



# **From Store Room To Board Room : Leadership Lessons I Learnt Along The Way**

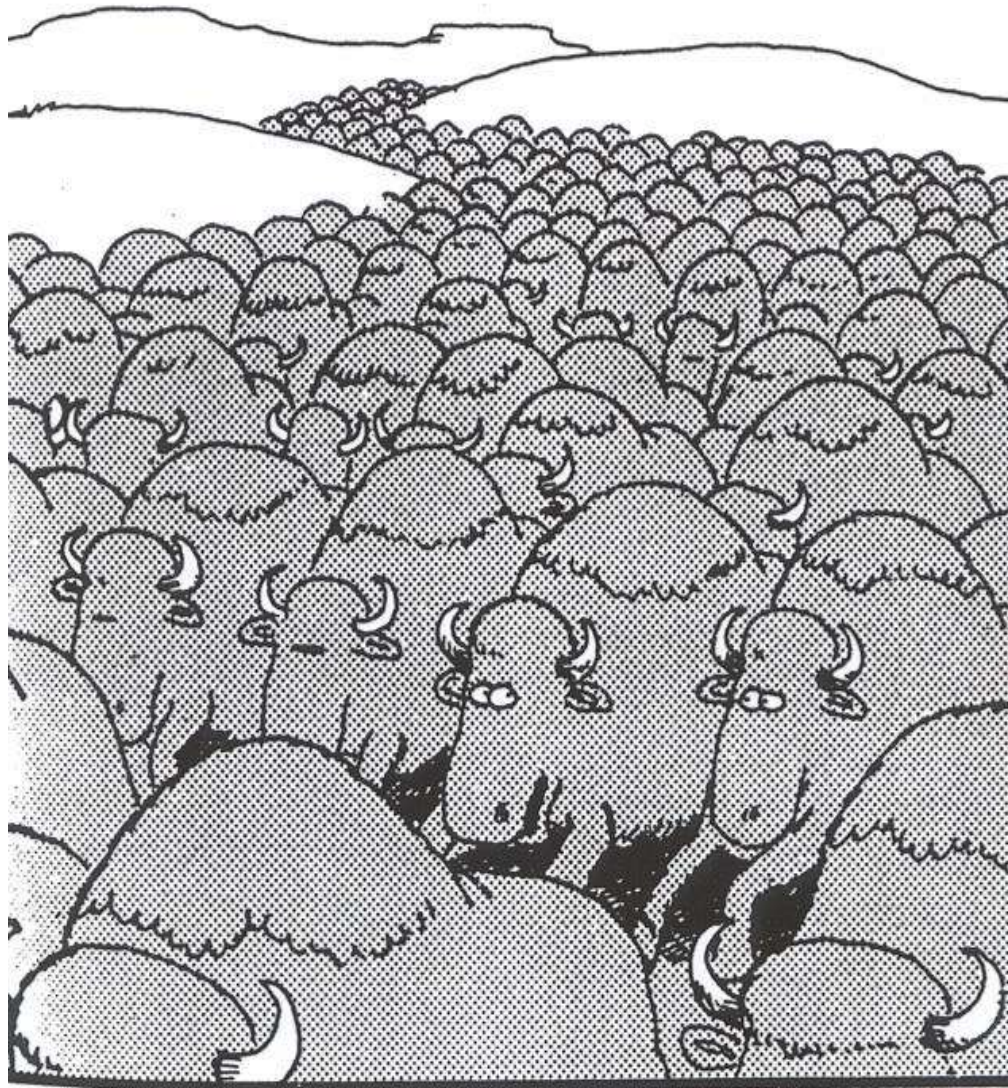
## **Liak Teng Lit**

Group Chief Executive Officer, Alexandra Health System  
Chairman, National Environment Agency

Hong Kong Hospital Authority Convention  
4 May 2016

# Agenda

- Leadership defined
- Lessons learnt as an ant
- My attempt at leading change
- Why you should lead



"As if we all knew where we're going."

# Leadership

A leader is someone who you will follow to a place you would not go by yourself.

# Leadership Makes A Positive Difference



Lee Kuan Yew



Mahatma Gandhi



Dr Martin Luther King



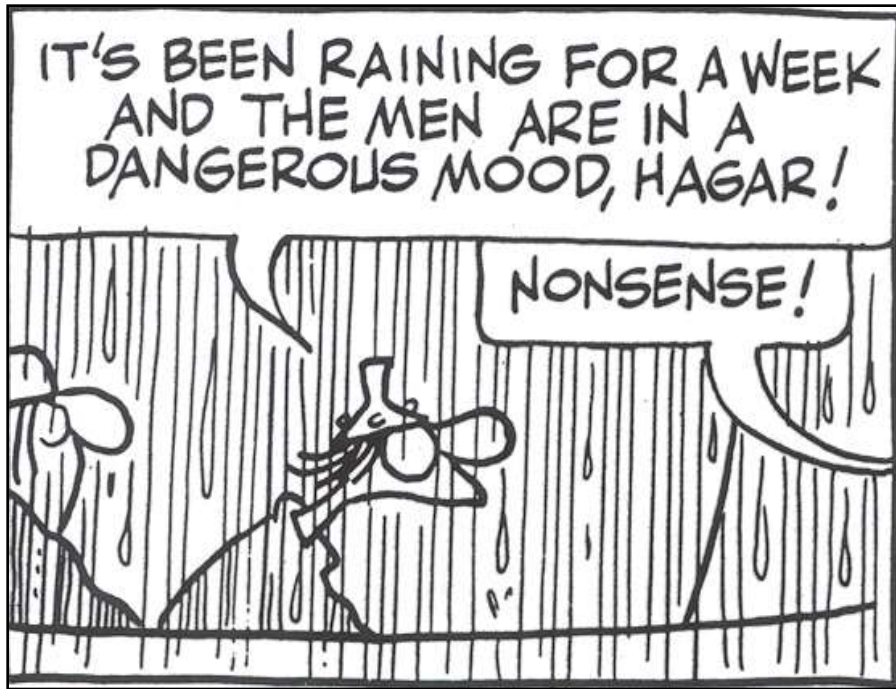
# Pharmaceutical Department (1977)



# Singapore General Hospital (1978)



Rank has its privileges



Life at work is like a tree full of monkeys, all on different limbs at different levels.

