

Egoism, Self-Interest, and Altruism

US275 Scientific Ethics
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Interactions among individuals

- Psychological egoism
- Ethical egoism
- altruism



Psychological Egoism

- we should always
 - do that which we perceive to be in our own self-interest
 - i.e. be selfish
 - whatever you do, you do solely for your own satisfaction

.....Dorothy Dix Talks.....



THE SELFISHNESS OF MEN.

Illustrated 1898 column by Dorothy Dix,
The Picayune, New Orleans

Paradox of Hedonism

- happiness is an elusive goal
 - if it is the only pursuit
- Happiness is best attained when pursuing other things

“Better Socrates dissatisfied, than the pig satisfied.”

~ John Stuart Mill



Xantippe Dousing Socrates
alt. title: *Socrates, his two spouses, and Alcibiades*
Reyer Jacobsz van Blommendael, 1655

Problems with Psychological Egoism

- must only act to promote own self interests
- but many actions and behaviors are not selfish
 - neutral
 - for the benefit of others



Ethical Egoism

- everyone should behave to follow their own best self-interests
- it is moral to maximize your own interests, even when it conflicts with the interests of others.



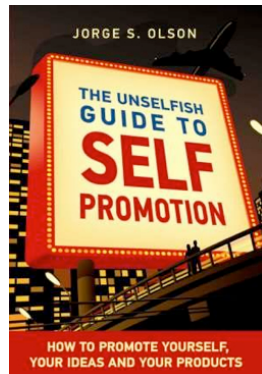
Selfishness

- focused only on self
- sacrifice the good of others for own sake
 - even when unjust to do so
- violate societal moral standards



Self-interest

- concerned with promoting our own good
 - but not necessarily at any cost
- can accept occasional failure to attain goals
- part of human nature



Problems with Ethical Egoism as a moral code

- inconsistent
 - directs different actions for people with different self-interests.
- cannot be publicized
 - egoists only benefit when others don't realize they are acting selfishly.



Hypocrisy
John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, 1890

Altruism

- putting the interests of others before our own
- selfless acts
- However, pure altruism
 - puts the individual at a disadvantage
 - fails just like pure egoism



The good samaritan
Vincent van Gogh, 1890

Reciprocal Altruism

- good deeds should be rewarded
 - bad deeds should be punished

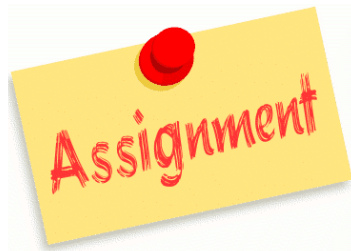
“you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours.”

“an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth...”



Assignment

The activity for this topic will be assigned after the Utilitarianism mini-lecture.



Readings

Chapter 6: Egoism, Self-Interest, and Altruism

Pojman & Fieser,
Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong



Daitoku myoo, the Wisdom King of Great Awe-inspiring Power, 11th century.

Any Questions?

Email me at:
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<http://www.pipitbullennets.com/images/animated-question-mark.gif>