

Presentation 2 - Egoism

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3.1 selfish vs egoism

From book

selfish: a character trait that some people have and which makes them seek and prompt their own comfort and satisfaction (choosing the best seat, the finest steak)

egoism: a philosophical doctrine according to which practical reasons—reasons for me to do things—have to be grounded in what matters to me.

From dictionary

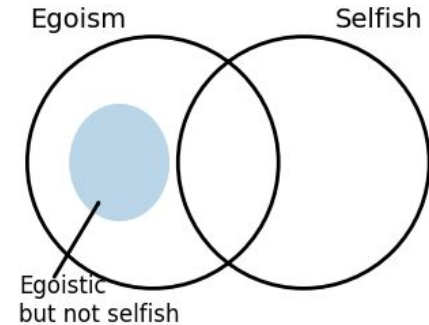
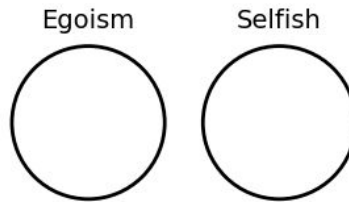
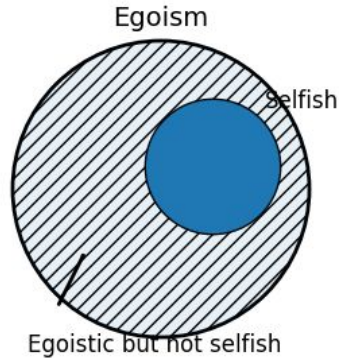
selfish: caring only about what you want or need without any thought for the needs or wishes of other people

egoism: a doctrine that individual self-interest is the actual motive of all conscious action

1. Are there any actions that are egoistic but not selfish?

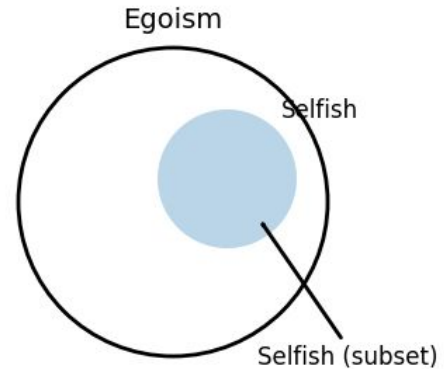
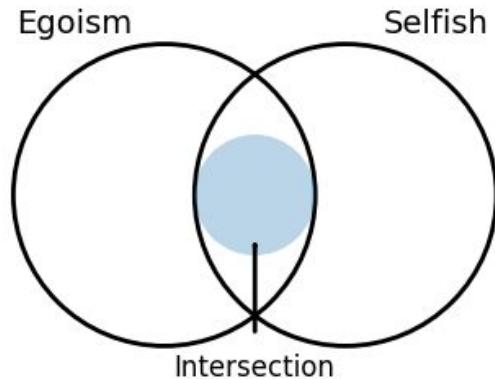
Ex: I choose to exercise, go to bed early, and avoid staying up late

What matters to me: health



Relationship between egoism and selfish

2. Can something be prompt my own comfort and satisfaction and also be grounded in “what matters to me”?



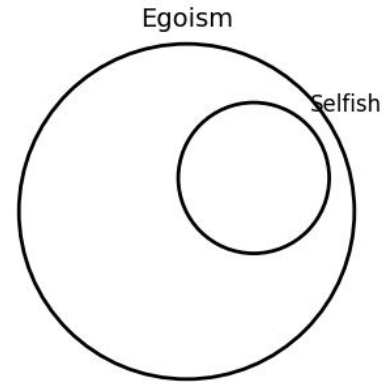
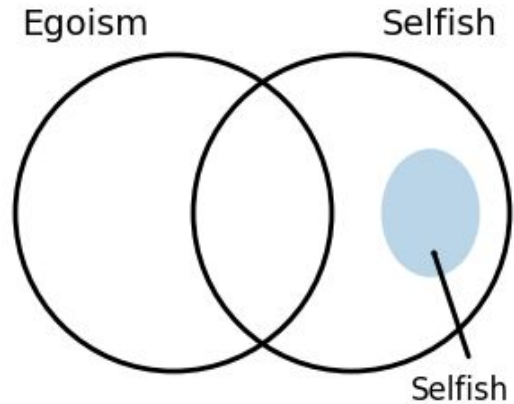
Example: *Taking the best seat or the finest steak.*

I take the best seat or the finest steak because what matters to me is my comfort and satisfaction.

