

## Otto K. — a Dialogue with The Professor

### Abstract

In this dialogue Otto K. and The Professor talk about how experiences from war can affect subjects over generations.

### Session 1

The Professor. I'm right.

Otto K.. I'm sure you are.

The Professor. I'm right. So that you know.

Otto K.. Yes. Can you tell me a bit about your upbringing?

The Professor. Why?

Otto K.. So I get to know you a bit. That's a way for me to understand the reasons you are here more in a context. You mentioned in the booking that you wanted to talk with someone from outside the situation you are in. We can start from that end if you like. In that case, can you tell me something about the situation you want somebody "from the outside" to take part of?

The Professor. Why am I here again?

Otto K.. Yes. You have booked an appointment to me as a psychotherapist for help with that situation.

The Professor. Really?

Otto K.. Yes. You were here last Tuesday at a quarter to seven in the evening. You talked to my assistant and insisted to pay in advance.

The Professor. All right, then. I forget sometimes. Lucky it was in my calendar. So, what is this situation that you talk about?

Otto K.. Yes. Why don't you tell me in your own words? Perhaps from the beginning?

The Professor. ... Now I remember. It's an ongoing thing. For years. My wife thinks I should back off. It's stupid really. It reminds me of my father.

Otto K.. Yes?

The Professor. I wanted to do things my way and he thought I should do them his way. Stupid really. My or his way. It was always the small things. Never big things. When I said what school I wanted to go to he just said, "okey". But when I wanted to change the tire on my bike. "You're doing it the wrong way", he would tell me. Just like that.

Otto K.. So, what's the resemblance with the situation you are here for?

The Professor. It's awkward, really. I tend to tell students that they are doing it wrong, the one way or the other. It's like a reflex. Then, when I check it, I'm usually right. But there have been complaints.

Otto K.. So you are usually right but not always. What do you do when you notice that they are right and you are wrong?

The Professor. Can't say that that has happened but they're not wrong either. It depends.

Otto K.. And you have a hard time admitting it?

The Professor. Guess so. Yes. But I don't think it's a big deal.

Otto K.. Why not?

The Professor. Shit happens. Go on with your life.

Otto K.. What did your father work with? What was his profession?

The Professor. He's alive. He was and is rich. "You have to do what's right." That's what he always said.

Otto K.. Are you doing what's right?

The Professor. You mean in those situations?

Otto K.. Yes.

The Professor. I'm more theoretically oriented. Right or wrong. There's always two sides. Why do you ask?

Otto K.. Always? Are there *always* two sides?

The Professor. What are you trying with?

Otto K.. To help you.

The Professor. You cannot.

Otto K.. Why are you here then?

The Professor. It was in my calendar. Didn't I tell you?

Otto K.. You did. So, if there's *always* two sides, I cannot help you *and* I can?

The Professor. Guess so. Can we talk about something else now?

Otto K.. ?

The Professor. Do you like your job?

Otto K.. Yes. What I'm doing now. Yes, I like it.

The Professor. Do you like yourself?

Otto K.. Enough to do what's right.

The Professor. I guess that goes for the two of us. But to always do what's right at work. No. I cannot do that.

Otto K.. Perhaps they are linked?

The Professor. ?

Otto K.. Perhaps.

The Professor. ...

Otto K.. I'm just saying.

The Professor. It goes way back. To the Celts. I have to go now. I think I'll book another appointment.

Otto K.. Alright then. Perhaps we will see each other again. Buy. [They shake hands.]

## **Session 2**

Otto K.. Welcome back.

The Professor. Thank you.

Otto K.. You mentioned to my assistant something about the last session. That you perhaps wanted to talk about last time we met?

The Professor. Yes. Money doesn't come from nothing. It's do or die. And we survived. I called my father. He's well but you cannot ask him anything. He simply doesn't answer.

Otto K.. Are you telling me that a man's doings have reasons that goes beyond him?

