of the case and try to understand how I became inveigled into this nightmare.