

# 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

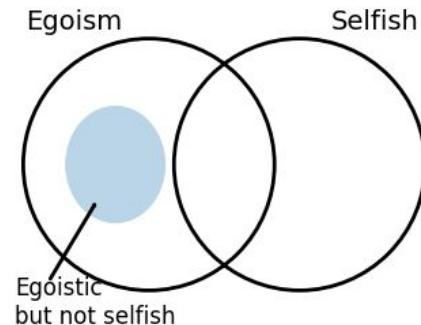
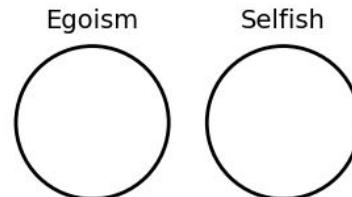
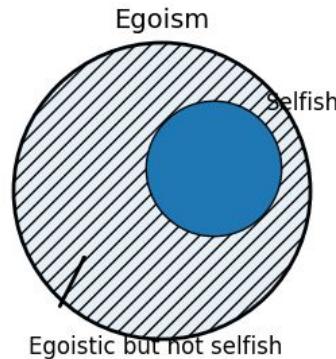
**selfish:** caring only about what you want or need without any thought for the needs or wishes of other people

**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?

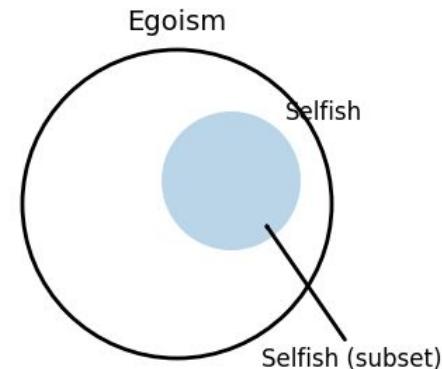
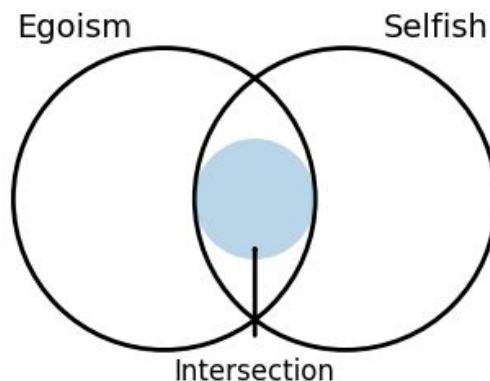
Ex: I choose to exercise, go to bed early, and avoid staying up late

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”?**



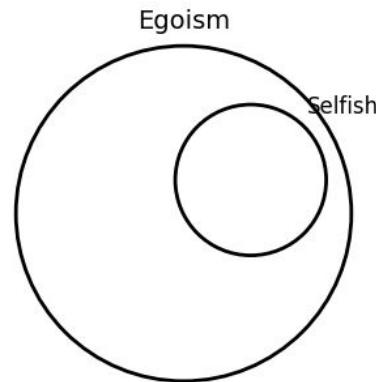
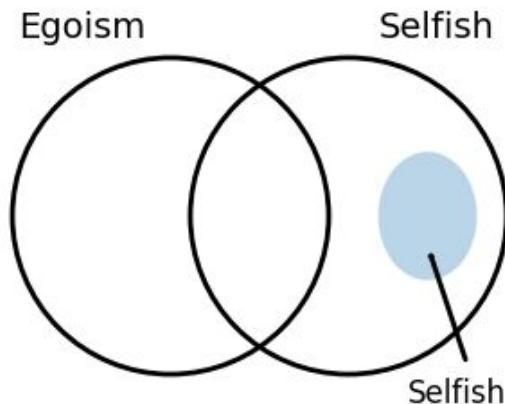
**Example: *Taking the best seat or the finest steak.***

**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.**

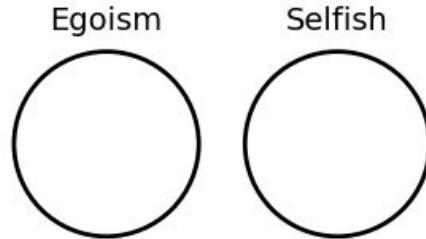
**However, if this choice ignores others who have equal claim, it is also morally selfish.**

### 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.*

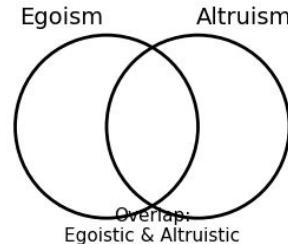
- **Not for self-interest or personal gain**
- **For the sake of another person** (altruistic)
- **Because the fact that the other person's life genuinely matters to them** (egoistic in grounding)

