

Ethical Egoism

1. Objectives
2. Administrivia
3. You asked...
4. Ethical Egoism
5. Rubric discussion

Objectives:

By the end of this lecture you should be able to:

1. Explain what ethical egoism is
2. Differentiate between psychological egoism and ethical egoism
3. Evaluate arguments in defence of ethical egoism

1. Argument outline due today
2. Rubric due next week Wednesday

Psychological Egoism is not an ethical theory. It does not tell us what we *should* do.

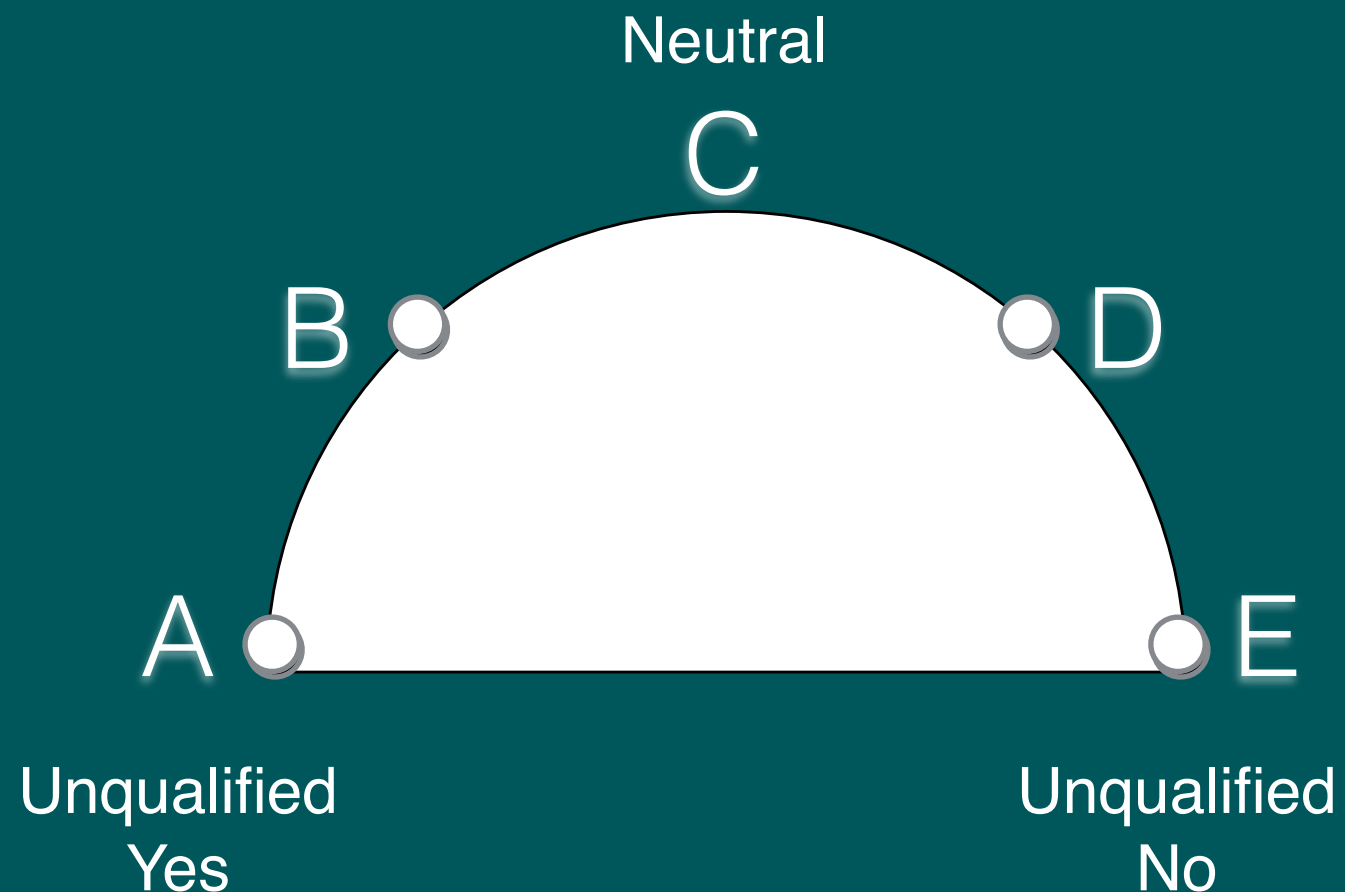
Psychological Egoism is a psychological thesis that purports to fully explain human motivation



Poll

Question

Are you a psychological egoist?





