



The Principle

- Judge Yourself -

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Sometimes we encounter people we can't directly define. At the first glance they appear thus and so, at another glance they appear thus and that. In the end all the impressions that we had were right but the main impression stays a kind of indefinable.

Last for instance, when me and my girlfriend went to the city. We went there by bus around 11 am. At the bus stop we encountered a man who was lying in the bus shelter, fast asleep. The impression he had on me, while he was lying there, was that of a drunk. My girlfriend on the other hand was compelled by her compassion and thought of him as a vagabond or tramp. She asked me to offer him our sandwich because maybe he had no food. I did not entirely disagree because the possibility of him being a tramp didn't cut out the fact that he was drunk. However I said I rather wouldn't offer him our sandwiches, because this could offend him. He wouldn't be the first drunken tramp we encounter, offended by the gesture of offering a sandwich. Still I thought that this particular man just became drunk the night before and now, on his way home, landed in the bus stop.

He woke up, probably, due to our presence. After approximate five minutes of confusion and disillusion, he stood up and sat down again. Finally he stood up and came on to my girlfriend as a typical drunk. He tried to convince us, but for what I believe, more himself, that the bus didn't drive today. As he was telling this, the bus, same line but other direction, came by. We said that he must have been sleeping, yet he kept on insisting that the bus didn't drive. He did not sleep and if so the bus would have woken him. The idea of him being wrong only agitated him and it seemed impossible to convince him so we left the subject for what it was.

The man kept the conversation alive. After explaining his philosophy about rules, encouraged by the speeding cars on the road, he continued by telling his life story. He told us various things about his life and how content he was leading such a life. He told about his son, where he himself lived, how he enjoyed the previous evening but didn't quite remember it, the women he met, etc., etc. Striking for us was how he thought that stealing is a very common and even wise thing to do. The most impressing point he made was the pilgrimage he would intent to do if he had the resources. This Pilgrimage would start at a very decadent luxury club in New York with at his side five women. From there he would travel to Europe ending in, for him, the most sacred country. He didn't dream of power, kingdoms or leading a religious life. Actually he didn't pretend to be anything, he wasn't important; he was more or less non-existing. What was important was his son. And still, deep down, beneath his cherished life, characterized by his (drunken) escapades, he longed for a pilgrimage. A pilgrimage starting with ultimate decadence and ending in sacredness where he would abide, fulfilled.

So, at the first appearance the man looked like a drunk that just came from a party. A second look on him gave the impression of him being a tramp a vagabond. And yes, he was drunk, he came from a party and in a way he was also a vagabond. There is nothing indefinable about this. We know more people that, 'somehow', like to drink till they pass out and afterwards wander on their way home. What this man made indefinable was his principle by which he lived. The principle that exposes itself in exactly that 'somehow'. A principle emerged from a deep sense of existence, an inborn conviction.

Conviction

The set of convictions (believes) that determine our actions seem to characterize us. On the other hand we do feel we get influenced by certain actions or situations we encounter. What does that say about our character? If character is made by our actions, how can actions made by others effect our character? Do those actions emerge from a same principle? If the principle and our conviction, on which our actions are based, characterize us, how can character and principle be different?

In the Eastern regions of the world there is a popular story about this very noble and compassionate monk. He is asked to do a procession for a deceased man in a village. The deceased man had die recently leaving behind a gorgeous young wife. The monk, immense respected, led the procession for the deceased very beautifully. The widow, whirled by emotions and compelled to do something in return for the monk, falls as a matter of disaster also in love with the monk. The monk, very disciplined, renounced all luxuries and had decided to stay the night in a cave near the village.



The widow finds out the monks whereabouts and comes up to the cave to pay respect. She tells the monk how impressed she was by the procession and by matter of thanks she offers her body to the monk. The monk thanks the widow and explains her that he, as a monk, is not allowed to have sexual intercourse. Sparing her the fact that he even doesn't has such desire for her. Disappointed the widow returned to the village. The next day she again pays the monk a visit, now she brings a goat. She says to the monk; 'as you couldn't have intercourse with me, let us butcher this goat and eat it together.' Again the monk thanks the widow for her offer but again he has to refuse her. 'Unfortunately', he says, 'I can't accept your offer. Being a monk I took the vow not to kill any living being. Even if you should kill the animal for me than still I can't eat it, knowing this animal died for me.' Touched be the monks answer and afflicted by the thoughts of her ignorant actions, the widow returns to the village.

