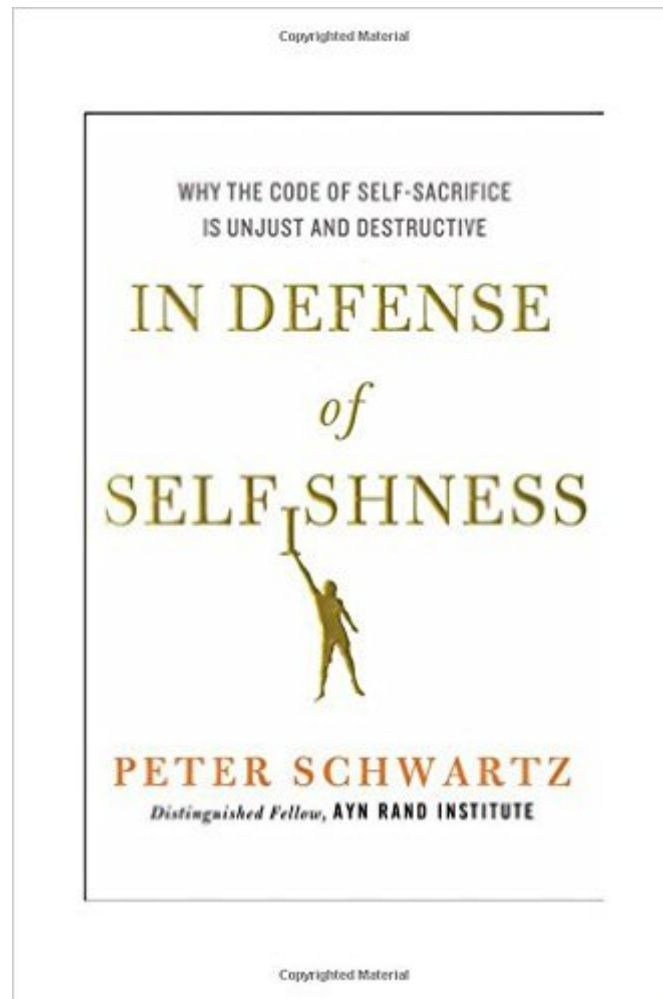


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In Defense Of Selfishness: Why The Code Of Self-Sacrifice Is Unjust And Destructive



Synopsis

From childhood, we're taught one central, non-controversial idea about morality: self-sacrifice is a virtue. It is universally accepted that serving the needs of others, rather than our own, is the essence of morality. To be ethical it is believed is to be altruistic. Questioning this belief is regarded as tantamount to questioning the self-evident. Here, Peter Schwartz questions it. In *In Defense of Selfishness* refutes widespread misconceptions about the meaning of selfishness and of altruism. Basing his arguments on Ayn Rand's ethics of rational self-interest, Schwartz demonstrates that genuine selfishness is not exemplified by the brutal plundering of an Attila the Hun or the conniving duplicity of a Bernard Madoff. To the contrary, such people are acting against their actual, long-range interests. The truly selfish individual is committed to moral principles and lives an honest, productive, self-respecting life. He does not feed parasitically off other people. Instead, he renounces the unearned, and deals with others in both the material and spiritual realms by offering value for value, to mutual benefit. The selfish individual, Schwartz maintains, lives by reason, not force. He lives by production and trade, not by theft and fraud. He disavows the mindlessness of the do-whatever-you-feel-like emotionalist, and upholds rationality as his primary virtue. He takes pride in his achievements, and does not sacrifice himself to others nor does he sacrifice others to himself. According to the code of altruism, however, you must embrace self-sacrifice. You must subordinate yourself to others. Altruism calls, not for cooperation and benevolence, but for servitude. It demands that you surrender your interests to the needs of others, that you regard serving others as the moral justification of your existence, that you be willing to suffer so that a non-you might benefit. To this, Schwartz asks simply: Why? Why should the fact that you have achieved any success make you indebted to those who haven't? Why does the fact that someone needs your money create a moral entitlement to it, while the fact that you've earned it, doesn't? Using vivid, real-life examples, *In Defense of Selfishness* illustrates the iniquity of requiring one man to serve the needs of another. This provocative book challenges readers to re-examine the standard by which they decide what is morally right or wrong.

