

# On Sacrifice

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*If I refuse to descend into hell, who will redeem the souls within?*

*~Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva*

In ancient times, people killed an animal as an offering to appease the gods' wrath. This act could bring the entire village a year of health, peace, and joy. That is why both Chinese characters for "sacrifice"—“犧” and “牲”—contain the radical for “beast.” Yet from a modern perspective, all living beings are equal. Animals, eaten by humans and chosen as offerings, are innocent—thus they are the ones sacrificed for humankind.

Aristotle once said, “Tragedy is for the purification of human emotions.” This is a humanistic viewpoint, one that turns back to humanity's reflection upon its own existence. Therefore, sacrifice, as a form of tragedy, serves to cleanse human dissatisfaction toward inequality— inequality that is primitive and innate: the length of one's life, one's height, beauty or ugliness, one's social rank, and all human suffering. To restore psychological balance, humankind requires the act of sacrifice.

No one wishes to be sacrificed innocently. Yet when a group of the wronged and the condemned unite, they form the brotherhood of Liangshan Marsh in Water Margin. To join Liangshan, one must offer a “pledge of allegiance”—a token of guilt. In other words, if you wish to join this band of outlaws, you must prove that you too are guilty. Heroes like Wu Song, Lin Chong, and Song Jiang were originally innocent men, but, forced by persecution to kill those who wronged them, they became criminals— and ultimately, members of Liangshan.

Another example of sacrifice is the loyal minister Wen Tianxiang of the Southern Song Dynasty. Before his execution, he wrote the immortal poem “The Song of Righteousness,” in which he invoked the spirits of the righteous who, like him, had been sacrificed before:

“The historian of Qi with his bamboo slips,  
The scribe of Jin with his faithful pen;  
Zhang Liang’s hammer in Qin,  
Su Wu’s integrity in Han,  
General Yan’s severed head,  
Courtier Ji’s spilled blood...”

These words revealed that his path was not solitary—and in knowing this, he found a kind of spiritual peace in his own sacrifice.

In ethics, there is a principle of moral equivalence: a law is just only if you could accept it from the other side. For example, if humans kill pigs and eat them, could you still approve if the roles were reversed— if pigs killed and ate you? This imbalance of creation, along with humanity’s suffering born from original sin, must have placed even God in a difficult position. Thus, the Creator sent His own Son to be sacrificed upon the cross, to cleanse the sins of humankind.

In the East, according to the classic Investiture of the Gods (Fongshen Yenyi), even the immortals could not escape disaster. During King Wu’s campaign against the tyrant Zhou, the souls of countless deities were enshrined upon the Register of the Gods. Therefore, whether in East or West, there are examples of divine sacrifice.

As the saying goes: “Sacrifice the small self to fulfill the greater self.” Yet when even the innocents are thrust forward as scapegoats, how tragic and helpless humanity appears! Let us end with Nietzsche’s vision of Eternal Recurrence:

### **Eternal Recurrence**

This life—as you live it now and have lived it before—  
you shall live once more, and countless times again.

There will be nothing new—  
but every pain and every joy,  
every thought and every sigh,  
and all the unspeakable smallness and greatness of your life  
shall return to you once more.

All in the same order and sequence—  
just as this spider, and this moonlight through the trees,  
and this very moment, and yourself.

The hourglass of existence will be turned again and again,  
and you, a speck of dust among the dust,  
shall flow with it eternally.

— Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra

## 論犧牲

我不入地獄 誰入地獄?

~地藏王菩薩

古代人為了平息神的怒火，因此殺一隻動物作為犧牲。這可使全村子的人獲得一年的健康，平安與喜樂。這是為什麼"犧"，"牲"兩個字都是畜字旁的。可是從現代的觀點看，眾生平等，動物被人所吃，被選中的動物是無辜的，也因此牠們是為了人類所犧牲。

亞里斯多德說："悲劇是為了洗滌人心"。這是一個人本主義的觀點，回到人本生來看自身的存在。因此"犧牲"作為一種悲劇，乃為清洗人類對不平等的不滿，而這不平等卻是原始天生的。例如人的生命長短，人的高矮美醜，人的地位高低，以及人的所有苦難，而為求得人類心理平衡便要有犧牲產生。

沒有人願意被無辜犧牲，而一群被迫犧牲的人聚義起來便是水滸傳中的梁山泊了。要加入梁山泊的條件便是要"投名狀"。亦即，若你要加入這一群罪人的團體便須要顯示你也是有罪的。像武松，林沖，宋江 都原是清白之人，但是因為被逼殺了迫害他們的人而成為犯罪之身。最終皆加入梁山泊。另一個犧牲的例子是南宋的丞相文天祥。他在死刑前寫下一篇亙古的詩詞"正氣歌"，其中提到跟他一樣相同被犧牲的前輩們："在齊太史簡，在晉董狐筆。在秦張良椎，在漢蘇武節。為嚴將軍頭，為嵇侍中血..".，顯示吾道不孤，得到犧牲時心理上的平衡。

在倫理學上有一平等置換原理：一個律法成立，若你在另外一個位置時你也可以接受。譬如人類殺豬吃

豬，若交換為豬殺你吃你，你是否也願意？類似這造物的不平等，以及人本身來自於原罪的苦難，事實上也應該讓神頗為為難。於是造人的神送下祂的兒子在十字架上犧牲了，以洗清人類的罪！在東方，根據古典小說封神演義，幾乎所有的神仙都是在劫難逃。在周武王討伐商紂王的戰爭中，這些神仙們都魂歸於封神榜上。所以無論東方西方都有神犧牲的例子。

所謂：犧牲小我，完成大我。但連無辜的人們也被推入成代罪羔羊，真是無奈！最後以尼采的永恆輪迴作為總結：

### 永恆輪迴

這人生，如你現在經歷和曾經經歷的  
你將再一次且無數次地經歷它

其中沒有任何新東西  
卻是每種痛苦與每種快樂  
每種思想與每種嘆息  
以及你生命中一切不可言說的渺小與偉大  
都必對你重現

而且一切皆在這同一的排列和次序中  
一如這蜘蛛與林間月光  
一如這頃刻與你自己

生存的永恆沙漏將不斷重新流轉  
而你這微塵的微塵與之相隨

尼采（查拉圖斯特拉如是說）