My reason is grounded in what matters to me, so the action is egoistic.

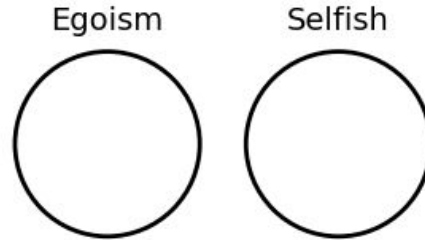
However, if this choice ignores others who have equal claim, it is also morally selfish.

3. Are there any actions that are selfish but not egoistic?



Author

“My needs and desires matter to me in a way they can’t matter to other people; the pain in my shoulder cannot matter to you in the way that it does to me, and vice versa.”



Relationship

1 . Are there actions that are egoistic but not altruistic?

Example:

I choose to exercise regularly and go to bed early because my health and long-term well-being matter to me.

This action is:

- **egoistic** — because it is grounded in what matters to me.
- **not altruistic** — because it is not done for the sake of others.

2. Are there actions that are egoistic and altruistic?

A person jumps into a river to save a stranger, even though it puts their own life at risk.

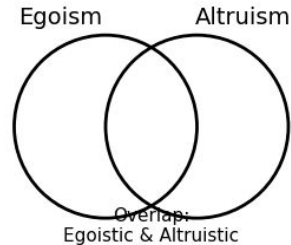
- **Not for self-interest or personal gain**
- **For the sake of another person** (altruistic)
- **Because the fact that the other person's life genuinely matters to them** (egoistic in grounding)

3 . Are there actions that are altruistic without being grounded in egoism?

A nurse treats all patients equally, even those she dislikes, simply because professional ethics require it.

Altruistic — she acts for the sake of her patients.

Not egoistic — her reason is not that they matter to her personally, but that it is her professional duty.



3.2-3.3

The Differences & Similarities of
Egoism,
Psychological Egoism,
Rational Egoism.

Brief recap of **Egoism**:

“Egoism is a philosophical doctrine according to which practical **reasons—reasons for me to do things**—have to be grounded in **what matters to me**.”

Reason: a cause, explanation, or justification for an action or event.

Key Points :

1. The reason for the action is given in the first person.
2. What matters to me
3. Egoism is **not** equal to “I will never do anything for others.”

Subject: me

Object: me or others (the surrounding world)

Psychological Egoism:

“This thesis is generally known as “psychological egoism,” because it makes the most fundamental explanation of human action rest upon **a certain state of mind**, namely **wanting or desiring**.”

psychological: arising in the mind; related to the mental and emotional state of a person.

The scope of wanting or desiring.



Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Key Points:

1. Must be explained in terms of their desires.
2. "People only ever do what they want to do."
3. Wanting is important! Not what I should do.

Psychological egoism → "why people do what they do,"

Egoism → "what people ought to do."

Rational Egoism

“Rational egoism ... advances a claim about how **rationally** we ought to be motivated.”

Rationally: behave and act by reasonable or logical means.

Key Points:

“The only really good reason for doing something is that you want to do it.”

The only reason for action is one's own desires.

In other words:

People may act out of compassion, custom, or morality, but these are not rational;

Only "I want to do this" is a truly rational reason.

“Since I already want to do it, I don't need additional reasons for continuing with that intention.”

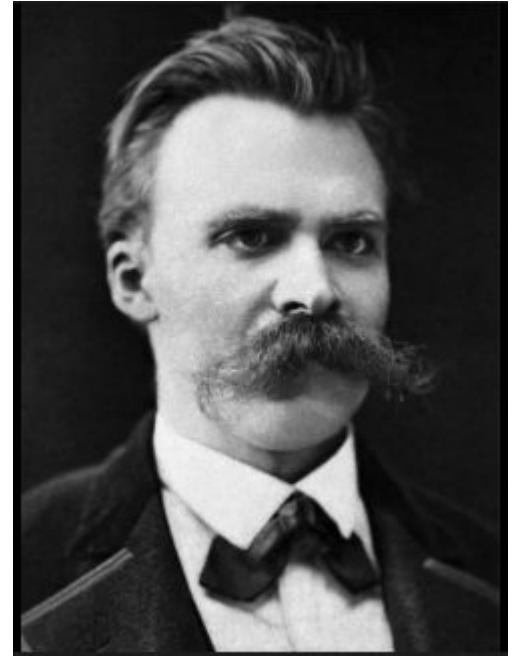
Egoism is a claim about reasons,

Psychological egoism is a claim about motivation,

Rational egoism is a claim about rational justification.

