

# THE LATERAL THINKER

*POPE FRANCIS, THE GREY POPE*



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*SOFTWARE FOR YOUR BRAIN***

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*“Not everything is black over white, or white over black. No! The shades of grey prevail in life.”*

- Pope Francis



## WORD OF MOUTH ...

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*What an insightful, courageous, revealing book! Your experiences with the Catholic upbringing are so close to mine! Your analysis of Pope Francis is terrific.*

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Michael Hewitt-Gleeson is a best-selling author of books and numerous articles on lateral thinking, selling and leadership ...

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- *SELL: the lateral thinkers' guide to selling and leadership* (1993), ISBN 0947351639
- *Clever: A Coursebook for Clever Thinking* (1993)  
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- *Career Acceleration Program* (CAP Vols I, II, III)  
(NYC 1977).

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## Part One

Flashback! Left. Right. Wrong.

Naturally, I was left-handed. I never thought about it until I went to school. Catholic school.

Being left was quite alright for me. It was, after all, the truth about me. Then I was introduced to the classroom where I began to learn that I was wrong. Being left was wrong. It was not right. Not at all. So, therefore I myself was wrong. And, slowly I was groomed and seduced into a whole new world.

The Greco-Roman world of right and wrong ... *logic*.



Everything in the classroom was either right or wrong as I soon learned through my daily doctrine. In this new world a thing was wrong if it was not right. I lived in 'the classroom' for more than ten years before I was allowed to escape after the Leaving Year.

It took me a war in Vietnam and another decade of reading and reflection before I finally escaped from the Greco-Roman logic world of right and wrong judgmental thinking.

By the time I had reached my first quarter century I had once again discovered that being left was quite alright for me. And then I began my search for truth about the world. *Real* truth.

The classroom was formidable but it was never successful in its campaign against my truth. First they set about to force me to change my hand. The force was all but overwhelming as I was still a very small boy. The nun, who called herself a 'Sister of Charity', would come very close into my face.

Her skin was soft and flawless and her eyes were determined behind her rimless glasses. The rustle of her starched wimple and black robes emitted little puffs, bursts of scent that would startle and repel me.

Black robes were mysterious and dark to me then as now. They might even hide a multitude of sins. She would nag me over and over with relentless exhortations and threats to use my right hand not my left.

I would quickly switch to get her out of my face and quickly switch back again when she was gone.

This went on day after day after day. It was my very first battle of wits.

I don't know what it was that I was learning but whatever it was it was foundational. Inevitably, it seemed, the arms race was taken to the next level.

The Charitable Sister produced, one day, a new weapon. A thick long wooden ruler with a menacing glint for embedded in the edge was a steel blade which protruded just enough to make its presence felt.

I had never been stalked before so now I was learning something very new indeed. She would appear from one side of my desk or the other, usually from behind and without warning and crack me on my left hand with the wooden ruler.

Shock and awe. Pain and humiliation.

In these assaults I began to learn a new lesson. Sister had a twist. A cruel strategy which she had devised for the occasion. She twisted the ruler so that when she cracked my fingers she did it with the sharp edge of the blade.

I learned that metal is harder than wood. That the force of thin is greater than the force of flat. I suppose I was learning physics at the age of six and I didn't even know it.

As I nursed my burst winter chillblains I also learnt the basics of first aid as I bound my cuts and bruises in my, perhaps unsanitary, school handkerchief. I also learned how to survive a bully.

After a time, when force was found to be wanting, a new strategy was employed by the enemy and the arms race was escalated to psychological warfare.

Branding and exclusion. It was announced to the class that I was an incurable kack-hander (a nasty label that disgusted me then and is distasteful to recall and record even now) and that I must stand and remove my belongings and move to the desk near the door.

The shame of it?

Not really. By now, I must have reached an early age of reason, because this big Sister Teacher was to be no mentor of mine. No thank you.

I knew the truth of it. She lacked fairness. She lacked discernment.

The nun lacked wisdom. She was not fit. She was an inconvenience to be endured and outwitted where possible.

She would catch me left-handed and dismiss me from the class for an hour. Get out! This would happen most days and I soon realised the reason for the desk by the door.

All part of the master plan of the threat of excommunication.

Soon I began to devise a strategy of my own.

What if excommunication was a blessing in disguise?



What if I decided I liked to play alone outside, even in the cold, than to be present in the classroom?

Suddenly embarrassment and shame could be channelled into peace and quiet and solitary discovery.

I once found a dead baby sparrow and was amazed at the size of its bright yellow beak compared to its little grey body.

I sat and wondered why and figured it out for myself.

This early persecution was a turning point for me.

By then I was only six but I had learned a crystal clear lesson.

Big Religion could be oppressive but it could also be ignored. If they could excommunicate me then I could excommunicate them back.

Tit for tat. Yes, I suppose I was learning *something*, after all.

The lesson on excommunication is about *exclusion*.

It is the opposite of inclusion.

I was learning that the Catholic Church seemed highly exclusive and intolerant of innovation of any kind, even to the point of handedness.

You're either right-handed and one of us, or you're out!

Really?

Is that what Jesus might have said?

In fact, that's a very reasonable thing about which to speculate.

How did Jesus think?

Was he a black/white thinker?

Who taught Jesus how to think?

What might Jesus have said and why might he have said it?

## Part Two

### The Greatest Teacher Who Ever Lived

When it came to my early education I learned much more from my father at home than I ever did from the nuns at school. Much more.

I once wrote in an earlier book:

*“I am an author and a motivational speaker. I am also a scientist. The two main features associated with this kind of job are teaching and travel. As you would expect, my niche market has consisted of aspirational thinkers.*

*Those middle-class people who desire a better life and who want better things, especially those who are able to do something about it. I've taught parents, educators, scientists, employees, CEOs, entrepreneurs, artists preachers, politicians and elite sportspeople.*

*The reason aspirational thinkers require motivation is because they know they can do better, they want to do better and so they seek out teachers who might be able to show them a better way.”*

But, who teaches the teacher?

