

Lesson 7

Notes

Three Types of Ethical Egoism

1. **Individual Ethical Egoism**

2. **Personal Ethical Egoism**

3. **Universal Ethical Egoism**

Ethical Egoism

- Ethical subjectivism is about
- Ethical egoism is concerned

Key Claims

-

-

-

Egoism vs. Hedonism

- Hedonism is a doctrine that considers

Psychological Egoism

- Psychological Egoism seizes on the fact that we are in part motivated by

- Psychological Egoism makes a claim about

- Ethical Egoism makes a claim about

Ayn Rand

- Believed in Ethical Egoism
- She believed that we can best create an atmosphere where each individual can pursue his or her own interest by protecting people's individual liberty rights.
- That we value that which helps us survive, and that which helps us survive is what is in our own self-interest
- She believed that we are fundamentally solitary individuals, each pursuing our own self-interest.
- Self-interested people help others only if they will get something in return.

Arguments for Ethical Egoism

There are at least three principal arguments in support of ethical egoism:

1.

2.

3.

1. Altruism Is Self-Defeating

2. Acting Selfishly Creates a Better World

- Ethical egoists sometimes maintain that if each person took care of himself/herself, the overall effect would be to make the world a better place for everyone.

- *Epistemological:*

- *Moral:*

3. Ethical egoism doesn't result in such a different world after all.

- This argument presupposes that people already act selfishly (i.e., psychological egoism) and are just pretending to be altruistic.
- If psychological egoism is true, then we should admit its truth and get rid of our hypocrisy.
- Reply:

Criticisms of Ethical Egoism

1.

2.

3.

1.
 - Can the ethical egoist consistently will that everyone else follow the tenets of ethical egoism?
 - It seems to be in one's self-interest to be selfish oneself and yet get everyone else to act altruistically (especially if they act for your benefit). This leads to individual ethical egoism.
 - Some philosophers such as Jesse Kalin have argued that in sports we consistently universalize ethical egoism: we intend to win, but we want our opponents to try as hard as they can
2.
 - Some philosophers have argued that ethical egoism is, at best, appropriate to living in a world of strangers that you do not care about.
 - Can ethical egoists be good friends?
 - If friendship involves (among other things) being concerned about other people for their own sake, then this seems something beyond the reach of the egoist.
 - Ethical egoists can help their friends if they believe there is a long-term payoff.
3.
 - Can the ethical egoist be sensitive to the suffering of others?
 - Such sensitivity seems to presuppose caring about other people for their own sake.
 - Moral sensitivity presupposes that the suffering of others exerts a moral "pull" on the individual—something that the ethical egoist does not recognize.