Some monkeys are climbing up, some down.

The monkeys on top look down and see a tree full of smiling faces.

The monkeys on the bottom look up and see nothing but assholes.





# Lessons Learnt As An Ant In The Organisation

- Respect does not come with job titles
- Money cannot buy passion, insights, creativity and commitment
- The boss has very little control over the thinking, behaviour and actual contribution of an employee
- People work for themselves, their loved ones, their beliefs. They don't work for you.
- Ants can choose to ignore the elephants to death

# My Work Experience

## Healthcare

- Pharmacist (Singapore General Hospital)
- Director, Pharmacy & MMD (National University Hospital)
- Operations Manager (Kandang Kerbau Hospital)
- Chief Operating Officer (Singapore General Hospital)
- Chief Executive Officer (Toa Pay Hospital, Changi General Hospital, Alexandra Hospital & Khoo Teck Puat Hospital)
- Group Chief Executive Officer (Alexandra Health System)
- Board Member (NTUC Health)

# My Work Experience

## Education

- Vice Chairman (Victoria Advisory Committee for Victoria Junior College & Victoria School)
- Member (Pathlight School Management Committee, NorthLight School Board of Governors, Nanyang Polytechnic School of Health Sciences, Institute of Technical Education Healthcare Training Advisory Committee, NUS Business School Advisory Board, Singapore Management University School of Information Systems Advisory Board and NTUC First Campus)

## Others

- Chairman (National Environment Agency, Public Hygiene Council, Water Network)
- Board Member (National Parks Board and Singapore Tourism Board)
- Member (Singapore Sports Council Facilities Advisory Committee)

# The Characters



- The Emperor
- The High Officials
- The Concubines & Eunuchs
- The Generals
- The Peasants & Soldiers



# The Seagull



- Fly in from afar
- Look good
- Make lots of noise
- Shit on everyone
- Fly off in glory into the sunset

# Lessons From Vietnam War



- Bosses flying in the air
- Soldiers stuck in the mud

# Leadership Lessons From Bosses I Respect



Mr SR Nathan



Mr S Dhanabalan



Mr Wong Hung Khim



Mr Lim Kim San



Dr Kwa Soon Bee



Mr Khaw Boon Wan



Mrs Chua Yen Ching



Mr Ngiam Tong Dow



Mrs Lee Phui Mun



Mr Philip Wee



Ms Jennie Chua

# The Best Are A Little Mad

- Mighty mouse
- Gentle giant
- Optimistic pessimist
- Trusting paranoid
- Cautious risk taker
- Nurturing destroyer



# 错误领导承担 功劳归于大家

Take responsibility in failure  
Give credit in success

# Talent Building



会认人  
会用人  
会做人

Recognise talent

Deploy talent

-----

# Making The World Go Round

- Some people make the world go round;
- Some watch the world go round;
- Some are not aware that the world is going round;
- Some are simply enjoying the opportunity to complain about the way the world is going round, too slow, too fast .....

