

## The Capitalist and the Fisherman

A very successful venture capitalist takes a summer vacation. He flies to a remote but beautiful country in order to get away for a while.

After a few days, he rents a huge yacht for himself and his family and ventures out to see the area from the water, after having explored it by land. The yacht takes him to some beautiful scenery as well as some sleepy small villages, further and further away from the capital. After a night of sailing, very early one morning he drops anchor in one of those tiny, beautiful sleepy, fishing villages.

Next to where he docks he observes a fisherman come in to land as well.

The fisherman's boat is small, beat up, old and sea-worn. It smells of fish.

The scene captured the capitalist's attention, and he noticed a substantial catch in the small boat – and so the capitalist engages the local fisherman in friendly conversation - but the whole time the capitalist's mind is working, working, working.

First he asks the fisherman, how long it has taken him to stock such an impressive haul. The fisherman informs him that it really varies depending on how long he wants to stay out there fishing – as well as the weather, his mood, the day etc. The capitalist inquired if this impressive amount of fish was regular for him, or just a great day of fishing. Puzzled, the fisherman explained that this amount of fish is always available and more, there was nothing impressive to the fisherman about his daily haul. The capitalist was curious as to how early the fisherman must wake up in the morning to get out and catch such an impressive display of stock. When the fisherman told him he was only out for a few hours, the capitalist asked him why he doesn't stay out longer and catch even more fish.

The fisherman shrugged off the question like he just didn't understand the question at all. To the fisherman he always fishes only long enough to bring in a haul that 'supports his family' and their immediate needs. Now it was the capitalist

who was puzzled. He inquires to the fisherman, if this is what you do in a few short hours, then what do you do with the rest of your time?

The fisherman again seemed to just not understand the nature of the question. He replied that sometimes he goes home and takes a nap. He plays with his kids for a stretch - maybe he walks into town with his wife, or putters around home on various hobbies. In the afternoon he takes a siesta, and then being well-rested he goes into town with his wife, joins his friends, enjoys their company and some wine, plays guitar and sings along; maybe catches a sunset. Then the next day, he does it all again. The capitalist laughed to himself when the fisherman ended his answer by saying, "I am very busy with my life."

To the capitalist - napping, siesta, sing-alongs, does not mean a busy life at all. The capitalist knew right away the tremendous potential of such an untapped fishing resource. If only he could explain it to the fisherman, he could really help him out. This man is after all a successful Wall Street venture capitalist; throwing money at small projects to make them huge is what he does for a living - and this fisherman might as well have been sitting on a gold mine. So the capitalist excitedly began to explain it to him.

The capitalist pointed out that with his help he could show the fisherman how to achieve success beyond what he currently could even fathom, and he could have financial abundance and freedom that would serve the fisherman and his family for several generations. The fisherman, curious more than anything; asked how that could be. He was being more polite than anything because he really still didn't understand all the excitement in the eyes of the capitalist. He just didn't relate to it.

The capitalist told him about work ethic and deferred gratification. If fish in that area were that abundant then if he fished a few hours longer each day, he could buy a bigger boat, with newer technology to enhance his catch even more. From that initial investment of his labor the proceeds from that bigger boat could lead to several boats, and eventually a fleet of boats, and he would have a monopoly on the fishing business in the area. From there he could sell his fish directly to a processor, cut out the locals and the middlemen, and make a better life for himself. He could even open his own cannery down the road: This way he could control the product, the distribution, the processing, all of it. He could become very rich indeed. Then he started to explain about stock options and the market etc.

The fisherman was a little lost in urban financial jargon which was beyond what he knew in his sleepy village. So he asked humbly, "how long would such a process take?" Without missing a beat, the capitalist – who was still excited by what he could envision, explained to the fisherman it would be a lifelong commitment, maybe 15-20 years. Of course at some point he would have to move to the capital city to make everything legal and oversee his interests. From there he would more than likely have to go back and forth to New York so that venture capitalists like himself could fund these various ventures at each step. The scope of the possibilities, the capitalist could anticipate and depict quite fervently to the fisherman.