The Professor. If the Celts hadn't done what they did I wouldn't be here.

Otto K.. Yes. And ...?

The Professor. And so on and so forth. If my father hadn't done what he did, I wouldn't be here.

Otto K.. So you are home free then, to go on bullying with a clean conscience?

The Professor. ...

Otto K.. ...

The Professor. Who do you think you are? Your conscience is clean as fresh snow?

Otto K.. That would be nice.

The Professor. This is bullshit! I want my money back!

Otto K.. [Puts the requested amount of money on the table between them.] The customer is always right.

The Professor. All I wanted to say was that some of the things we do comes from our background.

Otto K.. Can you tell me a little about it?

The Professor. Busted! ... Yes. I can and will. I'm sorry for my outburst. Would you take the money back? I believe they are yours.

Otto K.. So we continue then?

The Professor. Thank you. I had a harsh upbringing. Wasn't allowed to do the wrong thing but it wasn't that easy to know what those things meant. I've spent a career to find out. In the details, that is, not morally. Mathematics wasn't my thing so I turned to *set theory*. It's part of philosophy but only concerns the details and how they are related. In my world it's as exact as it gets. Nothing "fuzzy" about it but I know there are other views.

The students I tend to "bully", as you phrased it, don't take it seriously enough.

Otto K.. How do you know?

The Professor. I've been teaching for over four decades so I think I can tell.

Otto K.. I don't question that. But how can you *know*?

The Professor. Know what?

Otto K.. That they don't take it seriously enough.

The Professor. Teaching is a handicraft. You learn it from doing.

Otto K.. ...

The Professor. So, you think you're a philosopher. Interesting. For how many years had you been teaching philosophy? I don't recall. Help me?

Otto K.. We're finished here. You know your way out. Please come back as soon as you feel the need to.

The Professor. I don't think that was funny. What are you up to now? Did I touch a tender spot?

Otto K.. I will not explain. Just leave.

The Professor. ...

Otto K.. [Presses the alarm button.]

[A security guard enters.]

The security guard. How can I help you? What's happening?

Otto K.. We're finished here. The patient refuses to leave.

The security guard. Okay sir. We have to leave now. The doctor must take care of his next patient.

The Professor. [Picks up the small round table in front of him and swings it towards Otto K.].

Otto K.. [Manages to avoid the table and it hits the security guard hard in the head.]

The Professor. [Runs out of the office.]

[The security guard recovers quickly without injuries. The flat side of the table didn't even give him a black eye.]

### **Session 3**

The Professor. I'm so grateful that you accepted to have me back. I asked your assistant about the security guard and got to know that he was okay. I was so relieved. I usually don't go around hitting people. I've been thinking about it and have had some, I believe, flashbacks about being hit and violence. I don't know. I may be a monster.

Otto K.. Have you hit anyone, like you did last time, before?

The Professor. No. Never. In school I got into some fights but never as an adult.

Otto K.. So, what do you think happened? You have been thinking about it.

The Professor. It's all a blur, really.

Otto K.. Okay. Monsters usually show themselves much more early in life. I don't believe you're a monster. Do you remember any of those flashbacks you mentioned? They were pictures?

The Professor. I think I saw my father suddenly hit me at dinner.

Otto K.. Could that have happened?

The Professor. Yes. I think so, yes. He could slap me if I said something wrong.

Otto K.. Okay. So you tried to hit me when the security guard was about to show you out of my office. Could it be that I had said something that provoked you?

The Professor. You threw me out! What did you .... Sorry! I got carried away. Again.

Otto K.. Yes. Do you think we can continue? Do you know yourself that much? I think you can lose it any minute. What do you say?

The Professor. Perhaps it is safer that I try something else, or, someone else?

Otto K.. I agree. You are not a monster but you have some issues that we have reached but that we cannot in a safe way come past?

The Professor. Bye then.

Otto K.. [Reaches out his hand and they shake hands.] Goodbye.