# Role of A Leader

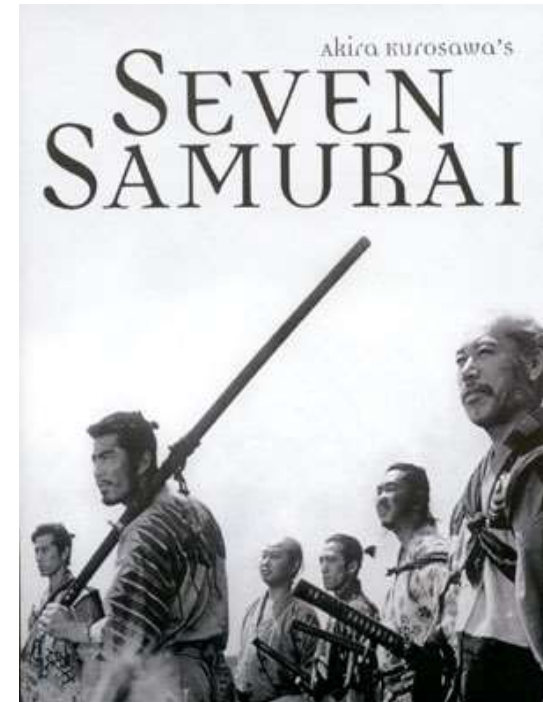
- Visualize
- Simplify
- Prioritize

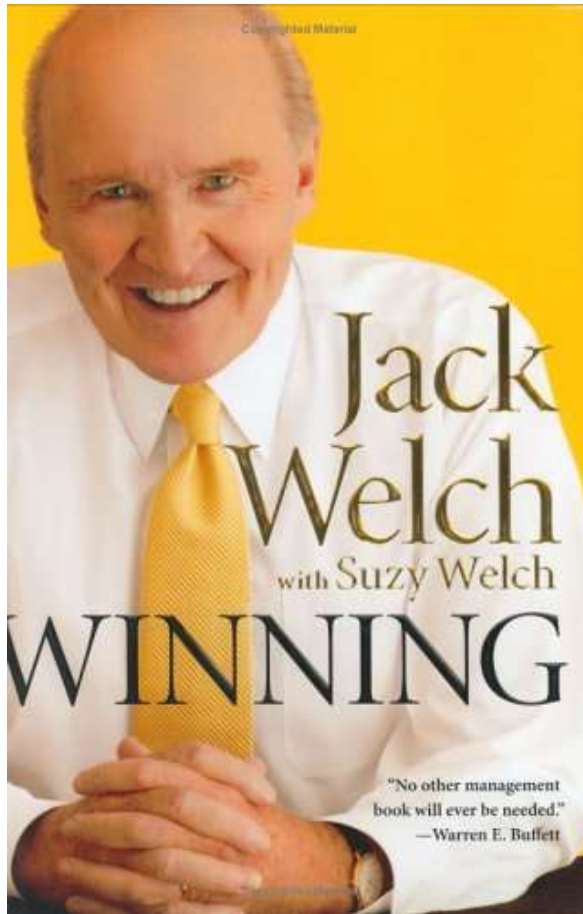


# The High Performance Team

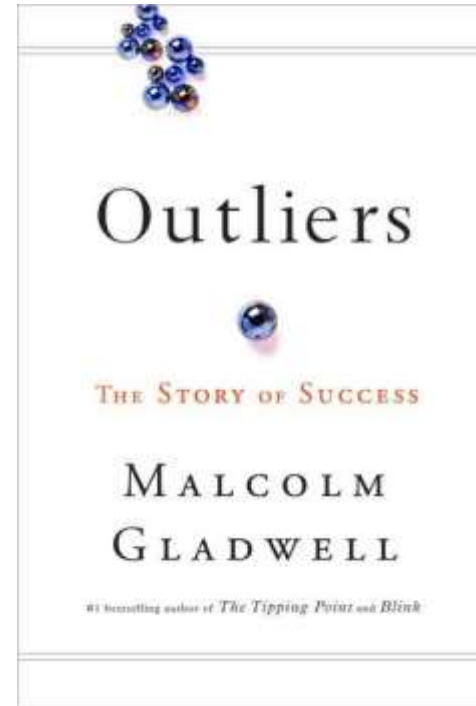
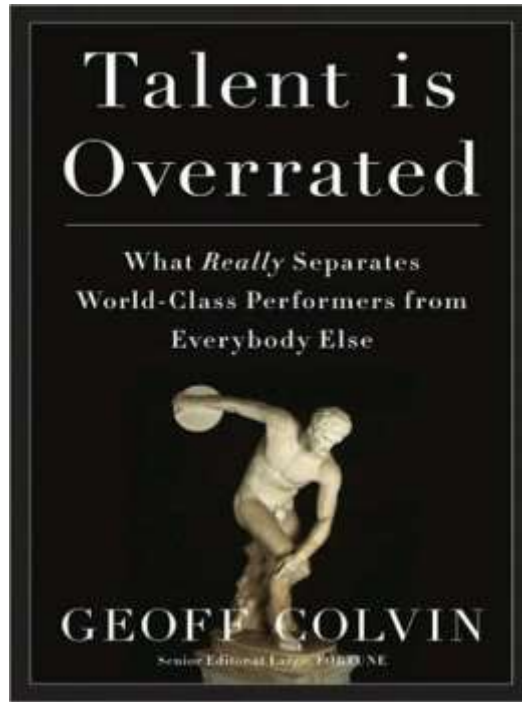
- The ambitious **General Manager**
- The spare-no-expense **Designer**
- The perfectionist, take forever **R&D Director**
- The efficiency-above-all else **Production Manager**
- The stingy **Finance Director**
- The obliging **Marketing Manager**
- The give-away-for-nothing **Salesman**

**CANNOT STAND ONE ANOTHER**





4Es - Energy  
Energise  
Edge  
Execute  
Passion



*“The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain.”*

*- Dolly Parton*

# Courage



*“I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion.”*

*- Alexandra The Great*

# Equality Is Unfair



The capable gets more responsibility but also more authority, freedom and rewards.

# Execution Is Everything

*“Ideas (including those from CEOs) are a dime a dozen. Ability to execute, making the idea work is worth millions.”*