From my own experience, every teacher sits on the shoulders of another teacher and, in my case, that teacher was my father, Martin Joseph Peter Hewitt-Gleeson, who was one of the wisest human beings I have ever known.



(15.11.1919 – 09.08.2003)

Dad had a great deal of life experience. At 19 he enlisted in the Australian Army to serve in WWII. He survived in two theatres of war, in the Middle East and in New Guinea.

Before the war he won scholarships for a classical education at St Kevin's in Toorak.

He was a bibliophile.

He read everything from Marcus Aurelius to Patrick White, and had a great deal of general knowledge and common sense.

He had a natural *noblesse oblige* which I believe he got from his mother and Dad was well known for his spontaneous generosity, his cheerful demeanour and lively sense of humour.

He was also very lucky.

He survived bowel cancer, completely cured, and other narrow escapes. He lived a good life for 84 years. Dad was a clever survivor.

Through a great depression and a world war and he was a lifelong chronic asthmatic.



Survival is clever and requires intelligence.

Long term continuous survival endows wisdom and this is a very clever thing, indeed. From the hard won feat of longevity emerges broad experience and special knowledge.

Wisdom cannot be taught.

Wisdom also offers a deep appreciation of the role that sheer random luck plays in long term survival.

The experience of surviving for a completed generation through childhood, adolescence and adulthood endows a human being with the knowledge and perspective that a young brain simply cannot match.

To achieve 50 years of survival, through two or more generations, allows the brain to build a database of experience which offers a perspective of history, an understanding of long term consequences, a faculty for prediction and a wisdom that cannot be acquired in any other way. It takes half a century.

Yes, dad was wise but he was forever a lot of fun.

He used to always say, “*Nobody’s perfect!*”.

My dad also taught me a lot of other things and, like anybody’s dad, he had his ‘famous sayings’. Sayings which he repeated many times and which I now find myself repeating, too.

Here follows ten of my dad’s ‘famous sayings’ which I can, of course, repeat verbatim:

*“Life is more important than work. Work is only urgent.”*

*“When you’re not sure what to do, son, just go to the beach!”*

*“The best trick is: there is no trick.”*

*“Mind your own business and if you do that you’ll be so busy you won’t have time to mind the business of anyone else.”*

*“Say something nice or don’t say anything at all.”*

*“Use your head. It’s the little things that count.”*

*“Make it fun and you’re more likely to want to do it.”*

*“Things are rarely what they seem at first sight. There’s always a much better way of looking at things.”*

*“For crissake don’t whinge. Just fix it or forget about it.”*

My dad was definitely not a motivational speaker but I still use his sayings in my own work as a teacher.

Why not do a list of ten of your own father’s famous sayings that are worth repeating?

## Joseph and Son

*“At that time, there was a small business in Nazareth called Joseph and Son. Joseph was a carpenter and handyman and his son, Jesus, was his apprentice. They worked together for local customers and also on major projects like the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem. Joseph was Jesus’ father, his boss and his teacher.”*

I once visited Nazareth about 25 years ago. I tried to imagine what it was like when Jesus lived and worked there. I tried, as a thought experiment, to get inside his head.

In the case of Jesus, it seems he also sat on the shoulders of his father, Joseph of Nazareth.

Although I'm an atheist I've always been interested in the story of Jesus. Not so much from a spiritual or even an historical perspective but mostly from a professional point of view.

Jesus was a motivational speaker.

He, too, was a teacher who travelled. His target audience, too, was mostly aspirational thinkers.

At that time, in Galilee, there were many such gurus or rabbis or teachers. There were no warring tribes of Israel anymore. There was a brisk trade in both goods and ideas.

There was the relative stability of *Pax Romanum*. There was the occupying Roman military yielding the paypackets of legions of young soldiers full of denarii to be spent on R&R along the picturesque seaside.



Employed with the client government in the capital city of Tiberius, there was also a large middle-class of public servants.

They were *scribes*—who were educated and employed and who could afford to have aspirations of their own.

These middle-class bureaucrats lived all along the Galilean seaside in the pleasant and thriving towns; Ammathus, Magdal, Gennesaret and Capernaum all rather neatly spaced at 5k intervals.

It seems the Galilean coastline was enjoying a busy schedule of motivational talks and political gatherings and the competitive spread of ideas.

So Jesus was in the right career and at the right time. But how did Jesus get started?

In his book *Jesus of Nazareth (Vol III)*, Pope Benedict XVI makes it clear that Jesus: “*thought and learned in human fashion*”. In other words, like all children, Jesus learnt mostly from his parents. The Australian, Cardinal George Pell, agrees: “*Parents are the best teachers*”.

This is also a fundamental principle of cognitive science: brain patterns are contagious through repetition from parent to child.

Through observation, repetition and imitation, Jesus' first and most influential teachers were his parents, Mary and Joseph of Nazareth. His father must have been a very wise teacher because, when he was 12, Joseph took Jesus along on his annual Passover visit to the Temple in Jerusalem. This is the first time Jesus was tested as a student and he passed with honours. After three days sitting among the teachers and listening and asking questions Jesus amazed them all with his understanding of the law and his answers (Luke 2.47).

Joseph of Nazareth is described in the Bible as 'a just man'.

His true character is revealed to us when he gets the news that his fiancée is pregnant along with her incredulous story that it was God's doing!

What will Joseph do?

Will he throw her out? Will he forgive her?

This is his defining moment of truth.

This is when history watches Joseph in wonder and admiration.

He went on to dedicate himself to the upbringing of Jesus who learnt not only how to talk and read and write but, as his son and apprentice, Joseph also taught Jesus how to think and solve problems and how to design and innovate with the use of tools.

