MORALITY
AND
RATIONAL
SELF-INTEREST
In Defense of Egoism

Ethical egoism is the view that it is morally right—that is, morally permissible, indeed, morally obligatory—for a person to act in his own self-interest, even when his self-interest conflicts or is irreconcilable with the self-interest of another. The point people normally have in mind in accepting and advocating this ethical principle is that of justifying or excusing their own self-interested actions by giving them a moral sanction.

This position is sometimes construed as saying that selfishness is moral, but such an interpretation is not quite correct. "Self-interest" is a general term usually used as a synonym for "personal happiness" and "personal welfare," and what would pass as selfish behavior frequently would not pass as self-interested behavior in this sense. Indeed, we have the suspicion that selfish people are characteristically, if not always, unhappy. Thus, in cases where selfishness tends to a person's unhappiness it is not in his self-interest, and as an egoist he ought not to be selfish. As a consequence, ethical egoism does not preclude other-interested, nonselfish, or altruistic behavior, as long as such behavior also leads to the individual's own welfare.

That the egoist may reasonably find himself taking an interest in others and promoting their welfare perhaps sounds nonegoistic, but it is not. Ethical egoism's justification of such behavior differs from other accounts in the following way: The ethical egoist acknowledges no general obligation to help people in need, justified unconditionally or "categorically."

The name Butler provides for ethical egoism is "self-love." On this view, a person is to be interested, perhaps cultivate some new interest, satisfaction. Usually among these interests are friendships and families (or perhaps one goes working for UNICEF). And, of course, it is important to consider the "long run" rather than the immediate future.

Given this account of ethical egoism plus a person could be morally justified in charging expense accounts, swindling a business partner, lord, draft-dodging, lying, and breaking promises. Contributing to charity, helping friends, being generous, and even undergoing hardship to put his own interests, no obligation. And when his interests are conflicting with theirs, he will reasonably pursue their expense, even when this other person is a friend, as well as when it is a stranger or enemy.

Such a pursuit of one's own self-interest is justified unconditionally or "categorically." Butler, Joseph, Fifteen Sermons Preached at the anthologies of moral philosophy include the most important works on the Library of Liberal Arts Selection, Five Sermons. Merrill Company, Inc., 1950). See particularly Sermon, says of rational self-love that "the object the former"—our own happiness, enjoyment, satisfaction... The ethica never seeks anything external for the sake of the things happiness or good." Butler is not, however, an egoist conscience and "a natural principle of benevolence."
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**Egoism**

J. J. C. Smart has written that it is morally right—that is, morally obligatory—for a person to act in his own self-interest when his self-interest conflicts or is irreconcilable with the interests of another. The point people normally advocating this ethical principle is that their own self-interested actions by giving

sometimes construed as saying that selfishness is NOT quite correct. “Self-interest” used as a synonym for “personal happiness” and what would pass as selfish behavior freeminded in this sense. Indeed, what selfish people are characteristically, if not in cases where selfishness tends to a person’s self-interest, and as an egoist he ought to pursue his own well-being at their expense, even when this other person is his wife, child, mother, or friend, as well as when it is a stranger or enemy.

Such a pursuit of one’s own self-interest is considered enlightened. The name Butler provides for ethical egoism so interpreted is “cool self-love.” On this view, a person is to harmonize his natural interests, perhaps cultivate some new interests, and optimize their satisfaction. Usually among these interests will be such things as friendships and families (or perhaps one gets his greatest kicks from working for UNICEF). And, of course, it is a part of such enlightenment to consider the “long run” rather than just the present and immediate future.

Given this account of ethical egoism plus the proper circumstances, a person could be morally justified in cheating on tests, padding expense accounts, swindling a business partner, being a slum landlord, draft-dodging, lying, and breaking promises, as well as in contributing to charity, helping friends, being generous or civic minded, and even undergoing hardship to put his children through college.

Judged from inside “standard morality,” the first actions would clearly be immoral, while the preceding paragraphs suggest the latter actions would be immoral as well, being done from a vicious or improper motive.

With this informal account as background, I shall now introduce a formal definition of ethical egoism, whose coherence will be the topic of the subsequent discussion:

(i) \((x)(y)(x \text{ ought to do } y \text{ if and only if } y \text{ is in } x's \text{ overall self-interest})\)

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1. Butler, Joseph, *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel*, 1726. Standard anthologies of moral philosophy include the most important of these sermons; or see the Library of Liberal Arts Selection, *Five Sermons* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1950). See particularly Sermons I and XI. In XI, Butler says of rational self-love that “the object the former pursues is something internal—our own happiness, enjoyment, satisfaction... The principle we call "self-love" never seeks anything external for the sake of the thing, but only as a means of happiness or good.” Butler is not, however, an egoist for there is also in man conscience and "a natural principle of benevolence" (see Sermon I).
In this formalization, "x" ranges over persons and "y" over particular actions, no kinds of action; "ought" has the sense "ought, all things considered." (i) may be translated as: "A person ought to do a specific action, all things considered, if and only if that action is in that person's overall (enlightened) self-interest."

(i) represents what Medlin calls "universal egoism." The majority of philosophers have considered universalization to be necessary for a sound moral theory, though few have considered it sufficient. This requirement may be expressed as follows: If it is reasonable for A to do s in C, it is also reasonable for any similar person to do similar things in similar circumstances. Since everyone has a self-interest and since the egoist is arguing that his actions are right simply because they are self-interested, it is intuitively plausible to hold that he is committed to regarding everyone as morally similar and as morally entitled (or even morally obligated) to be egoists. His claim that his own self-interested actions are right thus entails the claim that all self-interested actions are right. If the egoist is to reject this universalization, he must show that there are considerations in addition to self-interest justifying his action, considerations making him relevantly different from all others such that his self-interested behavior is justified while theirs is not. I can't imagine what such considerations would be. In any case, egoism has usually been advanced and defended in its universalized form, and it is in this form that it will most repay careful examination. Thus, for the purposes of this paper, I shall assume without further defense the correctness of the universalization requirement.

It has also been the case that the major objections to ethical egoism have been derived from this requirement. Opponents have argued that once egoism is universalized, it can readily be seen to be incoherent. Frankena9 and Medlin each advance an argument of this sort. In discussing their positions, I shall argue that the universalization of egoism given by (i) is coherent, that there is more than one type of "universalization," and that egoism can, in fact, be universalized in both senses. More importantly, I shall argue that the form of universalization presenting the most problems for the egoist is a form based upon a certain conception of value which I reject. The result will be that egoism can be defended as an ultimate practical principle. If it is incorrect, this is not due to any incoherence in the universalization requirement.

II

One purpose of a moral theory is to provide moral judgments (such as "I ought to do s") to provide criteria for second and third person judgments (such as "Jones ought to do s in C"). Any ethics that incoherently provide such criteria must be rejected. Frankena formulates egoism as consisting of

(a) If A is judging about himself, then A ought to do y if and only if y is in A's self-interest.
(b) If A is a spectator judging about anyone else, then B ought to do y if and only if y is in B's self-interest.

Frankena thinks that [(a) & (b)] is the one "consistent with the spirit of ethical egoism." But isn't it the case that (a) and (b) tally competitions of moral judgments about an important class of those where people's self-interests conflict? If this is so, egoism as formulated by Frankena must be rejected.

To illustrate, let us suppose that B does s, but not in A's self-interest, but not in A's self-interest. Is s right or wrong? The answer depends on who is making the judgment, then "B ought not to do s" is the judgment, then "ought not to do s" is correct. Surely any result as a possibility is incoherent.

This objection may be put another way. Frankena thinks that (a) is adequate for all moralizations of it can fit into a logically coherent

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ranges over persons and “y” over particular actions; “ought” has the sense “ought, all things considered, if and only if that action is in that (thorough) self-interest.”

Mill calls “universal egoism.” The majority considered universalization to be necessary for ethical egoism, but few have considered it sufficient. This is expressed as follows: If it is reasonable for A to do a specific action, B ought to do that action if and only if that action is in B’s self-interest. Mill’s version is called “universal egoism.”

The majority considered universalization to be necessary for ethical egoism, but few have considered it sufficient. This is expressed as follows: If it is reasonable for A to do a specific action, B ought to do that action if and only if that action is in B’s self-interest. Mill’s version is called “universal egoism.”

One purpose of a moral theory is to provide criteria for first person moral judgments (such as “I ought to do s in C’’); another purpose is to provide criteria for second and third person moral judgments (such as “Jones ought to do s in C”). Any theory which cannot coherently provide such criteria must be rejected as a moral theory. Can ethical egoism do this? Frankena argues that it cannot.

Frankena formulates egoism as consisting of two principles:

(a) If A is judging about himself, then A is to use this criterion: A ought to do y if and only if y is in A’s overall self-interest.