*- Mr Koh Boon Hwee  
Former Chairman, DBS*

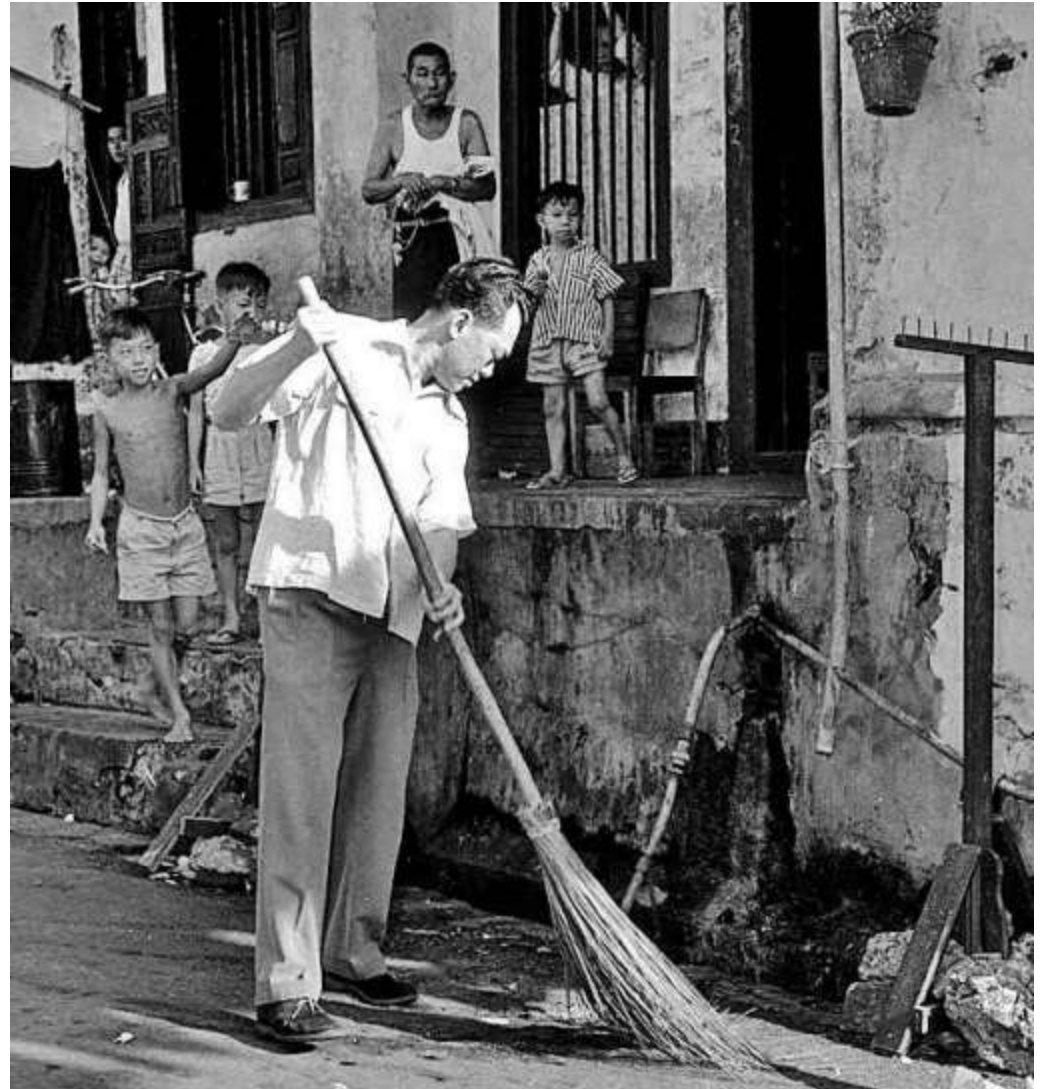
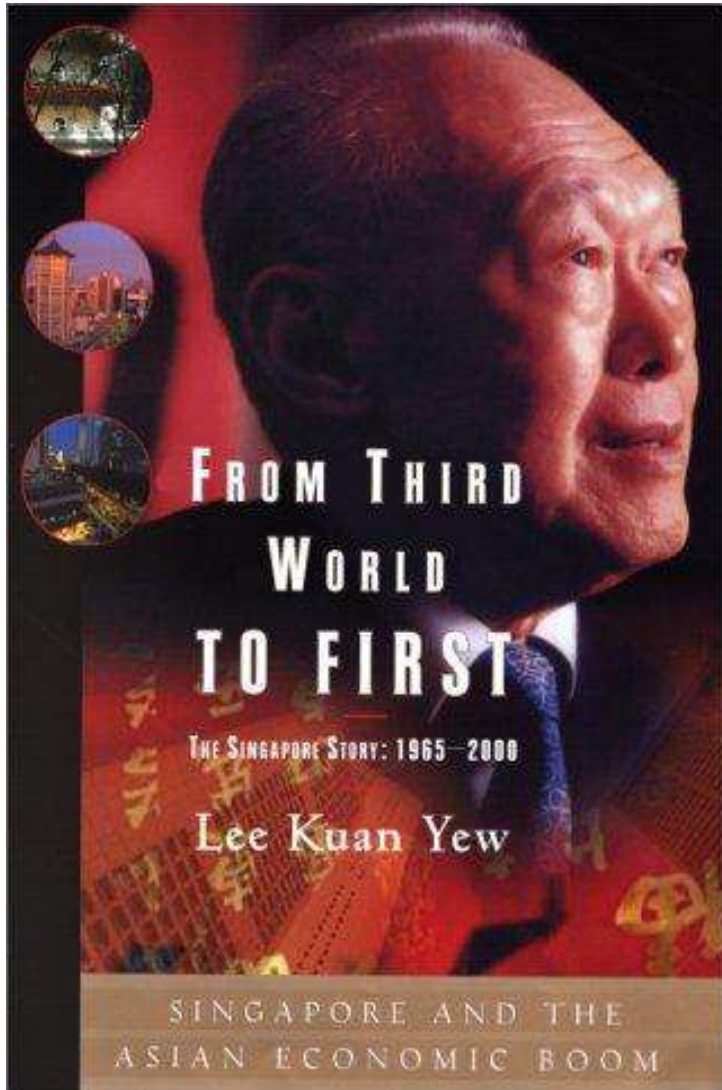


# Authenticity

*“What you do speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say.”*

*- Ralph Waldo Emerson*

- Be There
- Be Clear
- Be the Living Logo



# In health care, 'we need to walk the talk'

Only by leading a healthy lifestyle can one be a good role model, says chief of Alexandra Health

Kimberly Spykerman  
Melissa Pang

He runs more than 20km a week and lives by the mantra "eat food, not too much, mostly plant".

At 57, he also has five marathons under his belt.

Mr Liak Teng Lit, chief executive of Alexandra Health, believes in walking the talk.

"I am perhaps old-fashioned," he confessed.

"I've always believed in the Chinese saying *yí shen zuò zé* (a Mandarin idiom for leading by example). If we are in health care, then at the very least, we must be serious about what we do, which means we take care of our own health at a very personal lev-



ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHEIN

Mr Liak made headlines last week after he was quoted as saying that weight would be a consideration for career advancement.







## Outspoken critic of littering to take over as NEA chairman

By FENG ZENGKUN  
ENVIRONMENT CORRESPONDENT

THE National Environment Agency (NEA) will have an outspoken critic of littering as its next chairman from next month, when Mr Liak Teng Lit takes over from Ms Chew Gek Khim.

Mr Liak is currently group chief executive of the Alexandra Health System, which includes Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, the upcoming Yishun Community Hospital, and future Admiralty Medical Centre and Woodlands Integrated Healthcare Campus.

He is also chairman of the Public Hygiene Council, and led the



Mr Liak Teng Lit takes over as Ms Chew Gek Khim (below) as chairman of the NEA next month.



Litter picking

Enforcement

# Trust Is Everything



“If I trust you, you can do anything.”

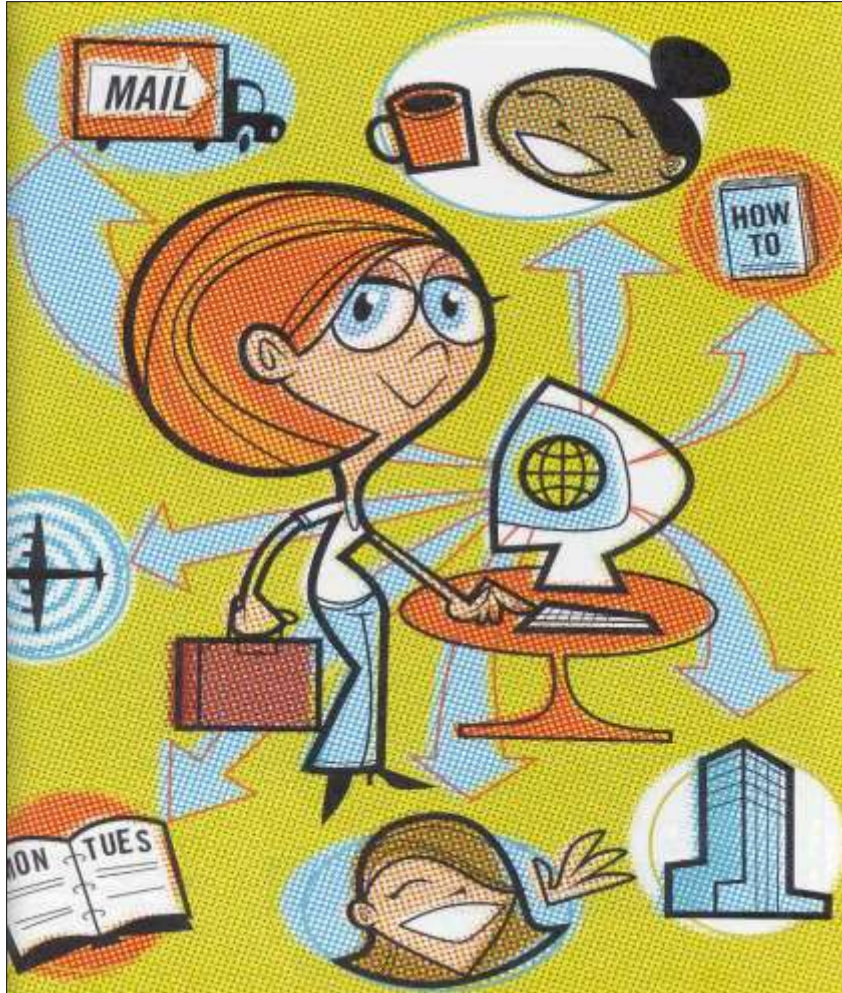
“If I don’t trust you, I make you write papers.”