Nietzsche and the Genealogy of Morality

The Birth of Good and Evil



The Genealogy

a line of descent traced continuously from an ancestor.

Common Belief: Morality is universal and timeless.

Nietzsche's View: Morality has a history and an origin

Digging into the past to reveal the "defects" of modern morality.

The Inversion of Values

Master Morality (ancient Rome)

Good : Strong, beautiful, talented, successful.

Bad : Weak, plain, untalented, failure.

Slave Morality (Christianity)

Good : Humble, poor, sick, obedient, suffering

Evil : Strong, powerful, rich, noble, dangerous.

What makes the values flip?

Ressentiment: a psychological state arising from suppressed feelings of envy and hatred that cannot be acted upon, frequently resulting in some form of self-abasement.



The Nietzschean Ideal

Übermensch: The German word *Übermensch* is literally translated as “overman,” often rendered “superman” and sometimes “higher man.” None of these translations is entirely satisfactory.

Cultured and strong

Self-Mastery: It's not about indulging in desires, but about being strong enough to control one's desires.

Reverence for Himself: Dare to be yourself, without feeling guilty about societal norms or morals.

Amor Fati : Happily accept fate, accept the limitations of life and death.

Eternal Recurrence

What is egoism(old rational version)?

People does not need extra reason to act according to their **desire**.

Then what is desire?

What you "**want**" in your subjective experience.

Why desire version doesn't work?

- It doesn't stop one from doing something that is clearly problematic.
- Desires can be short-sighted, misjudgmental, and conflicting.
- **Desire-based egoism seems to imply that “a machine of indulgence” is consistent with their theory.**

Why desire version doesn't work?

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Egoism doesn't work, good, so what?

Egoism doesn't work, good, so what?

Why do we even need to talk about it in the beginning?

- *In this chapter, egoism is mainly used as a **stress test** for morality.*
- *A moral theory proves its strength if it can withstand a strong objection.*
- ***We want a strong egoism.***

3.6 Desires and Interests (a stronger egoism)

People does not need extra reason to act according to their ~~desire~~ **Interests**.

Interests

What can promote or is important to one's life and well-being.

How is it stronger?

- It can't stop one from doing something that is clearly problematic.
 - *It don't fit your interests.*
- Desires can be short-sighted, misjudgmental, and conflicting.
 - *But Interests focus overall well-being.*
- Desire-based egoism seems to imply that “a machine of indulgence” is consistent with their theory.
 - *Interests version can provide reason to refuting such counterexamples.*
 - *Because it doesn't fit my interests...doesn't it?*



Which one would a egoist choose?



Which one would a egoist choose?



Comfortable, safe,
enjoyable



Which one would a egoist choose?

Authenticity,, dignity,
meaning



Comfortable, safe,
enjoyable



A close-up photograph of two human hands, palms up, holding small pills. The left hand holds a red pill, and the right hand holds a green pill. The background is dark and out of focus, with some green foliage visible on the right. The text "What is your interest?" is overlaid in white, centered across the hands.

What is your interest?

Which one fit your interests more?

Version A: What you believe is best for you.

This is too weak, what you believe can be wrong, can be short-sighted. You can use it as your own guide line, no problem.

But it can't show that:

- Morality is wrong.
- We don't have a reason to act morally

It can't challenge morality

Version B: Choose one that is better anyway.

Then pure egoism is not enough. You will need a stand along value judging standard.

You need to demonstrate:

- your standard can deliver a defensible ruling in key conflict cases.
- It can apply to all.

Otherwise it can't challenge morality

We are not finish yet

- Egoism doesn't work, doesn't mean morality works.
 - Egoism raised a challenge, and yet it failed to defeat morality.
 - However, morality still requires independent argumentation.
- The same arguments we use to refute egoism can also be used to challenge morality.
 - Why is acting morally better?
 - Why does the right of others matters to me?
 - If we define right as "can't be reject reasonably"
 - What is the standard of reasonable.
 - Does the personal belief count as reasonable?
 - Etc.

Thank you