The fisherman trusted the sincere excitement of the capitalist tourist and so continued to indulge him in the conversation. The fisherman asked, and then what? The capitalist was so enthused by the question he couldn't wait to explain it to him. The capitalist replied that is the best part of what he does for a living. When the time is right he told the fisherman – then he could announce a stock sale, sell his company stock on the open market, and become very, very rich. He would earn millions. To which the fisherman replied, 'and then what?' The capitalist told him then he would be rich enough to do anything and everything a man could want. The fisherman thought for a minute of what that would be. At the same time he asked the capitalist, what kinds of things other successful business people have done at such a time.

The capitalist replied, "well they retire young, they often move to a small, sleepy coastal fishing village, where they work a few hours per day; maybe take a morning nap, play with their grandkids for a stretch, take up various hobbies; go into town with their wives and sip wine and enjoy the company of friends, watch the sun set, and for the rest of their days, do it all over again for as long as they want.

Such is the parable of the capitalist and fisherman.

## **Lessons from the Tao**

Now before everyone jumps to a trite conclusion that the message is anti-capitalist, anti-business, you need to stop and understand the true message. Both men are living in the Tao. The fisherman knows nothing of lack, need, desire,

comparative living. Because he 'wants' for nothing, his life is the Tao of experience, and happiness is at his feet. The capitalist though is the same. He entertains the field of immediate possibilities on a grand scale. His involvement with the fisherman was an earnest interaction to help him see and fulfill a possible potential. Because his energy is focused on the 'now' of possibility and potential, he is also living in the Tao - his experience has not lead him to 'want or desire or lack' only the possibilities inherent in what he does. There is consistency and flow to this kind of energy which is sincere and expressive. It is the excitement of the capitalist that engaged the fisherman. Neither the capitalist nor the fisherman live from a mindset of worry, or fear or doubt. They both are accepting of their lives and comfortable within them.

Many people use this parable as a way to be 'anti-money' or 'anti-abundance.' This is sour to the notion of Tao. Abundance is everyone's right in whatever form it takes. It is never solely or soul-ly just about fiscal abundance. Money is not the root of all evil – the love of money is the root of that evil. There is a difference. Greed and generosity are matters of the mind - abundance is an experience in the spirit. Let's remember that if the fisherman sought to fulfill such a destiny as described by the capitalist - then jobs would be created, offering more abundance and more opportunities for more people. No one can give away what they don't have. To be anti-money is meaningless and prideful. No one can ever be poor enough to help the poor, sick enough to help the sick, or depressed enough to help the depressed.

That kind of prideful martyrdom serves no one, and is a disservice to the Tao. To reject abundance in fiscal or spiritual form goes against the Tao.

A consistent focus on darkness - only enhances a knowledge and awareness of darkness. It never brings it to light. Only those with abundance - be it material or spiritual can offer it, and treat it as a flow of energy. This is Tao. The lack of 'want' is what is shared by both the fisherman and the capitalist in this parable - it is just expressed in different ways. Passion is also a way of the Tao. Passion is never self-proclaimed. To claim it is surely to not have it. Passion is an expression, not a creation. The fisherman and capitalist both express a passion just in different forms and states. Passion is in keeping with the Tao. Abundance in all its forms is a good thing. Attachment to forms of abundance is the route to suffering, and the seven deadly sins. (Buddha)

In the end the way of the Tao in terms of this parable of the capitalist and the fisherman is best expressed in the words of Hillel:

*"Watch your thoughts; they become your words.... Watch your words; they become your actions; Watch your actions; they become your habits*

*Watch your habits; they become your character Watch your character for it will become your destiny"*

Your world is a reflection of your current personal nature. The way of the Tao, the way of the spirit is always about Intention, and Attention. These are the two currents of energy currency of 'the way.' (which is The Tao) Both the fisherman and capitalist, have this strength of the Tao guiding them. Neither man 'wants' – and neither man 'envies' the other. And both men are giving and receiving positive energy because neither one is threatened or intimidated by the other. This is also the Tao.

The parable of the Capitalist and Fisherman has many lessons within it. Balance is about embracing who you are, where you are, and how you are in your own world. This is Tao.