

When healing becomes a crime

Sociology



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Personally, I think that the basic point of the poem is that every person has various alternatives in life and that the choice of one's path in life is actually the most important task we all have before us. The realization of the importance of this task by itself demands maturity and a good deal of wisdom, so that, similarly to Frost, one is most probably bound to stay ". . . long . . . and [look] down . . . as far as [one] could. . ." (Frost 1915) to make up one's mind about what path in life to follow. Truly, even though we often can easily know what we would like to pursue, sometimes at stake are such critical consequences of our choices that one may only wish to have as simple a dilemma as the poet had when choosing between paths in the wood. For example, recently I was greatly impressed by reading about the acute problem that numerous patients suffering from cancer face today when choosing between mainstream cancer therapies, which are usually recommended by doctors but which are highly toxic and not always efficient, and alternative medical approaches, which sometimes offer higher hope for recovery and fewer side effects, but which are normally heavily criticized by the traditional medical establishment (Ausubel 2001). In this dubious situation, a person has indeed an almost existentialist choice to make for which the price is not less than one's life itself.

At the same time, along with the proper description of the great difficulties in choosing between alternative choices, Frost adds to our perception of him as of a very insightful and realistic poet by mixing in the poem of a bit of irony. This irony is contained in his observation that the road that he had chosen due to its more appealing look " had worn . . . really about the same" (Frost 1915) after he had passed along it. Thus, Frost indicates another peculiarity of human beings who are almost always hesitant not only about the initial

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choices that must be made but also are much concerned afterward about whether those choices were rightful in the first place. And while the poet does not say that his choice of the path in the wood was wrong, in the closing lines of the poem he sincerely confesses that these were essentially his subjective preferences that had defined his way. Similarly, as we follow our paths in life, at many moments we may wonder what would have happened if we had acted otherwise in the past. But such thoughts are permissible only if they do not completely overtake us, because in this case, a person may completely lose the way. So, for me one of the most important messages contained in the Frosts poem "The Road Not Taken" is that despite the fundamental inability of humans to know what really lies ahead, in order to live a meaningful life all of us have to make choices, even though in many respects ignorant ones, and after that to follow firmly the chosen path and try to make the best out of it while avoiding destructive doubts.