- Ngiam Tong Dow  
Former Permanent Secretary (Budget)





# The New Millennium



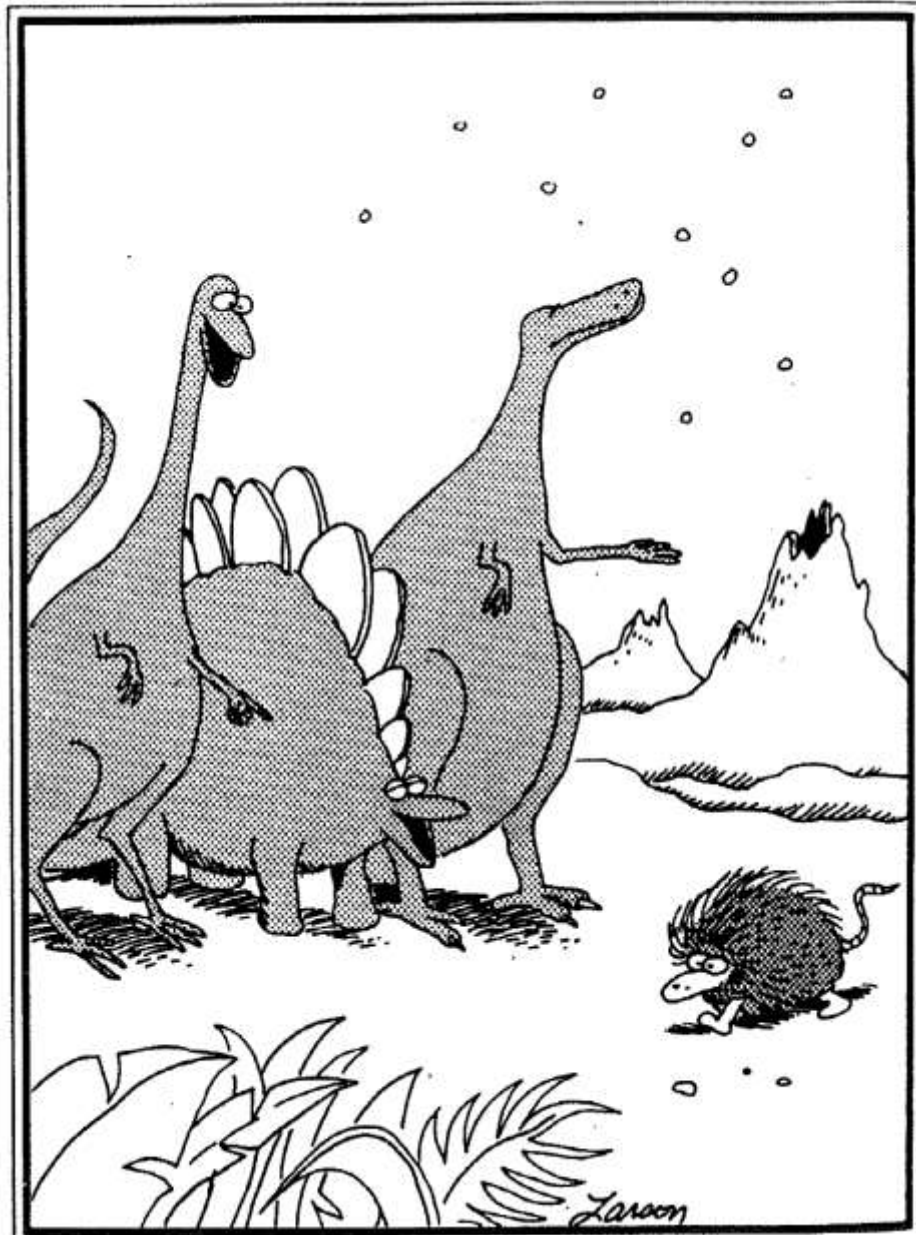
Globalisation, internet,  
robotics, artificial  
intelligence &  
genomics change  
everything



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"Clayton Christensen has done it again, writing yet another book full of valuable insights . . .  
*The Innovator's Prescription* might just mark the beginning of a new era in healthcare."  
—MICHAEL BLOOMBERG, Mayor, New York City

# The Innovator's Prescription

*A Disruptive Solution for Health Care*



**Clayton M. Christensen**

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE INNOVATOR'S DILEMMA*  
Jerome H. Grossman, M.D. & Jason Hwang, M.D.

Incumbents almost never  
succeeded in disrupting  
their own business models.