(b) If A is a spectator judging about anyone else, B, then A is to use this criterion: B ought to do y if and only if y is in A’s overall self-interest.

Frankena thinks that [(a) & (b)] is the only interpretation of (i) “consistent with the spirit of ethical egoism.”

But isn’t it the case that (a) and (b) taken together produce contradictory moral judgments about an important subset of cases, namely, those where people’s self-interests conflict or are irreconcilable? If this is so, egoism as formulated by Frankena is incoherent and must be rejected.

To illustrate, let us suppose that B does s, and that s is in B’s overall self-interest, but not in A’s. Is s right or wrong? Ought, or ought not B do s? The answer depends on who is making the judgment. If A is making the judgment, then “B ought not to do s” is correct. If B is making the judgment, then “B ought to do s” is correct. And, of course, when both make judgments, both “B ought to do s” and “B ought not to do s” are correct. Surely any principle which has this result as a possibility is incoherent.

This objection may be put another way. The ethical egoist claims that there is one ultimate moral principle applicable to everyone. This is to claim that (i) is adequate for all moral issues, and that all applications of it can fit into a logically coherent system. Given the above upon a certain conception of value which the egoist can coherently reject. The result will be that egoism can with some plausibility be defended as an ultimate practical principle. At the least, if egoism is incorrect, this is not due to any incoherence arising from the universalization requirement.

Principles and Ethical Egoism,” Australasian Journal 11:1-18; reprinted in this volume, pp. 56-68. See pp. 56-68 for universal versus individual egoism. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey; Prentice-Hall, Inc., Frankena in sections II and V are to this book.)
I IS SELF-INTEREST RATIONAL?

illustration, "B ought to do s" does follow from (a), and "B ought not to do s" does follow from (b), but the fact that they cannot coherently be included in a set of judgments shows that (a) and (b) are not parts of the same ultimate moral principle. Indeed, these respective judgments can be said to follow from a moral principle at all only if they follow from different moral principles. Apparently, the ethical egoist must choose between (i)'s parts if he is to have a coherent ethical system, but he can make no satisfactory choice. If (a) is chosen, second and third person judgments become impossible. If (b) is chosen, first person judgments become impossible. His moral theory, however, must provide for both kinds of judgment. Ethical egoism needs what it logically cannot have. Therefore, it can only be rejected.

The incompatibility between (a) and (b) and the consequent incoherence of (i) manifests itself in still a third way. Interpreted as a system of judgments, [(a) & (b)] is equivalent to: Everyone ought to pursue A's self-interest, and everyone ought to pursue B's self-interest, and everyone ought to pursue C's self-interest, and ... When the interests of A and B are incompatible, one must pursue both of these incompatible goals, which, of course, is impossible. On this interpretation, ethical egoism must fail in its function of guiding conduct (one of the most important uses of moral judgments). In particular, it must fail with respect to just those cases for which the guidance is most wanted—conflicts of interests. In short, it implies that one must both do and not do, since ethical egoism cannot guide conduct is inadequate as a moral theory and must be rejected.

Ethical egoism suffers from three serious defects as [(a) & (b)]. These defects are closely related. The first theory implies a contradiction, namely, that A's right and wrong. The second defect is that it is made coherent by rejecting one of its parts. The third defect is that the theory cannot guide its advice-giving function because it advises things considered) a person to do what it advises.

Any one of these defects would be sufficient, and indeed they do refute ethical egoism with (b)). The only plausible way to escape these defects is Frankena's definition and reformulate egoism (and indeed they do refute ethical egoism with (b)). The only plausible way to escape these Frankena's definition and reformulate egoism: altered, it can provide for first person judgments or for second and third person moral judgments. The ethical egoist cannot fulfill its advice-giving function because it advises things considered) a person to do what it advises.

(c) If A is a spectator judging about anything on this criterion: B ought to do y if and only if y is in its self-interest.

The objections to [(a) & (b)] given above [(a) & (c)] yields no contradictions, even if they conflict or are irreconcilable. When we suppose that s is in B's overall self-interest, and the self-interest, both B and A will agree in this case, that is, both will agree that B ought to do s, the theory provides for all moral judgments: for the third person; since it yields no contradiction it coherent by choosing between its parts adequate.

Finally, this interpretation avoids the defect that it cannot adequately fulfill its conduct guiding function it will never truly be the case that an agent's self-interest except his own. Any judgment

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\(^4\)This can be shown as follows:

i. Suppose \(A\) is the evaluator, then

- What ought A to do? A ought to do what's in A's interest. (by (a))
- What ought B to do? B ought to do what's in A's interest. (by (a))
- What ought C to do? C ought to do what's in A's interest. (by (a))

Therefore, everyone ought to do what's in A's interest. (by (a) & (b))

ii. Suppose \(B\) is the evaluator, then

- What ought A to do? A ought to do what's in B's interest. (by (b))
- What ought B to do? B ought to do what's in B's interest. (by (b))
- What ought C to do? C ought to do what's in B's interest. (by (b))

Therefore, everyone ought to do what's in B's interest. (by (a) & (b))

iii. Suppose \(C\) is the evaluator, then

- etc.

Conclusion: Everyone ought to do what's in A's interest, and everyone ought to do what's in B's interest, and etc.
most wanted—conflicts of interests. In such situations, the theory implies that one must both do and not do a certain thing. Therefore, since ethical egoism cannot guide conduct in these crucial cases, it is inadequate as a moral theory and must be rejected.

Ethical egoism suffers from three serious defects if it is interpreted as [(a) & (b)]. These defects are closely related. The first is that the theory implies a contradiction, namely, that some actions are both right and wrong. The second defect is that the theory, if altered and made coherent by rejecting one of its parts, cannot fulfill one of its essential tasks: Altered, it can provide for first person moral judgments or for second and third person moral judgments, but not for both. The third defect is that the theory cannot guide conduct and must fail in its advice-giving function because it advises (remember: advises, all things considered) a person to do what it advises him not to do.

Any one of these defects would be sufficient to refute the theory, and indeed they do refute ethical egoism when it is defined as [(a) & (b)]. The only plausible way to escape these arguments is to abandon Frankena's definition and reformulate egoism so that they are no longer applicable. Clearly, (a) must remain, for it seems central to any egoistic position. However, we can replace (b) with the following:

(c) If A is a spectator judging about anyone else, B, then A is to use this criterion: B ought to do y if and only if y is in B's overall self-interest.

The objections to [(a) & (b)] given above do not apply to [(a) & (c)]. [(a) & (c)] yields no contradictions, even in cases where self-interests conflict or are irreconcilable. When we suppose that B is the agent, that s is in B's overall self-interest, and that s is against A's overall self-interest, both B and A will agree in their moral judgments about this case, that is, both will agree that B ought to do s. And, of course, the theory provides for all moral judgments, whether first, second, or third person; since it yields no contradictions, there is no need to make it coherent by choosing between its parts and thereby making it inadequate.

Finally, this interpretation avoids the charge that ethical egoism cannot adequately fulfill its conduct guiding function. Given [(a) & (c)], it will never truly be the case that an agent ought to pursue anyone's self-interest except his own. Any judgment of the form “A ought to do what's in A's interest, and everyone ought to do what's in B's interest, and . . . etc.”
pursue B's self-interest" will be false, unless it is understood to mean that pursuit of B's self-interest is a part of the pursuit of A's self-interest (and this, of course, would not contribute to any incoherence in the theory). Thus, the theory will have no difficulty in being an effective practical theory; it will not give contradictory advice, even in situations where interests conflict. True, it will not remove such conflicts—indeed, in practice it might well encourage them; but a conflict is not a contradiction. The theory tells A to pursue a certain goal, and it tells B to pursue another goal, and does this unequivocally. Thus, the theory will have no difficulty in being an effective practical theory; it will not give contradictory advice, even in situations where interests conflict. True, it will not remove such conflicts—indeed, in practice it might well encourage them; but a conflict is not a contradiction. The theory tells A to pursue a certain goal, and it tells B to pursue another goal, and does this unequivocally. That both cannot succeed in their pursuits is irrelevant to the coherence of the theory and its capacity to guide conduct, since both can do what they are advised to do, all things considered—pursue their own self-interests.

(i), when interpreted as [(a) & (c)], is a fully objective moral theory. Therefore, in defending ethical egoism, one need not be driven into the kind of subjectivism which holds that "right," "wrong," "morally justified," and even "true" when used in a moral argument or judgment always mean "right for A," or "right for B," or "wrong for A," or "true for B," or perhaps "right from A's point of view," "right from B's point of view," etc. Such usage would be exceedingly peculiar, for in what sense can a judgment or action be said to be justified, all things considered, if it is justified for me and unjustified for you? Thus, interpreting ethical egoism as [(a) & (c)] rather than as [(a) & (b)] has the great merit of making it possible to avoid the temptation to subjectivism.