Also Jesus learned how to operate, maintain and grow a small business.

He learned how to behave and work and play at the side of his father and mentor, Joseph, for the first fifteen years of his life.

From all accounts Joseph was a wise dad, too. Again the priceless value of a father's wisdom.

Wisdom is to see other points of view. It includes the sagacity of patience to see beyond one's own immediate viewpoint and the wisdom to see the viewpoints of others involved in situations: your partner's, your children's, your children's children, your neighbour's viewpoint, your customer's, even your enemy's.

Wisdom is the ability to see consequences, immediate, short term and long term.

It is the ability to look back over history and to see forward into the future.

To understand cycles, passages of time, the passing of fashions, eras, eons and the many possible futures including extinction, the possibility of no future at all.

The wisdom of Joseph emerges from the labour-intensive and hard won, experience gained from having to solve life's wide range of random, unexpected problems.

And, from having survived through multi-changing environments over several generations and for an extended period of time.

There are no records at all of the sayings of Joseph as he wrote nothing down. His son Jesus was the same. Neither of them produced any written works as they favoured the oral tradition. So we all have to speculate based on the balance of evidence that does exist.

Joseph, obviously, was not a Christian nor a motivational speaker but his sayings were taught to Jesus and passed on by him. No doubt there were times when Jesus paraphrased Joseph. Other times when he repeated his dad's words verbatim.



Because of that, here's my selection of ten of the likely 'famous sayings' of Joseph of Nazareth:

*“You be merciful, son, just as your father is merciful to you.”*

*“Give to the one who asks you. Do not turn away the one who wants to borrow tools from us and if anyone takes what belongs to us, do not demand it back.”*

*“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”*

*“Once upon a time a man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and left him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road and when he saw the victim he passed by on the other side. Later, a Levite, when he came to the same place, saw him and passed by. But a Samaritan, on seeing the injured man immediately took pity on him. He went and bandaged his wounds with oil and gave him wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn and provided care for him.*

*The next day he gave two denarii to the innkeeper saying, ‘Look after this man and when I return from my trip, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have’.*”

*“Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”*

*“Give to everyone who asks of you and if someone slaps you on one cheek then turn to them the other. If someone takes your coat then offer them your shirt.”*

*“If you only love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you only do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you only lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great. You will be a child of the Most High. He also is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.”*

*“Remember always to be like a little kid.”*

*“If you want to learn public speaking, remember, no-one is greater than your cousin, John.”*

As we all know, Jesus went on to become one of the most famous teachers and public speakers in all of Western history.

His sayings are gospel.

They are repeated again and again down through the centuries.

At the end of the day, Jesus turned out to be a great credit to his father and teacher.

Joseph of Nazareth, because of his impact, may be acknowledged as the greatest teacher who ever lived.

## Part Three

### From Judgment to Discernment

Although I am now a cognitive scientist and an atheist I am also a vaticanologist, an observer of the Vatican.

It's a kind of intellectual hobby.

If one is interested in thinking then one is interested in its origins and the origin of Greco-Roman logic comes to us from the Greeks via the Vatican.

More on that later in Part Five.

My main interest, as a vaticanologist, is: *How has the Vatican survived for 2000 years?*

It's a curious fact that really does require an explanation.

In a Darwinian sense, the Vatican is easily the most successful human organization ever invented.

We have Coke and Pepsi. We have Macdonald's and Burger King. We have Apple and Microsoft. We have the Vatican and ... what? Nothing!

Nothing even comes close.



*How has the Vatican survived for 2000 years?*

Believers claim it is the work of the Holy Spirit. I can appreciate that and to me that is a kind of poetic explanation.

As a scientist, I also need a different kind of evidentiary explanation. One that would hold up in court.

The search for that evidence has been my hobby for 30 years. It's allowed me many trips to Rome, my favorite city, and lots of fun and adventure and research. I have formed a theory and perhaps that will be another book.

In the Western world it is the Vatican that has taught us not only *what* to think but also *how* to think.

For nearly 800 years, since Thomas Aquinas, the Vatican has taught *judgment*.

However, if Pope Francis has his say, the Vatican will now teach *discernment*.

This is a very, very BIG transformational change in global policy. It is enough to make him the greatest lateral thinker in the world.

It is also enough for him to deserve the Nobel Peace Prize.

If he does nothing else during his pontificate but switch the Vatican *from judgment to discernment* then this will be enough to make him one of the greatest popes of all the 266 who ever lived.

The Grey Pope!

Why is this so significant?

Start with your own case. If you were taught in the Western education system (Europe, the Americas, British Commonwealth), like I was, then the basic thinking software you were given is: *right or wrong*.

The right/wrong binary judgmental thinking system is what we now call *Greco-Roman Logic* or critical thinking.

It's the yes/no system.

It's about getting the correct answers to things.

Avoiding mistakes and backflips.

Defending your truths. Debating your opponents. *I-am-right-and-you-are-wrong*.

In the School of thinking we call that Black Hat Thinking. It's all about judgment. Bad judgment. Bad philosophy.

Bad judgment is easy.

It's logical.

It's either black or white.

It requires little cognitive effort.

You just react to things as they are presented.

That's it. I like it or I don't like it.

It's all about believing you are 'right'.

Anyone can do bad judgment. It's inside the box thinking.

Logic may be right enough to believe in ... but *is it true?*

On the other hand, good judgment is not easy at all.

It's outside the box.

It goes way beyond merely black or white reactions but ventures proactively into the vast grey matter of thinkspace.

In the School of Thinking we call this Grey Hat Thinking.

Grey ... or gray if you prefer ... involves *metacognition*.

Metacognition is the word cognitive scientists use to describe “thinking about thinking”.

Metacognition, like mindfulness, is a higher order of thinking than logic.