### 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.”

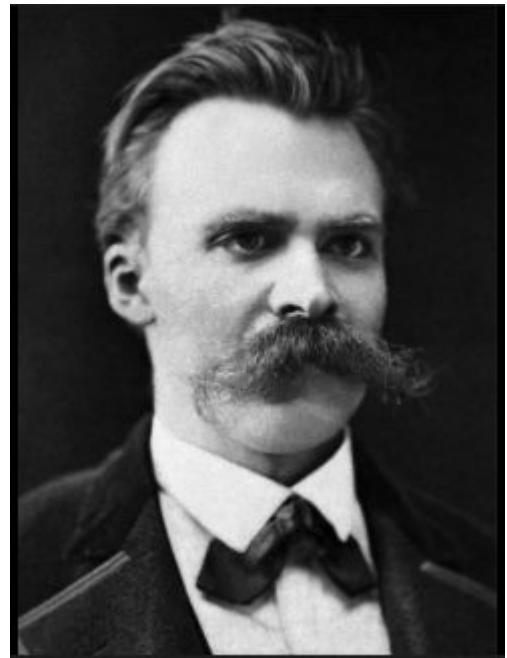
**Egoism is a claim about reasons,**

**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?

- 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.**

*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?

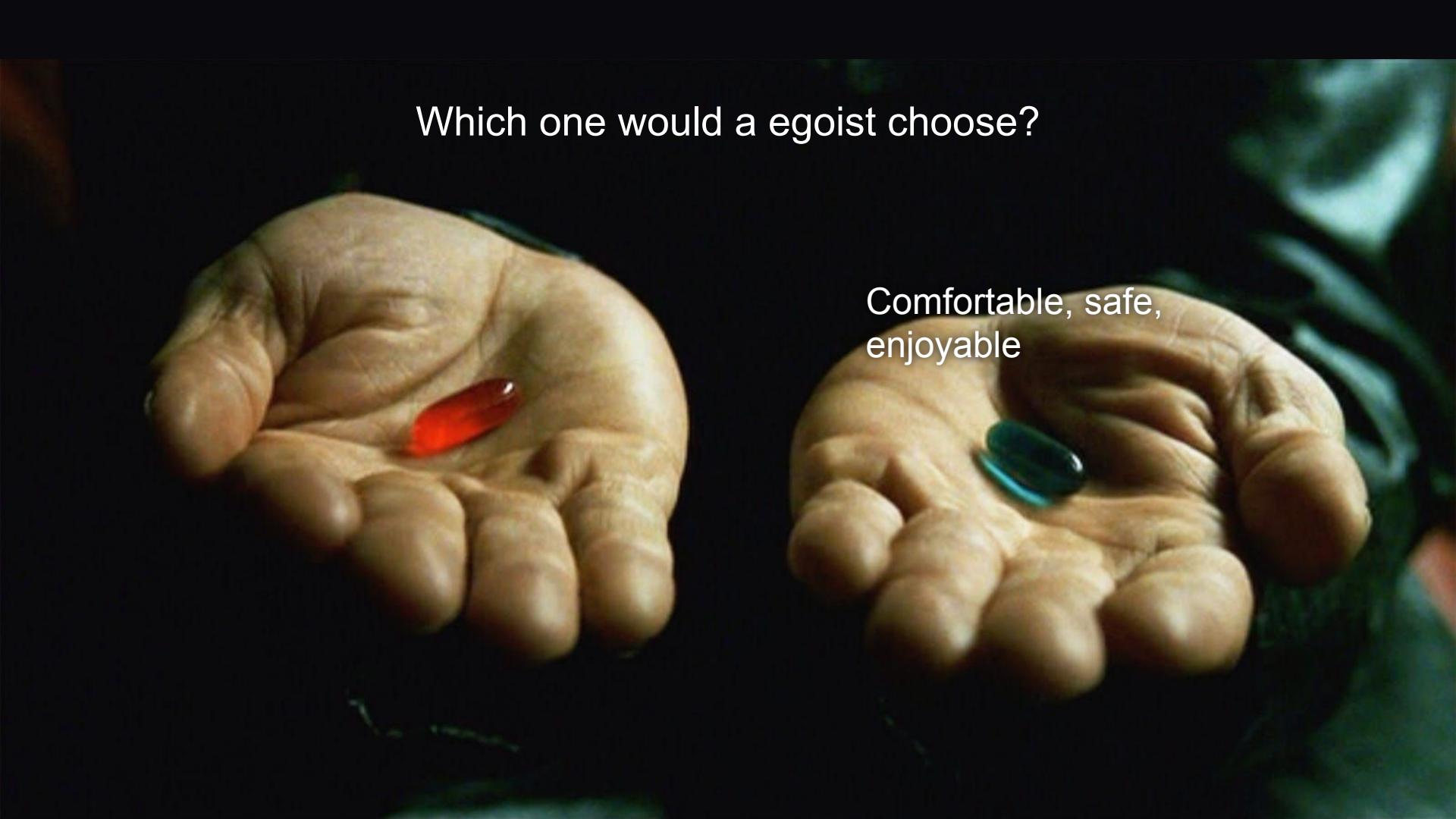
- It can't stop one from doing something that is clearly problematic.
  - *It don't fit your interests.*
- Desires can be short-sighted, misjudgmental, and conflicting.
  - *But Interests focus overall well-being.*
- Desire-based egoism seems to imply that “a machine of indulgence” is consistent with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