There remains the question whether [(a) & (c)] is a plausible interpretation of (i), that is, whether it is "consistent with the spirit of ethical egoism." It is certainly consistent with the "spirit" behind the "ethical" part of egoism in its willingness to universalize the doctrine. It is also consistent with the "egoistic" part of the theory in that if a person does faithfully follow (a) he will behave as an egoist. Adding the fact that [(a) & (c)] is a coherent theory adequate to the special ethical chores so far discussed, do we have any reason for rejecting it as an interpretation of (i) and ethical egoism? So far, I think not. Therefore, I conclude that Frankena has failed to refute egoism. It has thus far survived the test of universalization and still remains as a candidate for "the one true moral theory."

As is Gardner Williams in his *Humanistic Ethics* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), see Chapter III, particularly pp. 29–31.

In his article, "Ultimate Principles and Ethical Egoism," Williams maintains that ethical egoism cannot be a moral theory because it fails to guide our actions, tell us what to do in conflicting situations, or even in situations where interests conflict. True, it will not remove such conflicts—indeed, in practice it might well encourage them; but a conflict is not a contradiction. The theory tells A to pursue a certain goal, and it tells B to pursue another goal, and does this unequivocally. Thus, the theory will have no difficulty in being an effective practical theory; it will not give contradictory advice, even in situations where interests conflict. True, it will not remove such conflicts—indeed, in practice it might well encourage them; but a conflict is not a contradiction. The theory tells A to pursue a certain goal, and it tells B to pursue another goal, and does this unequivocally. That both cannot succeed in their pursuits is irrelevant to the coherence of the theory and its capacity to guide conduct, since both can do what they are advised to do, all things considered—pursue their own self-interests.

I have said from time to time that the egoist's self-interest will be false, unless it is understood to mean that pursuit of B's self-interest is a part of the pursuit of A's self-interest (and this, of course, would not contribute to any incoherence in the theory). Thus, the theory will have no difficulty in being an effective practical theory; it will not give contradictory advice, even in situations where interests conflict. True, it will not remove such conflicts—indeed, in practice it might well encourage them; but a conflict is not a contradiction. The theory tells A to pursue a certain goal, and it tells B to pursue another goal, and does this unequivocally. Thus, the theory will have no difficulty in being an effective practical theory; it will not give contradictory advice, even in situations where interests conflict. True, it will not remove such conflicts—indeed, in practice it might well encourage them; but a conflict is not a contradiction. The theory tells A to pursue a certain goal, and it tells B to pursue another goal, and does this unequivocally. That both cannot succeed in their pursuits is irrelevant to the coherence of the theory and its capacity to guide conduct, since both can do what they are advised to do, all things considered—pursue their own self-interests.

II

That ethical egoism could not successfully get off the hook of the criticism discussed and rebutted in section I. Frankena's formulation of egoism as equally circumspect by replacing principle (b) with (c). Medlin's charge is significant, however, and applies to [(a) & (c)] as well and thereby if egoism is to be maintained.

*All references to Medlin are to the reprint in the

* Medlin himself does not distinguish between (a) and (c). Thus, at one point he says:

When he [the egoist] tries to convince me that he is attempting so to dispose me that I shall do the action, he is attempting so to dispose me that I shall be better off, and he is not attempting so to dispose me that I shall be better off, but he is attempting so to dispose me that I shall be better off. Don't we all want to have our cake and eat it too? Don't we all want to be able to have our cake and eat it too? And, the fact that we all want to have our cake and eat it too is what makes ethical egoism inconsistent with the spirit of ethical egoism.

This passage implies that as a spectator assessing Medlin's charge, if I assert principle (c) and approve of A's doing Y even if this is at the expense of my welfare, I am committing a contradiction. For we assert our ultimate principles not because they are "true" or "right" or "good" or "morally justified," but because we want to have our cake and eat it too. And, the fact that we all want to have our cake and eat it too is what makes ethical egoism inconsistent with the spirit of ethical egoism.

But other of his remarks suggest (b). Thus, the
Ill be false, unless it is understood to mean that interest is a part of the pursuit of A's self, would not contribute to any incoherence of theory will have no difficulty in being an it will not give contradictory advice, even if its conflict. True, it will not remove such advice it might well encourage them; but a theory tells A to pursue a certain e another goal, and does this unequivocally.

The theory of humanistic ethics, expressed in a coherent theory adequate to the special needs of human conduct, since both ascribed, do we have any reason for rejecting it and ethical egoism? So far, I think not. Frankena has failed to refute egoism. It has of universalization and still remains as a moral theory."

In his Humanistic Ethics (New York: Philosophical particular pp. 29-31.

In his article, "Ultimate Principles and Ethical Egoism," Brian Medlin maintains that ethical egoism cannot be an ultimate moral principle because it fails to guide our actions, tell us what to do, or determine our choice between alternatives. He bases this charge on his view that because ethical egoism is the expression of inconsistent desires, it will always tell people to do incompatible things. Thus:

I have said from time to time that the egoistic principle is inconsistent. I have not said it is contradictory. This for the reason that we can, without contradiction, express inconsistent desires and purposes. To do so is not to say anything like "Goliath was ten feet tall and not ten feet tall." Don't we all want to have our cake and eat it too? And when we say we do we aren't asserting a contradiction whether we be making an avowal of our attitudes or stating a fact about them. We all have conflicting motives. None of this, however, can do the egoist any good. For we assert our ultimate principles not only to guide our conduct, but also to induce similar attitudes in others, to dispose them to conduct themselves as we wish. In so far as their desires conflict, people don't know what to do. And, therefore, no expression of incompatible desires can ever serve for an ultimate principle of human conduct.

That egoism could not successfully guide one's conduct was a criticism discussed and rebutted in section II. There, it rested upon Frankena's formulation of egoism as equal to [(a) & (b)] and was easily circumvented by replacing principle (b) with principle (c). Medlin's charge is significant, however, because it appears to be applicable to [(a) & (c)] as well and therefore must be directly refuted if egoism is to be maintained.

* All references to Medlin are to the reprint in this volume, pp. 56-61.

† Medlin himself does not distinguish between (b) and (c). Some of his remarks suggest (c). Thus, at one point he says:

When he [the egoist] tries to convince me that he should look after himself, he is attempting to dispose me that I shall approve when he drinks my beer and steals Tom's wife. I cannot approve of his looking after himself and himself alone without so far approving of his achieving his happiness, regardless of the happiness of myself and others.

(p. 58)

This passage implies that as a spectator assessing another's conduct, I should employ principle (c) and approve of A's doing y whenever y promotes A's interest, even if this is at the expense of my welfare.

But other of his remarks suggest (b). Thus, the above passage continues:
The heart of Medlin’s argument is his position that to affirm a moral principle is to express approval of any and all actions following from that principle. This means for Medlin not only that the egoist is committed to approving all egoistic actions but also that such approval will involve wanting those actions to occur and trying to bring them about, even when they would be to one’s own detriment.

But is not to believe that someone should act in a certain way to try to persuade him to do so? Of course, we don’t always try to persuade people to act as we think they should act. We may be lazy, for instance. But insofar as we believe that Tom should do so and so, we have a tendency to induce him to do so and so. Does it make sense to say: “Of course you should do this, but for goodness’ sake don’t”? Only where we mean: “You should do this for certain reasons, but here are even more persuasive reasons for not doing it.” If the egoist believes ultimately that others should mind themselves alone, then, he must persuade them accordingly. If he doesn’t persuade them, he is no universal egoist.

(p. 59)

According to Medlin, if I adopt ethical egoism and am thereby led to approve of A’s egoistic actions (as would follow from (c)), I must also want A to behave in that way and must want him to be happy, to come out on top, and so forth where wanting is interpreted as setting an end for my own actions and where it tends (according to the intensity of the want, presumably) to issue in my “looking after him.”

Of course, I will also approve of my pursuing my own welfare (as would follow from (a)) and will want myself to be happy, to come out on top, and so forth. Since I want my own success, I will want A’s noninterference. Indeed, what I will want A to do, and will therefore approve of A’s doing, is to pursue my welfare, rather than his own.

It is thus the case that whenever my interest conflicts with A’s interest, I will approve of inconsistent ends and will want incompatible things (“I want myself to come out on top and I want Tom to come out on top.” p. 61). Since I approve of B’s egoistic behavior at least to the extent of observing it, I must be motivated in contrary directions—both a to pursue my own welfare, for instance. However, this is not sufficient to produce inaction and does not prevent, for one desire may be stronger than another. Even if one desire were always greater than any other, the inconsistent ends would not prevent (i) from decisively guiding the egoist’s actions. If for the egoist, his principle will in fact lead to pursuing his own self-interest, and therefore, insofar as this principle, none will be stronger than any other.

