

When being nice became an economic interest

An essay on altruism

“A stranger becomes a friend when helped without strings attached”

Altruism can be recognized by the way someone is helped by another. The altruistic act has no attachment or expectation but is merely fulfilling the need for help. It is an anomaly for the word egoism, and transcend the needs of yourself in order to fulfill those of others. It isn't the self-importance that you have the ability to help, but a graceful expression of your compassion which makes the difference. The false personality, Maya or dysfunctional ego, has many ways to find self-importance in acts of service. One might be attached to the importance of his own service in a way that personal identification leads him to egoism. A simple trick to prevent this is to see yourself as an instrument. An instrument which has the soul purpose of being of service to alleviate suffering. In this way we prevent conditions on our service and we can stay unconditional in our behavior. By doing so there are no strings attached and the one in need for help can freely enjoy your altruism without having to be anxious or worried about guilt trips or obligated compensations.

The pursuit of self-interest has a paradoxical twist to it. Egoism is required when you need to have a set of needs met in order to continue your altruistic path. If your cup isn't filled, it will never spill over to the degree in which you can serve others. The imbalance originates when you have misconceptions about necessary needs and unnecessary desires in order to be happy and do your work. You might need to pursue your self-interest in order to earn your education and experience in the craft you want to cultivate. Nobody is helped by someone who over gives himself to the degree in which he cannot sustain himself anymore. This form of martyrdom is by no means alleviating suffering but only inflicting more. To find unity within this polarity, we need to consider how these opposites can work together in a harmonious way.

In the discovery of our own needs can we make better discernments in how we want to be of service to others. Without the required self-knowledge we cannot make precise decisions in what we need in order to give. The more aware one becomes about his own needs, the more aware one can be about fulfilling those of others. By stripping away things we don't need, we leave more room left in order to give. By saying goodbye to things we don't need, we can say hello by helping in new ways. This simple formula of using less and giving more can exponentially increase the act of service. It makes sense that when we lower our level of needs we can fulfill more of others. Often times, the needs we tend to cling to or not necessary and by removing these we are also giving relieve to ourselves.

Since this world is kind of a needy world, we need to consider and ask ourselves what are most important needs are in order to be happy and to do our work. When the joy is found in doing your work, then there will not be any greater substitute for it. If the work in and of itself is already giving you fulfillment, why bother asking much in return? Altruism becomes much easier when fulfillment is found in what kind of service you do. So in our pursuit of self-interest we need to know what our needs are in order to find fulfilling work. When these needs are found, we create more ease and grace in being unconditional towards others. Helping others is then also an act of helping ourself. This can be called an ideal situation where both parties are helped in the interaction.

“An altruistic act can only be altruistic if the act in and of itself is fulfilling for the caregiver and caretaker”

