

## **Zhodani** Philosophies

Editors Note: This article was written by Brienshqloriashav, (press attache for the Zhodani diplomatic mission to the Imperium) shortly before the news of the recent war reached Capital.

The editor of this publication has requested that I compose a short article explaining the philosophies and motivations of my people. In the interests of improved understanding between us, especially in view of the tensions which have almost always existed between the Imperium and the Consulate, I have cheerfully undertaken this task.

The physical differences between our two peoples are well-known, and have been fully dealt with in many fine reference works. I will, therefore, pass over our physical appearance except to correct a few of the more blatant misrepresentations. Firstly, your literature has a disturbing tendency to depict us with heavy eyebrows, a thick beard and either a sinister leer or a scowl, as if we were perpetually contemplating some heinous outrage. Let me assure you, the natural variation in the patterns and length of our facial hair is as great in the Consulate as it is in the Imperium. I admit there is a marked tendency of our nobles to sport beards, but not all of us do so. Among us, too, the class you call Intendants (and a great many of our Nobles as well) wear their head hair longer as a mark of distinction. Secondly, contrary to what many of your holographic film directors seem to think, we smile (and even laugh) as often as Imperials. The Consulate is not the gloomy, humorless place which your entertainments seem always to show.

Contrary to what most Imperials believe, we are not robots. Creativity, divergence of opinion, freedom of expression...we have all of these within the Consulate. Our government is not oppressive...rather it is wholly concerned with the well-being of our citizens, both as a whole and individually. In return, our citizens respect, obey, and freely criticize their rulers (as is their duty).

## PSIONICS

I shall turn now to the major difference between our peoples: psionics. It is the possession of psionic abilities which is the root cause of all tension between us. I have dwelt in the Imperium for years, and I believe I have an understanding of Imperials as great as any of my people, yet even I have only begun to understand the depths of the distrust Imperials feel for us. Most of your populace seems to fear psi powers, even though they have brought our society nothing but benefits (and could yours, if you would but embrace them).

For example, psionics permit us to advance the science of behavioral psychology far beyond the Imperial efforts. Where your scientists must guess what occurs in a subject's mind, our observers can know. Our doctors can be certain of the precise effects of a particular course of treatment, instead of stumbling about in the dark, as yours do. Since such disorders as greed can be cured, there is no need for a Zhodani to steal. Since our citizens learn to be open and free in their opinions (and to respect and accept those of others), there is no need for a Zhodani to lie. Since most anti-social tendencies can be detected and corrected early, there is almost no violent crime within the Consulate.

The idea that we constantly monitor our citizens' thoughts is ludicrous. Privacy is not an unknown and alien concept to us. A citizen's privacy...his personal life, his dreams, his thoughts...are his own, and no one in the Consulate will violate a citizen's right to privacy without good and compelling reasons. In any case, not all of us have the ability to "read minds" as you phrase it. However, many of us are trained in "reading" subtleties of body language, speech and behavior, but these are talents anyone can learn, with or without psionic abilities (a great number of your own psychiatric and behaviorial scientists study and use our techniques, so they can hardly be considered "evil" by your intelligensia).

Of course, a citizen's right to privacy does have certain limitations. Our *Teverchedle* patrols occasionally monitor the general state of certain minds (more or less at random), but this is no more a violation of their privacy than when Imperial police stop and question an Imperial citizen. It is done to detect the beginnings of mental illness, that such illness may be uncovered and treated as early as possible.

Which brings us, in a rather roundabout fashion, to another basic difference between our citizens and

yours...their fundamental honesty. In conversations. I have noticed that many Imperials will signal that they are about to speak the truth with a phrase such as "believe me" or "to be perfectly frank." There are no such phrases in our language. They are not needed. Indeed, while we have an intellectual understanding of the concept of "lie," contact with the actual fact that people exist who willingly convey information that they know to be untrue disgusts those of us without special training. Naturally, some of us are often misinformed, and thus convey falsehoods, but these are accidental, and we all strive to be as truthful as possible. Our people believe that the truthful expression of opinion cannot be harmful if it is sincerely and constructively expressed.

Just as the average Imperial citizen would be uncomfortable in the midst of the Consulate, the average Consulate citizen would be uncomfortable in the midst of the Imperium. He can trust no one. He believes himself to be completely surrounded by liars and thieves. Even if he has no psi abilities, no Imperial will believe him, and he will be shunned as if he has some terrible disease. For these reasons, only those of us with the highest motivations towards peace and mutual understanding can remain long in the Imperium, and even we require special training and education.

It is, of course, understandable that Imperials should fear the exposure of their innermost thoughts. Because of the structure of your society, anti-social thoughts are allowed to form, and grow without hindrance. An Imperial often grows to adulthood without ever receiving the help he needs to properly adjust himself to society, and make the greatest possible contribution to the common good (and to himself, by doing so). Criminal behaviors grow and fester in his mind...greed, acquisitiveness, violence, hatred, prejudice...and come to dominate his behavior. Consider what could happen in your society if the energy, the inventiveness that is channelled into criminal pursuits were instead directed to the benefit of all. What a wonderful place the Imperium could be! - Brienshaloriashav