

Betrayal – a loss of a ‘sense of being’ and ‘belonging’

In language, betrayal is defined as the ‘breach of a covenant’ or the ‘breaking of a promise’. But philosophically, it is more than just breaking a rule – it is the rupture of a relationship built on trust, where expectations, explicit or implicit, are shared between people.

What sets betrayal apart from ordinary lying or cheating is that it involves a prior bond between the parties. It is the violation of trust that has been consciously given, and it carries an existential weight because it touches the betrayer’s own sense of self. In other words, betrayal is not only something one does; it is something that reshapes who one is.

The ‘betrayal of the homeland’ is a unique and particularly serious form of betrayal. A homeland is not a person one can argue with or take to court. It is a source of belonging and meaning. That is why, across cultures, it is often seen as the most serious kind of betrayal.

A homeland is more than geography or legal/political boundaries. It is an existential reality that lives deep within individuals. It is a moral idea that calls for loyalty and sacrifice. It con-

nects past, present, and future in a continuous whole—where roots and branches cannot be separated.

In this sense, the homeland is not something we simply own; it is something we are. It is formed through the meaning we attach to it and the sense of belonging we consciously embrace, with all its emotional and historical depth.

Seen this way, betraying the homeland is not just breaking a commitment – it is a sharp break from one’s own roots. The betrayer does not merely violate a contract; he removes himself from the very source of meaning and identity that once defined him.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Jean-Paul Sartre describes betrayal as an extreme form of ‘bad faith’. It is when a person denies his own freedom and responsibility, pretending that he had no choice but to act as he did.

From a moral perspective, betrayal raises a fundamental question: is it always wrong, or does its judgment depend on context?

From an absolute moral standpoint – especially in religious traditions – betrayal is always

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wrong. It violates clear principles such as ‘do not lie’ and ‘keep your promises’, regardless of circumstances.

The philosopher Paul Ricoeur, in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, argues that betrayal of the homeland is distinct because it combines several layers of betrayal at once: betrayal of one’s ancestors, of society, and of a deeper, almost sacred sense of belonging. He describes the homeland as ‘the land our ancestors chose as their final resting place’. To betray it, therefore, is not simply to betray a state or government, but to betray memory itself – and the shared human bond that connects generations. (Memory, History, Forgetting/ Paul Ricoeur; The University of Chicago Press, 2006).

In Islamic thought, betrayal – understood as treachery and breaking one’s word – is clearly and firmly condemned. The Quran states: “Indeed, Allah

does not like the treacherous” (Al-Anfal 8:58);

“Indeed, Allah does not like one who is persistently treacherous and sinful” (An-Nisa 4:107);

and: “Indeed, the worst of living creatures in the sight of Allah are those who persist in disbelief... those with whom you made a treaty, but then they break their treaty every time, and they do not fear Allah” (Al-Anfal 8:55–56). (Translations from *The Clear Quran* by Mustafa Khattab).

Such clear moral guidance stands in contrast to philosophical or political arguments that have tried to justify betrayal—often in the name of ideology, pragmatism, or factional interests.

Historically, these justifications have opened the door to foreign domination and internal division. Today, they reappear in new forms, shaping narratives around conflict, occupation, proxy wars, and the exploitation of nations and their resources.

On a human level, betrayal tears at the fabric of trust within society. It does not only damage relationships, but also weakens the very ability to trust others. Those who experience

betrayal often carry what can be described as an ‘existential scar’, questioning themselves: How was I deceived? Who am I now? Did I deserve this?

At the same time, the betrayer is rarely at peace. He often lives in a state of inner conflict – caught between justifying his actions and feeling a sense of shame.

For this reason, philosophers and thinkers have treated betrayal as one of the ‘limit situations’ that reveal both the fragility and the freedom of human beings. It exposes how capable we are of keeping commitments, and how easily our loyalties can fracture. Betrayal is not just an act – it is a lens through which we understand how trust is built, and how it collapses.

In the end, betrayal remains an open question tied to human vulnerability. Addressing it requires more than judgment; it requires building individuals who are grounded in strong intellectual, moral, and spiritual frameworks. When these foundations are formed early and firmly, they help create a balance of values that can withstand the pressures and temptations that lead to betrayal.