As in many stories the third times count. So for the third time the widow goes to the monk, now bringing beer from a famous Dutch branch. This beer is known to break the ice, so the widow is expecting some result. Offering the beer to the monk, the monk thinks; 'as a monk I have taken the vow not to drink alcohol, but this awfully disturbed woman is so compelled to do something for me that another rejection would be disastrous for her. Drinking a bit of alcohol would be less harmful, he concludes.' So finally he accepts the offer. After one beer his thirst increases, another beer is accepted, now the ambience of the scene and the company is becoming more and more appealing to him. He drowns in it. The morning after, he finds himself in bed with the woman seeing in the cave the leftovers of what used to be a goat, next to a pile of empty beer bottles.

It's liberty Hall. We can think a lot of things of the story. And that's precisely its intention. However, we can't set a deal on principle and character. Nonetheless the story tells us a lot about principle and character. Not only of the characters in the story but more about our personal interpretation on these characters and thus of our selves. Therefore we can know that the difference between principle and character is not tainted by action but rather by our interpretation of what we perceive. Do stories affect people's principles and character? It is what you believe.

Conclusion; there can be a space between conviction and one's principle and conviction as well as principles can have their particular actions. Character is exactly that space between conviction and principle, which is not space nor an expression but rather an impression.

Hierarchy

Character does defer from belief and principle, however it is dependent on them. I am likely to say that, the more you are convinced about character the stronger your principles and the less convinced about character the stricter your belief (conviction). If I must strive for character or a sort of characterless-ness, depends, in this reasoning, on my concern on belief or principle. But this is just apparently so.

I would have written here a third story. The fairytale about the Princess and the frog, narrowed in our western civilization. I assumed, I was convinced, that everyone (in the west) was familiar with this particular tale. When I spoke about it with a good friend (I was best man on his wedding), it appeared he didn't know the tale. Also his wife didn't and later it became clear that even my own girlfriend wasn't totally familiar on the story. Yeah, they knew about this frog transformed into a prince after a kiss of the princes, but the storyline and the clue of the tale were kind of blurry. Extraordinary, cause, taken from a certain perspective, the tale deals with an actuality within our culture. The actuality I am exploring in this essay; principles.

I am raised in a strong roman-catholic environment. There is nothing wrong with that, although not everybody shares this conviction. My cultural inheritance is, cause of this, strongly connected to a strong sense of hierarchy. This belief, in hierarchy, which is also colored by religion, and encourage in education, has put my view on the world in a same perspective. I see a ranking in my family, where the parents, traditionally the father, are head of the family. I see a ranking in the structure of companies, institutes and corporations, where the chief executive, or board of members, are called the head of the organization. Within politics, I see the president as head of the departments. In the Monarchy, the king, by birthright, is considered the head of a country. However; a feeling of hierarchy is strict personal. It emerges out of conviction. That I think there is a certain ranking is a conviction, when I think there 'should' be a ranking that is a principle.

Judgment

In the middle East we find the following story about Moses and his servant Joshua Ben Nun:



Moses said to his servant Joshua: 'I will not cease from my wanderings until I have reached the place where the two seas meet, even though I journey or eighty years.' But when he had reached the place where the two seas meet, they forgot their fish. And the fish took its way through a stream to the sea. And when they had journeyed past this place, Moses said to his servant: 'bring us our breakfast, for we are weary from this journey.'

But the other replied: 'see what has befallen me! When we were resting there by the rock, I forgot the fish. Only Satan could have put it out of my mind, and in wondrous fashion it took its way into the sea.'

Then Moses said: 'that is the place we seek.' And they went back the way they had come. And they found one of Our servants, whom We had endowed with Our grace and Our

wisdom. Moses said to him: 'Shall I follow you, that you may teach me for my guidance some of the wisdom you have learnt?'

But he answered: 'You will not bear with me, for how should you bear patiently with things you cannot comprehend?'

Moses said: 'if God wills, you shall find me patient; I shall not in anything disobey you.'

He said: 'If you are bent on following me, you must ask no question about anything till I myself speak to you concerning it.'

The two set forth, but as soon as they embarked, Moses' companion bored a hole in the bottom of the ship.

'A strange thing you have done!' exclaimed Moses. 'Is it to drown her passengers that you have bored a hole in her?'

'Did I not tell you,' he replied, 'that you would not bear with me?'

'Pardon my forgetfulness', said Moses. 'Do not be angry with me on this account.'

They journeyed on until they fell in with a certain youth. Moses' companion slew him, and Moses said: 'You have killed an innocent man who has done no harm. Surely you have committed a wicked crime.'

'Did I not tell you,' he replied, 'that you would not bear with me?'

Moses said: 'If ever I question you again, abandon me; or then I should deserve it.'

They travelled on until they came to a certain city. They asked the people for some food, but the people declined to receive them as their guests. There they found a wall on the point of falling down. The other raised it up and Moses said: 'Had you wished, you could have demanded payment for your labors.'