It requires much more than black/white judgmental thinking.

It requires good judgment.

It requires *discernment*.

In the words of Pope Francis himself, “*Not everything is black over white, or white over black. No! The shades of grey prevail in life.*”

What is discernment?

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines discernment as ‘good judgment’. Here are ten synonyms to help you unpack the meaning of *discernment*:

*wisdom*

*enlightenment*

*subtlety*

*insight*

*perception*

*lateral thinking*

*ingeniousness*

*taste*

*refinement*

*sophistication.*



These are ten meaningful words and you can search any of them with the press of the google button. If you like, start by googling: *wisdom*.

According to *Wikipedia*:

“Discernment is the ability to obtain sharp perceptions or to judge well (or the activity of so doing). In the case of judgment, discernment can be psychological or moral in nature. In the sphere of judgment, discernment involves going past the mere perception of something and making nuanced judgments about its properties or qualities.

“Considered as a virtue, a discerning individual is considered to possess wisdom, and be of good judgment; especially so with regard to subject matter often overlooked by others.”

The quality of our thinking is a very personal thing. It directly impacts on the quality of our future.

We cannot escape the consequences of the choices we make. This also applies at the group level as well as the global level.

Many people are now saying that the most important thing in the world today is the quality of human thinking. It is said that the quality of our future will be a direct consequence of the quality of our thinking.

At the School of Thinking (SOT) we are engaged with CEOs and their employees to help raise the quality of thinking across the enterprise. If the employees can become much better thinkers then not only will they benefit personally at home and at play but also the future of the company and their jobs will be much better.

Also, the return to shareholders will be better. The re-investment of profits into the enterprise to create more jobs will also be greater. We call this 'Return on Payroll'.

We invite CEOs to pay attention to the level of discernment of their employees. Here below is a CEO audit on discernment. Even if you're not a CEO you can do this as an audit on your own thinking, or on your local group, or simply as a thought experiment.

If you were a CEO you could use this audit to rate your own employees' level of discernment in just 20 questions.

SOT has validated this checklist with thousands of members globally for over 20 years.

It was designed by Dr Eric Bienstock who is Vice-Principal of SOT in New York.

Eric holds a Master's degree in Mathematics from the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences, and a PhD from New York University where he researched Mathematics, Education and Learning Theory.

He based this audit on SOT's *Learn-To-Think Coursebook and Instructors Manual* (Hewitt-Gleeson & De Bono, Capra 1982).

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## CEO DISCERNMENT AUDIT:

### Rate Your Own Employees' Level of Discernment

Metacognition, *thinking about thinking*, is all about the skilled management of attention. How well do your employees pay attention? Use these 20 questions to assess the quality of daily thinking across your own enterprise.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Answer each of the 20 questions overleaf, scoring either 3, 2, 1, or 0 points for each answer depending on your personal estimate of how your enterprise, as a whole, actually does what is stated on a daily basis. As CEO use your best guess of these criteria for scoring:

3 – 90% OF THE TIME (nearly always)

2 – 70% OF THE TIME (mostly)

1 – 40% OF THE TIME (often)

0 – 10% OF THE TIME (hardly ever)

**NOTES:** Please don't panic, this is NOT a scientific test. Self-rating can be notoriously unreliable so your ratings may be way off depending on your mood and other factors.

However, time has proven this to be a valid audit to help you take stock of your enterprise thinking, their attention skills, your own view of their cognitive engagement.

It's hearty food for thought!

*Every day the output of your peoples' brainpower is decisions.*

This is your return on payroll.

They make hundreds of decisions a day, sometimes more. The quality of these decisions not only has a direct impact on the quality of your business and shareholder value but also on your employees' personal life, their family, their business and their friends.

If you can raise the quality of their decisions you can raise their quality of life.

A trained thinker can be discerning. A skilled thinker can direct his or her thinking and use it in a deliberate manner to produce an effect.



To a trained and engaged thinker, thinking is a tool that can be used at will and the use of this tool is practical. Results. This ability to use ‘thinking as a skill’ is the sort of thinking that is required to get things DONE.

### **INTERPRETATION:**

If your TOTAL SCORE in this audit was between 51 and 60 points, your enterprise may already possess superior discernment.

If you scored between 31 and 50 points, your thought-leaders may have better than average discernment.

If you scored between 0 and 30, your enterprise may possess no additional discernment other than the natural thinking ability most untrained people have.

## SCORE

\_\_\_\_\_ Your employees' judgments of ideas are based on the value of the idea itself rather than on their emotions at the time.

\_\_\_\_\_ They judge ideas not just as "good" or "bad" but also as "interesting" if they can lead on to better ideas.

\_\_\_\_\_ They consider all factors in a situation before choosing, deciding or planning.

\_\_\_\_\_ They consider all factors first, before prioritising the ones that matter most.

\_\_\_\_\_ When my managers and supervisors create a rule they see to it that it is clearly understood and possible to obey.

\_\_\_\_\_ They try to see the purpose of rules they have to obey, even if they don't like the rules.

\_\_\_\_\_ They look at consequences of their decisions or actions not only as they effect themselves but also as they affect our other stakeholders, internal and external.

\_\_\_\_\_ They look at a wide range of possible consequences, short and long term, before deciding which consequences to bother about.

\_\_\_\_\_ On the way to a final objective they establish a chain of smaller objectives each one following on from the previous one.

\_\_\_\_\_ The objectives they set are near enough, real enough and possible enough for them to really try to reach them.

\_\_\_\_\_ In planning, they know exactly what outcomes they want to achieve.

\_\_\_\_\_ They keep their plans as simple and transparent as possible.

\_\_\_\_\_ They know exactly why they have chosen something as a priority.

\_\_\_\_\_ They try to get as many different ideas as possible first, before starting to pick out the priorities.

\_\_\_\_\_ They will go on looking for alternatives until they find one they really like.