Russ Shafer-Landau

“

Unlike the psychological version, ethical egoism really is a moral theory. It tells us about what we are morally required and forbidden to do. Specifically, it says that there is one ultimate moral duty—to improve your own well-being as best you can.

- Text, p. 106

”

Psychological
Egoism

Ethical
Egoism

Accept ✓

Accept ✓

Accept ✓

Reject ✗

Reject ✗

Accept ✓

Reject ✗

Reject ✗

“



Russ Shafer-Landau

In a perfect world, virtue would always be rewarded and vice would never flourish. But what should we do, here in our imperfect world, when immorality promises great rewards?

- Text, p. 107

”



Russ Shafer-Landau

“

What to do when moral behaviour is met with ridicule, a prison term, or a bullet? It is easy when morality and self-interest give the same advice. But what if they don't?

- Text, p. 107

”

#

Four Distinctions



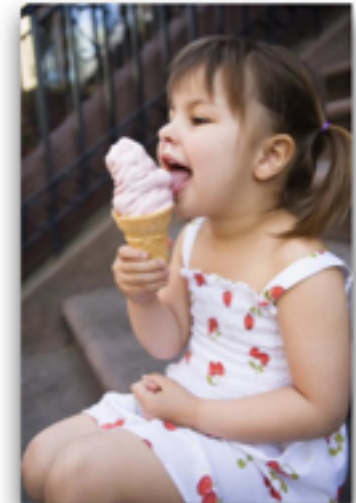
**Prudential :: Ethical
Distinction**

Philosophy 110B



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Prudential :: Ethical Distinction



Philosophy 110B





Russ Shafer-Landau

“

If ethical egoism is true, there are no such cases. This sort of egoism claims that actions are morally right just because they best promote one's self-interest. On this view, conflicts between self-interest and morality are impossible.

