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Year

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Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: Philosophy

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Title of the extended essay: Examination of altruism in  
Doctor Who

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The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

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**Assessment form (for examiner use only)**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Achievement level</b>		
	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum
<b>A</b> research question	2	1	2
<b>B</b> introduction	2	1	2
<b>C</b> investigation	4	1	4
<b>D</b> knowledge and understanding	4	0	4
<b>E</b> reasoned argument	4	0	4
<b>F</b> analysis and evaluation	4	0	4
<b>G</b> use of subject language	4	1	4
<b>H</b> conclusion	2	0	2
<b>I</b> formal presentation	4	1	4
<b>J</b> abstract	2	0	2
<b>K</b> holistic judgment	4	1	4
Total out of 36		6	

An Investigation into the philosophy of Altruism  
Word Count: 2,500

Philosophy

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## Introduction

Altruism, the concept of self-sacrifice, which is driven by moral obligation, can be considered selfish. While proponents of altruism argue that it is the ultimate form of selfless because it does not include any satisfaction from the altruist, it can also be argued that this sense of self-duty and selflessness is in itself a form of selfishness. There is a distinct line between the concept of compassion and altruism. Altruism requires that self-sacrifice is completely undetermined by how the actor feels, and that the actor should not expect anything from the situation. However, satisfaction is what someone may expect from the act. However, it cannot be pure. The human mind has the capability of enjoying altruism, but is unable to utilize it. While this can be said for humans, the idea is different for those from different worlds or those impacted by other beings.

In the television series *Doctor Who*, The Doctor is an alien from the planet Gallifrey who travels the universe through time and space in order to help those in danger. The Doctor is part of a group of aliens called the Time Lords, a species of humanoids who are able to traverse time through the help of their time traveling devices. The time traveling device that the Doctor uses is called TARDIS, which stands for Time And Relative Dimension In Space. Time Lords also have a knack for escaping death, by regenerating whenever they are dying or near death (“The Parting of the Ways,” *Doctor Who*).

The Doctor, during his ninth reincarnation, has just survived the Last Time War, a war that destroyed the majority of the Time Lords save him. This Doctor has suffered immense psychological pain and refuses to speak of his conflicts during the war, mirroring someone with the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. He is arrogant, war hungry, and inherently secluded. However, he befriends Rose Tyler, and begins to change (“Rose”). The Ninth Doctor begins to travel with Tyler as his companion, and they find solace and defending the universe from evils.

The Ninth Doctor soon finds himself regenerating due to radiation poisoning from saving Tyler, a final act of altruism for his beloved companion. This leads to a new, younger Doctor. The Tenth Doctor is unlike the Ninth Doctor in the sense that he is more emotional, more heroic in a sense. He travels the universe with Tyler, until the events of “Doomsday”, where Tyler is forced to leave the Tenth Doctor. The Tenth Doctor continues to find new adventures, and new reasons to defend the universe from harm. He meets Martha Jones and Donna Noble, who respectively leave him as well. The Tenth Doctor is the most mournful as he still selflessly strives to save others, risking death just to save anyone he can and because he wants to, not because he is required to. The final lines, ironically, of this Doctor are: “I don’t want to go,” which assert that the Tenth

Doctor has not succeeded in everything he wished in this incarnation (“The End of Time”).

The Eleventh Doctor is perhaps the most peculiar of the Doctors. He is the maddest, and the most unpredictable. He pushes the idea of being happy on anyone he meets, wishing for the best for anyone. He is seen as the most selfless Doctor, the most caring. The Eleventh Doctor is seen as also a more personal Doctor, however. He defends his friends more than anything else, unwilling to let harm befall any of them. This is most apparent after the departure of his companions Amelia Pond and Rory Williams, when he essentially gives up helping anyone.

Rory Williams is one of the Eleventh Doctor’s most celebrated companions, as he is seen as the only human in the show being purely selfless. He sacrifices himself for his wife on multiple instances, even telling The Eleventh Doctor that Amelia Pond is “the most important woman in the universe” (“The Pandorica Opens”). His commitment to justice, however, can also be seen as innately selfish. While the Doctor, in all of his incarnations, truly acts altruistic, Rory Williams only acts altruistic toward his wife; therefore, it can be assumed that he sacrifices himself only for his wife, because she is important to him. Altruism, therefore, cannot apply to him.