We can now explain Medlin’s conclusion that the egoist as spectator and judge of another should assess the other’s behavior according to his own interests, not the other’s, which would be in accordance with (b). Here, the implication is that the egoist as spectator and judge of another should assess the other’s behavior according to his own interests, not the other’s, which would be in accordance with (b).

Perhaps Medlin is arguing that the egoist is committed to accepting both (b) and (c), as well as (a). This interpretation is consistent with his analysis of “approval.”

So that when he sets out to persuade me that he should look after himself regardless of others, he must also set out to persuade me that I should look after him regardless of myself and others. Very small chance he has! (p. 56)
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Argument is his position that to affirm a moral approval of any and all actions following from one's own welfare. For Medlin not only is the egoist committed to approving of egoistic actions but also that such approval is necessary for actions to occur and trying to bring them about would be to one's own detriment.

Is someone should act in a certain way to try to persuade someone else to act so and so, we have a duty to do so and so. Does it make sense to say: “If someone should act in a certain way to try to persuade someone else to act so and so, we have a duty to do so and so.”? Only where does this for certain reasons, but here are even stronger desires for not doing it.” If the egoist believes that he himself should mind themselves alone, then, he must not persuade them, he is no utilitarian.

If I adopt ethical egoism and am thereby committed to approving of egoistic actions (as would follow from (c)), I have in that way and must want him to be on top, and so forth where wanting is internal for my own actions and where it tends to issue in my wanting (p. 59).

To persuade me that he should look after himself instead of others. Very small chance he has (p. 58). The egoist as spectator and judge of another should not care about A’s inconsistent ends and will want incompatible desires to come out on top and I want Tom to come out on top,” (p. 61). Since I approve of incompatible ends, I will be motivated in contrary directions—both away from and toward my own welfare, for instance. However, this incompatibility of desires is not sufficient to produce inaction and does not itself prove Medlin’s point, for one desire may be stronger than the other. If the egoist’s approval of his own well-being were always greater than his approval of anyone else’s well-being, the inconsistent desires constituting egoism would not prevent (i) from decisively guiding conduct. Unfortunately for the egoist, his principle will in fact lead him to inaction, for in being universal (i) expresses equal approval of each person’s pursuing his own self-interest, and therefore, insofar as his desires follow from this principle, none will be stronger than another.

We can now explain Medlin’s conclusion that “the proper objection to the man who says ‘Everyone should look after his own interests regardless of the interests of others’ is not that he isn’t speaking the truth, but simply that he isn’t speaking” (p. 57). Upon analysis, it is clear that the egoist is “saying” that others should act so that he himself comes out on top and should not care about Tom, Dick, et al., but they should also act so that Tom comes out on top and should not care about himself, Dick, the others, and so forth (p. 61). This person appears to be saying how people should act, and that they should act in a definite way. But his “directions” can guide no one. They give one nothing to do. Therefore, such a man has in fact said nothing.

I think Medlin’s argument can be shown to be unsuccessful without a discussion of the emotivism in which it is framed. The egoist can grant that there is a correct sense in which affirmation of a moral principle is the expression of approval. The crux of the issue is Medlin’s particular analysis of approbation, and this can be shown to be incorrect.

We may grant that the egoist is committed to approving of anyone’s egoistic behavior at least to the extent of believing that the person ought so to behave. Such approval will hold of all egoistic actions, even those that endanger his own welfare. But does believing that A ought to do y commit one to wanting A to do y? Surely not. This is made clear by the analogy with competitive games. Team A has no difficulty in believing that team B ought to make or try to make a field goal while not wanting team B to succeed, while hoping that team B fails, and, indeed, while trying to prevent team B’s success.
consider this example: I may see how my chess opponent can put my king in check. That is how he ought to move. But believing that he ought to move his bishop and check my king does not commit me to wanting him to do that, nor to persuading him to do so. What I ought to do is sit there quietly, hoping he does not move as he ought.

Medlin's mistake is to think that believing that A ought to do y commits one to wanting A to do y and hence to encouraging or otherwise helping A to do y. The examples from competitive games show that this needn't be so. The egoist's reply to Medlin is that just as team A's belief that team B ought to do so and so is compatible with their not wanting team B to do so and so, so the egoist's belief that A ought to do y is compatible with the egoist's not wanting A to do y. Once this is understood, egoism has no difficulty in deciding what to do according to (a) and in judging what others ought to do according to (c).

IV

There is in Medlin's paper confusion concerning what the egoist wants or values and why he believes in ethical egoism. The egoist does not believe that everyone ought to pursue their own self-interest merely because he wants to get his goodies out of life. If this were all there were to his position, the egoist would not bother with (i) or with moral concepts at all. He would simply go about doing what he wants. What reason, then, does he have to go beyond wanting his own welfare to ethical egoism? On Medlin's emotivist account, his reason must be that he also wants B to have B's goodies, and wants D to have his, and so forth, even when it is impossible that everybody be satisfied. But I argued in the preceding section that the egoist is not committed to wanting such states, and that it is not nonsense for him to affirm (i) and desire his own welfare yet not desire the welfare of others. Therefore, the question remains—why affirm egoism at all?

The egoist's affirmation of (i) rests upon both teleological and deontological elements. What he finds to be of ultimate value is his own welfare. He needn't be selfish or egocentric in the ordinary sense (as Medlin sometimes suggests by such paraphrases as "Let each man do what he wants regardless of what anyone else wants," p. 61), but he will value his own interest above that of others. Such an egoist would share Sidgwick's view that when "the for another man to choose between his own happiness, he must as a reasonable being this occasion does arise, the egoist will want more than he wants his own, and this will have him wanting the other's welfare at all. It is in terms that he guides his actions, judging that he ought y is in his overall self-interest. This is the egoist's position.

However, there is no reason that others to be of value to them, less more to be of much more likely that each will find his or her own ultimate value. But if it is reasonable for the behavior in terms of what he finds to be of value, it is also reasonable for others to justify their behavior in terms of what they find to be of ultimate value. This follows from universalization and provides the deontological as "Similar things are right for similar people; the universalization principle seems undeniable even where there is irrelevance between himself and others. The reason that it can be morally permissible for him to act in a certain way regardless of whether others do the same is that it is morally permissible for each person to act in a certain way regardless of whether others do the same. This follows from the universalization principle, and provides the deontological rationale for the egoist's position.

Medlin and others have not constructed egoism that they have acknowledged the role of deontological elements in the production of (i) by noting the universalization principle. They have given more emphasis to its teleological element, have thought that at the least (i) states that something is intrinsically valuable and therefore ought to be done, and have then argued that an egoist cannot accept the universalization principle. He asks of the ethical egoist: Is it the well-being of himself, Tom, that is in question? Or is it the well-being of others that they are going on in a certain way regardless of whether others are going to promote their well-being?" (p. 61).

I may see how my chess opponent can put my move in such a way that he ought to move. But believing that he might move, and check my king does not commit me to hoping he does not move as he ought. I think that believing that A ought to do y and that B ought to do so and hence to encouraging or otherwise influencing him to do so, is compatible with the egoist’s not wanting A to do y. Ethical egoism has no difficulty in decisively guiding what others ought to do according to (c).

Further confusion concerning what the egoist wants to achieve in ethical egoism. The egoist does not sights to pursue their own self-interest merely to ensure that his goodies out of life. If this were all there was to it, the egoist would not bother with (i) or with moral legislating section that the egoist is not committed to wanting anything, it wanting his own welfare. Since he does not want to have B’s goodies, and wants D to have his, it is impossible that everybody be satisfied.

On of (i) rests upon both teleological and deontological considerations. What he finds to be of ultimate value is his own welfare yet not desire the welfare of others. This remains—why affirm egoism at all? Ethical considerations are important in the ordinary sense of values. Such an egoist would share Sidgwick’s view that when “the painful necessity comes for another man to choose between his own happiness and the general happiness, he must as a reasonable being prefer his own.” When this occasion does arise, the egoist will want the other’s welfare less than he wants his own, and this will have the practical effect of not wanting the other’s welfare at all. It is in terms of this personal value that he guides his actions, judging that he ought to do y if and only if y is in his overall self-interest. This is the teleological element in his position.

However, there is no reason that others should find his well-being to be of value to them, less to be of ultimate value; and it is much more likely that each will find his own welfare to be his own ultimate value. But if it is reasonable for the egoist to justify his behavior in terms of what he finds to be of ultimate value, then it is also reasonable for others to justify their behavior in terms of what they find to be of ultimate value. This follows from the requirement of universalization and provides the deontological element. Interpreted as “Similar things are right for similar people in similar circumstances,” the universalization principle seems undeniable. Failing to find any relevant difference between himself and others, the egoist must admit that it can be morally permissible for him to pursue his self-interest only if it is morally permissible for each person to pursue his self-interest. He therefore finds himself committed to (i), even though he does not want others to compete with him for life’s goods.