# Newly Retired Managers' Regrets

Should have :

- Taken more risk
- Reflect more
- Realised earlier that the only thing that matters is to make a difference

# Are you earning your keep?

Hint : 90% think they are above average

<http://strikemag.org/bullshit-jobs/>

# **Rank Has Its Responsibility**

**Out of 10 Caliphs, 9 will go to hell.**

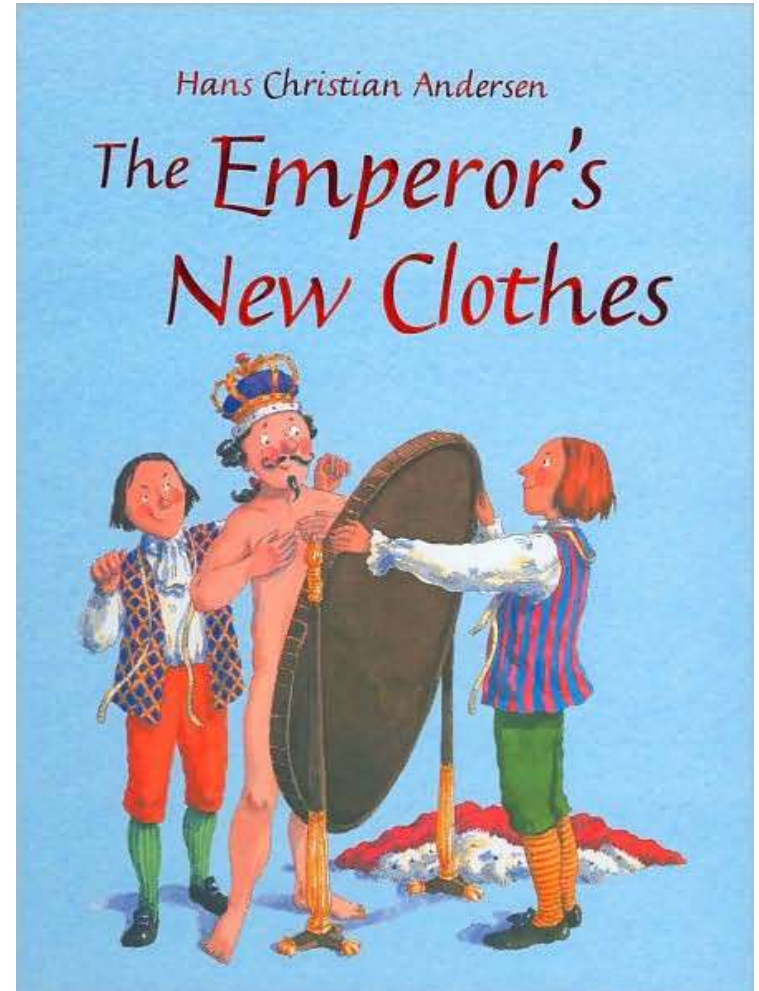


# Leadership Self-Deception

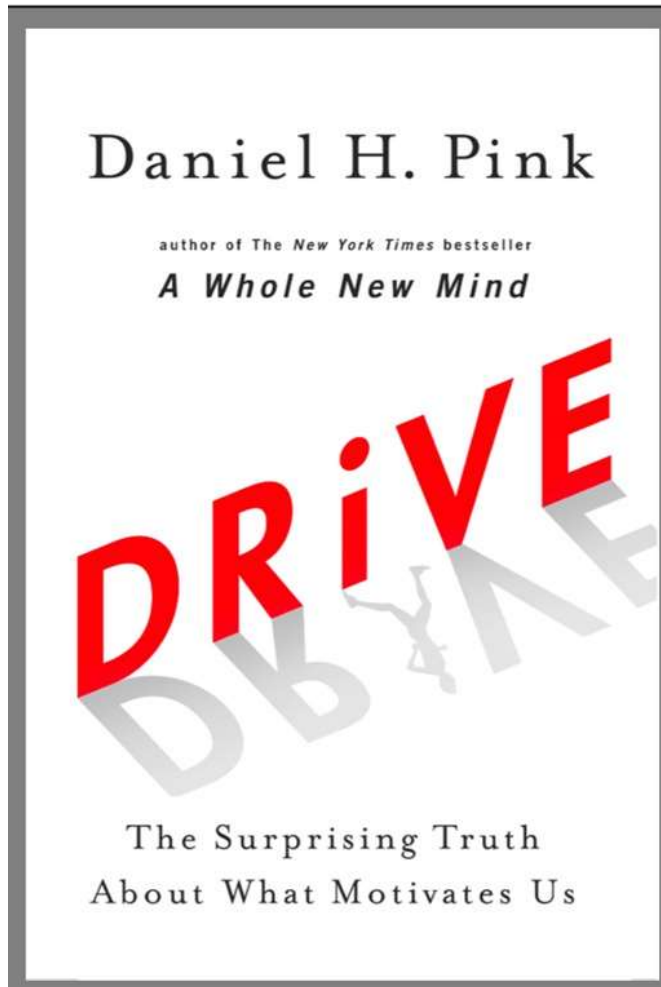
