

IS MY GOODNESS GOOD BECAUSE I WANT IT TO BE OR IS IT GOOD NO MATTER WHAT I WANT?

THE OPTIONS - SELF-SACRIFICE, RATIONAL SELF-INTEREST OR BRUTAL SELFISHNESS

Serving others without seeking anything in it for yourself including good feelings is self-sacrifice or altruism. Without seeking means you are open to getting something so real altruism implies that you refuse anything in return for what good you do. An altruism that declares that it is good to work only for the other person (meaning anything else is bad) and leave yourself out of it demands that you consciously leave yourself out.

You may help John because you wish to satisfy your desire to help and it is not because he is suffering. That is rational self-interest.

You may help John because you want to slip poison in his coffee - that is barbarism.

So you have three things to choose from.

Which one should be your motivation?

SELF-INTEREST AND BAD ARE NOT NECESSARILY THE SAME

It is not being selfish that matters. It is being bad. You can be unselfish and bad. You might refuse to help somebody because you know they will help you back and choose to help a stranger who you will never see again. You can be selfish and do things not for the sake of others but because you feel you want to and be considered good. It is only religion that condemns that selfishness not society.

A DILEMMA

Do I do good to another because I say it is good or because it is good? Do I intend to do good because good is just good or because I decide it is good?

The problem is we have learned that none of the three motivations to act are really good. They range from bad, to more bad and more more bad.

This means the question is meaningless and is virtue-signalling in the sense that you pretend to be really about good. In the real world, you are what you are and it is not good but grey.

Do I do grey to another because I say it is grey or because it is grey? Do I intend to do grey because grey is just grey or because I decide it is grey? Nobody wants to ask that at all!

Your efforts are necessarily suspect as to their purity if it is grey you have to aim for not good.

HYPOTHETICAL

Do I do good to another because I say it is good or because it is good? Do I intend to do good because good is just good or because I decide it is good?

This is hypothetical. It is what we would ask if we could be good not grey.

It is a play on the question if moral good is moral because God says so or would be good even if he banned it. This is the Euthyphro Dilemma. Its the difference in something being good in itself or just good because I or God or somebody says so.

DOES IT MATTER?

Should I do good to a person because it is the rule to do good or because it helps that person? Its the difference between doing it for the rule or to prevent harm to the person.

But notice with trying to prevent harm you still have what amounts to a rule - do this and you will prevent further harm.

You must do it.

If I help because it is the rule then I don't care about the person but just about rules or what I perceive as good. We know it is possible to be interested in good only because rules say it is good. In that case, it is the rules we are really interested in - not real good. And if the rule is what is good then how can my motive to be good to the person be credible if I don't genuinely care about what is good for them? So either way I do wrong. So its a dilemma.

A rule avoids committment to the person which is easier than committing and sacrificing to a person. You never know what a person is going to need which is why going along with a rule is easy and avoids committment. The rule is simple and you go along with it and it makes no other difficulty.

We find then that morality as in right and wrong actions is not as coherent as it seems or as caring.

CAN I BOTH SERVE THE RULE AND THE PERSON?

If there is a problem with serving the person and the rule why can't I do both? Some think I can compromise and do both.

Then I don't care about the person fully but only half care.

You can answer that I do care for it is the nearest I can get to caring and I am doing my best. [The person who feeds you on rotting chicken because there is nothing else is being a bigger and better person than the situation allows.] And so I also care about goodness. That is the solution to the dilemma for you can't do more than your best.

Another solution is that if I don't care about the person or about good then I am selfish but selfishness isn't bad when properly practiced. So I am not doing wrong after all.

You have to be pragmatic – you make a good attempt to strike for the best grey. That is the only good you are ever going to get!

IS THE DILEMMA CONFUSED?

