

Selfish and unselfish actions as personal interest philosophy essay



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Selfishness is an act of being self-centered and egotistical. It is the ability of a person to do his or her own things without helping others or meeting the needs of other people, they only concentrate in self-satisfaction. Selfishness also shows satisfaction being a goal of an act. Altruistic on the other hand is the state of being selfless, unselfish, humane and philanthropic. It is where an individual views satisfaction as a feature of accomplishing a certain goal and how he or she enjoys helping others. It is the ability of an individual to set down strategies of meeting the needs of other people and he or she receives enjoyment from doing it and accomplishing their goal. The ultimate aim of this paper is to examine the arguments by various individuals that gives a clear implications of the distinction between selfishness and altruistic (Batson & Shaw, 1991).

To begin with, it is important to view both selfish and unselfish actions as a personal interest where the individuals does what they merely intended to do especially when the action is done voluntarily (Rachels, 2003). Rachels was greatly against the arguments that people never volunteers to do anything except what they only wish to do. This is because most people do actions they do not wish to do in order to achieve a certain goal, which a person needs to meet (Kurt, 1990). In addition, there are some actions, which people may wish not to do but are forced to do them because they fell their selves under an obligation to them. For example, paying the fees of your child in school or institution is just an obligation but most people do not love it because it is too expensive. This means that individuals usually act from a single motive known as self-love and this is greatly supported by the ethical egoism, which suggests people should only act from self-love.

However, note that every person is selfish because he or she does what he or she wishes to do. For instance one individual might want to help a colleague become successful and achieve their goals, while a different individual try's to sabotage or betray them, both do what they wish and they are both selfish. Therefore, it is the objective of an individual that brings about an act of selfishness. If several of a person's objectives is to make them happy then they are selfish. If a person wants to help others, the person is kind, when he or she wishes to cause harm to them, then the person is malicious. It is the deform view of human nature where both ethical and psychological egoism rest. For example, I allow my sister to stay in my spare bedroom while she is in town visiting, this is a case of kindness.

It is also clear that because the altruistic actions normally produces self-satisfaction in the individual and because the same satisfaction sense is a good conscious state, it is then that the action is actually intended to accomplish a pleasant state of consciousness, other than bringing about the good for others. For example, when a member of government establishes a certain project in his area before election, he only accomplishes a state of consciousness to make people happy but in real sense, he is self-centered in that he aims to win people's favor during the elections. Thus, the action is seen as unselfish but only at a superficial analysis level. Even though many actions by individuals are accelerated by whole or part of self-interest. Thus, most actions done by individuals either to themselves or to others are because of self-interest which is just accentually selfishness and self-satisfaction.

There are some instances of common and well-known altruistic actions like self-sacrifice and gratuitous help and this is what makes the psychological egoism seem to be false. For example, what intention can a mother have in sight after perseveringly attending to her sick child? After a long struggle the child languishes and eventually dies from their injuries, by the death of the child, what goal does the anguishing mother achieve after the long attendance to dying child? Therefore, it is obviously wrong and very incorrect to describe such an object or a goal of that mother as self-interest or selfishness. The psychological egoists however, commented on the same by saying that such kind of help on others is strongly motivated by some sort of self-interest like the reciprocation expectation, the non-sensory satisfaction, and the desire to gain reputation or respect or by the reward expectation in a presumed afterlife (Rachels, 2003). The action of helping is actually very active in such strong selfish goals. This is what brings about altruistic acts which people do though most of them do not do it whole-heartedly.

Psychological hedonism

The psychological hedonism on the other hand suggests that the main aim of the motive of egoism is to create better pleasure feelings and preventing or avoiding bad feelings of pain (Kurt, 1990). For example, a student will always be seen obeying the school rules but in real sense, there are certain rules they wish to break as they feel they do not believe or respect them but to avoid punishment, they abide by them. There are however, other non-limited forms of psychological egoism let the main aim of an individual to encompass things like preventing punishment from an individual or other things like shame or guilt and obtaining presents such as self-worth, pride, <https://assignbuster.com/selfish-and-unselfish-actions-as-personal-interest-philosophy-essay/>

reciprocal beneficial action. This means that some people will do the good deeds or try to portray altruistic attitude that they do not actually have. They normally do it in order to be praised and feel proud of themselves but in real sense, they are actually selfish. It is only that they tend to show satisfaction as a goal of an act.

It is difficult to explain the theory of universal positivity even though people accept it because for instance, taking an action like a soldier jumping on a grenade with the main aim of saving his colleagues all in the name of sacrifice (Batson & Shaw, 1991). Such an incident does have time for the person to experience positivity towards the action of an individual. However, the psychological egoist may argue out that the soldier encounters moral positivity in when he makes sure that he is sacrificing his life to ensure the comrades are safe and survive or else he is avoiding the negativity connected with the thought of all of his colleagues dying. Psychological egoists also argue out that while some actions may not clearly portray social or physical positivity, nor preventing negativity, the initial considerations or reactionary mental expectation is the major issue. When a dog is taught how to sit on the first occasion, it is given a biscuit. This happens for several times until it learns how to sit without being given the biscuit. The egoists hence claim that such actions that do not require or result to direct positivity or reward are very different from the dog's actions (Kurt, 1990). In this case sitting after being asked to or commanded will have now become a habitual force and ending such habits is usually very difficult and may lead to mental discomfort. This may apply to morality as well as the theory applied to appear ineffective positive actions.

This has led to accusation of the psychological egoism being circular. If a person performs an act freely without being forced to acquire personal enjoyment from an act, for that reason; therefore majority of people carry out these actions that make them feel some type of enjoyment. This is the case in altruistic acts where people perform them while getting enjoyment from them and therefore, they are egoistic. The argument is highly circular because such an argument has its conclusion similar to its hypothesis assuming that people only perform acts that give them personal enjoyment (Rachels, 2003). This is the objection that came up with Joseph Butler though it was a modification of Hazlitt and Macaulay's works. However, Joel Feinberg expounded the idea in his "Psychological Egoism" paper of 1958 where he encompassed the following cross-examination. "All men desire only satisfaction. Satisfaction of what? Satisfaction of their desires. Their desires for what? Their desires for satisfaction. Satisfaction of what? Their desires? For what? For satisfaction." Therefore, it is evident enough that the altruistic act is circular.