'Now the time has arrived when we must part,' said the other. ' But first I will explain to you those acts of mine which you could not bear with in patience.'

'Know that the ship belonged to some poor fishermen. I damaged it because in the rear there was a king who was taking every ship by force.'

'As for the youth, his parents are true believers, and we feared lest he should plague them with his wickedness and unbelief. It was our wish that their Lord should grant them another in his place, a son more righteous and more filial.'

'As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city whose father was an honest man. Beneath it their treasure is buried. Your Lord decreed in His mercy that they should dig out their treasure when they grew to manhood. What I did was not done by caprice. That is the meaning of the things you could not bear with in patience'.

What does such a story with us? Does it shake us with excitement, do we resent it? Does it confuses us, don't we know what to do with it? Doesn't it really appeal to us or do we instantly see 'the light' (delight) and we come into action. Many things are possible but one thing is certain, it is being judged.

Personally

Where does a personal judgment finds his base? I don't know. And exactly this answer conceals an opening. This opening we even can consider the principle of the answer. The finite verb, I. It sounds easy to comprehend, that without I there is neither knowing nor not-knowing. Without I there is neither judgment nor no judgment.

Personally I committed myself to explore and expose the teachings of the Dharma in contrast to teach or explore 'the' Dharma. Freely translated Dharma would be the name of a sort of Law which comprehends and consists in Nature. It is the nature of everything and the dependent connection of this whole-less whole. Many people were convinced that the teaching of the (Gautama) Buddha about the dharma were his teachings. But this is not entirely true. If the Buddha had a teaching, than the Buddha should have a personality, a separate individuality or an independent existing I. But the Buddha is called, the Buddha, because he is not attached to any kind of ego, personality, entity nor separate individuality.

In Buddhism mind is often depicted by a monkey. The monkey jumps from one thing to another just like our mind. The monkey is drawn towards all kind of objects, just like our minds. Often we identify ourselves with mind. In Buddhism they give four other aggregates beside mind where people identify themselves with. People try to find their I in body, feeling, cognition, and something what the Buddhist would describe as mental events, such as attention and intention. In none of them Buddhist claim there is found an I. This does not mean there is no I, there is certainly an I but it doesn't arise by its own force. It emerges, like the Buddha, from different and ever changing factors.

Would I be very fond of my personality this is of course great. There is an I, a self. But the point is that this self is not existing by its own means. It exist depended, there is no absolute existing I. This is no newly arisen wisdom. Since ages religious systems and, more recently with its arising, science take a sort of selflessness as a principle. Also in modern business economy the strictly personal is out of the question. An example how we strive for selflessness is, our widely accepted diversion of ego,

super ego and subconscious, which contains also our animal instincts and desires. By doing this we try to make the self less absolute. Tactful, cause, not many people tent to see being selfish as a positive behavior, nowadays.

Selflessness could be a lesson and Buddhist scholars could call this lesson Dharma. 'Could'; because this is just a personal vision. A vision developing itself trough my commitment to, explore and expose, the teachings of the Dharma. The question; where is a personal judgment based on? I answered, I don't know. This is for me an opening, the point where I actually engage. This opening is for me, personally, also a point of deliverance.

PiYama

The word 'Principle' is derived from the Latin word principia. Principia used to mark a beginning. Principia mark, the 'first'. Likewise is the Prince the first to follow the king. The word of God the pope is the first to receive. The Pope declines from his duty and a new one is elected. We welcome the new principle of Christianity. Also H.H. the Dalai Lama has declared to go into retirement. Some years ago he already released himself of his political duties and his religious duties are being succeeded. When his body will die (in approximate 40 years) the principle will be reborn. The Tibetans as well as the Buddhist scholars and friends are curious about the Character of the successor. Likewise the Christians will be curious about the character of the new Pope. In Holland were the Queen abdicates and the Prince transforms to King, people are curious about the characteristics of this new born King.

What do I know of the world? I live in a world where the pope and the Dalai Lama seem to exist at the same time, where kings rule next to presidents, where some people believe everything and others nothing. All these things coexist whether they are in agreement or not. Principles rise everyday and disappear in time and distance. The same we can say about convictions, judgments and also characters. It seems the same path as a human life. Change seems our connection with everything and every day we are confronted with change. The vagabond changes with a story, the character by judgment. But how does change connect with the one that veils the judgments, beholds a conviction and states the principles? How does change connect me to the world and how does change continues through me? How does change continues through, my actions, my character, my principles and my Judgment?

What do I know of the world?..... What do I know about myself !?

Engage, explore, deliver.

The principle?

Judge your-self.

May I welcome you at another PiYama party.