Medlin and others have not construed egoism in this way. While they have acknowledged the role of deontological considerations in the production of (i) by noting the universalization requirement, they have given more emphasis to its teleological aspects. In particular, they have thought that at least (i) states that a certain state of affairs is intrinsically valuable and therefore ought to be brought about. If this is so, to affirm the principle is to accept this set of values. Medlin then argues that an egoist cannot accept these values and remain a consistent egoist. He asks of the ethical egoist: “Just what does he value? Is it the well-being of himself, Tom, Dick, and Harry or merely their going on in a certain way regardless of whether or not this is going to promote their well-being?” (p. 61).

Consider this latter alternative and the result if everyone were to follow (i) and behave as the egoist claims it is most reasonable for them to do. We would have a state wherein everyone disregarded the happiness of others when their happiness clashed with one's own (p. 62). Given the normal condition of the world in which the major goods requisite for well-being (food, clothing, sex, glory, etc.) are not in overabundance, we would have a state of competition, struggle, and probably much avoidable misery. Hobbes' overstatement is that it would be a "war of everyman against everyman" in which life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

Since Medlin holds that acceptance of a moral principle such as (i) rests on valuing that state of affairs which compliance to the principle would bring about, and that acceptance of this principle as ultimate rests on placing ultimate value on that state of affairs (on wanting that state more than any other), it is understandable that ethical egoism should appear to him to be "a funny kind of egoism" (p. 62).

Medlin's point is that a person valuing such a state of affairs is no longer an egoist in any natural sense of that term. An egoist values his own welfare. But the Hobbesian conditions described above include this value only incidentally, if at all. To make his position consistent, therefore, he must choose between the following alternatives. He can accept the actual values promoted by his theory. Since these are not egoistic values (confirmed by the fact that he could not convince others to value and promote such a state of affairs by appealing solely to their self-interest, p. 62), this is to abandon egoism. Or he can accept self-interest as the ultimate value which, because of the universalization requirement, will involve accepting each person's self-interest as of equal value. This will be to abandon egoism and (i) for a form of utilitarianism (p. 63).

Medlin's crucial charge against ethical egoism is not that it is incoherent or unable to fulfill the necessary functions of a moral theory such as decisively guiding conduct in cases where interests conflict, but that principle (i) is simply not an expression of egoism. Egoism is an unformulable moral theory, and hence no moral theory. This charge rests, however, on what I shall call the material conception of value. Medlin's criticism rests on the assumption that ethical egoism (i.e., principle (i)) is saying that there is something of intrinsic value which everyone ought to pursue—that these are not egoistic values (confirmed by the fact that he could not convince others to value and promote such a state of affairs, perhaps quite complex, the goal of all moral actions. The task of particularizing any ultimate moral principle, the material conception of value, I call this view the material conception of value.

In utilitarianism, the single, though hard, is the state of maximum social welfare—"the greatest number," "people being as happy as possible, or some such variant. For Moore, it is a maximum of intrinsic goods—that is, of the enjoyment of beauty, moral qualities, and so forth. Jones' pleasure is as valuable as my pleasure as the obligation to bring about that pleasure as the state views are further instances of this: that each man is an end in himself and as a respect, where one sign of this respect is acting being could share the ends of one's actions.

The egoist would replace this standard of value with a conception of value. On this account, that which for different people will usually be the same; it is the same kind of good but not the same. What is valued will be similar but normally of a different nature. "Self-interest is the ultimate good," in generic sense. What is specifically valued—

*The egoist "must behave as an individual egoist, if he is to be an egoist at all" (p. 60), but since "the individual egoist cannot promulgate his doctrine without enlarging it, what he has is no doctrine at all" (p. 58).
alternative and the result if everyone were to have a state wherein everyone disregarded the
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mal egoist cannot promulgate his doctrine without en-
doctrine at all" (p. 58).
which everyone ought to pursue—that there is one specific state of
affairs everyone ought to pursue. This is false, and is the result of not
 distinguishng material valuations from what I shall call formal
valuations.
In analyzing the teleological basis of (i), Medlin and others have
been misled by imposing on the egoist a conception of intrinsic or
ultimate value which he does not hold. They suppose that there is
value or set of values which is or ought to be common to everyone
(or they suppose that principles like (i) express the desire that such
set of values be common to everyone). It is characteristic of this
position that these values are of such a nature that everyone ought
to promote them; they are objective and binding upon everyone. It is in
terms of this common goal that each person's actions are to be guided
and justified. Furthermore, these values demand and establish a har-
mony and concert among men's actions. There is some end, some
state of affairs, perhaps quite complex, the establishment of which is
the goal of all moral actions. The task of a moral theory, and par-
ticularly of any ultimate moral principle, is to direct one to such a
goal. I call this view the material conception of value.

In utilitarianism, the single, though hardly simple, material value
is the state of maximum social welfare—"the greatest happiness of the
greatest number,; "people being as happy as it is possible to make
them," or some such variant. For Moore, it is a state in which there
is a maximum of intrinsic goods—that is, of pleasure, knowledge, love,
the enjoyment of beauty, moral qualities, and so forth.10 On his view,
Jones' pleasure is as valuable as my pleasure, and I have the same
obligation to bring about that pleasure as Jones does. Supremacy of
the state views are further instances of this conception, as is the view
that each man is an end in himself and as such entitled to one's re-
spect, where one sign of this respect is acting always so that any other
being could share the ends of one's actions.
The egoist would replace this standard view with the formal con-
ception of value. On this account, that which is to have ultimate value
for different people will usually be the same only in the sense that it
is the same kind of good but not the same particular instance of it.
What is valued will be similar but normally not identical. In the state-
ment, "Self-interest is the ultimate good," "self-interest" is used in a
generic sense. What is specifically valued—the various contents of

9 Moore, G. E., Ethics (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), Chapter VII,
"Intrinsic Value," see especially pp. 140, 146-47, 152-53.
these self-interests—is quite different from person to person and sometimes mutually incompatible. What the egoist is saying, of course, is that his welfare has ultimate (or intrinsic) value to himself, though not to anyone else, and that Tom's welfare has ultimate (or intrinsic) value to Tom, but not to himself or others, and that Harry's welfare has ultimate value to Harry, but not . . . , and so forth. He is saying that his interests give him a reason for acting but give Tom and Harry none, and that Tom's interests give Tom a reason for acting but give him and Harry none, and that . . . , and so forth. Here, there is no common value shared by the egoist, Tom, Harry, et al., unless by accident.

According to a teleological moral theory, what a person ought to do is maximize the good or ultimate value, whatever that might be. If ultimate value is understood in the material sense, one will naturally believe that everyone has an obligation to bring about the same particular state of affairs. And since the egoist says everyone ought to act in a certain way, one will assume that this is because there is something ultimately valuable about everyone acting in that way. This would be a mistake. A moral theory may be teleological in terms of merely formal values. Nothing stronger is necessary. One can agree that people ought to maximize the good, but maintain that there is nothing which is good to everyone. Thus, people will be justified in pursuing somewhat different states, and possibly come into conflict. Moral principles will not have the objective of establishing a concert and harmony among men's actions nor of expressing a common goal. (i), in particular, will not have as its purpose the promotion of material values. If everyone does follow (i), states highly disvaluable to some will result, and there is no assurance that the egoist will succeed in maximizing value for himself.

In the previous section, I argued that the egoist's belief that other egoists ought to act in a way harmful to himself could be understood by noting similar beliefs in competitive games. We can likewise understand how the egoist can construct a coherent moral system not essentially dependent on material values by noting that practical systems such as professional football can be explained and justified without assuming a set of ultimate values common to all the parties encompassed by them. Thus, the player's ultimate values are, let us say, winning and being superior, money (for themselves), the satisfaction of playing the game, and glory; the owner's values are money (for themselves), promotion of civic or business enterprises, and winning and being superior; the spectator's values are seeing the game and being a fan, both aesthetic and material; the official's values are money (for themselves), such as superiority or "love of the game." All only formally the same; but their pursuer is sufficient to produce the game. The players do not have to be shared or even mutually; team can win, glory is a scarce good required and so forth. One player need not care about others, except in so far as they figure as means. Since he cannot win, or make a fortune, or others playing too, he must get together with all its paraphernalia. But even with ultimate values Tom the football player is probably of the same kind. Similarly, a moral principle requires no more of a commitment than acceptance of the competitive game does.

We began this section with a question: does the egoist believe that everyone ought to interest rather than believe that everyone ought to interest or simply going off to get his own egoist could not coherently maintain (i) and he must in fact simply go off to get his own can, and have tried to answer Medlin's question finds that his own self-interest gives him ways, but he does not think that this self-interest is sufficient to produce the game. But even with ultimate values Tom the football player is probably of the same kind. Similarly, a moral principle requires no more of a commitment than acceptance of the competitive game does.

