Affirmative

I affirm the resolution, resolved: humans are primarily driven by self-interest I offer the following definitions:

Primarily is defined by **Oxford English Dictionary** as “for the most part, mainly.”

Self-interest is defined by the **Oxford English Dictionary** as “pursuit of one's own advantage or welfare.”

The resolution asks the affirmative to prove that humans act primarily in self-interest, not only in self-interest. Therefore, the burden of the negative is to prove that in most cases, there are forces

that drive humans to act primarily not in self-interest. The affirmative will win today’s debate by showing that in most cases, humans are driven by self-interest.

Contention 1:

Humans are driven by survival.

This is because of the inherent hierarchy of needs that exists by human nature.

**Abraham Maslow, an influential psychologist**, developed the theory that some needs are of higher priority than others. According to Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs, people fulfill their most important need, such as food and water, before their less important needs, such as love and respect.

These needs are the driving force behind human behavior.

**William Graham at Wayne State University** confirms that human behavior conforms to Maslow’s theory. Maslow’s hierarchy shows that before people can even think about performing altruistic actions, they must have satisfied their biological needs - again, food, water, oxygen, sleep. Humans don’t form any other goals unless their self-interested biological needs are cared for first, making self-interest the primary drive. Using this theory of hierarchy of needs, we can see that, before even considering any action, much less an altruistic action, we act in ways that solely benefit us: the bare necessities.

**After all, it’s common sense: would you rather be alive, or altruistic? Contention 2:**

**Even when performing seemingly altruistic actions, these actions are primarily in self-interest**

I will provide 2 reasons as to why this is true.

1. We imagine actions have an altruistic purpose, when in reality they don’t. When humans consciously believe they are acting in someone else’s interest, they are really tricking themselves into doing something for themselves. According to psychologists Jason Weedon and Robert Kurzban in 2017, Human minds are designed to hide their strategic foundations behind socially attractive veneers. The Public Relations Departments of people’s minds craft stories about the benevolent wisdom of their own views and the malevolency of their opponents’ views. Most people are themselves unaware that these subconscious features are important in shaping their own views. This means that humans are inherently putting themselves first at every single action they take.

2. Seemingly altruistic actions are a means to seeking one’s own happiness. As shown by Tania Singer and colleagues in 2004, people experience pain when they see another person in pain. The same brain areas that are activated by one’s own pain are activated by seeing another person’s pain. Thus, actions to alleviate another’s pain also alleviate one’s own pain. Further, according to Neel Burton M.D., “Altruistic acts are self-interested, if not because they relieve anxiety, then perhaps because they lead to pleasant feelings of pride and satisfaction; the expectation of honor or reciprocation; or the greater likelihood of a place in heaven; and even if neither of the above, then at least because they relieve unpleasant feelings such as the guilt or shame of not having acted at all.” This showing that seemingly altruistic acts are primarily self-interested. It is primarily pride and happiness, and an unwillingness for guilt, that drive seemingly

altruistic actions.

In short, humans are, unfortunately, inherently selfish. This doesn’t mean that humans only act in self-interest, but rather primarily, even in situations when acting seemingly altruistically.

**Contention 3:**

**Humans are inherently competitive**

A great example of this simple fact can be seen through economic systems. Here, in the United States of America, we live in a capitalist system. It rules over our lives and, according to the Future of Freedom Foundation, is inherently competitive by nature. But, for some reason, it works, right? The economy has its ups and downs, sure, but it has worked as a system.

Now let’s look at a system that hasn’t worked: Communism. To paraphrase Harvey Mansfield, professor of government at Harvard University, communism failed because people stopped working or worked less when they realized they had no personal gain from their work.

So, let’s look again at capitalism, which does work. The primary difference we can see here is harnessing self-interest rather than resisting it. In short, a system that encourages self-interest works. The reciprocal does not.

In conclusion, humans are self-interested. Primarily, first and foremost. Everything we do is for ourselves, in one way or another.

Thus, I proudly affirm.

