

## Hubris

[Previously published as fb190109 piya]

The word **hubris** comes from the Greek, and means “presumption,” originally towards the gods. Now it is used in a general sense of “overbearing pride, excessive self-confidence.” We often see this being expressed in the postings on Facebook. To make this reading easier, let me say that I have a lot of hubris myself. I presume to know a lot of Buddhism and Pali, and so think myself better than other people in such matters. Often, I even consider myself the best. This is a clear case of hubris.

People with real hubris – those who see themselves as being the best, etc – would never openly admit it. They have hordes of admirers and transfers (those who transfer their desired emotions to authority-figures) to show and prove it. Their task is to indirectly suggest their knowledge, power, attainment, etc, by stories, so long as this will fan up more admiration and transference. This is a sign of a Guru cult tendency – it is wise to at once keep away!

I have digressed: let’s return to hubris. Now, suppose I make a post about some truth or teaching that I consider to be really profound — by my standards, of course: what other is there? I would expect you and others to at least “like” it or “wow!” it. If not, you should even write some polite response or supporting remarks on how clever the post is, and so on.

## Two kinds of people

However, this is rarely the case. Two kinds of people tend to disagree with us: the intelligent and the stupid (which covers most of us). If we consider ourselves intelligent, we would politely reply, with arguments and evidence, where we are wrong. Perhaps, we may add some sarcastic point or innuendo which is so dense that no one is hurt, much less understand or care about it.

If we consider ourselves intelligent, we are likely to argue every rebuttal that we can think of. Somewhere in between, we are likely to say things which can mean anything to anyone. When this does happen, we have a range of reactions to one another depending on what or how we think of each other or whether we respect each other.

During our stupid moments (there are no stupid “people”), we tend to react, expressing our stupid unwholesome emotion. We have not even met the person we are trolling, but there we go--a convenient victim representing an ex-, a dominating parent, an asura boss, or we just hate ourselves. It's often a terrible case of negative transference. FB tends to unleash this darkness when we are careless.

## Tadpoles and frogs

If we are really wise, we may tell ourselves, “This post or poster is stupid!” and leave it at that. If we are the “owner” of the page, we have the final say, or rather, the final solution: **block** the dissident. (Advice: Don't be a politician or preacher or leader of others.)

Of course, we have every right to do this. We want to focus on some very specific pet topic like “can tadpoles be enlightened?” Clearly, it would be annoying for someone to keep sending us long posts about kissing them turning them into pretty princesses or handsome princes.

The problem with writing such clever and witty pieces is that there are always those who will think that we consider them to be mere “tadpoles” or demeaning frogs, and we love frogs. So we may charge them for abusing frogs! This is deeply troubling. If we are unable to write about enlightened tadpoles and frogs, what are we left with to write about?

### **Dickens and characterization**

Charles Dickens, one of the greatest of English writers and social critics, wrote about **people**. The lovable but insolvent Micawber, for example, is based on his own father. The miserly near non-human Scrooge is named after a real money-lender Arthur Gride. Most of *David Copperfield* is based on Dickens’ own life.

In fact, Dickens, whose modest house was on Norfolk Street (now Cleveland Street), London, was full of quaint shops, curious buildings and interesting people. Many of these have been immortalized in his works. He was an amazingly imaginative man with a gift for words.

### **Writing with care**

Just imagine, most of what we write here or on any social media, are forgotten almost as soon as they are written. If we want to write something worth reading and spreading, it should be what the future would enjoy reading, and more so, benefit from.

If such is our goal, in all sincerity and wisdom, then, we are entitled to some hubris. For what is hubris now will be **humility and love** when readers see the truth and courage in our writings and their lives are significantly bettered by them.

R599 Inspiration 369  
Piya Tan ©2019