\_\_\_\_\_ While most people look for alternatives when they are not satisfied; my managers and supervisors look for them deliberately, even when they are satisfied.

\_\_\_\_\_ They are able to tell themselves the real reason behind a decision they make.

\_\_\_\_\_ Before making a decision, they consider the factors, look at the consequences, get clear about the objectives, assess the priorities, and search for possible alternatives.

\_\_\_\_\_ They are able to see the other person's point-of-view whether agreeing with it or not.

\_\_\_\_\_ They are able to spell out the differences and similarities between different viewpoints.

\_\_\_\_\_ **TOTAL SCORE.**

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## Francis on Discernment

Let's return to Francis' campaign for the teaching of *discernment*.

Pope Francis says priests must be taught to see shades of grey.

During *World Youth Day 2016* Francis had a Q&A session with his fellow Jesuits in Krakow on the high importance of discernment in everyday life.

He asked the Jesuits to start teaching discernment over judgment.

The pope charged them to begin an outreach to diocesan seminaries and diocesan priests.

He has charged Jesuits with sharing the careful art of discernment.

He felt that some seminaries are not teaching the skills priests need when facing difficult pastoral situations brought to them by those seeking guidance.

They are too judgmental, too black and white.

*“Some programs of priestly formation run the risk of educating in the light of overly clear and distinct ideas, and therefore to act within limits and criteria that are rigidly defined in advance.*



He thinks that priests who weren't taught the "wisdom of discernment" during their formation years, later may *"find themselves in difficulty in accompanying the life of so many young people and adults."*

*"Many people leave the confessional disappointed. Not because the priest is bad, but because the priest doesn't have the ability to discern situations, to accompany them in authentic discernment,"* the Pope said. *"They don't have the needed formation."*

The Vatican newspaper noted on that occasion that the Pope referred to the need for discernment 35 times in his papal exhortation!

He has repeated this on his regular teachings.

This Vatican pivot from its medieval Thomist philosophy of *judgment* to a new Franciscan one of *discernment* must have profound global consequences over time.

I can't help thinking that both Jesus and Joseph would approve.

## Part Four

### Greyscale Thinking

Along with the many millions, I watched the live broadcast of the US 2016 Presidential debates as the two candidates, Clinton and Trump, spoke in turn.

I soon began to get that familiar feeling of disappointment and bewilderment at the quality of the level of discussion so typical of the Westminster system of debate which is still used widely around the world.

So, I tried a simple discernment experiment.

As each speaker made their claims and touted their policies I simply asked myself: *"Is it true?"* and *"Is what you are now saying a genuine attempt at making a fully true statement?"*

And then I gave that statement a 'truth rating' out of 10 ... 1 being low and 10 being high.

Rarely could I confidently answer, *"Yes, that is true!"*

If I had to make a discerning guess I would say that more than 75% of their statements and claims were only half-truths ... at best.

And, as the widely-quoted Yiddish proverb says ... *A half-truth is a whole lie.*

(NOTE: This is a simple discernment experiment you can try for yourself.

The same experiment could be used in other situations where the detection of half-truths is required.

In the media there are many opportunities to do this in current affairs, business, politics and other programs and articles.

Religious sermons, TV ads, blogs and tweets may also provide useful opportunities to detect half truths.

For the first time in history lies can travel at the speed of light.

In our exploding world of cybermedia with social media, photoshop, digital manipulation, phone-hacking and peer2peer messaging at the speed of light,

I believe that the global epidemic spread of lies may be one of the most serious challenges facing long-term human survival.

Children, in particular, are absurdly inexperienced, insecure and ill-equipped in their approach to the crackling chaos of the internet—the 24/7/365 whirling, howling, cacophonous wilderness of the greedy grasping global marketplace with its siren songs, ferocious fads, toxic wastes and vicious moods, its callous explosions, its viral plagues and epidemics and cruel and sudden extinctions.

These hidden minefields of traps and predators are putting capricious end to the promising future, safe conduct and healthy development of their most precious possession. Their brain.

While kids probably already have good anti-viral protection for their laptops and smartphones my concern here is that they also should have equal protection for their greatest gadget of all. Their own personal necktop computer.

When you think about it we all need personal protection against infection from malware in our necktop computer.



This malware mostly consists of lies that are presented to us as being truths.

Offline or online, the world is a wide web of truths. It's a shopping mall. A huge marketplace of all kinds of truths. Little truths. Big truths. There are many, many truths. Millions of them. These truths live in brains and are, literally, hopping about from brain to brain via smartphones all day long, 24/7. Yes, 365.

There are all kinds of truths that want to live in your brain. Some are true and some are untrue. There are acquired truths.

There are real truths. There are new truths and old truths. Unscientific and scientific. Low-probability and high-probability. Dormant and dominant. Lazy and busy. Simple truths. Complex. Vicious and virtuous truths. Dumb. Clever. Logical and lateral. Popular truths and secret ones. Fast truths and slow truths. There are convenient truths and inconvenient truths. etc. etc.

*true 1. in accordance with fact or reality. 2. genuine; not spurious or counterfeit.*

- Oxford English Dictionary

This OED definition of true suggests we can divide all these truths into two general categories: fake and real. To paraphrase the OED, fake truths are spurious and counterfeit. Real truths accord with fact and reality.

There are hives of truths, megahives. There are places that host replicating truths.

For example Facebook and Wikipedia and Weibo. Here are millions of truths buzzing about from brain to brain on second-by-second transactions at the speed of light across the wired world.

Some truths are better at replicating than others. Some win. Some lose.

Remember, truths always need homes to live in and these homes are human brains. The most successful truths are the ones that are good at acquiring brains. They spread, virally, from brain to brain across the web.

Other truths are less successful and some may not even survive. This is the darwinian fate of truths. Replicate or die!