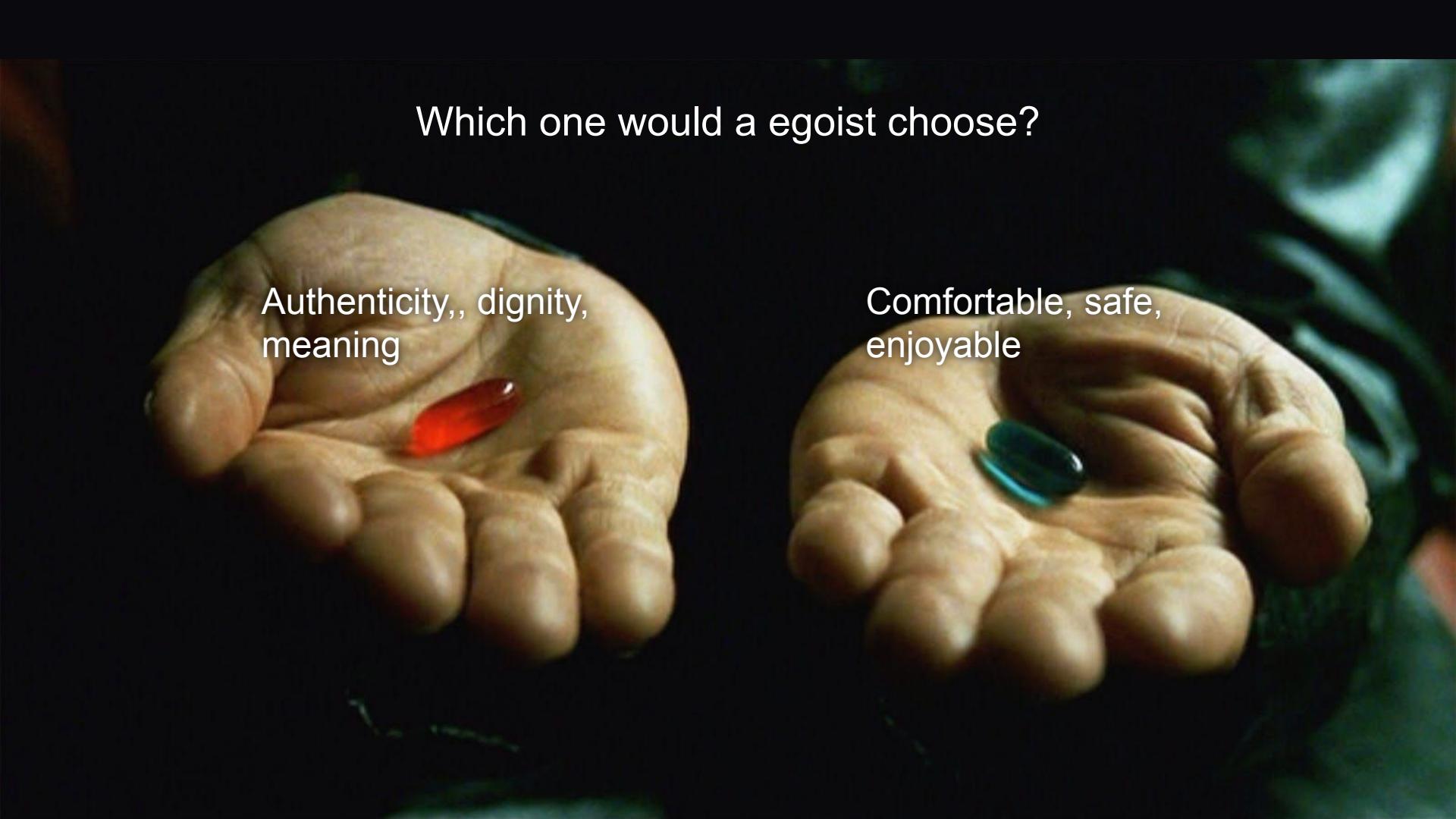
Which one would a egoist choose?



Which one would a egoist choose?

