



Self-realization in Business: Ibsen's Peer Gynt

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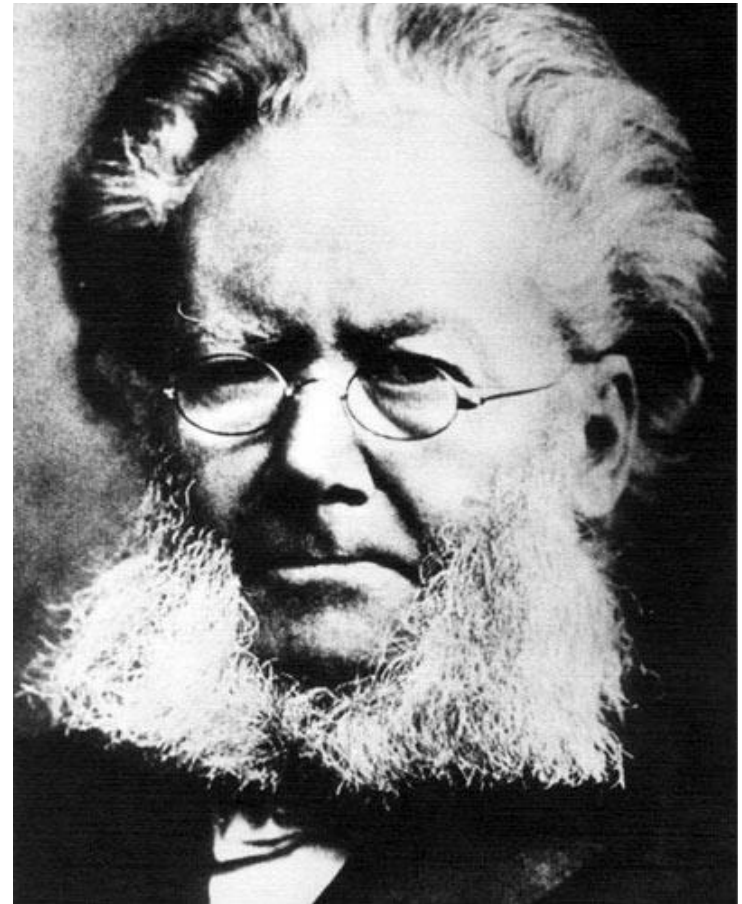
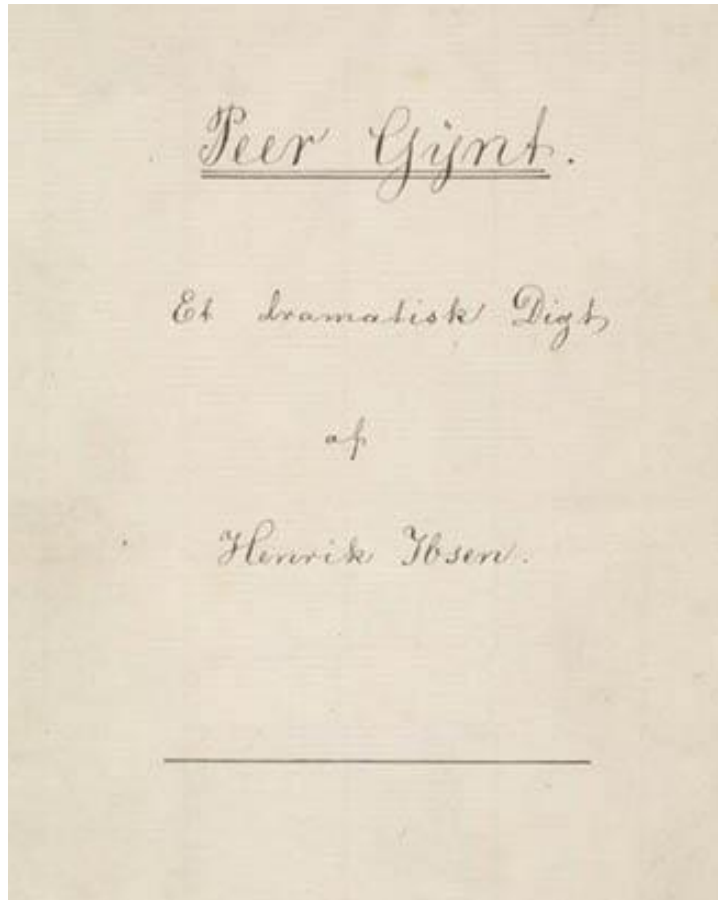
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Humanities for Business