## 鸡鸣日出



Cock crows, sun rises

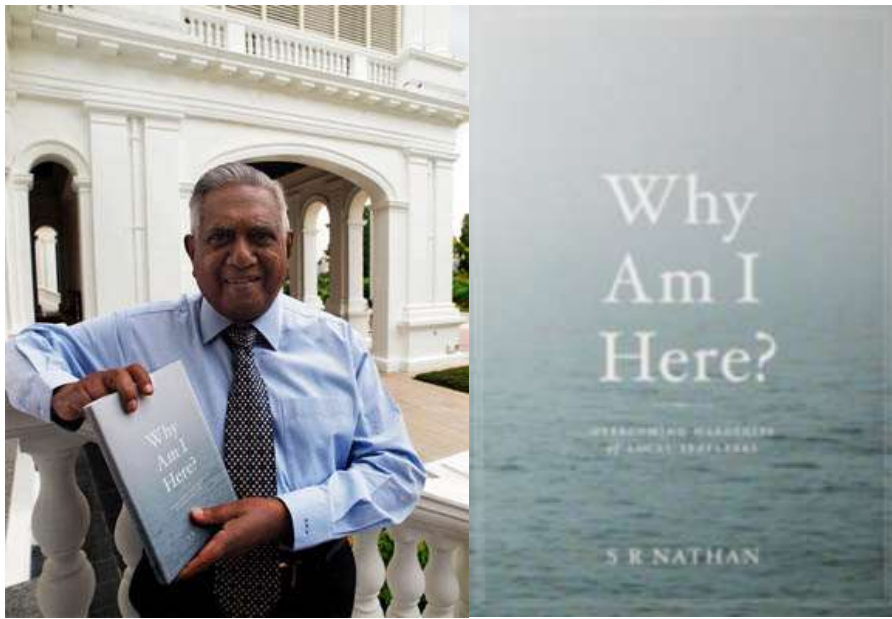


***“Are you building a legacy  
or living on a legacy?”  
- Gary Hamel***



- Purpose
- Mastery
- Autonomy

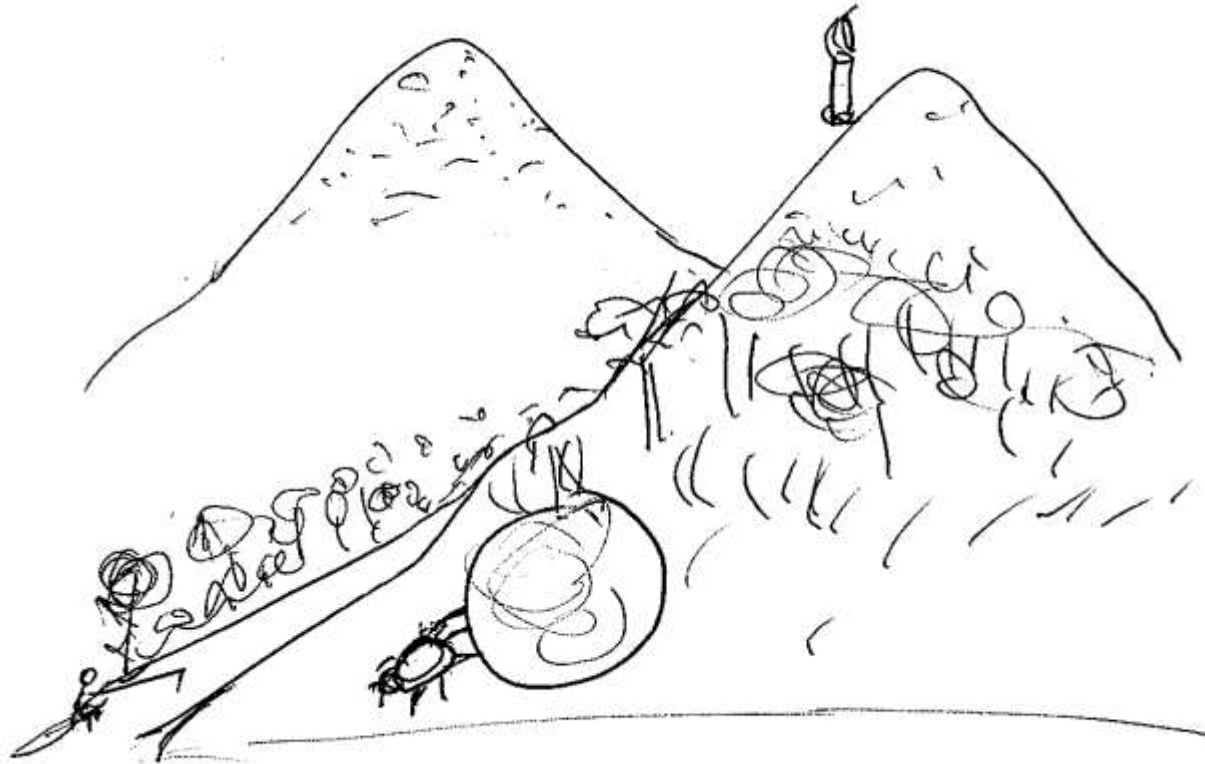
[RSAanimte.Drive](https://www.rsa-animated.com/Drive)



Bhutan (2006)

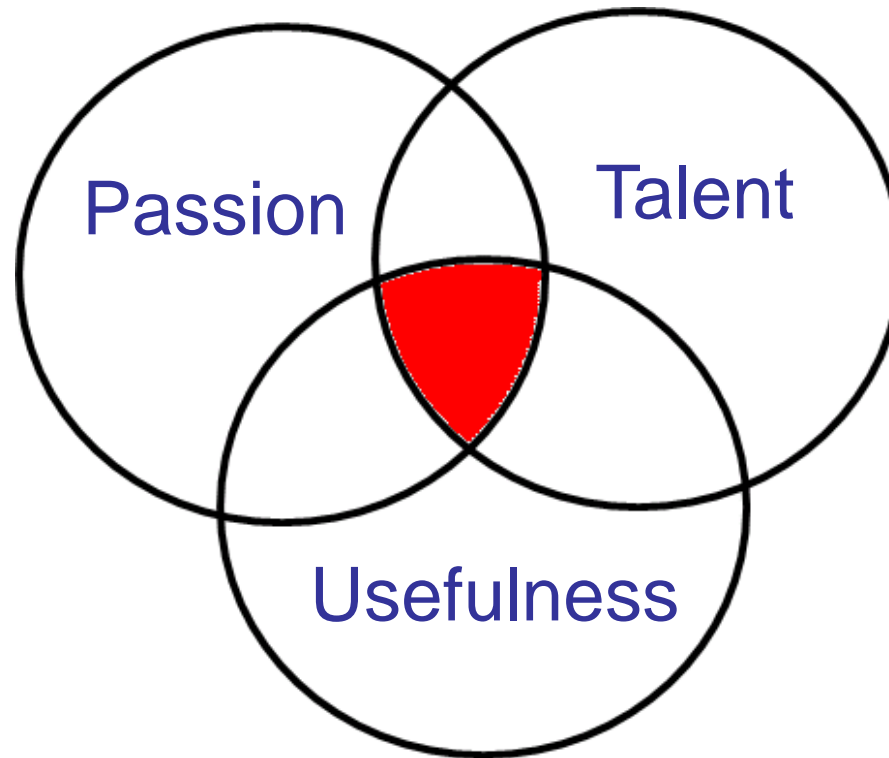
- Draw your personal emblem
- Write your own epitaph

# My Emblem



He tried to make a positive difference.

