

“Our employees are our first and best customers.”

— Owen Thornton

Article 100

Collection of Kind Thoughts

By W. Owen Thornton

Cautionary Note: I'm not sure that what follows connects together in a linear fashion. Some leaps of logic may have to be granted.

Don't you just hate it when you have taken the time to develop an idea or theory and you later discover you weren't first? John Stuart Mills eloquently wrote:

“What shall we say of the love of money? There is nothing originally more desirable about money than about any heap of glittering pebbles. Its worth is solely that of the things which it will buy; the desires for other things than itself, which it is a means of gratifying. Yet the love of money is not only one of the strongest moving forces of human life, but money is, in many cases, desired in and for itself — the desire to possess it is often stronger than the desire to use it, and goes on increasing when all the desires which point to ends beyond it, to be compassed by it, are falling off. It may then be said truly that money is desired not for the sake of an end, but as part of the end. From being a means to happiness, it has come to be itself a principal ingredient of the individual's conception of happiness.”

He later goes on to say that fame and power are like money: that fame, fortune and power begin as a means to an end and become an end in and of themselves. I will add that seeing as they are intended to only be a pathway towards an end, they cannot function as an end: therefore they cannot fulfill us. When fame, fortune and power are viewed as an end this is the moment they become a treadmill to unhappiness where we fall into the cycle of unhappiness of requiring more and more of what cannot possibly satisfy us. Mills died in 1873. It makes me yearn for a different education system that includes such writings so that I don't have to spend my energy creating what was first known over a century ago. (I'll let go of the fact that Mills said it better than I have ever conceived of saying it!)

So let me add the human kindness “spin” to this idea. We're unkind to ourselves whenever we chase an idea like fame, fortune and power

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as though these things can make us feel better. Clearly they cannot. But why do we fall into this pattern so readily? I'm going to make an armchair philosopher's stab at answering this question.

We begin life full of ideals, dreams and hopes. But along the way, they begin to wither. Let's list some reasons to demonstrate that sometimes there are good reasons why this happens. Sometimes we change and the dream stops meaning something to us but we haven't yet realized this. In other situations we come to understand that we didn't really understand the cost of that dream: it takes more than we're willing to give, or the cost of it is more than we're willing to sacrifice. Say you always wanted to be an actor but you meet a lovely gal instead. The kind of marriage you know you desire is incompatible with the vagabond nature of being an actor and ... the dream dissipates. Sometimes we just give up because it takes too freaking long to achieve, like selling that novel. Sometimes we just don't have it and what we hoped for isn't where our talent lies. I believe in many cases what we have failed to identify is this change in ourselves. We still 'think' we want that old dream. We may might even have ideal happiness where we are, but this unrealized dream is nagging us,

wearing us down.

And so we lose our ideals. We 'settle' for less. But we do this unconsciously. Regrets pile up. Hurts mount. Disappointments weigh us down. We settle for the daily grind. Now couple this with an intuitive way of how we observe the world. We tend to cling to our hurts and disappointments and take for granted our successes. First let me quickly deal with those hurts. I've mentioned before that when we complain it is like taking rocks out of a bag and setting them down on the table before us. That would be okay if we were willing to leave them there, but like badges of honor we sneak back and when no one is looking we pick them back up and place them back into our bags. Sad things, bad things are like these rocks.

We somehow need to honor these hurts/complaints, while remembering them without carrying around the weight that they have to bring us down. They **are** a part of us and our life journey. They are lessons we have learned and they are important. They are important but we cannot let them become our driving forces. If you've been around this web blog for a little while, you'll know some of those methods by now!

Now let me consider the good

things we have done and contributed. We underplay them. I don't know why. Perhaps we all feel a false humility. We don't like brag-garts and because we don't exactly know where the line is between acknowledging our good qualities and bragging we downplay them all. Many course leaders will tell you that when we're asked to perform an exercise where we list our skills and deficiencies that most people will have a list of their deficiencies that is a mile long and there may be none or only a few of good qualities on the other side of the ledger. A friend of mine did a skills survey at his church and discovered one sad fact: some people did not want to do the survey for fear of discovering they had no skills to offer! (You do realize that this is 100 per cent untrue, right?)

So we all know our weaknesses and downplay our strengths. We've all tried living a dream and we often fall short. So we settle for less. We've also seem to have an inner knowing that we should all be equally skilled and well rounded. This too leads to failure. Here at www.thehumankindnessproject.com we first learned to begin to appreciate our own unique giftedness with Discover Your Sales Strength by Benson Smith and Tony Rutigliano. This book was followed

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by a host of others written about in following articles. What we learned in a nutshell was that attempting to round out our weaknesses is fruitless. None of us particularly shine when we try to be the entire alphabet. It's not that we can't learn to do all things well, but that we don't desire to do all things well: we don't see the point of doing such and such because we have different gifts that inspire us to do more of XYZ rather than attempt to work the entire alphabet. We are not motivated to do the things we dislike simply to overcome the fact that we are not well rounded. We need to embrace the fact that we are all uniquely gifted. And we should focus on enhancing our gifts and letting others who like the other parts of the alphabet to compensate for our shortfalls. Let them do what they love and let us do what we love and trust it will all work out in the end!

