

PHIL 160 Handout
Egoism, Disability, and Care-Giving, 9-20-19
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Psychological and Ethical Egoism: The Basics

Answer the following questions, without using your notes.

1. Identify which of the below positions is psychological egoism.
2. For each of the other positions, explain why it is not psychological egoism.
3. If it's another position that we've talked about or the reading has mentioned, explain why it is that position.
 - a. When any human is acting, she thinks that she is ultimately pursuing self-interest.
 - b. All actions are ultimately motivated by self-interest.
 - c. All human actions are ultimately motivated by self-interest.
 - d. All human actions should be ultimately motivated by self-interest.
 - e. When any human is acting, he is ultimately motivated by pleasure and pain.
 - f. All human actions advance our self-interest.
4. If someone is a psychological egoist, why could it seem pointless to also be an ethical egoist?

5. What is hedonism?

6. Challenge Question: What's one argument that attracts people towards psychological egoism? Try to reconstruct it in premise-conclusion form.

7. Challenge Question: What's one counterexample to psychological egoism? How would the psychological egoist respond to that counterexample?

Argument Reconstruction: The Argument from Personal Ownership for PE

Reconstruct the argument in premise-conclusion form:

1. First, identify the conclusion of the argument. What is the main claim the argument is trying to establish?
2. Second, identify the premises of the argument. What are the steps to get to the main claim?

a. "Every action of mine is prompted by motives or desires or impulses which are *my* motives and not somebody else's. This fact might be expressed by saying that whenever I act I am always pursuing my own ends or trying to satisfy my own desires. And from this we might pass on to—"I am always pursuing something for myself or seeking my own satisfaction," Here is what seems like a proper description of a man acting selfishly, and if the description applies to all actions of all men, then it follows that all men in all their actions are selfish."³

Argument Reconstruction: The Argument from Hedonism for PE

Reconstruct the argument in premise-conclusion form:

1. First, identify the conclusion of the argument. What is the main claim the argument is trying to establish?
2. Second, identify the premises of the argument. What are the steps to get to the main claim?

b. It is a truism that when a person gets what he wants he characteristically feels pleasure. This has suggested to many people that what we really want in every case is our own pleasure, and that we pursue other things only as a means.

Objection Generation: The Argument from Self-Deception for PE

Read the following argument. Then construct an objection to one of the premises, in premise-conclusion form. If you finish constructing an objection to one of the premises, try objecting to one or more of the other ones. (Yes, it is possible to object to more than one of these premises!)

P1: We often think that we are acting for the sake of benevolence, when we're actually acting to pursue our self-interest.

P2: Other people often think that they are acting for the sake of benevolence, when they're actually acting to pursue their self-interest.

P3: If we and others are often deceived in thinking we have benevolent motivations, then we and others are always deceived in thinking we have benevolent motivations.

C1: So everyone is always deceived in thinking they have benevolent motivations.

P4: If everyone is always deceived in thinking they have benevolent motivations, then everyone's motivations are ultimately self-interested.

C2: Everyone's motivations for actions are ultimately self-interested.

Counterexample Generation: Against PE

Generate at least three counterexamples to PE. Explain why they are counterexamples. If time, brainstorm how the psychological egoist might respond to these purported counterexamples.

Discussion: Ethical Egoism and Care for Others

Should you care about and for others? What's the value of caring for others? Why?

Discussion: Needing Care from Others

Are you independent? Why or why not?

What are the good and bad parts of being dependent on others?

Is it better to fight for disability rights on the basis of making disabled people's lives more independent or to fight for disability rights on the basis of recognizing disabled people's (and all people's) needs for care?

Space for Notes

Space for Feedback

Did you like the fishbowl discussion? Why or why not?

List one to two ethical issues that you would be excited to discuss for the class debate.

What's one thing that went well today?

What's one thing that could have gone better?