What about the idea that goodness necessarily implies rules - eg you cannot give a sick baby poison if you want to help it. It is a rule not to give the poison. So some say the Dilemma is confused for it thinks the rule to be good is separate from helping so to love the rule is to love helping people and vice versa. But a rule and goodness are not the same thing. A rule is an order and thus in itself may be bad or good or even both at the one time! It cares about being a rule and nothing else. It is a weapon. If the Dilemma requires you to divorce reason in order to imagine that doing good to a dog by giving him a little treat is a rule then it is a licence for manipulators who wish to make rules and pretend these rules are factually and objectively right.

IS THE DILEMMA ABOUT ACTIONS OR MOTIVES OR BOTH?

The Dilemma is usually interpreted as being about what actions say about your motives so the focus is on the motives. The Dilemma would be rubbish if it meant anything different. To say an action is to be celebrated and rewarded just because it has good results regardless of your bad motives would be to sanction not morality or goodness but vice and hypocrisy. The dilemma is about the motives not the results.

A METHOD

Good is not a rule it is a method. Good as in rule is nothing compared to good as in method. Rules only serve to make a form of good but oppose the real deal.

WHAT IF IT WERE A RULE?

To love helping people is loving people. If good is a rule then that is only good if a rule says so. It is a callous ethic. It is not very encouraging. We never know how many are influenced by such an ethic for they will not tell us.

A MISTAKE

Some say that helping others is goodness and that is that but they are incorrect for they confuse the good results with the motives. The good results of helping people are thought to mean that you meant to do good which doesn't follow. And some good results will be unexpected and there will always be some bad ones!

DOES THE DILEMMA POINT TO EGOISM AS THE ONLY WISE COURSE?

Egoism is rational self-interest. It is a form of selfishness.

To care about rules not good is selfish. To care about good not rules is also selfish. Good is associated by us with promoting happiness and wellbeing. Caring about good not rules is what egoism is about.

So the dilemma points to egoism as the best.

GOD'S EUTHRYPO DILEMMA AND MINE

My dilemma is more fundamental than the God one. Thus the latter is overruled by it. It is written in what we are so theories about God cannot match it.

I have to judge what good is before I can judge God as good. So my dilemma is what matters. If I have to decide between it and a God one I have to choose mine. Though conscience is portrayed as the work of God it clearly is not. It asks to come before even him.

We know that just because something is good doesn't make it moral. It is good to have a lot of alcohol but the ethics of egoism advises against that good and recommends being more self-centred as in health-conscious.

You need the rules for teaching morality. We hate rules - we only like them when they suit us in which case we only like the fun we find in them not them. Both caring about rules and caring about good is selfish so we can't compromise either. We are selfish in all that we do.

Altruism cares about rules as rules. Egoism does that too but not to as serious of an extent. Egoism fits the idea of good just being good better.

WHAT ABOUT NEUTRALITY?

Altruists and egoists deny that the other knows what love is. Suppose neither do. If egoism and altruism are not love then what must be your attitude? Toss a coin. If you say you must wish you could love others what sense does that make if neither side makes it possible?

Altruism thinks of you as a servant not a dignity. It is not a very humanitarian idea. It would be wrong to be an egoist and wish that altruism as we see it was true for that would be wishing for an evil thing.

Egoism seems bad to many for they want you to make others equal to yourself. It would be wrong to be an altruist and wish that egoism as we see it was true for that would be wishing for an evil thing.

So be neutral. Or toss your coin.

Egoism realises that nobody wants to be loved in a selfless way. The mother wants her baby to enjoy the cuddles and gain something for itself. Egoism understands love better even if not perfectly. Altruism does not understand it at all and swamps it in lies and contradictions,

FINALLY

No matter what I do, I am the one who has to decide what love and compassion and mercy etc mean. No God can do it for me. I even have to decide if God can embody these ideals. The dilemma, "Is good good because I say so or do I just discover what is good meaning good does not care what I think?" is for me not God or religion. Don't let God belief rob you of your dilemma. Why do you want to ignore yours and distract yourself with his? Because you fear the huge responsibility you have. Drop God.