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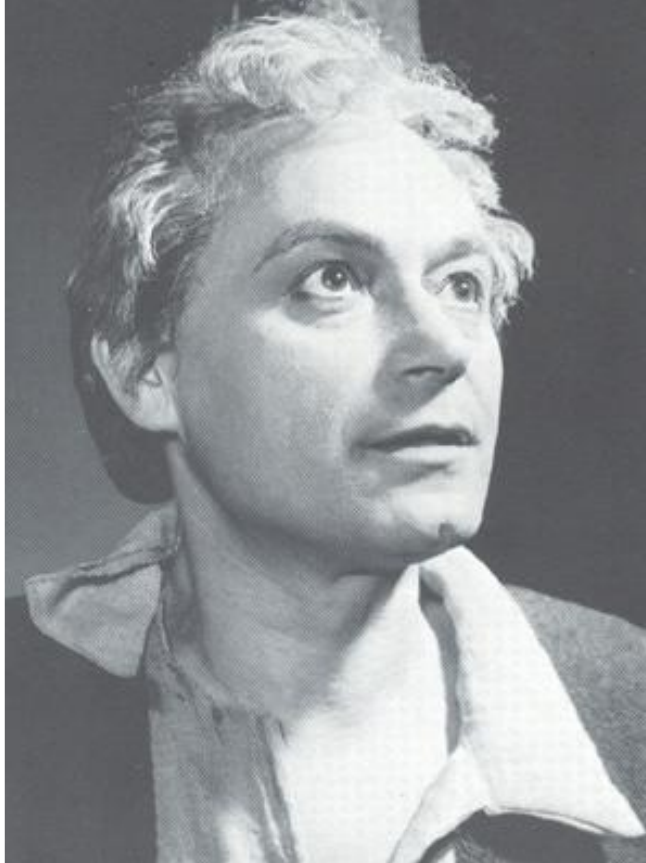
Ibsen wrote „Peer Gynt” in 1867



When Peer Gynt has become an old man, he starts to reflect on his life

- **Has he made his life into something – or was his life an empty one?**
- **Who has he been?**
- **Has he been true to himself and realized his highest potential?**
- **Has he been a man who has accomplished something for the common good or had he been a troll – an ego tripper who always had followed his lower instincts in a relentless drive for money?**

Is Peer Gynt a Liar?



At the opening of the play Peer Gynt lies – but he denies it. Is Peer Gynt a victim of self-deception because his distinctions between facts and fantasies are blurred? Or is Peer a conscious, cynical and notorious liar about what he has done, and about himself?

The Gyntish Self



**His life-project is to be
Emperor of the World**

**Peer Gynt has an all-
desiring and never
insatiated ego**



Peer Gynt is a relentless egoist in doing his businesses

- He employs various **moral disengagement strategies** by which **moral self-sanctions** become **disengaged**, giving free way to a **variety of misbehaviors** without carrying any moral concern.
- He clearly illustrates that the more a person is concerned with **self-enhancement goals**, the more he is inclined to resort to mechanisms that permit him to **justify transgressions**.

What is Self-realization?

- **Peer Gynt learns from the Button-moulder that he has never been himself.**
- **He asks the Button-moulder what is it "being oneself".**
- **He gets the answer**
„To be oneself, Peer Gynt, the self must die“.

The Christian Interpretation

The Button Moulder teaches Peer what it is to be oneself in Christian sense.

