

# Analysis of ethical egoism philosophy essay



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Moral standards inform our actions, behaviours, and thoughts. The foundation of these standards stem from our cultural heritage passed on through generations. Introducing morals into the ego bears the philosophy of ethical egoism, which is a normative theory, based on the promotion of one's own good in accordance with morality (Moseley). Shaver avers that based on the ethical egoism theory it is necessary and sufficient for an action to be morally right and that it maximizes own good. The promotion and pursuance of one's self-interest underscores the normative theory. It prescribes the motivation of one's thought, behaviour, and action.

To understand the ethical egoism theory we must first know certain principles behind it. Ethical egoism is a normative theory, which means it prescribes how we should think, behave, and act. Shaver presents three features of ethical egoism as individual, personal and universal. He states that individual ethical egoism is notion that all persons should serve self-interest. Personal ethical egoism is the belief that one should act from the motive of self-interest (Shaver). Universal ethical egoism is the doctrine that all persons should pursue their own interests exclusively (Shaver).

The foundation of a coherent theory of ethics is in truth, consistency, and completeness. 'In truth' means that a statement of action is either true or false and not both. Consistency means that there should be no contradictions or incompatible statements. Completeness means that there should be no moral truth, which is not provable from the basic moral principles of the theory (Moseley).

Shaver's argument (qtd. in Rachels) in favour of the theory is that we are better positioned to know what is good for us. He further argues that since to seek out the good of others is to interfere, we should mind our own business. His point is that all of our commonplace practices from corporate social responsibility to a welfare system are borne of self-preservation and interest.

Shaver's other submission (qtd. in Rand) in favour of the theory is that a form of egoism was one of the thrusts of the American Revolution. He further argues that capitalism a 19th Century business model of the American history helped in rapid economic and cultural development that the nation also experienced.

In opposition to the theory, Moseley (qtd. in Bayer) believes that it fails to provide the moral and arbitration framework to resolve conflicts. He holds that it is contradictory that pursuit of self-interest can be right and wrong. Moseley states that a successful pursuance of self-interest can be a deterrent if it prevents others from seeking their interest though perceived as a moral triumph.

Finally, opponents say that ethical egoism is prejudicial because it divides people into two groups and discriminates against one group based on some subjective difference. Critics have touted this as the best objection to the theory, for it provides the soundest reason why the interests of others ought to concern the interests of the self. The theory fails to answer certain fundamental questions of criteria of categorization, like the difference between self and others that justifies placing self in a special category. This

makes the theory an arbitrary doctrine, in the same way that racism is arbitrary (Moseley).

Some strengths of the theory are that, sometimes acting in one's self-interest often benefits others . e. g. going to college is in your self-interest, and it will help keep you off welfare, crime. In pursuing your self-interest, you will get a job, which will benefit others, or you start a business to make money, but you must have satisfied employees and a competitive product thereby helping others. In choosing your own interest, you must have the personal freedom to choose. Hence, as an egoist you must allow everyone to pursue his own personal interest (universal ethical egoism); consequently, egoism leads into a right-based theory where each individual has certain inalienable rights or a rule-based theory where certain rules of conduct are in the interest of everyone to observe. That is we are all better off if everyone obeys the law for we have to give up some good to achieve our maximum possible good. (Moseley).

Notable weaknesses of the theory include the fact that it cannot be generalized or recommended to others because such a recommendation would be against one's self-interest; there is no way to justify the belief since it applies to just one person. Another problem is that it is difficult to figure out what " own interests" means. It cannot be ascertained whether the phrase mean short-term or long-term benefit, pleasure, happiness, preference, or something else, for what gives you pleasure might not be a benefit or in your interest. (Moseley).

One thing is certain about all the arguments presented, that the theory is controversial, inconsistent, and incongruous and cannot therefore be used as a basis to guide and direct our actions, habits, and beliefs. It is imperative to state that a theory is but an opinion or point of view if not grounded in truth, consistency, and completeness.