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## egotism, *n.*

**Pronunciation:** Brit. /'i:gətɪz(ə)m/, /'ɛgətɪz(ə)m/,

U.S. /'igə,tɪzəm/, /'igou,tɪzəm/

### Frequency (in current use):

**Etymology:** < EGO *n.* + -ISM *suffix*, with intrusive *t* as in AGIOTAGE *n.*

If the statement of Addison (quot. 1715 at sense 1) can be trusted, the word seems to have been invented by some of the Port-Royalists to range with the terms of rhetoric denoting 'figures of speech' and the like. (In accordance with this, Lord Chesterfield speaks of 'the egotism' as one might say 'the aposiopesis', 'the chiasmus'.) It seems probable that *egotism* was formed on the pattern of some older word in *-otism*; compare for example French *idiotisme*.

**1.** The obtrusive or too frequent use of the pronoun of the first person singular: hence the practice of talking about oneself or one's doings.

- 1715 J. ADDISON *Spectator* No. 562. ¶3 The Gentlemen of Port-Royal..branded this Form of Writing [sc. in the First Person] with the Name of an Egotism.
- 1747 LD. CHESTERFIELD *Let.* 16 Oct. (1932) (modernized text) III. 1036 Banish the egotism out of your conversation.
- 1749 LD. CHESTERFIELD *Let.* 2 Oct. (1932) (modernized text) IV. 1414 Though I do not recommend the egotism to you with regard to anybody else, I desire that you will use it with me.
- 1753 J. HANWAY *Hist. Acct. Brit. Trade Caspian Sea* I. Introd. p. xi The nature of journals renders egotisms unavoidable.
- 1775 W. MASON *Mem.* in T. Gray *Poems* 173 The Reader..will excuse this short piece of egotism.
- 1856 E. K. KANE *Arctic Explor.* I. xxx. 407 The egotism of personal narrative.

**2.** The vice of thinking too much of oneself; self-conceit, boastfulness; also, selfishness.

- 1800 *Med. & Physical Jrnl.* 4 503 My readers will pardon any appearance of egotism..since it is not easy to talk of oneself without giving offence.
- 1830 S. T. COLERIDGE *Lect. Shakespeare* II. 116 The intense selfishness, the alcohol of egotism, which would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven.
- 1847 R. W. EMERSON *Napoleon* in *Wks.* (1906) I. 381 His absorbing egotism was deadly to all other men.
- 1853 F. W. ROBERTSON *Serm.* 3rd Ser. vii. 101 Sin is the withdrawing into self and egotism out of the vivifying life of God.
- 1858 W. GREENER *Gunnery in 1858* 232 Without egotism, I can safely offer to make a gun or guns against any maker in the world.
- 1878 W. E. H. LECKY *Hist. Eng. 18th Cent.* II. vii. 257 An intense class and national egotism then

dominated all politics.

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