

“Guilt versus Duty”

By:

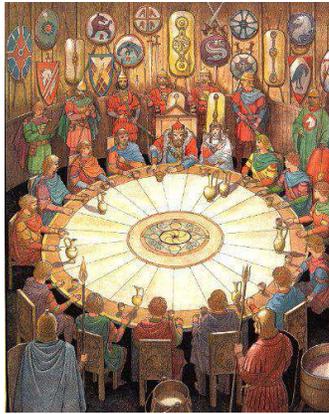
Sensei Sukh Sandhu

KanCho The Gi Yu Kyo Kai Dojos

09/17

Through some research on the internet and specifically multiple dictionaries, I think the following definitions best represent my thoughts in this article.

The word *Duty* is defined as 1. “a moral of legal obligation, a responsibility” and 2. “a task or action someone is required to perform”. The word *Guilt* is defined as 1. “the fact of having committed a specified or implied offense or crime” and 2. “a mental or emotional event that occurs when a person believes or realizes accurately or not—that he or she has compromised his or her own standards of conduct or has violated a universal moral standard and bears significant responsibility for that violation”.



King Arthur, Knights of the Round Table

The Japanese Samurai, like many other warrior groups through history and currently serving in our nations now, often have a very strong ethos around the ideal of “Duty”. In the Samurai code of virtues, known as “Bushido”, the idea of serving your lord or master is a unquestioned loyalty to the duty one has for his/her honor, his/her family name’s honor and your lords honor. This is “Giri” 義理 or

“Gimu” 義務. Of course the other side of this is a feeling of guilt, which is “Zaiaku-Kan” 罪悪感 or just

“Yuuzai” / Tsumi” 罪.



Samurai ("to serve") bowing to their lord

In Budo we often talk and try to exemplify characteristics that we believe better ourselves and our communities. The idea of Duty vs. Guilt is very simple to understand at the end of the day. When you must fulfill some obligation, commitment or promise for someone or something, it usually does not "feel" good in your conscience and spirit if you are doing it out of "guilt". However, if you fulfill some obligation, commitment or promise for someone or something through "duty", you feel a sense of elation in keeping your word and following through on your commitments. If you take on a task for yourself or on the behalf of another, no matter how small or insignificant in your eyes, complete it as you were supposed to per the unspoken (or sometimes spoken) contract your spirit has with the commitment you took on. Often the Samurai would not take on a task, or even open their mouths, unless they were willing to give everything, and I mean everything, to fulfill their obligation to whomever they were committed. If they could not fulfill a request, they would not accept it. Conversely, if they accepted a task for someone, they did it, no matter what. Imagine if everyone we knew, everywhere we went, people followed through with action to the words they spoke to us. Quite frankly a samurai would literally split his belly open ("seppuku") if he/she did not fulfill their duty to their lord. Now, I know that is extreme. However, what if we took that same type of resolve and placed it in our spirits BEFORE we committed to do things for others and for ourselves? Does it make you wonder? How much could we actually accomplish and how truly honest we could be with each other, let alone to our own conscience.



The US Military and The Flag of The United States of America

We have a lot of expectations and commitments we are beholden too every day in our modern lives. Some we accepted openly, some we may have agreed to without thinking about what it would take to truly accomplish. The DUTY of your marriage to your spouse. The expectations of a wife, of a husband or a partner. The DUTY to your children, your parents, siblings and friends. The DUTY to your community, your country, your faith, your God. The Duty to your Budo, your Dojo, your Teachers. All these things revolve around one thing....a Relationship. Relationships flourish when there is great communication. Honest communication, dialogue where people accept or deny obligations, knowing that

if they accept them, they must fulfill them. So, IF you want to keep a relationship, then keep it and fulfill the obligations every day that go along with it or, quite frankly, DON'T. And then move on, realizing you will no longer have that relationship anymore. It's just that simple. You should never feel guilty about doing something for someone, including yourself. Whether it's the guilt between the issues of married couples, cheating on your food diet, talking behind people backs, or cheating on your taxes. These are all events where guilt should not be harvested. You can change these feeling by just not doing them, or not short cutting your promises.



Sikh ("to serve, to be a disciple of") bowing to his faith

If I turn to thoughts around the dojo, I think of the moments below that make students feel guilt: missing training at the dojo with lame excuses, not paying your owed funds to your dojo, not helping or pitching in to clean your dojo, not giving your all to help those around you etc. These are all easy, simple things that can be taken care of IF you view them as fulfilling YOUR duty to your dojo, teachers, and fellow students. It IS your duty to be healthy, stay in shape physically, take good care of your equipment and tools, be skilled at your craft or art form (especially in the basics), know your "stuff" when it comes to your martial arts training. It IS your duty as a warrior.



Wedding vows

My advice, if you ever feel guilty about something, is to reflect back in your mind and ask yourself why? If you cannot or will not do something, just say so, that way no one is let down when you fail to deliver on the task you did not want in the first place. Knowing full well, that at times in life, some tasks are assigned to us, and we have no choice but to succeed at them. We all make mistakes, we all bite off more than we can chew at times. But if it is truly a mistake, own it and communicate with the person or

person you are letting down. I am sure if they are in any sort of relationship/friendship with you, they will forgive you and work through your commitments to one another. If, however, guilt is your motivator, then you should quit whatever you are doing, because it is the wrong self-motivator. It will drag you down and you will not be able to find happiness and balance in your life. In doing so, you will not be able to help others or effect change in your communities. Your ineffectiveness to fulfill your duty will do nothing but let others down, a spiral of failures will ensue and your self-worth with it.

Take some pride in fulfilling your duties to others, and yourself. It will uplift you, create more of what our communities and country need...positivity and strength.