

## PERSONAL PERSONALITIES

August 23, 2011

By Michael Erlewine ([Michael@Erlewine.net](mailto:Michael@Erlewine.net))

I have had some fun of late poking at our concept of a self, pointing out that it is a collection of attachments and even those are ever changing. And although the Self is, as I put it, a case of "permanent impermanence," this does not mean that our self is useless or not interesting. It is useful and can even be fascinating; this is perhaps best seen in the different types of persons around us, as in: our personalities.

We each build our personality by the choices we make and the things we like and only time will tell if we have made the right choices or not. Most of us would like to have an attractive or interesting personality and the endless stream of popular magazines is testimony to the fact that imitating what is considered "cool" is the way many personalities are put together these days. We copy, big time. Monkey see, monkey do.

But real personal power, the actual power or attraction of the person, has little to do with imitation or copying what works for others and has everything to do with the choices we each make in life. And this happens to be pretty easy to explain, so I will give it a shot. This is what makes the concept of the "Last Judgment" so important, thus the proverbial advice of "don't judge," at least not too soon... and perhaps not at all.

At any given time, like today for example, we are surrounded by choices and are free to choose so many different paths and directions. We can't travel all the roads that life offers us, at least not at the same time, so we must choose one and leave the others behind -- un-traveled. In many cases, we won't know if we have made a good choice until farther on down the road, much later in our lives.

### Unconventional Persons

Choosing what everyone is choosing, as shown in the popular magazines of the day, copying what others do, does not guarantee that these personal choices will result in a personality that reflects how we really feel inside ourselves, or even what is good for us -- what we really need. Using what is now current or popular is (by definition) peaking or already peaked and will probably not be very useful much farther down the road of time. It is of today, and not tomorrow.

Not choosing what is popular at the time, holding out for something more authentic or true for us, and digging deeper may also, by definition, be unpopular and very risky. We go against the grain, against what is conventional, and there may be a price to pay. How will we know if we have made the right choices? We will know later on down the line, for better or for worse. Let's take an example: someone living in the 1960s, where there was so much flux, and so many alternatives to choose from.

### Choosing a Future

Back then, we might have chosen to champion women's rights. We might have stood for civil rights and alternative culture. We might have chosen to eat more whole and organic foods, as opposed to eating more processed foods. We might have preferred self-educating ourselves, rather than pursuing a more formal course of study. We might have elected to experiment with

alternative states of mind, rather than the expected religion of our times, and so on. You get the idea. These are choices we might have made back in the day.

At that time, way back then, these choices were often not all that clear. I know, because I was there. These alternative choices did not stand out as obvious choices because everything was all mixed together in the present moment, and there was more like a haze of confusion rather than a list of clear choices to be made. We had to go by our gut feeling in making choices and choosing anything unconventional involved a risk.

Unconventional choices were just that: not conventional. They went against the grain or trends of the time. Some (many in fact) even carried penalties, imposed by society, like choosing to not finish high school or choosing to educate yourself rather than to get a degree. It took guts or foolishness to make those hard choices and there were few rewards other than personal satisfaction.

Now, let's jump ahead some 30 years and look at the personalities that resulted from these different choices.

### The Most Significant Subset

A person (personality) that chose (way back then) to self-educate themselves, to expand women's or civil rights, to have a more natural birth experience, to learn about whole foods, or alternative religions, would at least (today) be very distinct and perhaps more interesting (and useful) to society than a person who chose to follow a more conventional route than that has since faded to obscurity. Some of what were alternative choices then are mainstream now. Why is that?

As time changes certain qualities are found to be more useful or interesting to society and these are sought out and promoted; they naturally come to the front. Those persons who have these qualities have a personality of more interest (of more use) to society at large than one without these qualities. Both types have personalities (conventional and unconventional) and as personalities go, neither is more or less a personality. Why is one more interesting than the other?

The process of time and change naturally selects the qualities most needed for the present time, and if a particular person happens to be composed of the most significant subset of these qualities, that personality will be interesting, perhaps even scintillating. Today's unconventional are tomorrow's conventional. Everyone wants to learn more about what it takes to be that way, because today those alternatives may be considered useful. Ecology and clean air are good examples.

I grew up in an era when almost everyone smoked, in planes and trains, buses, and cars. There was no apology for someone blowing smoke where we breathed. You just had to suck it up. Those who did not smoke, like those who never touched a drop of alcohol were frowned upon - teetotalers. Ugh. They had no fun. But today, all that has changed, thanks to one person at a time giving up those habits and daring to defy convention. We all know how the tobacco companies fought this change.

Another example: If in the 1960s, for some reason, you had decided to learn the Chinese language, your skills would be in great demand today. English speaking Americans who know Chinese can get a job anywhere. Who could predict that China would become so powerful,

although, if you think about it, this should have been a no-brainer.

### A Stellar Personality

The point here is that one way of looking at our personality is as the result of a series of choices we have made in the past. Someone who, for whatever reasons, has managed to make five or ten really good choices in their past, will appear as a most valuable and fascinating "person" today. Others may kick themselves for not having made the same choices and try to imitate those choices now, but this is usually just a little too late to bring about the same effect for themselves. Their imitation has not been forged by time. The die is cast early on.

In other words, there are real practical rewards for developing our instinct for making good choices. What I am pointing out here is that a stellar personality, one filled with many points of light or interest, was made long ago (just like stars in the sky were), not just by natural talent, but through a process of making careful correct choices.

We may not all be Leonardo DaVinci material, but we each can learn to use our own mind and intuition to make choices that will bring forth a destiny worth living for ourselves and for society. Choices that we make today, which may seem very unpopular now and even separate us from acceptance and popularity, can in time result in a personality that is key or crucial for the society of the future, even precious. This is the idea of the last judgment, personified. It is the final or last judgment that counts.

### That Fascinating Person

When you meet a really fascinating person, take note of what about them is so fascinating and you may end up with a short list of the significant choices they made, choices that others did not make. They invested their time and energy in ways that have proved useful to society today, although at the time, that choice may not have raised any eyebrows, or perhaps even seemed like a waste of time. This is called having the courage of our convictions.

Our personality is the most significant subset of all the choices we have made, the things we have cared for and loved, and what we have rejected or hated. If most of those choices are now relevant, then our person appears almost unique. You get the idea. That is how personalities of note are made.

The truth always wins out in the end because it (by definition) lasts longest. We may not have this or that talent, but any of us can learn to choose what is true and authentic. As my first teacher used to say "Michael, it is not true because I say it; I say it because it is true."