River Song is perhaps the most unusual character in *Doctor Who*. River Song is the daughter of Amelia Pond and Rory Williams, and is part Time Lord. This is due to her being conceived in the TARDIS, which blended with part of her DNA (“A Good Man Goes to War”). The Tenth Doctor, however, meets her first due to River Song’s timeline going in an order opposite that of the Doctor’s. River Song ultimately sacrifices herself for The Tenth Doctor, and for the rest of those around the Doctor. The Tenth Doctor watches her die, saying “time can be rewritten,” to which she replies, “don’t you dare” (“Forest of the Dead”).

## The Ninth Doctor

The Doctor is introduced in his ninth reincarnation as a war survivor from the Last Time War. He confronts a new world, one without his own species part of it. The Ninth Doctor meets Rose Tyler, a woman who would later become his companion. The Ninth Doctor is seen throughout his tenure as continuously feeling the side-effects of the Last Time War, which is evident in “Dalek.” Daleks are opposite of the Time Lords in many ways, chiefly as the Daleks rely on logic while the Time Lords are able to utilize their emotion. The Daleks were the ones who the Ninth Doctor, along with the Time Lords faced during the Time War. The Ninth Doctor holds an unimaginable source of hate for the Daleks, who also return the hate to the Doctor. When the Dalek is released and recognizes the Ninth Doctor as his enemy, it attempts to kill him. The Ninth Doctor displays anger, but does not destroy him. The Dalek instead goes on a rampage, attempting to kill everyone in the building. The Ninth Doctor, driven by his will to defend his friends and also driven by his hatred for the Dalek, is able to stop the Dalek. When The Ninth Doctor is reunited with Rose Tyler, he realizes that his drive to sacrifice himself for others far surpasses his hatred for the Daleks, and continues to travel with Rose Tyler (“Dalek”).

The Ninth Doctor constantly is conflicted between the Last Time War and his duties as the Last Time Lord. The Ninth Doctor refuses to accept he is the last Time Lord because he refuses to accept the idea that he is alone. Loneliness follows the Doctor

through all of his incarnations, as he understands that every companion can, and will leave. The Doctor is the loneliest man in the universe, and in time. No one is there to be with him, and although many have tried, he still is just so lonely. Still, even with this in mind, he helps anyone as much as he can.

The Ninth Doctor also demonstrates how his satisfaction when others are saved. Although his entire species is killed off, something not explained until later in the series, the Ninth Doctor expresses pride in saving many people. The Ninth Doctor and his companion Rose Tyler are challenged by a group of children with gas masks later on who attempt to take over London during the Blitz of World War II. These children have the gas masks grown on them when they begin to exhibit the symptoms. When the Ninth Doctor realizes he must protect London, he utilizes a form of technology he finds from Captain Jack Harkness, a future companion. The Doctor uses the nanogenes of Barroman's ship to fight off the gas-masked army. The nanogenes are able to eliminate the gas masks without having any adverse effects on any of the children. The Doctor then ecstatically rejoices, "Everyone lives Rose, just this once. Everyone lives!" (The Doctor Dances). This is an obvious response to the Last Time War, where he became the last of his species. His sacrifice in this situation in the face of imminent death shows how determined the Ninth Doctor is at saving anyone. The Ninth Doctor shows that anyone is worth saving, regardless of who they are.

## The Tenth Doctor

The Tenth Doctor is a highly unusual character. In his tenure as the Doctor, he explores the bit of his past focusing on the Last Time War, his emotional boundaries with his companions, and his subsequent and inevitable death.

The Tenth Doctor travels with Rose Tyler, and slowly develops feelings for her. This causes a new, more hopeful Doctor to appear. He even says that Rose has become the only person he has to trust in the entire universe. The Tenth Doctor challenges a being who claims to be a god when this "god" says he has the power to topple worlds, and threatens to destroy a ship carrying humans, including Rose Tyler, on it. The Doctor first threatens to break something that would cause a black hole to form, killing both him and the god. The god mocks him, but the Ninth Doctor says that he's "seen fake gods and bad gods and would-be gods. [He's] had the whole pantheon. If there's one thing [he] believes in, [he] believes in her" ("The Satan Pit"). Toward the end of the series, with the departure of Rose Tyler, the Tenth Doctor is alone. He travels for a long while until he finds his new companion in Martha Jones ("Smith and Jones").