**Maslow's Theory is correct:**

**Dodson 14** [Thor Dodson, "Exploring Maslow's Hierachy of Needs Empirically", 12/1/2014, Oregon State Uni, https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/downloads/vx021g975]

One hypothesis implied by the structure of Maslow’s hierarchy is that the level of satisfaction of any given need should be negatively correlated with desire for satisfaction of that need (Balloun and Graham 1973, p. 99). Balloun and Graham explored this hypothesis in 1973 and found significant negative correlations between a need’s strength and its satisfaction. The correlations were stronger in between strengths and satisfactions of the same level as opposed to between levels, which Balloun and **Graham felt lent some support to Maslow’s theory concerning the relationship between satisfaction and desire and the ordering of human needs** (Balloun and Graham 1973 p. 107).

**Self-interest is at the core of altruistic actions**

**Weeden 17** [Jason Weeden,, "Self‐Interest Is Often a Major Determinant of Issue Attitudes", 01/26/2017, Wiley Online Library, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/pops.12392]

Reviewing political opinion patterns in the 1950s, The American Voter concluded that self-interest played a key role in the public's views on social welfare policy. Since then, however, many researchers have argued that self-interest has very little effect on issue opinions. We argue that the principal reason for this shift lies not in self-interest coming to matter less, but, instead, because some scholars—by narrowing the definition of self-interest, declaring ordinary demographic effects uninterpretable, and assuming that group interest is distinct from self-interest—essentially defined out the possibility of self-interest being a major determinant of political views. Yet even with these limiting moves, the general denial of self-interest has come to include a long and growing list of exceptions. In addition, we find that many of the specific claims grounding the general denial are problematic. **Thus, we argue that self-interest remains a potent factor in the context of a number of issue opinions.** Further, taking a broader view of human interests, we see self-interest effects not only in economic opinions, but also in various cultural/social domains. For example, when it comes to individuals’ opinions on issues relating to meritocracy and discrimination, we find that levels of meritocratic competence are typically a key factor, along with racial, religious, and other relevant categories. Also, there are solid links among individuals’ sexual lifestyles, religiosity, and views on issues such as abortion and marijuana legalization. Not only are such domain-specific relationships “major,” but self-interest variables typically have more secure claims than individuals’ ideology, party, and values to being unambiguous “determinants” of issue opinions.

**People feel pain when others feel pain**

**Lmunoz 13** [Lmunoz, "Feeling Others' Pain: Transforming Empathy into Compassion", 06/24/2013, Cognitive Neuroscience Society, https://www.cogneurosociety.org/empathy\_pain/]

“I feel your pain.” That phrase took on a whole new meaning when scientists first were able to visualize how the brain processes someone else’s suffering. In a landmark paper in Science in 2004, **Tania Singer and colleagues showed that some pain-sensitive parts of the brain are activated when we empathize with others who are in pain.**

**Altruistic acts are self-centered due to personal satisfaction**

**The 13** [About The, "An Analysis of Altruism", 08/31/2013, Psychology Today, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-seek/201308/analysis-altruism]

**Altruistic acts are self-interested, if not because they relieve anxiety, then perhaps because they lead to pleasant feelings of pride and satisfaction; the expectation of honor or reciprocation; or the greater likelihood of a place in heaven; and even if neither of the above, then at least because they relieve unpleasant feelings such as the guilt or shame of not having acted at all.**

**Communism Failed due to the Nature of Self-Interest**

**C.** [Harvey C., "Self-Interest Rightly Understood on JSTOR", Invalid date, No Publication, https://www.jstor.org/stable/192173]

In particular it IS time to have another look at self-interest. For **communism is said to have collapsed because it did not work, which was said to mean that it did not accord with the self-interestedness In human nature.** In the historical or cultural view pervasive in our time that demes the universality of self-interest, every regime IS seen In its own time and therefore as adequate to its own time. The forces that cause it cannot fail to support It. In that view every regime "works" because It cannot be judged except by Its own standards. It can live by its wishes regardless of truth.