Now. This is the thing. Get ready for what may come as a big shock.

The cognitive consequences of this next insight are huuuuuuuge!

**The most successful truths are not always the real truths!**

Fake truths often spread faster than real truths. Think about what this means ...

Counterfeit memes are often more popular than facts.

Convenient truths may acquire many more brains than inconvenient truths.

So, from now on, we are going to divide all the truths in the world into two categories: acquired and real.

Real truths are those truths that are supported by facts and most accord with reality. They have the balance of evidence on their side.

Acquired truths are those that are simply good at getting replicated into your brain but are not real truths at all.

In particular, I now want to draw your attention to ATV, the Acquired Truth Virus.

The Acquired Truth Virus, or ATV, is a brainvirus that lives in your brain which claims to be a real truth but is not. It's a fake. It's counterfeit.

This book about discernment also shows you how to protect your brain from ATV.

As an antidote, SOT has put forward a new thinking method to help meet this challenge.

To follow on from the previous SOT thinking tools (*thinking hats* and *brain software*) this new tool is called: *greyscale thinking*.

*Greyscale Thinking: how to sort a truth from a lie.*



I was once contacted by a young man in London who is a teacher/coach and personal trainer/consultant. He is in the early stages of his career and he sought my advice. He asked me this question: *What makes a great teacher?* That is a very good question. It's exactly the question he should be asking as he embarks on this vocation.

My response to him was this: While there are many things that can make a teacher a much better one there is one non-negotiable, one litmus test, which defines a great teacher.



This test is about how the teacher's performance stacks up to the BIG question: **IS IT TRUE?**

Is what the teacher is teaching a TRUTH or a LIE? The answer to this question is what sorts out the frauds from the professors. If this test is passed then the teacher can be a great teacher if not then the teacher will always be a failure ... in my view.

Anyone can make a claim. All sorts of claims are made in business, in science, in religion, in families, in governments, in education, in politics, on blogs and in the media. But is it a true claim?

How closely does it correspond to reality? Or, is the claim a lie? How do we know? Does it even matter?

Yes. It does matter whether a claim is a truth or a lie.

For example, many people believe things which are dangerous lies. These lies may have been protected from thinking for hundreds of years.

These lies all have *consequences* which may range from deception to dementia to death.

Like a brainvirus, these lies can infect the brains of very young children.

This is happening right now to millions of children as you read this article.

*I do believe that the global epidemic spread of lies may one of the most serious challenges facing long-term human survival.*

To help meet this challenge I am introducing the idea of *greyscale thinking* (US *grayscale*).

Greyscale thinking is simple, fast and scientific. Anyone, anywhere and anytime can use greyscale thinking to help sort out a truth from a lie.

Any child can learn to use it. Greyscale thinking can be taught to kids by parents and by teachers.

Any employee can learn to use it. Greyscale thinking can be taught to employees by managers and leaders.

Once a 'claim' is made it can be subjected to questioning which reveals whether the claim is closer to being a 'truth' or a 'lie'.

In 1983 at SOT we pioneered the 'six thinking hats' method for better thinking.

Nearly 100 years earlier the celebrated English poet, Rudyard Kipling, promoted his 'six honest men' – the use of six questions – as a guide for better thinking.

You may have heard it before.

Here is Kipling's clever poem:

*I have six honest serving men they  
taught me all I knew. Their names  
are What, and Where and When;  
and Why and How and Who.*

**SIX TRUE QUESTIONS:**

The methodology of *greyscale thinking* is the cognitive skill of putting a CLAIM to the SIX TRUE QUESTIONS:

The answers to each of the 6 questions moves the CLAIM to and fro along the greyscale continuum:

| TRUTH    what?    where?    when?    why?    how?    who?    LIE |



| TRUTH ..... LIE |

The answers to each of the 6 questions indicate, on the balance of the evidence, whether the CLAIM is more likely to be a TRUTH or more likely to be a LIE.

It is the deliberate effort one makes to move closer to a truth and to move further away from a lie that produces all the benefits of greyscale thinking.

No claim should ever be protected from questioning.

Any claim that has ever been made in all of history and any claim that ever will be made can be illuminated, examined, tested, investigated and accepted or rejected using the 6 true questions of *greyscale thinking*.

What difference does it make?  
The difference is an immediate increase in:

- your survival intelligence: your skills to survive and prosper in a rapidly changing environment, and
- your speed of thought: the speed with which you can escape from your current view of the situation in order to find a much better view.

How long does it take to learn?

It takes ten minutes a day, for ten days, to learn greyscale thinking.

10 x 10.



## Part Five

### Bad Philosophy: Aristotle's Boxes

The most difficult feat of human thinking is to escape from the box of our own logic. Escaping from our box can be so difficult that most people simply cannot do it most of the time.

For some thinkers it can take ten years or more to escape from their thinking box.

Others can take a lifetime. There are those who never do. Bad Philosophy!

The skill of thought leadership is to think outside your own box. It's to separate box thinking from reality. This is the very physics of thinking. The escape from the box is good philosophy.

Who invented box thinking?

Box Thinking was invented around 2500 years ago. The inventor was Aristotle. He was a Greek thinker who studied under Plato for twenty years. Box Thinking is a method of thinking that relies on words. It needs the certainty of words to work. It's logical. It's bad philosophy.

Box thinking uses words as labels. It uses these labels to sort everything into the 'correct' boxes.

To cope with the chaotic jumble of everyday reality and the harsh indifferent randomness of events ARISTOTELIAN BOXES are created and verbal thoughts are labelled and then put in the matching box.

Bad Philosophy.

For example, Aristotle took the random thing of GOVERNMENT and he boxed it into ordered categories:

constitutional  
tyrranical  
monarchy  
aristocracy  
oligarchy  
democracy.

Even today in Australia people are still discussing which Aristotelian box to choose from: monarchy or republic?