We began this section with a question: does the egoist believe that everyone ought to interest rather than believe that everyone ought to interest or simply going off to get his own egoist could not coherently maintain (i) and he must in fact simply go off to get his own can, and have tried to answer Medlin's question finds that his own self-interest gives him ways, but he does not think that this self-interest is sufficient to produce the game. But even with ultimate values Tom the football player is probably of the same kind. Similarly, a moral principle requires no more of a commitment than acceptance of the competitive game does.
Quite different from person to person and sometimes. What the egoist is saying, of course, is that Tom's welfare has ultimate (or intrinsic) value to himself, though that Harry's welfare has ultimate (or intrinsic) value to himself or others, and that George's welfare has ultimate (or intrinsic) value to himself or others, and that Harry's welfare has ultimate (or intrinsic) value to others, but not . . . , and so forth. He is saying that Tom and Harry have a reason for acting but give Tom and Harry a reason for acting but give Tom and Harry a reason for acting but give Tom and Harry a reason for acting but give . . . , and so forth. Here, there is no reason for acting by the egoist, Tom, Harry, et al., unless by logical moral theory, what a person ought to do for ultimate value, whatever that might be. If stood in the material sense, one will naturally have an obligation to bring about the same particular states, and possibly come into conflict. He does not have the objective of establishing a concert of ends, nor of expressing a common goal. He does not have as its purpose the promotion of material values; otherwise, the states highly disvaluable to the egoist would succeed in producing the game. The players' interests, for instance, do not have to be shared or even mutually compatible—only one team can win, glory is a scarce good requiring the defeat of others, and so forth. One player need not care about the others, or the spectators, except in so far as they figure as means necessary to his ends. Since he cannot win, or make a fortune, or even play football without others playing too, he must get together with them to form a league with all its paraphernalia. But even with such cooperation, the ultimate value Tom the football player is pursuing are quite different materially from those pursued by Harry the football player, though probably of the same kind. Similarly, acceptance of the egoist principle requires no more of a commitment to common material values than acceptance of the competitive game does, that is, none.

We began this section with a question suggested by Medlin: Why does the egoist believe that everyone ought to pursue his own self-interest rather than believe that everyone ought to pursue his own self-interest or simply go off to get his own? Medlin thought that the egoist could not coherently maintain (i) and remain an egoist—that he must in fact simply go off to get his own. I have argued that he can, and have tried to answer Medlin's question as follows: The egoist finds that his own self-interest gives him a reason to act in certain ways, but he does not think that this self-interest per se gives any other person a reason to act. Self-interest is an ultimate good in the formal but not the material sense. He therefore holds that what he ought to do, all things considered (what it would be most reasonable for him to do), is pursue his own self-interest, even to the harming of others when necessary. But he further acknowledges that if this form of reasoning is sufficient to justify his egoistic behavior, it is sufficient to justify anyone's, or everyone's egoistic behavior. Consequently, he will accept the universalization of his position to “For each person, it is most reasonable for him to pursue his own self-interest, even to the harming of others if necessary,” or to “(x)(y)(x ought to do y if and only if y is in x's overall self-interest).” While this is a teleological moral principle because it states that a person ought to maximize value, it is a mistake to think that it points to one particular state of
affairs which is valuable and which therefore ought to be promoted by everyone. Such a mistake is based on the failure to distinguish between material and formal valuations. Because (i) establishes other's welfare as valuable only in the formal sense, the egoist can affirm (i) without being committed to accepting either their welfare or Hobbesian-like conditions of competition as valuable, thus avoiding Medlin's dilemma.

V

Medlin remarks that the egoist would be a fool to tell other people they should "look after themselves and no one else" (p. 58). He goes on to say:

Obviously something strange goes on as soon as the ethical egoist tries to promulgate his doctrine. What is he doing when he urges upon his audience that they should each observe his own interests and those interests alone? Is he not acting contrary to the egoistic principle? It cannot be to his advantage to convince them, for seizing always their own advantage they will impair his.

So far as Medlin is concerned, I discussed this "strange" aspect of egoism when I argued that it was not necessary either to want or to urge another to do what he ought to do in order to believe that he ought to do it. Behind Medlin's requirement of promulgation was seen to be a commitment to the material conception of value. The difficulties such a commitment entail for the egoist can be avoided if he uses only formal valuations. Thus, Medlin has failed to show that the egoist must violate his principle in the very holding of it because he has failed to show that the egoist must promulgate that principle if he holds it.

At this point, many philosophers would argue that ethical egoism is an even stranger doctrine than Medlin supposes if it can be consistently held only when it is silently held. In this section, I shall examine their argument. We shall first look at what the egoist must abandon along with the requirement of promulgation. It appears as though this must include most of the activities and emotions characterizing morality as such. According to its critics, this would mean that ethical egoism was not a moral theory. We shall then consider the egoist's reply to this criticism.

Taking the long run fully into account, position silently if he is to remain prudent than might be suspected, for it means serious than might be suspected, for it means not only from advocating his doctrine, but the behavior typical of any morality. For instance, enter into moral discussions, at least not since to debate a moral issue will ultimately require. This will not be to his interest for at least he become suspicious of him and cease to trust if is an egoist and treat him accordingly. It will should win the debate and convince them.

Nor will he be able to give or receive more that he can advise others as long as interests to note that it is not to his interest to have. Giving of advice involves giving reasons for about the moral principle upon which that therefore appropriate. Of course, the egoist can in Tom about his affair with Dick's wife, Tom enlightened views about marriage, noting that both are adults, and so forth, although behavior will soon lead to a scandal ruining Harry's advantage. Tom has advised Harry, but not Harry what he thinks Harry really ought to in Harry's overall self-interest. And Tom only is following (i). This all goes to make the principle, sincerely advising Harry, but rather pretending to advise while really deceiving and manipulating him.

This use of advice—to manipulate others' bought at a price too great for the egoist to public activity, urging others to be benevolent from their actions) gives them grounds to reco toward them, and thus to create sanctions for self-interested behavior.

Worst of all, it will do the egoist himself advice for he is bound not to get what he wants, he will be told to do things which might be his advantage. What sort of help could he be utilitarian? Their advice will follow from this. If he asks another egoist, he is no better off, s
Taking the long run fully into account, the egoist must hold his position silently if he is to remain prudent. This restriction is more serious than might be suspected, for it means the egoist must refrain not only from advocating his doctrine, but also from a wide range of behavior typical of any morality. For instance, he will not be able to enter into moral discussions, at least not sincerely or as an egoist, for to debate a moral issue will ultimately require him to argue for (i). This will not be to his interest for at least the reason that others will become suspicious of him and cease to trust him. They will learn he is an egoist and treat him accordingly. It would be even worse if he should win the debate and convince them.

Nor will he be able to give or receive moral advice. If it is objected that he can advise others as long as interests do not conflict, it will do to note that it is not to his interest to have his egoistic views known. Giving of advice involves giving reasons for certain actions; inquiries about the moral principle upon which that advice is based are therefore appropriate. Of course, the egoist can lie. When Harry comes to Tom about his affair with Dick's wife, Tom can approve, professing enlightened views about marriage, noting that there are no children, that both are adults, and so forth, although he knows Harry's behavior will soon lead to a scandal ruining Harry's career—all to Tom's advantage. Tom has advised Harry, but not sincerely; he has not told Harry what he thinks Harry really ought to do—what would be most in Harry's overall self-interest. And Tom ought not, since he himself is following (i). This all goes to make the point; the egoist is not sincerely advising Harry, but rather pretending to sincerely advise him while really deceiving and manipulating him.

This use of advice—to manipulate others—is limited, and perhaps bought at a price too great for the egoist to pay. Since advising is a public activity, urging others to be benevolent (in order to benefit from their actions) gives them grounds to require one to be benevolent toward them, and thus to create sanctions restricting the scope of his self-interested behavior.

Worst of all, it will do the egoist himself no good to ask for moral advice for he is bound not to get what he wants. If he asks nonegoists, he will be told to do things which might be in his self-interest, but usually won't be. What sort of help could he get from a Kantian or a utilitarian? Their advice will follow from the wrong moral principle. If he asks another egoist, he is no better off, since he cannot be trusted.
Knowing that he is an egoist, he knows that he is following (a), acting in his own self-interest, and lying if he can benefit from it. The egoist is truly isolated from any moral community, and must always decide and act alone, without the help of others.