So while we're all unique, we live in a world that wants us all to be the same. In that world most of us fail to varying degrees, but some of us have the appearance of success: probably because more of their natural uniqueness falls into the categories that allows them to work within the current system really well. But for the rest of us we numb out and go to the same old uninspiring job year after year.

We're part of a mundane crowd rather than being a unique individual with great gifts.

And so, in a world where we all are 'supposed to look the same and none of us successfully fit into that framework' we seek SOMETHING that will elevate us about the mundane crowd. Fame, fortune and power have long held appeal to us. And while fewer of us consider that we can all be famous and powerful we do readily buy into the fact that we can all be rich! (The Ontario Lottery Corporation used to have the slogan Imagine the Freedom. I wonder how much of a *trap* money could be!) And so we jump on money as an end goal band wagon and we chase that empty dream right into a spiraling depression ... cause no matter how much of it you get it never makes you happy and you always need to go out and get more!

And any good we do along the way we tend to ignore. The Gallop books that followed Smith and Rutigliano suggest we overlook our good qualities in part because we think everyone else has them ... that they don't stand out. We take them for granted. Our mistakes, man they reach out and grab us, but because we don't see the ultimate impact of the good things we do, we miss them ... and

collect the hurts that weigh us down.

A Story

Let me step aside for a moment and tell you a story about the movie *Chocolat*. An independent woman blows into town and opens a chocolate shop. In the movie she saves a woman's life, brings a grandchild and grandmother together, inspires sexual relations in a couple who thought their passions were dead and, unites two different couples and in the end, she saves the entire town to some degree. She does this even though she is not Christian and she does this in a Christian town where the people do not treat her in a very Christian-like manner. The mayor tries to bankrupt her and drive her from the town and he enlists everyone in the town to help him achieve his goal, including the young Priest – who later stands up for himself – thanks again to our heroine! At the critical point in the movie, our heroine cannot see the good she is doing and all she can see is the hurt and the bigotry and the meanness of the mayor and his willing lackeys. She wants to leave town ... start over.

I submit that we all have the power of human kindness to be

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and do what this woman did in *Chocolat*. Yes, I know it is a work of fiction. But we are all unique. And we all have done things which have helped someone else to varying degrees and like our heroine we fail to acknowledge them. We all face opposition although it may not be quite as clear as it is in *Chocolat*. We all want to turn tail and run.

I have said many times here at www.thehumankindnessproject.com that we get what we send in life. Sometimes it's not only that we have to stand our ground long enough to have others rescue us like what happened to the heroine in *Chocolat*, but we have to acknowledge that we're even worthy of being rescued. Sometimes when someone's reaching out to help, we have to look up and stick out our own hand in return. We are worthy of this kind of help. This is one significant point to learn in Keith Ferrazzi's book, *Never Eat Alone*.

When We're Asleep

Early philosophers wondered how we remain who we are. For when we're asleep our conscious thoughts end. How is it that we wake up and remain us? Memory is a harsh mistress, I think. We cling to the hurts *because* they make a harsh impact and we lose

sight of the good things that have happened to us or that we've done *because* they don't seem to make that sort of hard-hitting impact upon us or we can't see the full impact of the degree of goodness. If I were God, I'd change the way memory works just a little. I would have it so that we could readily let go of the impact of those bad things (but not forget so we don't have to repeat them) and I would make it so the good things stick a little easier. But I don't really have to be God to make this wish work, do I? For (if you believe in a God) he gave us the tools we need to do this, we either don't know how to, don't make time to, or don't desire to find the time to release pain and celebrate the good. I believe we CAN really be someone slightly different every time we wake up.

No, I'm not saying life sucks or anything like that. I'm just saying that life can be so much better if we could let go of the bad stuff and concentrate on the good stuff, just a little bit more than we already do. The one thing we know for sure is that fame, fortune and power will never be the solution to happiness.

My heart aches for anyone who thinks they are stuck, or who can fill out the bad traits side of a chart and can't fill out the good side. That is in part why I have written

100 articles all dancing around human betterment and human kindness.

Where I am Today

Well many of you know I am back at University studying philosophy. I'm not sure it is the religious study I had hoped to make when I desired to become a minister so many years ago. But that door is closed and we move on, finding another way to offer our unique gifts. I genuinely think I am kinder now than I was 100 articles ago. I am becoming gentler, less judging (though I'm not perfect by any means) and I have learned a fair bit of philosophy and an awful lot more about myself.

I can only hope that for those of you who are reading these articles, that I have helped you along the way. Sometimes I think I have repeated myself several times and that may indeed be the case. But I'm a firm believer that we need to hear things many times before it gets into our heads and we comprehend it. Timing can mean everything!

Thanks for being there for me. It means a great deal that you desire to read my writing.

God Bless and see you next month.