

VINDICATING THE ARGUMENT, "MY DESIRE/INTENTION TO HELP ANOTHER IS MINE THEREFORE IT IS ABOUT ME"

Everybody says, "If I help somebody and feel good after it does not follow that I did the act to get that feeling. If I make a nice dinner for somebody to see them happy it does not follow that I was motivated to please myself by seeing this person happy. Just because the motive is my motive does not mean it is a self-interested motive."

It is known as fact that I cannot act without a motive (page 115, Dictionary of Philosophy, Simon Blackburn, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996). Motive or intention is defined as the reason you want to do something or cause something to happen.

Psychological egoism is said to reason that because I need my motive, anything I do is for me and I am really what it is all about (ibid). It says motive means, "I want to get some satisfaction by doing this thing or getting this thing." Critics say it is not about satisfaction but reasons. But the fact remains that satisfaction plays a part. You have to want to do something enough even if you don't want to do it in order to do it. We all want to do what we do under the circumstances.

Critics of psychological egoism say it would be as irrational as saying that because a thought is mine it is all about me and I can think only of me. But a thought hasn't anything to do with feeling and motive has. The analogy fails. A thought isn't a feeling or an attraction like motive is.

A mistake critics of psychological egoism make, is thinking that because we desire things outside of ourselves, cars, money and friends etc that it cannot be true. We want these things because of the emotional response and satisfaction they give. We don't want them in themselves. Nobody ever wanted a car just because a car was a car. They want the car because it makes life easier, because they like driving and because it is cool to have a car. The critics don't believe in their own argument. How do we know? Because they say a person who does good for praise is an egoist despite looking outside himself for this praise. The dishonesty of altruists is distressing.

I can do a good work without thinking of how good it will make me feel after. But this has nothing to do with psychological egoism when psychological egoism is correctly understood. Doing it does something to you emotionally and your feelings are always one of your motives. You don't want to eat the dreadful porridge and hope that doing so will evoke some good feeling. The act is its own reward – you fulfil yourself in the doing of the act. Whatever comes after the act is irrelevant. It is the feeling you want the act to happen that causes you to do the act – some people call this choice is where the egoism is. You can't act unless you want the act to happen. You must at least want the act for itself. The good results of the act need not be the attraction at all.

Joanna is in dire need of help or she will suffer terribly. Only you can help. If you cannot do it unless you find even 1% of benefit in helping for yourself then it follows that though the 99% is about her you are weighing you against her. You are still what matters.

You help her not for her but for yourself. She is not helped because she is suffering but because you want to help her.

DENIES THE NOTION THAT SELFISH AND UNSELFISH ARE ALWAYS MIXED

To say that because my intention to help x is mine that does not mean it is about me does not fit the common view that we mix selfish and unselfish together all the time. It denies that doing good for others really is all about doing good for them.

It is easy to think you are unselfish when you are more selfish than what you think. Self-discernment is very difficult. In theory if it is true that that helping somebody may not mean you are doing it to fulfil something in yourself it does not follow that anybody actually is unselfish. The theory then is only good as an idea but does nothing to tell us about human nature. The argument is not an argument at all but is like "the man protesteth too much".

FORGETTING

It would seem true that the motive being my motive does not mean it is a self-interested motive but only if you forget what motive is. The motive being what attracts me does mean it is a self-interested motive. This in a nutshell is the only real refutation of psychological egoism there could be. Refute it and we establish that psychological egoism is fact.

SELF-PRESERVATION

Just because the motive is my motive does not mean it is a self-interested motive is wrong. Self-preservation is the strongest need of all. The suicide only dies because he or she wants to kill the pain not themselves. They die to preserve themselves from the pain. The self-preservation need permeates all our decisions. No decision or thought is tolerated that may take away our life and we can lose life by losing freedom as well as by dying. Life is not life unless one can do what one feels one likes to do - within reason.

Here is a parallel to show the point: Just because a thought I have is my thought it does not mean it is a thought about me. Interesting! But a thought is not a feeling or a motive. The parallel doesn't work. We agree that just because something is mine that doesn't mean I have it for me. But if you substitute the word something with "motive - why I want to please myself by doing something" you see that motive is an exception. A good parallel would be, "Just because I do something to help another and seem to be after no reward that does not mean I didn't do it for my entire fulfilment." That is true. And its truthfulness shows that their parallel is simply wrong. Their parallel when translated properly really is saying the absurd, "Just because my self-centred act is mine doesn't mean it is for me."

The fact that I have a thought doesn't mean that the thought is about me but it does mean that the thought is FOR me. When we go for something or do anything we need thoughts to do it. Therefore everything I do is for me.

Just because the motive is my motive does not mean it is a self-interested motive. But the believers in altruism say that just because an act is selfless, it does not mean it is unselfish. The woman who murders her lover to get his money to give to her son to save her son's life is considered selfish though she has committed an act of sacrifice. The person who spends thousands on surgery to look beautiful and who neglects their parents is making a big sacrifice and risking their life and we consider this selflessness to be selfish because of the neglected parents. So you can't be sure any selfless act is not selfish. If that is true, then probability alone supports egoism. We should always assume that people are selfish all the time. It does no good to assume any different. The woman who murdered her lover can say she made an error in judgement or has some aberration in her conscience so she was altruistic despite what she did. She can say she did right and that though society may disagree with her that does not mean she was wrong. She can say that differences of opinion are a part of life and just because it was a serious matter doesn't mean she shouldn't have her opinion regardless of what others think. The surgery addict can say that he or she feels they have no hope of being a good person unless the surgery was done. Selfishness is so easily disguised. And if we go along with people who obscure their selfishness and start praising their altruism and selflessness then we have lost the plot. It is best to assume they are selfish and that egoism is true and that religions that try to eradicate egoism such as Christianity and Islam are themselves evil. To fight egoism is to promote the lies of those who claim they have eradicated it from their hearts.

Just because an act does not directly benefit me and does it indirectly does not mean I am selfless. Indirect can be more important than direct.