

## Philosophy 306: Egoism and Altruism

### TAKE-HOME EXAM #2

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** THERE ARE 3 TAKE-HOME EXAMS IN THIS COURSE, EACH WORTH 20% OF YOUR GRADE. YOU MAY CHOOSE TO DO ONLY 2 OF THEM; IF YOU DO, I WILL GIVE YOU A C- (1.7), RATHER THAN AN F, ON THE ONE YOU DO NOT CHOOSE TO DO.

**DUE: Tuesday, April 21** [lateness policy: .2 off if you turn the paper in by Thursday, April 23; .5 off if by the following Tuesday, April 28; .5 more for each subsequent week late.]

Write an essay on **one** of the following 3 topics (750-1000 words).

Please number the pages of your paper!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

1. On Nichols, "*Sparks of Benevolence*:"

- (a) Explain what Nichols means by "minimal mindreading."
- (b) Explain Nichols's argument that minimal mindreading is necessary for altruistic motivation, as against the views (i) that *no* mindreading is necessary for it, and (ii) that sophisticated mindreading (which includes, but is not limited to, what he calls "perspective taking" and also Blum's view) is necessary for it. (That is, show why he rejects (i) and (ii).)
- (c) Give two criticisms of some significant aspect of Nichols's argument that you have just described. You do not have to agree with the criticisms; you may think that Nichols could answer them. They just have to be a reasonable criticism.

2. On "*vener theory*"

- (a) What does De Waal ("*Morality Evolved*") mean by "*Veneer Theory*?" Explain why De Waal rejects veneer theory. (You don't need the details of his argument to answer this.)
- (b) Explain Kitcher's ("*Ethics and Evolution: How to Get Here from There*") criticism of De Waal's views about animal altruism.
- (c) Given Kitcher's criticism, how would you describe where Kitcher ends up on the issue of veneer theory? In answering this question, you may make reference to Singer's criticism of veneer theory ("*Morality, Reason, and the Rights of Animals*").

3. On Nichols and De Waal, *animal altruism and young child altruism*

- (a) De Waal believes that his research demonstrates the existence of altruism in certain primates, evolutionary ancestors of human beings. Taking at least two of his specific examples, explain in what sense De Waal thinks these examples exemplify altruism. To put it another way, according to what definition of "altruism" are these examples of altruism, according to De Waal. (I am not asking whether you agree that these are altruism in the sense that De Waal means it, only to articulate De Waal's definition.)
- (b) Nichols believes that very young children (1 – 3 years old) exhibit a form of what he calls "altruistic motivation." Looking at at least 2 of the examples he gives, explain in what sense Nichols thinks these examples exemplify altruism. To put it another way, according to what definition of "altruism" are these examples of altruism, according to Nichols?
- (c) Both Nichols and De Waal think their findings lend support to certain views of adult altruism. Keeping those views in mind, discuss whether you think that Nichols's views of child and adult altruism support De Waal's views of animal and adult altruism, and vice versa.