It will not be to the egoist's self-interest to support his moral principle with sanctions. He will be unable to praise those who do what they ought, unable to blame those who flagrantly shirk their moral tasks. Nor will he be able to establish institutions of rewards and punishments founded on his principle. The egoist cannot sincerely engage in any of these activities. He will punish or blame people for doing what they ought not to do (for doing what is not in their self-interests) only by coincidence and then under some other rubric than violation of (i). To punish people for not being egoists is to encourage them to be egoists, and this is not to his interest. Similarly, the egoist, if he engages in such an activity at all, will praise people for doing what they ought to do only by chance, and always under a different, nonegoistic label.

A corollary to this is the egoist's inability to teach (i) to his children (while himself following it). It is imprudent to raise egoistic children, since among other things, the probability of being abandoned in old age is greatly increased. Therefore, the egoist can give his children no sincere moral instruction, and most likely will be advised to teach them to disapprove of his actions and his character, should they become aware of their true nature.

Finally, one of the points of appealing to a moral principle is to justify one's behavior to others—to convince them that their (sometimes forcible) opposition to this behavior is unwarranted and ought to be withdrawn. When we do convince someone of the rightness of our actions, he normally comes onto our side, even if reluctantly. Thus, the teenage daughter tries to convince her father that it is right and proper for sixteen year old girls to stay out until 12:30 (rather than 11:00) because if she is successful and he agrees with her, he then has no excuse (other things being equal) for still withholding his permission. For an ethical egoist, this point is doomed to frustration for two reasons: first, because justifying one's behavior in terms of (i) gives an opponent no reason to cease his opposition if maintaining it would be in his own interest; and second, because it will not be to the egoist's interest to publicly justify his behavior to others on egoistic grounds, thereby running the risk of converting them to egoism. Therefore, the egoist is unable to engage in interpersonal reasoning with his moral principle as its basis—he can only justify his egoistic actions as such in the interpersonal "excuse."

Adherence to the egoistic principle makes it imprudent, for one to sincerely engage in any of the typical moral attitudes. There are also typical moral attitudes and perhaps not impossible for an egoist to sincerely express for him to sincerely express. I have in mind repentance, forgiveness, revenge, outrage, the form of sympathy known as moral support. When can the egoist forgive another, and for whom else's wrongs, wrongs which are normally do not it is hard to see how someone could wrong someone. egoism, for (i) gives one no obligations to otherwise of shirking those obligations. At least, one can directly. Second, what is the nature of the wrong forgiven? It must be a failure to properly punish. Harry makes this lapse. Can Tom forgive him? For forgiveness involves nonexpressed beliefs and attitudes, it be wise to express this attitude or to forgo it. For public sense. Partly because if their interests involve Harry's harm; Tom does not want Harry and Tom ought not to encourage him to devolve in overtly forgiving him. And partly imprudence of making it known that one is involved in expressing forgiveness of nonegoistic harm, his doing so must be basically insincere.

Similar considerations hold for the expression and attitudes mentioned. As for those which are dependent upon some manner of public expression and remorse, it is perhaps not impossible for one (or to be capable of having them), but it is clear that occasion will be quite different from what is involved in overtly forgiving him. And partly imprudence of making it known that one is involved in expressing forgiveness of nonegoistic harm, his doing so must be basically insincere.

Resentment as a moral attitude involves one's failure to do what they ought. But one can be offended if other people don't look after their interests are not connected with his. When their interests are connected, the offense does not fail to pay.
egoist, he knows that he is following (a), acting and lying if he can benefit from it. The egoist may moral community, and must always decide the help of others.

The egoist's self-interest to support his moral principle will be unable to praise those who do what blame those who flagrantly shirk their moral able to establish institutions of rewards and on his principle. The egoist cannot sincerely activities. He will punish or blame people for not to do (for doing what is not in their self-sacrifice and then under some other rubric thus people for not being egoists is to encourage this is not to his interest. Similarly, the egoist, a activity at all, will praise people for doing only by chance, and always under a different, the egoist's inability to teach (i) to his children it. It is imprudent to raise egoistic children, is, the probability of being abandoned in old age. Therefore, the egoist can give his children education, and most likely will be advised to teach his actions and his character, should they be nature.

Points of appealing to a moral principle is to others—to convince them that their (some- to this behavior is unwarranted and ought we do convince someone of the rightness of comes onto our side, even if reluctantly. Thus, tries to convince her father that it is right and old! girls to stay out until 12:30 (rather than successful and he agrees with her, he then has (being equal) for still withholding his per- egoist, this point is doomed to frustration for the justifying one's behavior in terms of (i) gives to cease his opposition if maintaining it would and second, because it will not be to the ego- justify his behavior to others on egoistic aling the risk of converting them to egoism. unable to engage in interpersonal reasoning with his moral principle as its basis—he can neither justify nor excuse his egoistic actions as such in the interpersonal sense of "justify" and "excuse."

Adherence to the egoistic principle makes it impossible, because imprudent, for one to sincerely engage in any of these moral activities. There are also typical moral attitudes and emotions which, while perhaps not impossible for an egoist to sincerely have, is impossible for him to sincerely express. I have in mind remorse, regret, resentment, repentance, forgiveness, revenge, outrage and indignation, and the form of sympathy known as moral support. Let us take forgiveness. When can the egoist forgive another, and for what? One forgives the other's wrongs, wrongs which are normally done against oneself. First, it is hard to see how someone could wrong someone else given ethical egoism, for (i) gives one no obligations to others, and hence no way of shirking those obligations. At least, one has no such obligations directly. Second, what is the nature of the wrong action which is to be forgiven? It must be a failure to properly pursue self-interest. Suppose Harry makes this lapse. Can Tom forgive him? In so far as such forgiveness involves nonexpressed beliefs and attitudes, yes. But Tom would be unwise to express this attitude or to forgive Harry in the fuller, public sense. Partly because if their interests conflict, Tom's good will involve Harry's harm; Tom does not want Harry to do what he ought, and Tom ought not to encourage him to do so, which would be involved in overtly forgiving him. And partly because of the general imprudence of making it known that one is an egoist, which would be involved in expressing forgiveness of nonegoistic behavior. If the egoist is to forgive people where this involves the expression of forgiveness, his doing so must be basically insincere.

Similar considerations hold for the expression of the other emotions and attitudes mentioned. As for those which are not so clearly dependent upon some manner of public expression, such as resentment and remorse, it is perhaps not impossible for the egoist to have them (or to be capable of having them), but it is clear that their objects and occasion will be quite different from what they are in the standard morality. Resentment as a moral attitude involves taking offense at someone's failure to do what they ought. But why should the egoist be offended if other people don't look after their interests, at least when their interests are not connected with his own? And when their interests are connected, the offense does not arise from the fact that the other did something wrong—failed to properly pursue his own
I IS SELF-INTEREST RATIONAL?

interests—but because of the further and undesirable consequences of this failure, but consequences for which that person was not liable. Resentment here is very strange, all the more so because of the formal rather than material commitment of the egoist to the obligation to pursue one’s own self-interest. Since he doesn’t value others’ doing what they ought, any resentment he feels must be slight and rather abstract, amounting to little more than the belief that they ought not to behave that way.

Granting that it would not be in his overall self-interest for others to be egoists too, the ethical egoist has compelling reasons not to engage sincerely in any of the activities mentioned above, as well as not to give expression to various typical moral attitudes and emotions. This is strange not because the egoist is in some sense required to promulgate his doctrine while at the same time faithfully follow it, for we saw above that he can coherently reject this demand, but strange because his position seems to have lost most of the features characterizing a morality. When put into practice, ethical egoism discards the moral activities of advocacy, moral discussion, giving and asking of advice, using sanctions to reward and punish, praising and blaming, moral instruction and training, and interpersonal excusing and justification, as well as the expressing of many moral attitudes and emotions. With these features gone, what remains that constitutes a morality? The egoist may, indeed, have a coherent practical system, but since it lacks certain major structural features of a morality, it is not a moral theory. Consider a legal theory which, when put into practice, turns out to have neither trials, nor judges, nor juries, nor sentencing, nor penal institutions, nor legislating bodies. Could it still be a legal theory and lack all of these? Isn’t the case similar with ethical egoism?

If the above account is correct, its conclusion would be that egoism is a coherent practical theory, able to guide behavior and provide for the critical assessment of the actions of others without contradiction, but simply not a moral theory of conduct. Many philosophers would agree to the basis of this conclusion—that a theory lacking the wide range of typical moral activities and expressions that egoism lacks is not a moral theory—among them Frankena and Medlin. On their views, a morality must be interpersonal in character—if it is not interpersonal through a commitment to material values, at least interpersonal through a commitment to the various public activities mentioned, and perhaps to methods of carrying them out which will tend toward producing harmonious, if not common, results. One is committed to a noninterpersonal morality, a morality, and to only formal values, his position is an unethical egoist moral position, many of whose conclusions will be much more, as is made clear by this earlier...

What it is important to note about this conclusion and morality is that it can coherently be...

