

Self Ascription Paper – “My Reality Tunnel”

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A parable is a simple story illustrating a moral or religious lesson. "A Parable serves as a laboratory where great things are condensed in a small space" (Turner, 1996). However, it is not as simple as that as the interpretation(s) of the story is really what sets parables from other forms of literary work. It uses common language relying on imagery and ordinary experiences to explain a phenomenon. "At the heart of the parabolic method lies a recognition of the power of language in our lives, to awaken the imagination, to stir the will, to shape our very understanding of reality and to call us into being and response" (Slee, 1985). The purpose of this self-ascription paper is to give my interpretation of Franz Kafka's 'A Parable About a Parable' and relate this to my reality tunnel.

Kafka's parable is about the choices we make from the moral attitudes we hold. We are all born with our Id. The Id is in place to meet our basic needs for survival in our first three years of life. It is often called the pleasure principle, as it demands for immediate satisfaction. The next stage of development involves our Ego. In this stage, we are now aware and understand that other people have needs as well. We understand that we should be considerate of the reality of the situation and that we are not the most important person in the world. In the Superego stage, our moral attitudes prevail. This is where our conscience guides us in doing what is right and what is wrong. According to Freud, the balance is critical in a normal healthy person.

"The ego is the strongest so that it can satisfy the needs of the id, not upset the superego, and still take into consideration the reality of every situation. It is not an easy job by any means, but if the id gets too strong, impulses and self-gratification take over the person's life. If the superego becomes too strong, the person would be driven by rigid morals, would be judgmental and unbending in his or her interactions with the world."

(Heffner, 2001)

The old man in the parable obviously had some kind of imbalance. Who in their right mind would wait at a door for eternity not knowing if they would be allowed access?

What kind of person does it take to wait at a door not knowing if it was the right door to wait by in the first place? All these dilemmas point out to the choices one makes from the interplay between the Id, Ego, and Superego. In the old man's case, the Superego took over, driving the old man to stand by his convictions without considering the realities of the world. As for Simon Moon and his quest to understand the parable in order to have a full appreciation of Zen, his Id was so strong that it triggered an impulsive disorder. He was so engrossed in finding out if the Buddhist doctrine of dharma had something to do with the parable that he forgot why he had come to study Zen in the first place. Only at the point when the door was slammed into his face in the meditation hall did Simon realize how much his subconscious had taken control of him. This was when he experienced 'awakening'. Freud talks about two things that drive our Id, Ego, and Superego. They are sex (Eros or Life Force) and aggression (Thanatos or Death Force) (Heffner, 2001). Sex represents our drive to live, to prosper, and produce offspring. Aggression represents our need to stay alive and stave off threats to our existence, our power, and our prosperity (Heffner, 2001). Imbalances create ego defense mechanisms that are sometimes harmful to our health and look on life. The decisions that we make and how we choose to react to situations give way our reality tunnel.

I was raised in an immigrant Chinese family. Our only relatives when we arrived in Canada were my father's stepbrothers. I was taught at a young age that in order to be successful in Canada, I had to be better than my Caucasian counterparts. In order to shine and be recognized, I was motivated to learn and to continue learning. Being raised

in East Vancouver and not knowing any English at the time, I quickly grasped the English language although even today I still make the same subject verb agreement mistakes. I remember being pushed by my mother to recite the timetable in Chinese. The rhythmic sounds from the reciting obviously got ingrained into my subconscious as math was not a problem. In primary school, I made all the sports teams at school although I rarely would play because of my lack of understanding of the game. I did, however, have speed and work ethic. It probably did not help that my father was never around to show me the intricacies of the different sports with his hectic working schedule. In high school, I became better aware of positional responsibilities and found myself as one of the star players at school. Playing sports has given a lot of meaning to my life. These characteristics have followed me to my work. I am a person who takes pride in what I do which is the reason I believe in doing thing right the first time around. I am a stickler to details and can be consumed by this if not for my Superego. Many times, it is my wife ‘the guard’ who knocks the sense into me. My entrepreneurial spirit is my strongest asset. I believe that even though we are doing well at something, my thoughts always goes to how we could do it even better. This type of spirit drives me to paths that are less traveled. At my school, I enjoy coaching and technology. My basketball teams since I began teaching at this school have won local as well as district championships. In teaching, I have incorporated technology as part my daily routine. The school web site was re-design by students under my guidance. The yearbook was transformed from a dull pictograph of the school year to one that has a voice.

I set high expectations for myself as well as others. This extends from my family to my friends to my colleagues, and to my students. I try to ‘raise the bar’ in whatever I

do and am prepared to rock the boat in order to make it happen. Taking risks does not scare me as I have always found ways to overcome them. When I was unemployed after teaching in Asia, I started a company putting together online photos for rental properties. As I have gotten older and started a family, I have been less concerned with what everyone says or does, but have given more priority to my family and myself. My wife who I met in Japan is of Irish / Norwegian decent although she claims to be a Canadian has been a guiding force in my life. She has given me a different outlook on life. She is easy going and is very good with her words. She can make a person feel absolutely terrible or absolutely terrific without lifting her finger. I admire her wit, her eloquence with her words, and her selflessness. If I were to be a complete person, my wife would make up my other three quarters of me. Although I am a 'good guy' as well, I would not be the person I am without the inspiration and self sacrifices that my family has given me. To these people, I offer my sincerest thanks.

My reality tunnel is strongly linked to my experiences as a child and an adult. These experiences shape how my Ego responds to situations. Although the unconscious plays a larger role in our reality tunnel, understanding how the Ego maintains control of the Id and Superego will provide us with more balance.

Resources

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