# Career Sweet Spot



Thinking style : Visual, auditory or kinesthetic



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#### Alain de Botton: Atheism 2.0



What aspects of religion should atheists (respectfully) adopt? Alain de Botton suggests a "religion for atheists" -- call it **Atheism 2.0** -- that incorporates religious forms and traditions to satisfy our human need for connection, ritual and transcendence.

[http://www.ted.com/talks/alain\\_de\\_botton\\_atheism\\_2\\_0.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/alain_de_botton_atheism_2_0.html)

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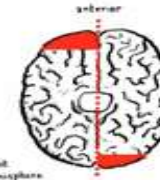
**Mike Rowe on Discovery, Realization and Lamb Castration**  
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#### RSA Animate - The Divided Brain

24 Oct 2011

Renowned psychiatrist and writer Iain McGilchrist explains how our "divided brain" has profoundly altered human behaviour, culture and society.

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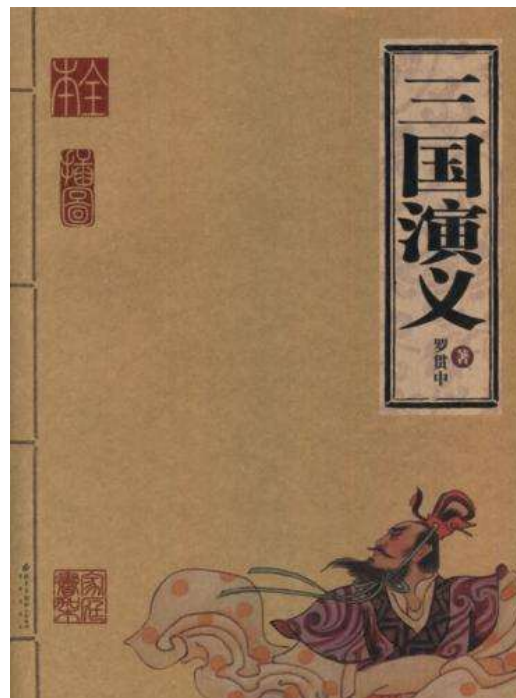
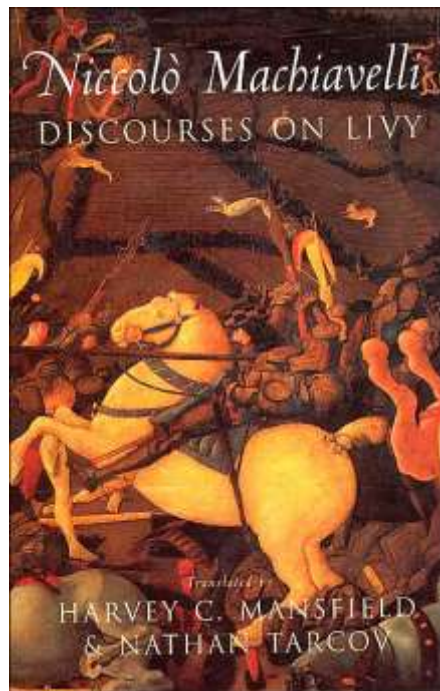
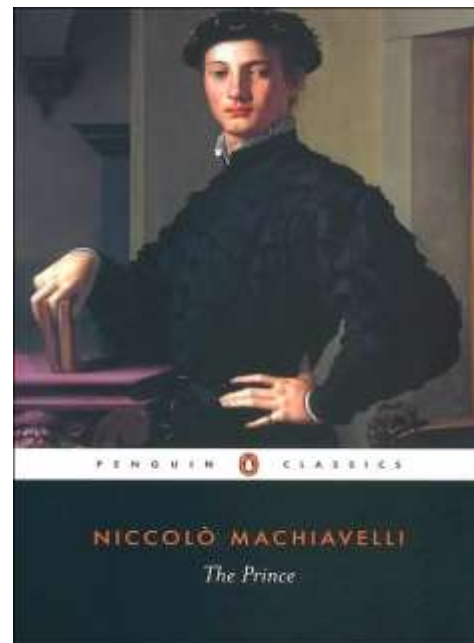
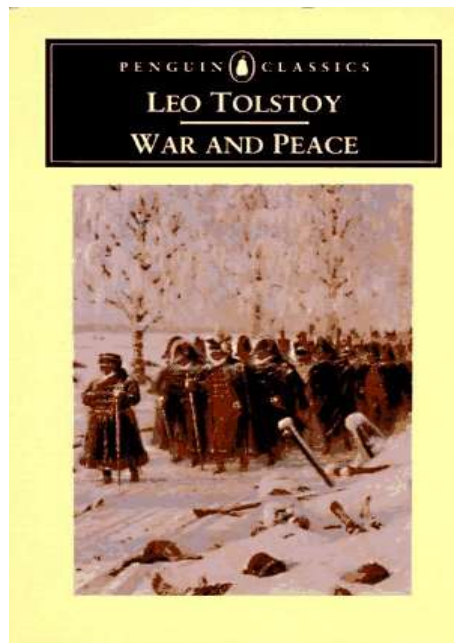
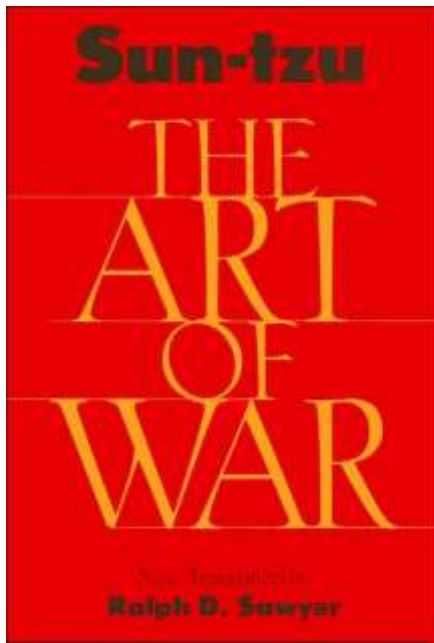
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子曰：“见贤思齐焉，见不贤而内自省也”

“When we see men of worth, we should think of becoming like them; when we see men of a contrary character, we should turn inward and examine ourselves.”

- Confucius

*God,*  
grant me the  
**serenity**  
to accept the things  
I cannot change,  
the **courage**  
to change  
the things I can,  
and the  
**wisdom**  
to know the  
difference.

**liaktl@gmail.com**