

# Self-Interest

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## COURSE OUTLINE

### A. WHAT SELF-INTEREST IS

1. Definitions
2. Attitudes toward self-interest
3. Goal: happiness
  - active
  - self-generated
4. Sharpen our image
  - a. Egoism is NOT:
    - emotionalism
    - hedonism
    - subjectivism
  - b. Self-interest IS:
    - objective
    - long-range
    - spiritual (as well as material)

### B. WHY EGOISM IS THE PROPER POLICY TO ADOPT

1. Specific arguments for and against egoism
  - a. Against:
    - Egoism is not a morality.
    - Egoist is hardhearted.
    - Egoist is driven by greed.
    - Egoism tramples other people.
    - “You’re no better than anyone else.”
    - “What goes around comes around.”
    - “Helping others makes me happy.”
  - b. Moderate position
  - c. For: (Caution: These are not all good arguments.)
    - Psychological egoism
    - Why is it permissible to receive others’ sacrifices?
    - Why do you owe your life to other people?
    - Aristotle’s distinction between base and true egoism.
    - Egoism is most efficient, given self-generated character of life.

2. True explanation: Egoism is necessary.

3. Altruism

a. Not benevolent

- Anti-value
- Treats people as slaves
- Selective
- Other-directed altruism feeds pointless altruism
- Injustice
- Anti-capitalism
- Altruism serves no one
- “Meaning well”

b. Destructive legacy

- Political
- Breeds resentment
- Degrades love
- Fosters emotionalism
- Treats morality as game
- Instills guilt
- Breaks spirit

## C. HOW TO BE SELF-INTERESTED

1. Principles and discipline

2. Ill-begotten gains won't work

3. Requires a self

4. Implications for relations with other people:

- a. Value is not zero-sum
- b. No conflicts between rational interests
- c. Mutuality of interests

5. Image of ideal man (without pain, fear, guilt)

6. Honest introspection

7. Loving yourself