

Morality and sacrifice

Life



SACRIFICE “ Sacrifice” is the surrender of a greater value for the sake of a lesser one or of a non value. Thus, altruism gauges a man’s virtue by the degree to which he surrenders, renounces or betrays his values (since help to a stranger or an enemy is regarded as more virtuous, less “ selfish,” than help to those one loves). The rational principle of conduct is the exact opposite: always act in accordance with the hierarchy of your values, and never sacrifice a greater value to a lesser one. Sacrifice” does not mean the rejection of the worthless, but of the precious. “ Sacrifice” does not mean the rejection of the evil for the sake of the good, but of the good for the sake of the evil. “ Sacrifice” is the surrender of that which you value in favor of that which you don’t. If you exchange a penny for a dollar, it is not a sacrifice; if you exchange a dollar for a penny, it is. If you achieve the careeryou wanted, after years of struggle, it is not a sacrifice; if you then renounce it for the sake of a rival, it is.

A sacrifice is the surrender of a value. Full sacrifice is full surrender of all values. If you wish to achieve full virtue, you must seek no gratitude in return for your sacrifice, no praise, no love, no admiration, no self-esteem, not even the pride of being virtuous; the faintest trace of any gain dilutes your virtue. If you pursue a course of action that does not taint your life by any joy, that brings you no value in matter, no value in spirit, no gain, no profit, no reward—if you achieve this state of total zero, you have achieved the ideal of moral perfection.

If you wish to save the last of your dignity, do not call your best actions a “ sacrifice”: that term brands you as immoral. If a mother buys food for her hungry child rather than a hat for herself, it is not a sacrifice: she values the

child higher than the hat; but it is a sacrifice to the kind of mother whose higher value is the hat, who would prefer her child to starve and feeds him only from a sense of duty.

If a man dies fighting for his own freedom, it is not a sacrifice: he is not willing to live as a slave; but it is a sacrifice to the kind of man who's willing. If a man refuses to sell his convictions, it is not a sacrifice, unless he is the sort of man who has no convictions. Sacrifice could be proper only for those who have nothing to sacrifice—no values, no standards, no judgment—those whose desires are irrational whims, blindly conceived and lightly surrendered. For a man of moral stature, whose desires are born of rational values, sacrifice is the surrender of the right to the wrong, of the good to the evil. The creed of sacrifice is a morality for the immoral—a morality that declares its own bankruptcy by confessing that it can't impart to men any personal stake in virtues or values, and that their souls are sewers of depravity, which they must be taught to sacrifice. By its own confession, it is impotent to teach men to be good and can only subject them to constant punishment.