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Customer Reviews

"Altruism upholds parasitism. It declares that if anyone desires something he lacks, he is morally entitled to make others supply him with it. Altruism declares that mooching is moral but independence and self-reliance are not, that living off others is respectable but providing for oneself is crudely venal." -- page 202

While browsing at my local bookseller the other day I happened upon Peter Schwartz's new book *In Defense of Selfishness: Why the Code of Self-Sacrifice is Unjust and Destructive*. As I perused the dust jacket I quickly realized that the author was challenging much of what I believe in. As a lifelong practicing, orthodox Catholic I was taught from a very early age that self-sacrifice and putting the needs others first was the right way to live. I could not resist. This was going to be a very interesting read indeed. Now if you happen to be a card-carrying, dyed in the wool liberal Peter Schwartz is going to put much of what you believe in through the wringer as well. Schwartz finds the whole notion of altruism to be positively irrational and methodically makes his case. He argues passionately for the concept of *egoism* which is the view that morality ultimately rests on self-interest. And I must confess that Mr. Schwartz makes a number of very convincing arguments for his point of view. He points out that the authentic concept of selfishness, of simply pursuing one's interests, has largely been expunged from our vocabulary. Egoism maintains that each man's life is an end in itself. His moral purpose is not to serve others needs but to pursue his own happiness. This line of thinking is certainly contrary to the tenets of my Catholic faith but I do believe he has a point here.

I see great value in this book in two main respects. First, it provides extensive, very illuminating concrete examples illustrating the influence of altruist morality in daily living and governmental policies. Before reading this book, I did not fully realize the range of seemingly inexplicable current events that I now understand are all expressions of altruism, i.e., endless self-sacrifice for others' benefit. The book also does an excellent job of indicating the essential alternative to altruism,

namely, a morality founded on rational thinking and corresponding action as one's basic means of furthering one's own life -- and why that approach will do vastly more to sustain and strengthen one's life (for anyone who thinks and acts rationally) than dogmatic adherence to a causeless "duty" to subordinate oneself and one's mind to the wishes and alleged "needs" of as many others as possible. Some may wonder if the book's view of altruism is an exaggeration, but the book's extensive concrete examples and historical background demonstrate otherwise. The book's key thesis is that everyone has a choice about what code of morality to follow, and that the objective requirements of man's life require consistent adherence to a morality of rational self-interest. The book shows that the morality of altruism, in contrast, inescapably destroys human life on a vast scale (over time). I also found the book to be highly readable, flowing almost like an exciting detective story, with each major section and chapter leading naturally into the next in a progression that often makes the reader tantalizingly unable to resist continuing to read to find out what comes next.

In Defense of Self-Interest – why the code of self-sacrifice is unjust and destructive – ©2015 by Peter Schwartz
A short BOOK REPORT by Ron Housley
For many, many years a barrage of non-stop warnings about altruism has bombarded my awareness. What Peter Schwartz has done here is to cobble together in one place a diverse assortment of examples and instances of altruism run amok; a description of how altruism is misapprehended by most; an outline of the thinking which should have unseated altruism from its pedestal ever so long ago. Somewhere along the way, I heard someone (AR?) say that today's culture is an orgy of altruism. And we see evidence of that every single day, both in the New York Times and on Fox News. But no reporter ever bothers to say explicitly: here is yet another story that illustrates the destructive effect of altruism upon us all. Altruism plays itself out on the public stage incessantly but nobody stops to point it out: not the pundits; not the real journalists; not the professors; not the politicians; not anybody. It is the elephant in the room, day in and day out. Without our widespread cultural acceptance of altruism, we would never have had to endure Elizabeth Warren and Barack Obama making the collectivist claim that you didn't build that. Their mantra is pure altruism, and flies in the face of common sense; and contradicts everything we know about how we each function in society. But I haven't heard where anyone from the New York Times has ever tried to set the record straight. Few take seriously the question of self-interest vs. altruism.

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