A close-up photograph of two hands held open against a dark background. The hand on the left holds a single red, oval-shaped capsule. The hand on the right holds a single blue, oval-shaped capsule. The lighting highlights the texture of the skin and the color of the capsules.

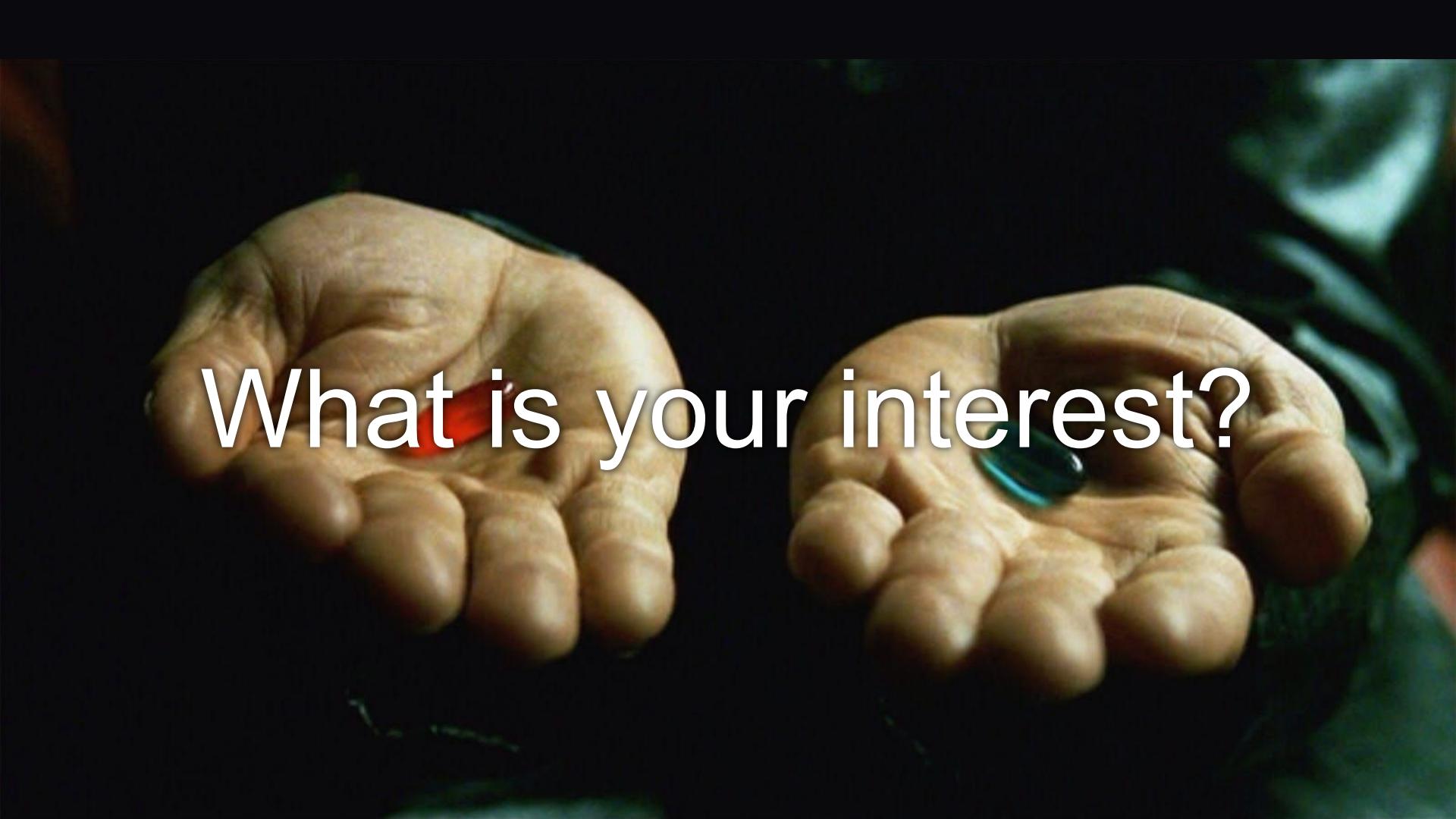
Comfortable, safe,  
enjoyable

A close-up photograph of two hands against a dark background. The left hand is open, palm up, holding a single red, oval-shaped capsule. The right hand is also open, palm up, holding a single blue, oval-shaped capsule. The lighting highlights the texture of the skin and the vibrant colors of the capsules.

Which one would a egoist choose?

Authenticity,, dignity,  
meaning

Comfortable, safe,  
enjoyable

A close-up photograph of two hands against a dark background. The hand on the left is holding a single red, heart-shaped pill. The hand on the right is holding a single green, capsule-shaped pill. The lighting highlights the texture of the skin and the distinct colors of the pills.

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