\footnote{This sense of universalization needn’t be rejected, but as we saw in section IV, doing so would be much more, as is made clear by this earlier...}
The further and undesirable consequences of actions for which that person was not liable.

Strange, all the more so because of the formal commitment of the egoist to the obligation for interest. Since he doesn’t value others’ doing sentiment he feels must be slight and rather little more than the belief that they ought not not be in his overall self-interest for others ethical egoist has compelling reasons not to practice, ethical egoism discards the moral discussion, giving and asking of advice, and interpersonal excusing and justifying of many moral attitudes and emotions. Here we must understand that the ethical egoist is not just taking the egoistic principle of acting and judging as his own private maxim. One could do this, and at the same time keep silent about it or even advocate altruism to everyone else, which might well be to one’s advantage. But if one does this, one is not adopting a moral principle, for as we shall see, if one takes a maxim as a moral principle, one must be ready to universalize it.

Here, Frankena connects nonuniversalization with silence, and thereby universalization with promulgation. This is a very strong sense of “universalize” which goes well beyond the principle “What’s right for one person is right for similar people in similar circumstances.” One can satisfy the universalization requirement in this latter sense by acknowledging that everyone would be justified in behaving as you are. As we have seen, this can be done without either wanting or urging others to do what they ought. But Frankena takes universalization to be much more, as is made clear by this earlier passage:

Now morality in the sense indicated is, in one aspect, a social enterprise, not just a discovery or invention of the individual for his own guidance . . . it is not social merely in the sense of being a system governing the relations of one individual to others . . . it is also social in its origins, sanctions, and functions. It is an instrument of society as a whole for the guidance of individuals and smaller groups. It makes demands on individuals which are, initially at least, external to them. . . . As a social institution, morality must be contrasted with prudence.

What it is important to note about this conception of universalization and morality is that it can coherently be rejected. Universalization toward producing harmonious, if not common, values. Since the egoist is committed to a noninterpersonal morality, a private not public morality, and to only formal values, his position is in their view a nonmoral position, many of whose conclusions will be judged immoral by any legitimate moral theory.

Frankena and Medlin agree that a silent theory is not a moral theory. A moral theory requires publicity, and cannot be private. Thus, Frankena says:

Here we must understand that the ethical egoist is not just taking the egoistic principle of acting and judging as his own private maxim. One could do this, and at the same time keep silent about it or even advocate altruism to everyone else, which might well be to one’s advantage. But if one does this, one is not adopting a moral principle, for as we shall see, if one takes a maxim as a moral principle, one must be ready to universalize it.

(p. 17)

Now morality in the sense indicated is, in one aspect, a social enterprise, not just a discovery or invention of the individual for his own guidance . . . it is not social merely in the sense of being a system governing the relations of one individual to others . . . it is also social in its origins, sanctions, and functions. It is an instrument of society as a whole for the guidance of individuals and smaller groups. It makes demands on individuals which are, initially at least, external to them. . . . As a social institution, morality must be contrasted with prudence.

What it is important to note about this conception of universalization and morality is that it can coherently be rejected. Universalization
tion in this strong sense is not a rational requirement (not analytic) as it appears to be in the weak sense. Our extended analogy between ethical egoism and competitive games shows just how coherently these strong conditions can be abandoned. At the most, this strong sense (in part explicated in terms of the various moral activities discussed above) may be part of the notion of “morality”; if so, egoism could not correctly label itself “ethical” or claim to be a moral theory. But this fact does not show that egoism as defined by (i) is mistaken, unreasonable, or inferior to any moral theory.

I personally think that it makes sense to speak of egoism as a morality, since I think it makes sense to speak of a “private morality” and of its being superior to “public moralities.” The egoist’s basic question is “What ought I to do; what is most reasonable for me to do?” This question seems to me a moral question through and through, and any coherent answer to it thereby deserves to be regarded as a moral theory. What is central here is the rational justification of a certain course of behavior. Such behavior will be justified in the sense that its reasonableness follows from a coherent and plausible set of premises. This kind of justification and moral reasoning can be carried out on the desert island and is not necessarily interpersonal—it does not have as one of its goals the minimal cooperation of some second party. Whether one calls the result a “morality” or not is of no matter, for its opponents must show it to be a poor competitor to the other alternatives. With respect to egoism, they cannot do this by arguing that (i) is logically incoherent or is incapable of being a practical system or violates any “principles of reason,” such as universalization. I have tried to show how all these attempts would fail. I have even suggested in sections III and IV the way the egoist can argue for the reasonable-

gain nor loss. For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.” T. S. Eliot.) The more one stresses the “moral” aspects of adopting (i) which seem to require sincere participation in the various public activities mentioned above, the more the “egoist” will be committed to the other than egoistic values which will result if everyone heeds him, such as: conflict, struggle, and competition, strength, craft, and strategic ability, excitement, danger, and insecurity. While it is true that strictly speaking these values are not egoistic, even so (i) retains its egoistic “flavor.” This is evident when it is applied to situations of irreconcilable conflict. The issue is to be settled by force or craft, or whatever, just in the way that it would be settled under the full-fledged, nonpromulgated egoism. It is perhaps difficult to imagine someone having the outlook needed in order to publicly promulgate (i) in such inhospitable conditions; nonetheless, it seems a possibility, and perhaps the professional soldier or gambler, or Zorba the Greek are approximations. Certainly, he would not be Medlin’s misguided utilitarian.
quences is not a rational requirement (not analytic) in the weak sense. Our extended analogy between competitive games shows just how coherently these should be abandoned. At the most, this strong sense in terms of the various moral activities discussed of the notion of “morality”; if so, egoism could shift “ethical” or claim to be a moral theory. But now that egoism as defined by (i) is mistaken, untenable to any moral theory.

That it makes sense to speak of egoism as a moral theory makes sense to speak of a “private morality” and to “public moralities.” The egoist’s basic question is: what is most reasonable for me to do? This is a moral question through and through, and so it thereby deserves to be regarded as a moral one. All the rational justification of a certain behavior will be justified in the sense that it is not from a coherent and plausible set of premises.

Egoism and moral reasoning can be carried out and is not necessarily interpersonal—it does not require the minimal cooperation of some second party. It results a “morality” or not is of no matter, for if it is a poor competitor to the other alter egoism, they cannot do this by arguing that it is or is incapable of being a practical system. It makes sense to speak of the egoist as universalizing. I have no attempts would fail. I have even suggested the way the egoist can argue for the reasonable-

It is only the trying. The rest is not our business." T. S. uses the “morals” aspects of adopting (i) which seem to add in the various public activities mentioned above, the committed to the other than egoistic values which will exist, such as conflict, struggle, and competition, strength, excitement, danger, and insecurity. While it is true that these are not egoistic, even so (i) retains its egoistic “flavor,” as applied to situations of irreconcilable conflict. The piece or craft, or whatever, just in the way that it would be, nonpromulgated egoism. It is perhaps difficult to see the outlook needed in order to publicly promulgate (i) in such a way that it has, of course, seemed eminently reasonable to innumerable men, the “common man” not being the least among these. I therefore conclude that ethical egoism is a possible moral theory, not to be lightly dismissed. Its challenge to standard moralities is great, and not easily overcome.

If one insists that egoism is without the pall of morality, the obvious question one must face is: “Why be moral?” It is not at all easy to convincing show that the egoist should (that it would be most reasonable for him to) abandon his position for one which could require him to sacrifice his self-interest, even to the point of death. What must be shown is not simply that it is to the egoist’s interests to be in a society structured by various social, moral, and legal institutions, all of which limit categorically certain expressions of self-interest (as do the penalty rules in football), which is Hobbes’ point, but that the egoist also has compelling reasons (always) to abide by its rules, to continue to be moral, social, or legal when “the painful necessity comes for a man to choose between his own happiness and the general happiness.”

The egoist can acknowledge that it is in his long range self-interest to be in a moral system and thus that there should be categorical public rules restricting his egoistic behavior. Publicly, these rules will be superior to self-interest, and will be enforced as such. But according to his private morality, they will not be superior. Rather, they will be interpreted as hypotheticals setting prices (sometimes very dear) upon certain forms of conduct. Thus, the egoist will believe that, while it is always reasonable to be in a moral system, it is not always reasonable to act morally while within that system (just as it is not always reasonable to obey the rules of football). The opponent of egoism, in order to soundly discredit it, must show that moral behavior is always reasonable. If the conception of “formal value” is admitted as sound, and if the egoist is correct in his claim that there are no material values, I do not see how such attempts could be successful.

This brief discussion of the question “Why be moral?” has Baler’s attempt to show that egoism is ultimately unreasonable as its specific background, and is formulated in terms most appropriate to his treatment of the problem. See Kurt Baier, The Moral Point of View (New York: Random House, 1965), Chapter 7, especially sections 3 and 4. Section 3 reprinted in this volume, pp. 159-65.