



Mains Practice Question

Q. What do you understand by the term ethical egoism? (150 words)

22 Jul, 2021 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Introduce what is meant by the term ethical egoism.
- Explain the utility of ethical egoism for public servants.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

Ethical egoism is the view that people should act according to their self interest. Ethical egoists argue that people do not often pursue their self interest, but that they should in fact do so.

Acting in self interest means that we should do what maximises our happiness and minimises our unhappiness. This is a form of hedonism. Hedonism is a doctrine which proposes that one should maximise one's happiness and minimise one's unhappiness.

Body

Pros of ethical egoism

- **Ethical egoism encourages self-awareness:** If one can know oneself and what one needs, then it is easier to stay productive in modern society. The benefits of having this trait in one's life include a higher level of emotional intelligence, greater listening and empathy skills, along with improved critical thinking.
- **There are more opportunities for personal improvement:** If one focuses on a path involving ethical egoism, then one's self-interests become the top priority. In this way, one works toward making himself better in some way.
- **Provide Strong Motivation:** Ethical egoism is an approach that says what you think or feel are the best motivators to keep you productive

Issues With Ethical Egoism

- **Create a Self-centered Society:** One of the principal tenets of ethical egoism is that no one else looks after your personal needs except you. That means everyone, including people in families, is pursuing a reflection of their self-interest.
 - Public servants would keep personal interest first over the public interests.
- **Loss of empathy in Society:** The benefits of understanding how others think or feel are numerous, and its absence is one of the hallmarks of psychopathy. We need this trait to establish better administration, friendships, have satisfaction in our intimate relationships, and see reductions of aggression in society.
- **Breakdown in Workplace Relationships:** Employee relationships would become problematic in a society with this structure because the business would only serve its purpose as a means to an

end.

- **Eliminates the concept of objectivity from society:** No one would care about what anyone else thought with regards to their actions or pursuits. The only drive toward thoughts, feelings, and decisions would be self-interest.
- **No Solutions Offered When Conflicts of Interest Arise:** Since most ethical issues involve this sort of problem, the approach at a societal level could cause productivity to grind to a halt.
 - Imagine that a sewage treatment facility wants to dump raw waste into the local river.
- **Against the Principle of Impartiality:** Ethical egoism suggests that we shouldn't even try to be tolerant because it is more important to distinguish between ourselves and everyone else. Then we focus on offering preferential treatment internally or to our external factors.

Conclusion

The study of ethical egoism leads us to a place where morality becomes an individualized definition instead of a societal constraint. If killing someone was the action to take to improve one's status in society, then a refusal to commit violence would become the definition of an immoral act.

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