Bad Philosophy!

It's as if they were the only options. Aristotle loved his boxes. He was quite anal about everything. He craved order.

In Aristotle's Lyceum everything was covered by rules, rules, rules. The living arrangements, the study courses, the timetables were all dominated by rules and regulations.

Bad philosophy.

For Aristotle, just thinking was not good enough. No, you had to do box thinking. You had to think logically. Logic is narrowly obsessed with hunting down contradictions. In logic, a thing cannot be in box A and box NOT-A at the same time.

No, it must be sorted and classified into the 'correct' box.

Bad Philosophy.

To make more boxes Aristotle got busy breaking everything up into subjects like: politics, ethics, rhetoric (speech-making), physics, biology, meteorology, etc.

Finally, he developed his very own thinking software called LOGIC. Aristotle invented a real thinking app called the *syllogism*. In earlier books I have called it Aristotle's Silly Syllogism.

# Why?

Because it lacks wisdom and common-sense. His mentor Plato had already invented the idea of 'truth' and so Aristotle became a passionate and obsessive truth freak.

His syllogism starts with a local truth. Then the thinker simply matches up items that come along and ... *ca-ching* ... out comes the conclusion.

Simple really.

And very silly.

First example:

LOCAL TRUTH: Swans are white

ITEM: This is a swan

LOGICAL CONCLUSION: Therefore it is white

Second example:

LOCAL TRUTH: Salespeople tell lies

ITEM: Amy is a salesperson

LOGICAL CONCLUSION: Therefore Amy is lying

Third example:

TRUTH: Our church is the right church

ITEM: You are not a member

LOGICAL CONCLUSION: Therefore you are wrong (This was the logic of the French and Spanish Inquisitions)



Fourth example:

LOCAL TRUTH: The earth is flat

ITEM: Flatness has an edge

LOGICAL CONCLUSION: Therefore you will fall off the edge if you go too far from the shore.

Fifth example:

LOCAL TRUTH: The President is the law

ITEM: The President did something

LOGICAL CONCLUSION: Therefore it is legal

(This was Nixon's logic box.)

Sixth example:

TRUTH: A boss's opinion is best

ITEM: You are not a boss

LOGICAL CONCLUSION: So when we want your opinion we'll give it to you

**Bad Philosophy.**

Aristotle was a human filing cabinet. He loved mail-sorting. This goes here and that goes there.

He yearned for the order that his classifications brought to his ideas and his thoughts.

He assumed that the same order that he found he could impose on words and language could also be imposed on the real world.

Many have made the same mistake.

Aristotle's cognitive operating system, *logic*, has dominated Western education for too long.

How come we still think this way 2500 years after Aristotle joined Socrates and Plato on Mount Olympus?

How come this ancient brain software has survived so long?

Who kept it alive?

Who spread it around?

Who programmed it into your brain?

Of course, it really does have to be said that Aristotle made a very great contribution to thinking that was needed in his time.

He was no villain.

My aim is to point out how the use of *logic* has been subsequently and often ruthlessly imposed by authorities, and vested institutions over 2500 years.

Well now, when it came to the spreading of Aristotle's Logic Thinking Software no one was more successful than the Neapolitan nobleman, Thomas Aquinas. In the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century, Thomas discovered a new translation of Aristotle, from the Greek, and set out to synthesize Aristotelian ideas in such a way that it was useful for defending 'The Truth'.

‘The Truth’, proclaimed Thomas, was the teachings of the Church. his church.

As it happened, Thomas’ Church was already an information monopoly.

All European universities had been established and were run by the Church with its head office in Rome.

The Vatican literally owned all of knowledge and was busily packaging the content and exporting its proprietary education system globally.

The powerful but flawed thinking software, *logic*, was the cognitive operating system that was embedded in this education enterprise.

This was thanks to Thomas Aquinas also known as the 'Angelic Doctor' of the church.

This global educational enterprise amounted to programming brains with what the church taught *verbatim* and repeating it back again ... without error!

Logic, as we have seen, is very good at hunting down contradictions or 'mistakes'. Scholarship was reduced to mere defense of Vatican teachings, which were known collectively as – 'The Truth'.

In Thomist Aristotelian neuroware, the logic operating system worked like this:

LOCAL TRUTH: Vatican teachings are 'The Truth'.

ITEM: Using logic to match things up we ask: Does ITEM match TRUTH?

LOGICAL CONCLUSION: If YES, then it's RIGHT. If NO, then it's WRONG.

Bad Philosophy.

Thomist Aristotelian doctrine could show up any contradictions. It could show if a point-of-view did not exactly match 'The Truth' and therefore it was heresy.

Greco-Roman Logic. Cut out their tongues! Crank up the rack! Get the branding iron! Off to the stake! The logical work of The Inquisition still sends shivers up my spine.

Aquinas imbedded Aristotlian logic into the Vatican education system. Greco-Roman Logic has become the main thinking software of Western civilization, wherever it has been exported.



‘The Truth’ (embedded with logic) was proselytised to all corners of the earth with missionary zeal. In fact, the Western education system may well be Europe’s most successful export ever.

Australia is a good example. Although geographically in South East Asia, Australia has culturally been part of Europe for the past 200 years.

At that time, along with rabbits, the Western education system was exported into Australia. It went viral!

Even today we still send very young children to school and infect their brains with Greco-Roman logic. We still tell children that life simplistically is to be sorted into RIGHT and WRONG. And all they have to do is avoid 'mistakes' and contradictions and to get the RIGHT answer. And all will be OK. But things are changing in Rome. The wise and generous lateral thinker, Pope Francis, says: *"Proselytism is solemn nonsense, it makes no sense. We need to get to know each other, listen to each other and improve our knowledge of the world around us."* Good philosophy.