- Text, p. 107

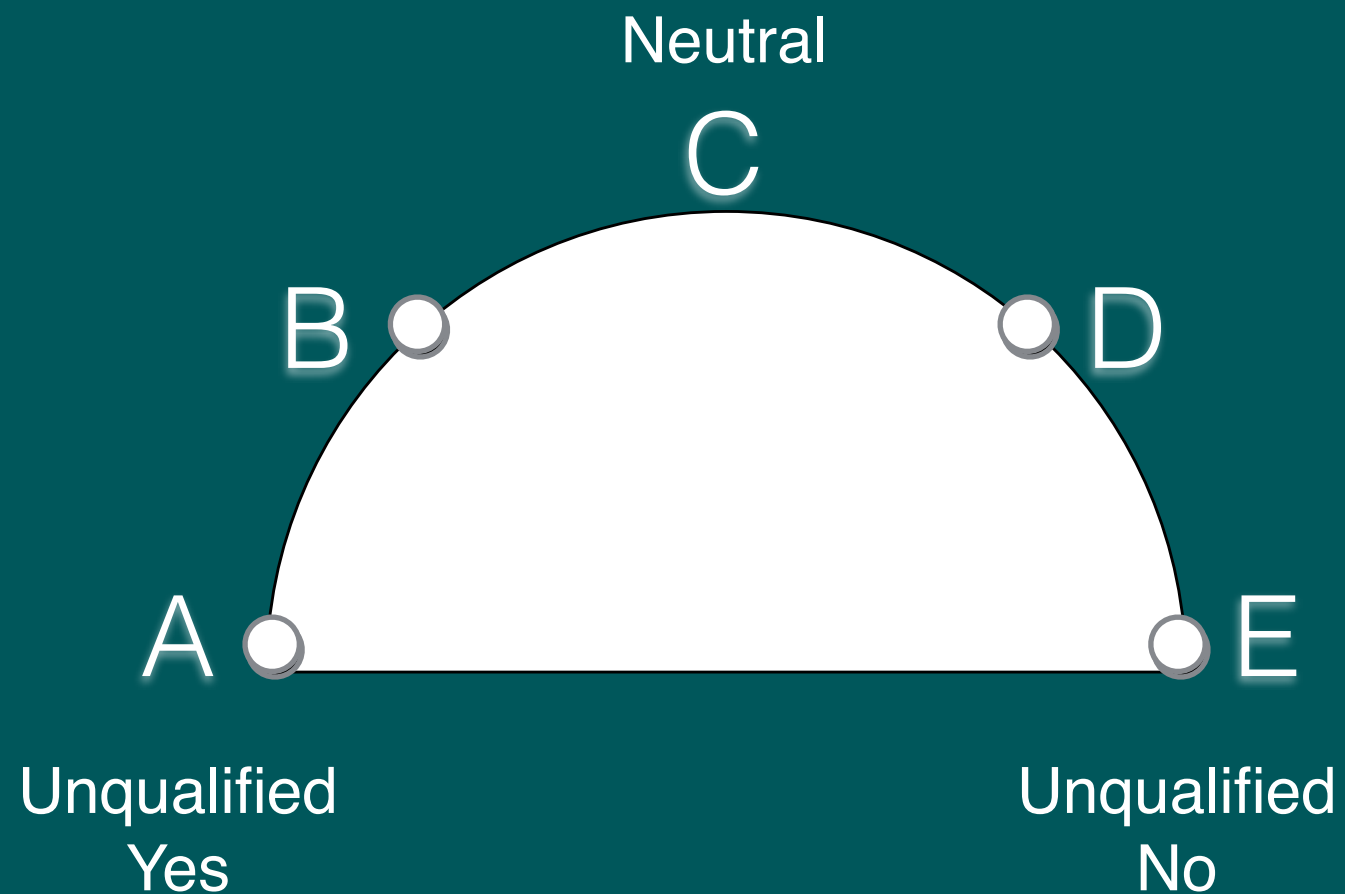
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Poll

Question

Are you a ethical egoist?



- P1 If an ethical theory requires killing, rape, or theft, just because such actions maximize self-interest, then that theory cannot be true
- P2 Ethical egoism sometimes requires such actions, just because they sometimes do maximize self-interest
- C Therefore, ethical egoism cannot be true

First...a bit of logic

P1. If Boots is a cat, Boots is an animal

P2. Boots is a cat

C. Hence, Boots is an animal



If the premises are true, the conclusion **MUST** be true

Modus Ponens

P1. If P then Q

P2. P

C. Hence Q

If the premises are true, the conclusion **MUST** be true

If the conclusion is false, at least one of the premises **MUST** be false...

Modus Ponens

P1. If P then Q
P2. P
C. Hence Q

(Affirming the Antecedent)

Modus Tollens

P1. If P then Q
P2. Not-Q
C. Hence not-P

(Denying the Consequent)

- P1 If an ethical theory requires killing, rape, or theft, just because such actions maximize self-interest, then that theory cannot be true
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Think from the perspective of an ethical egoist...

They will reject the conclusion

So they must argue that one of the premises is false

P1 If an ethical theory requires killing, rape, or theft, just because such actions maximize self-interest, then that theory cannot be true

P2 Ethical egoism sometimes requires such actions, just because they sometimes do maximize self-interest

C Therefore, ethical egoism cannot be true

Think from the perspective of an ethical egoist...

P2 looks like it's true.

It would take a very strong argument to demonstrate that P2 is false.

Think from the perspective of an ethical egoist...

