

## *Philosophical Musings - Integrity*

Whatever happened to integrity? Has it been killed off by political correctness? Has it been killed off by liberal lunacy? Or has it simply been killed off by greed? Integrity is the combination of honesty, responsibility, genuineness, reliability, honor, decency, and morality.

When I was a boy (a really long time ago) we were taught that “honesty was the best policy”. We were taught to take full responsibility for our actions – both good and bad. We were taught that our word was our bond (say what you mean and mean what you say). In today’s schools students are taught more about political correctness, cultural sensitivity, diversity, and the current political pap than about the tools for leading a useful life. Most cannot string a coherent sentence together. The notion of the analysis of evidence and provable facts is not mentioned and therefore young people are not taught to think for themselves or to draw their own conclusions. Instead they mindlessly espouse the words and philosophies of others. They do not even take the time to consider neither the source nor the meaning of those words. It’s a sad commentary on the human condition of today.

It seems in today’s world we play word games never saying what we actually mean. Or we simply repeat the words of others again and again somehow thinking that if a falsehood or partial truth is repeated often enough before an audience that it will be taken as gospel – the truth. The news media is a prime example of this principle in action. Coincidentally, that is one of the foundation principles of propaganda as explained by Jacques Ellul in his work *Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes*. Once the propaganda or falsehood is taken as fact then the repetition must be stopped or it will become a hindrance to the validity of the propaganda.

Most folks think of propaganda as total falsehoods. However, propaganda mixed with known truth is much more difficult to distinguish from something that is blatantly false. When the two are mixed they may become imminently believable.

Where do we see this repetition? The tech giants control the information that we are able to access and retrieve. If you do a Google search you will receive citations in a particular order. That order influences people to see what Google wants us to see because most people do not bother to browse past the first couple of pages of citations on a search. We are expected to believe that Google somehow has provided a completely unbiased neutral list of citations and that the order is purely related to popularity or relevance. What exactly is relevance? Relevant to whom and why? Why are variations of citations repeated?

This brings us to the notion of trust. Who do we trust? Google has proven that it cannot be trusted. The government (pick one – any government) has proven that it cannot be trusted. Where in our lives are we taught to trust? If you consider the school systems of today, they do not even teach about patriotism or consideration of others or good manners. Parents are basically lazy for the most part and spend as little time as they can with their children and do not teach these principles either. Much of children’s value system is gained by watching TV (the omnipresent baby sitter - so the parent doesn’t have to interact with the child). In other words few parents instill good manners, the consideration of others, or patriotism in their children. It’s just too much trouble. Trust is learned by observation. When a parent says that they will do something and then do not actually do it the child observes and concludes, after a few of these experiences, that the parent cannot be trusted and that our word may not always be counted on. A child raised in a home where there is a lack of trust will not be willing to trust as an adult and their word will reflect the behavior of not saying what you mean and meaning what you say.

The question has to be asked: where are we going with this line of discussion? If it opens the eyes of one parent then their children will receive a better foundation of values than would otherwise be the case. In order to make change it has to come one parent at a time. Schools fail to provide relevant education. That has to change or else in the future we will be governed by people who are lacking in integrity and relevant knowledge. We see it already every day in the political and business arena. When one philosophizes in generalities one must always understand that there are exceptions to those generalizations – but damn few of them in what has been described here.