

Egoism and Moral Scepticism by James Rachels

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn what the principles of Egoism are, “what is it?” and “what does it do?” are just some of the questions I expect to answer after I read the essay. Also, I expect to deepen my understanding on Moral Scepticism and be able answer my question, “why it is mentioned in the title of the essay?”

Quote:

Ed: “Now Abe, where does selfishness come in this little episode?” Abe Lincoln: “Why, bless your soul, Ed, that was the very essence of selfishness. I should have had no peace of mind all day had I gone on and left that suffering old sow worrying over those pugs. I did it to get peace of mind, don’t you see?”

Book review:

These essay talks about Egoism (particularly that of ethical and psychological), the views of different egoist (such as Glaucon) regarding how a specific person thinks and acts. The author James Rachels contradicts the doctrines of psychological and ethical egoism with her beliefs on moral scepticism and Altruism. Psychological egoism is the view that all human in nature are selfish and that all actions made by men are motivated by self-interest. In line with psychological egoism, ethical egoism is the view of how a person or human should act. In an egoist point of view, humans have no obligation for the wellbeing of others except for their own self-interest. James Rachels opposed these principles by stating two arguments, the first being that people never does things voluntarily except for what they want to do. This supports the egoistic point of view that people actions are motivated by self interest alone. James Rachels stated that there are two classes of actions made by us humans. One are the actions we might not want to do, but still we are forced to do because we want to achieve something in the end; a good example of this is doing assignments, for (some) students assignments are very exhausting but because of the desire to earn good grades, students are forced to exert effort in doing their assignments, this clearly supports the egoistic point of view on selfishness. The second class are the actions we humans do, not because we want to do it, nor even because there is an end result that will be an advantage, but rather we do because we feel there is an obligation why we need to do them. The example mentioned above supports this action. The student who is forced to do an action (do assignments) he didn’t want to do in the first place. The fact that the student did his assignments even if doesn’t want to, is not an act of selfishness. People’s actions are not always of self interest, there are actions that prioritize the welfare of others and it is only human to help others because as the saying goes, “no man is an island” people need each in order to survive.

What I have learned:

I have learned that Egoism is a false point of view. I cannot fully appreciate its concept of self interest because personally some of my actions as person, a son, a classmate and boyfriend clearly oppose it.

Integrative questions:

- 1) Is it in human nature to help others?
- 2) Can a person survive alone?
- 3) Is self interest a good or bad thing?
- 4) Are all actions of men motivated by self interest alone?
- 5) Is Altruism a good or bad thing?