“If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget himself. (...) For whoever wants to save his own life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”



The Buddhist Interpretation

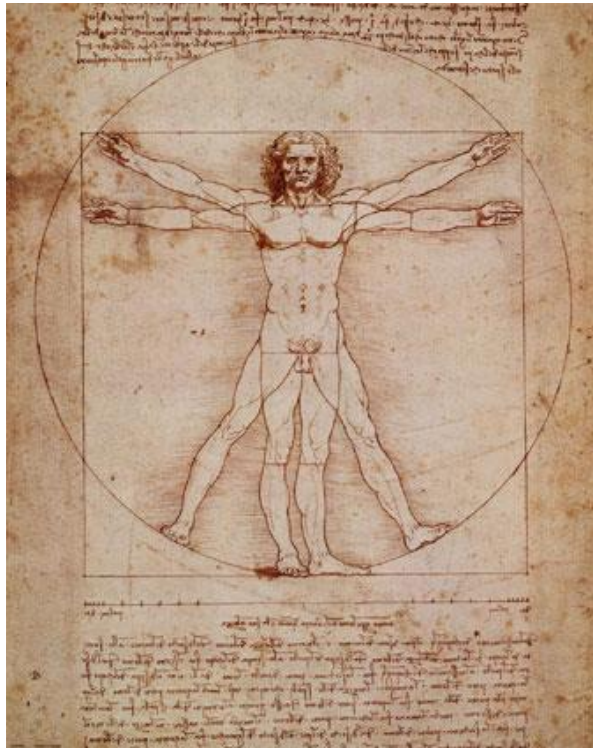
Buddhists have a distinctive view of self, the **no-self** (“annatta”)

Buddhism encourages people to **detach** themselves from the clinging to what is **regarded as self**



Man versus Troll

“Man, be thyself”



**“Troll, to thyself be
– enough”.**

Peer Gynt's Tragedy




The ego mindset cannot be fulfilled. Its greed for more satisfaction and recognition becomes the source of its own destruction.



Troll Behavior in Today's Business

- **The uncritical pursuit of profit, “enrich yourself” mentality**
- **The businessman who is a servant of his lower self can destroy nature, people, and future generations and also his own self.**

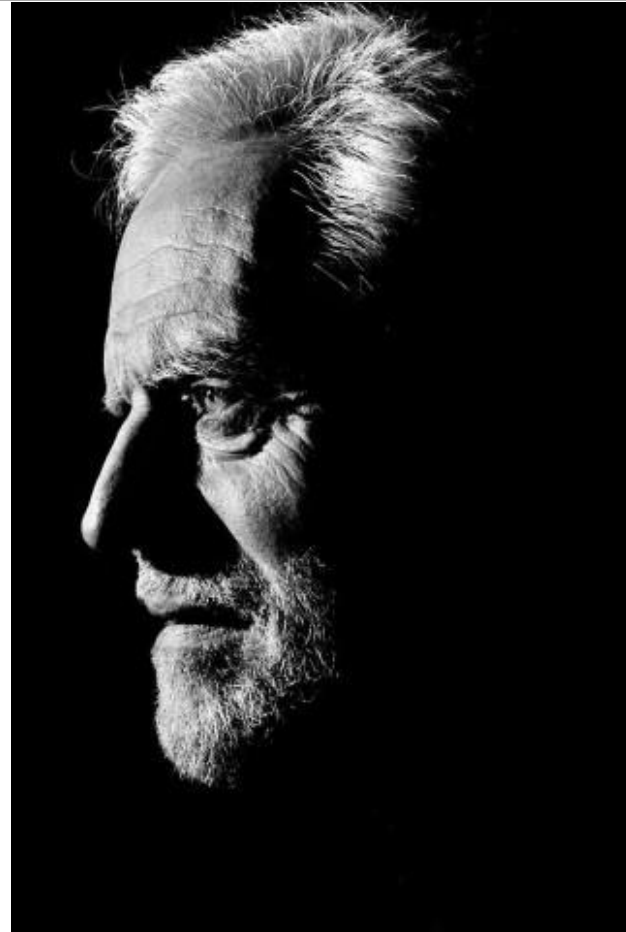



**Being truly and wholly human
requires genuine selflessness:
denying the instincts of
your lower self and serving
purposes higher than you.**

Spiritually Based Leadership

Peter Pruzan
Copenhagen
Business School

Detached
involvement
is needed.





Work can be transformed to selfless service freeing us from the personal desires and ambition, and implies an indifference to the outcomes. In this way work may give a sense of interconnectedness and imply a transcendence of the lower, ego dominated self.

James March

**Undermining
the self-interest
doctrine is the
most important
project of the
21st century.**



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Thank you!

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