P1 If an ethical theory requires killing, rape, or theft, just because such actions maximize self-interest, then that theory cannot be true

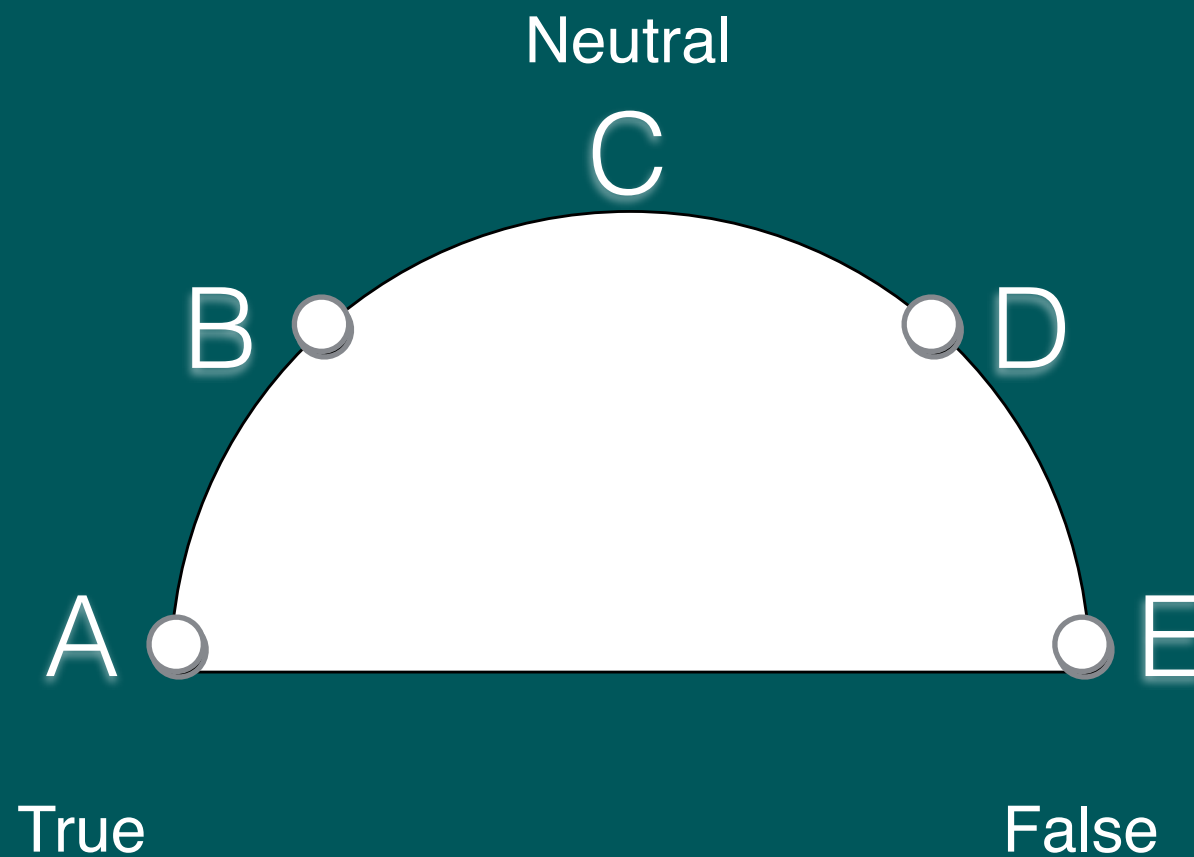
P2 Ethical egoism sometimes requires such actions, just because they sometimes do maximize self-interest

C Therefore, ethical egoism cannot be true



Poll

P1 If an ethical theory requires killing, rape, or theft, just because such actions maximize self-interest, then that theory cannot be true





Russ Shafer-Landau

“

Only those who already dislike egoism would accept the first premise. Premise 1 is not a neutral claim. Rather, it assumes that egoism is mistaken. It assumes, specifically, that self-interest cannot morally justify actions such as rape and theft.

- Text, p. 109

”

An argument from paradigm cases will simply beg the question against ethical egoism



Russ Shafer-Landau

“

Unlike the psychological version, ethical egoism really is a moral theory. It tells us about what we are morally required and forbidden to do. Specifically, it says that there is one ultimate moral duty—to improve your own well-being as best you can.

- Text, p. 106

”

- Egoism may require actions that seem highly immoral
- Egoism may forbid us from doing actions that seem morally good
- Egoism may permit us to escape some important duties



What's the most you would do?

