

## Second episode transcript

Introduction : Welcome to the second edition of the thought project on doing good. Today we talk about the role of power and privilege and its ability to frame exclusivity and invisibility. I am Nicolle and I am Sinan. Hello, welcome to this podcast.

N: So Sinan, how would you define privilege?

S: According to Merriam Webster, it means having a special right or immunity granted as a peculiar benefit, advantage, or favor. So I guess it means that there are a set of rules which don't apply to certain people just because of who they are.

N: Ah yes, It is a socially constructed advantage. It could be something that you did not choose, and may even be something you are not even aware of like there is this bubble and you do not know you have this so called privilege until you live outside that "community" and you realize you are treated favorably and unfavorably for factors like how you look, your accent, where you come from, your wealth.

S: What do you mean when you say a "bubble"?

N: I understand it as this space where people of the same discipline, belief, education, etc. stay within that comfortable zone within which they reinforce each other's belief and opinion, often at the expense of being unable to see the world outside that bubble, and the realities that exist parallel to their limited lens.

S: Indeed, privilege then is socially constructed, and it translates to the law as well.

N: Yes, the law has the ability to reinforce the existing structure of privilege and it can make attempts to a more reasonable and equitable society more challenging. I think it may be about the role of privilege in developing the power dynamics in everyday interactions.

S: Yes, Power makes you more vulnerable. Once I heard someone say, "When you feel most powerful, that's when you're at your weakest."

N: That makes sense, so would you say that you are aware of your privilege?

S: Yes, I am very well aware of it. It took me some time to realize it though. I became more aware of it when I left my bubble in high school. I felt it big time, because I met people from different backgrounds- people who really struggled- who, for example, had to work many jobs for the same education that I was enjoying. It determines so much of the life we get to live. I see it as an advantage for me, I am resolved to use this power in a way that will help others. For example, this gives me the opportunity to speak out on certain issues that unfortunately some people might find more difficult.

N: Well...For me, yes as well, I recognize it. Just the part that we can make mistakes or how we could take more risks speaks so much of our privilege. I am aware, but everyday is a question of how much of what I am is my effort, and how much was brought about by my privilege. Privilege may be running deeper than I am presently aware. Our families activate opportunities that enable us to get ahead. Power can also be scary because it may be giving one the illusion of invincibility and how it may be fostering a culture of impunity.

S: Power is really scary, power is not static, you could lose it suddenly. Failing regimes, for example, open opportunities for new opposition to arise, that could challenge existing power structures. Existing allies may be supportive of authoritarian leaders because they benefit from it too, the system works in their interests. People want to be around power because they feel powerful too. Authoritarian leaders need to keep their power because once they lose it, they lose everything! Their allies may be supporting them only to the extent that they benefit from it too. However, once the system breaks because of some economic and social failures, they become vulnerable to allies turning against autocrats. There are also instances where opposition leaders assert democratic values, and they may win. But once they get to taste power, it opens them to a kind of life, comfort and control that they weren't aware of before. And they conveniently forget the democratic values they were initially fighting for, just because the current system now works for their favor. Power corrupts them. Once they taste it, they'd want to conserve. It's precious, I think it's like a drug, like an addictive poisonous fruit. And with their desire to stay in power, they become the authoritarian leaders and human-rights violators that we know and resent today.

N: Hubris is dangerous.

S: Oh it is, it is very dangerous, and when do you feel you feel the most powerful, Nicolle?

N: Well, I feel most powerful when I'm being listened to, especially in tables where the issues that I feel most passionate about are being discussed and decided on.

S: Yes me too, I have lived in many countries like Canada and the United States, but I definitely feel most powerful in Turkey where I look like most of them- my gender and ethnic background works in my favor. For example, I can take the cab and feel safe despite being in a place where women may not feel the same. Society may have become desensitized to the violence against women, to the point that they start denying and show it as an exception. Unfortunately, that's not true, I am afraid its becoming the norm.

N: So what I am getting from this, this is a parallel example in international engagement, and of the pressing issues that the world is facing. Dynamics in international engagement is affected so much by the privilege that one is accorded. It affects so much of how and what we see, and of what or how much we can ignore. So how would you define "Invisibility"?

S: So, invisibility is a protective shield that gives you immunity, it is apparent in many institutional organizations in which people are protected because of their affiliation to certain institutions or countries. So, thanks to this they get away with the crimes that they commit. For example, rape committed by peacekeeper officers. Skye Wheeler from Human Right's watch explains that "While the UN can investigate allegations of sexual abuse and rape, peacekeeper accountability is up to the country that sends the troops. As a result, prosecutions have been rare even after media coverage and outrage." It is probable that the prosecution is rare because it may tarnish the image of the countries that send their troops, and because of that countries could also be more hesitant to send their troops with the UN.

N: It's likely the system could incentivise concealing a bad, and can make one compromise values. It can make us question our integrity- blur lines on what it means to do good or inflict least bad. Invisibility could also be interpreted as the power not to look at others and the power to invisibilize yourself from the responsibility that comes from the privilege that is afforded to you. Perhaps because the system is working in your favor, there is less reason to resist and compromise your position. In a sense, invisibility could be seen in situations where one prioritizes one's own interests at the cost of turning a blind eye on the impact it inflicts on others. It plays a huge role. Power and Privilege allows us to invisibilize people and causes, and to invisibilize ourselves. You choose if you wanna care or not, who to include in the discourse, in the process, and who you exclude. So the conclusion that I think we're getting from this is this. We can see how the extent to which doing good is easy is a function of privilege. It is our responsibility to be analytical, to scratch the surface deeper, and to not judge because our privilege may only be visibilizing and framing to us only a part of the

story. Sometimes, our knowledge may be superficial, so we need to look deeper. We listen deeply and explain with clarity.

S: I totally agree, I would just like to add that we have to be self-critical, and see the privilege that we have. In this journey, the first step starts with working hard on ourselves and our behaviours so that we can become the change that we want to see in the world, then we encourage our families and friends to join us. I would like to thank the Institute for this platform. And also thank you so much also to our lovely Professor Seymour.

N: Thank you to the rest of you for joining us today, and we hope to see you in the next.