This series revolves around the reoccurring theme of Mr. Saxon, a man who turns out to be another Time Lord like the Doctor. When The Tenth Doctor travels to the end of time, he meets Professor Yana, a mysterious man who is trying to send the last group of humans into a place called Utopia ("Utopia"). The Tenth Doctor, along with Martha Jones and Captain Jack Harkness, begin to investigate this strange man and the Utopia he dreams of. The Tenth Doctor is overcome with emotions when he realizes that this Utopia is not a Utopia at all, but will send them to their deaths. The Tenth Doctor is unable to do anything, as Professor Yana realizes who he is. Professor Yana spots the stopwatch that the Tenth Doctor holds, a stopwatch only Time Lords can carry. Professor Yana soon is shot after realizing he is a Time Lord, and regenerates into the Master. His



regeneration is much more lethal and painful. The Tenth Doctor attempts to stop this man from stealing his TARDIS, but also tries to save the group of humans who are leading to their death. The Tenth Doctor gives up on his TARDIS, the most important item in his life, to protect the humans. He fails, however. The humans leave for Utopia, and the Tenth Doctor is left without a TARDIS.

The following episode includes the introduction of the Toclafane. The Toclafane are what the Time Lords called the monsters in their nightmares. The Toclafane are later explained to be what the humans who went to Utopia became. The Tenth Doctor is horrified at this fact, and is then captured by the Master.

When the Tenth Doctor watches a year pass in the world, his companion Martha Jones has begun the resistance movement against the Master. At this point, the Master has total control over the entire world, and is absolute. When Martha Jones is able to reach the Tenth Doctor and free him, this begins the downfall of the Master. The Tenth Doctor finally reveals his darkest secret from his past, that it was not the Daleks who killed the Time Lords, but it was him. The Tenth Doctor, in all of his self-loathing for killing his own species, still puts the effort to save humanity, believing that humanity is "worth it." Toward the end of the episode, the Master begins to die, and the Tenth Doctor pleads for him to regenerate. The Master just laughs at him, and the Tenth Doctor weeps to the reality of the fact that he has killed every Time Lord except for himself. He is the last of the Time Lords ("Last of the Time Lords").

The Tenth Doctor, in his swansong, faces the threat of those he sealed long ago: the Time Lords. The Time Lords, through a beacon, called forth the Master to be able to connect Gallifrey to Earth. The Time Lords, led by Rassilon who was The Doctor's opposition in Gallifrey, officially land on Earth. Gallifrey's arrival would mean the Earth's demise, and the Tenth Doctor could not risk the end of the world. The Doctor put forth everything he had, and with the unlikely help from the Master, he saves the planet. The Tenth Doctor, relieved that he avoided his death, proceeds to make sure his companion is okay. This is when Wilfred Mott, the Tenth Doctor's current companion knocks four times. The four time knock signals the death of the Tenth Doctor, and the Tenth Doctor has to choose between saving Wilfred Mott or continuing his own existence. The Tenth Doctor chooses to save Wilfred, and this shows the Tenth Doctor's selflessness at its highest, when he is in tears for having to die. The Tenth Doctor then proceeds in his swansong, visiting every companion he has ever had, to say goodbye. The Tenth Doctor then whispers, in his final moments, when the TARDIS is destroying itself due to the radiation taken in by the Tenth Doctor, that "[I] don't want to go" ("The End of Time"). The Tenth Doctor then regenerates.

## The Eleventh Doctor

The Eleventh Doctor presented himself as a child for most of his tenure as the man behind the TARDIS. He becomes more invested in his companions, but also becomes increasingly self-loathing. Instead of loathing his part in the fall of Gallifrey, the Eleventh Doctor believes that the universe does not need him anymore ("The Wedding of River Song"). The Eleventh Doctor stresses the importance of Amelia Pond, his new companion, and her husband Rory Williams. The Ponds are the main focus of the Eleventh Doctor's adventures, as he tries to make their lives as pleasing as possible while

also discovering that they are much more important they seem. The Eleventh Doctor, while in the time stream with Vincent van Gogh, sacrifices his own goals in order to help van Gogh. He and Amelia Pond fail at saving him, and van Gogh still commits suicide ("Vincent and the Doctor"). The Eleventh Doctor still says this, "The way I see things, every life is a pile of the good things and the bad things. The good things don't necessarily soften the bad things, but vice-versa, the bad things don't necessarily spoil the good things. Or make them unimportant." This, I believe, is the pinnacle of the Eleventh Doctor's philosophy. This may even pertain to every Doctor's belief system. The Eleventh Doctor shows his uttermost maturity at this point, and how the "good things" are those things he chooses to be altruistic for. His companions, his friends, even strangers he's never known, all people who he has strived to please. The Eleventh Doctor believes everyone deserves a chance in life, and that is pure altruism and pure understanding.

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