- (E) Swim out to the kid
- (D) Make a human chain
- (C) Throw something that floats
- (B) Dial 911
- (A) Do nothing

1. The self-reliance argument
2. The libertarian argument
3. The best argument for ethical egoism

- P1 The most effective way of making everyone better off is for each person to mind her own business, and tend only to her own needs
- P2 We ought to take the most effective path to making everyone better off
- C Therefore, we each ought to mind our own business and tend only to our own needs

P1 The most effective way of making everyone better off is for each person to mind her own business, and tend only to her own needs

P2 We ought to take the most effective path to making everyone better off

C Therefore, we each ought to mind our own business and tend only to our own needs

The problem is...

P1 is demonstrably false

Our duty to help comes from two sources:
consent and reparation

If I do not consent to help other people, and I
have done no wrong, then I have no duty to
help them

Our duty to help comes from two sources:
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If I do not consent to help other people, and I
have done no wrong, then I have no duty to
help them

The problem is...

This claim goes against the
ethical egoism's main tenet

- P1 If you are morally required to do something then you have good reason to do it
- P2 If there is good reason for you to do something, then doing it must make you better off
- C Therefore, if you are morally required to do something, then doing it must make you better off

P1 If you are morally required to do something then you have good reason to do it

P2 If there is good reason for you to do something, then doing it must make you better off

C Therefore, if you are morally required to do something, then doing it must make you better off

The problem is...

P2 assumes that self-interest is the *only* reason for doing something

Why use a rubric?

- They save time
- They communicate expectations
- Provides a basis for marking*

* A paraphrase of the reasons given here: <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/assessing-student-work/grading-and-feedback/rubrics-useful-assessment-tools>

What types of rubrics are there?

- Analytic
- Holistic

| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Criteria 1 | | | |
| Criteria 2 | | | |
| Criteria 3 | | | |
| Criteria 4 | | | |

Criteria


Performance

Description

Sample Criteria

- clarity
- organization
- spelling & grammar
- disciplinary conventions
- sources
- content
- thesis
- structure


- use of evidence
- analysis
- logic and argumentation
- mechanics
- connection to course concepts
- following instructions
- writing



| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Criteria 1 | | | |
| Criteria 2 | | | |
| Criteria 3 | | | |
| Criteria 4 | | | |

Sample Levels**Three Levels**


WeakAverage.....Excellent
 Developing.....Competent.....Exemplary



| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Criteria 1 | | | |
| Criteria 2 | | | |
| Criteria 3 | | | |
| Criteria 4 | | | |

Sample Levels**Four Levels**


Unacceptable.....Marginal.....Proficient.....Distinguished
 Beginning.....Developing.....Accomplished.....Exemplary
 Emerging.....Progressing.....Partial Mastery.....Mastery
 Poor.....Fair.....Good.....Excellent



| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Criteria 1 | | | |
| Criteria 2 | | | |
| Criteria 3 | | | |
| Criteria 4 | | | |

Sample Levels**Five Levels**

Poor.....Minimal.....Sufficient.....Above Average.....Excellent
 Novice.....Intermediate...Proficient.....Distinguished.....Master
 Unacceptable.....Poor.....Satisfactory.....Good.....Excellent



| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Criteria 1 | | | |
| Criteria 2 | | | |
| Criteria 3 | | | |
| Criteria 4 | | | |

| | Exemplary | Competent | Developing |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Clear & Concise Explanations | The submission goes well beyond the expectations of a strong explanation | The submission is objectively written, it impartially describes and evaluates the topic, it is accurate, it conveys information effectively, it demonstrates the interconnectivity of ideas. | Submission is missing significant components of a good explanation |

Advantages

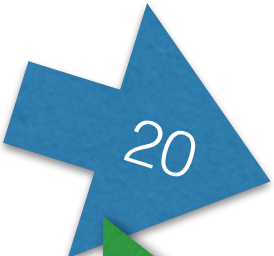
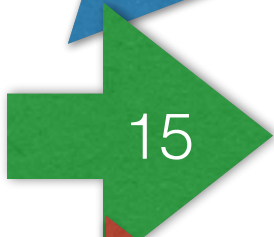
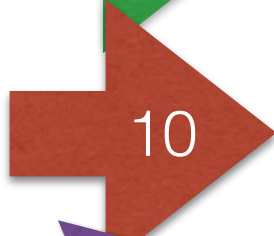

- Easy way to point out areas of strength and weakness
- The criterion can be weighted to indicate the importance of each dimension*



The diagram shows a 4x4 analytic rubric table. A blue arrow labeled 'Criteria' points to the first column. A green arrow labeled 'Performance' points to the top row. A red arrow labeled 'Description' points to the bottom row. The table structure is as follows:

| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Criteria 1 | | | |
| Criteria 2 | | | |
| Criteria 3 | | | |
| Criteria 4 | | | |

* Pretty much verbatim from: http://teachingcommons.depaul.edu/Feedback_Grading/rubrics/types-of-rubrics.html

| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|
|  20 | | | |
|  15 | | | |
|  10 | | | |
|  5 | | | |
| Ideas | | | |
| Connection | | | |
| Writing | | | |
| Instructions | | | |

Things to keep in mind:

- Requires commitment from instructor
- The descriptions must be specific enough for consistency of grading*

The diagram shows a 4x4 grid representing an analytic rubric. The first column contains the labels 'Criteria 1', 'Criteria 2', 'Criteria 3', and 'Criteria 4'. The first row contains the labels 'Level 1', 'Level 2', and 'Level 3'. Three arrows point to the table: a blue arrow labeled 'Criteria' points to the first column, a green arrow labeled 'Performance' points to the first row, and a red arrow labeled 'Description' points to the bottom-right cell (Criteria 4, Level 3).

| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Criteria 1 | | | |
| Criteria 2 | | | |
| Criteria 3 | | | |
| Criteria 4 | | | |

* See: http://teachingcommons.depaul.edu/Feedback_Grading/rubrics/types-of-rubrics.html

- A holistic rubric consists of one scale
- All the criteria is considered together
- Marks are based on an overall judgement of the student's work*

* See: http://teachingcommons.depaul.edu/Feedback_Grading/rubrics/types-of-rubrics.html

Performance

Level 1

Criteria

Writing: Blah blah blah blah.
Analysis: blah blah blah blah
Spelling: blah blah blah

Level 2

Writing: Blah blah blah blah.
Analysis: blah blah blah blah
Spelling: blah blah blah

Level 3

Writing: Blah blah blah blah.
Analysis: blah blah blah blah
Spelling: blah blah blah

Written Reflection Rubric

Philosophy 110B
1155

Performance

Criteria

Capstone

You clearly demonstrate a great deal of sophistication in your written reflection. You clearly articulate your ideas and give cogent reasons for why certain ideas are correct. You command a strong working knowledge of course concepts and clearly demonstrate this in your writing. You are able to apply course concepts to new contexts.

Keystone

Your written reflections are insightful. You articulate your ideas and take seriously the need to give reasons for why certain ideas are correct. You demonstrate knowledge of course concepts and correctly apply them to new contexts.

Cornerstone

You are engaged with the course material and are wrestling with the ethical questions discussed in class. You have made a good start but could delve a little bit deeper by trying to apply course concepts to your personal life or to current events. Remember that good ethical thinking requires us to provide reasons for what we think. Not everything goes. Not all ethical viewpoints are equally good. Some are better than others.

Milestone

You have made an attempt at wrestling with the ethical questions we are discussing in lecture. I strongly encourage you to keep thinking about how to answer the questions we ask in class. And I encourage you to question the answers you come up with.

|

Advantages

- Emphasis can be put on what the student is able to do
- Minimizes the number of decisions that a marker must make

* See: http://teachingcommons.depaul.edu/Feedback_Grading/rubrics/types-of-rubrics.html

Things to keep in mind:

- Not a good tool to provide specific feedback to students
- It is not possible to weight the different criteria
- A student's work may span different levels for different criteria

* See: http://teachingcommons.depaul.edu/Feedback_Grading/rubrics/types-of-rubrics.html