Things are changing in Australia, too. Since World War II Australia has become less Eurocentric and more Euro-Asian.

Today, Australia is a multi-cultural society. Accordingly, medieval 'unique rightness' has become a far less useful cognitive asset to young Australians than 'curiosity and diversity'.

Today, Aussie kids are less interested in defending sharp medieval European truths and more interested in designing new fuzzy Aussie truths that are useful and relevant to life in the Third Millennium.

## Part Six

### GE x10

*Larry Page lives by the gospel of 10x. Most companies are happy to improve by 10%. Not the CEO of Google. Page says a 10% improvement means you're basically doing the same as everybody else. But Page expects his employees to create products and services that are 10 times better than the competition.*

- (Steven Levy, WIRED magazine. Cover story, February 2013).

The famous WIRED cover story was about how Larry Page 'lives by the gospel of x10'.

But how did Larry Page hear about x10 Thinking?

Larry Page got x10 from Jack Welch of GE.

Here's the story which I'm often asked to relate.

In the 80s in the USA I co-founded the School of Thinking and designed the *Learn-To-Think Project* whose mission was: to get thinking on the curriculum as a school subject.

With my co-founder, Edward de Bono, we worked with many government bodies, foundations and school districts while we developed programs for the direct teaching of thinking as a skill.

We developed the *Six Thinking Hats* method for teaching thinking.

This method is still being taught in many schools around the world.

Since then School of Thinking has been responsible for the distribution of more than half a billion thinking lessons.

In 1982 I also co-authored, with Edward de Bono, *The Learn-to-Think Coursebook and Instructors Manual* (ISBN 0884961990).

Within a year our book became the cover story of an international *Readers Digest* special edition which reached 68 million readers worldwide!

In New York in 1984, I first published x10 thinking brain in my book *NewSell* (ISBN 0932648568) which was later said to be twenty years ahead of its time.

Although it was provocative and heretical it was also well-received.

IBM was the first of the Fortune 500 to take it up. IBM Europe then sent a corporate jet to fly me to Monte Carlo for two weeks to present x10 thinking to all their senior executives and R&D leaders.

I was even invited to give a private presentation to HSH Albert, The Crown Prince of Monaco. Then IBM invited their executive clients from around the world to my presentation with 12 translators. It was like a mini-UN meeting!



After that, the word got around: *The New York Times*. *The Wall Street Journal*. *USAir Magazine*. Radio, TV etc.

More presentations were sought by Fortune 500 corporations like Borg-Warner senior executives in Bermuda, by State Farm Insurance in Las Vegas and also by the YPO HQ in Texas and their various chapters around the USA.

Because the *Readers Digest* story was also featured in the Arabic edition, *Saudia Airlines* invited me to lecture to their senior executive team for four days in Jeddah.

Soon after, I was invited by Jack Welch, Chairman of GE, to present to his senior managers at a GE leaders conference on Marco Island in the Gulf of Mexico.

Immediately after my *GE x10* presentation Jack jumped up and took the floor. He said to his team: *“x10 is the simplest idea in the world. But, it’s not easy. We’ve gotta reach, we’ve gotta stretch, we’ve gotta go for the x10!”*

From the beginning, Jack became very enthusiastic about x10 thinking. He was a great lateral thinker. I found him to be a CEO of great discernment.

After the conference I flew back to New York with Jack in his jet. Together we planned a project to expand GE x10 and teach it to his wider Leadership team.

The plan was to spread x10 thinking throughout GE via two GE resources: the Leadership Meetings, and the Leadership Academy.

Over the next 4 years (with a theatre quality produced, computerized 30 slide-projector multi-media show) I travelled far and wide from Greenwich to Acapulco.

To GE leadership conferences and to the GE Leadership Academy at Crotonville giving presentations and masterclasses on x10 thinking.

Even today, 30 years later, I'm delighted to be contacted by former GE executives who google and track me down to tell me things like: *“x10 thinking changed my life, my career and my golf game. I even taught it to my kids”*.

It's a real buzz.

Now, looking back since the 1980s we can see the viral spread and it's worth noting the following:

- Jack Welch of GE was a master of x10 thinking. He nicknamed it 'boundaryless thinking' and also "boundarylessness".
- By the time he left Jack had grown the company from a market value of \$14 billion to a market value of \$410 billion making it the most valuable company in the history of the world.
- *"Our dream for the 1990s,"* Welch wrote in GE's 1990 annual report, *"is a boundaryless company where we knock down the walls that separate us from each other on the inside and from our key constituencies on the outside."*

- In his book about his time at GE *Jack: Straight From the Gut* (2001) he wrote about cvs2bvs: *“It would make each of us wake up with the goal of “Finding a Better Way Every Day”. It was a phrase that became a slogan, put up on the walls of GE factories and offices around the world. It was the essence of boundaryless behaviour, and it defined our expectations”*.
- Famous for the little handwritten notes he would send to people, Jack sent me several and the one I prized most said simply: *“Michael, you are a friend of our company”*.
- Since then, thousands of companies in the US and around the world have used ideas from the GE Model.

- . Scores of Fortune 500 companies emulated the leadership example and transformation model set by Jack Welch at GE.
- . In 1999, *Fortune* magazine named him "Manager of the Century".
- . Copious business volumes, *Harvard Business Review* articles and other media have been written about Jack's value-driven transformation of his company.
- . Using his cutting-edge strategies, like Six Sigma, Work Out, and Boundarylessness. Jack has helped to develop more leaders than any other CEO in business history.

- . That I know of, the Jack Welch era at GE produced CEOs for Honeywell, 3M, Boeing, Intuit, Symantec, Home Depot, Chrysler, Siemens and Merck. According to USA Today the top three companies for producing CEOs of other Fortune 500 companies are GE (26), IBM (18) and McKinsey (16).
- . Today, Larry Page of Google is the best proponent of x10 thinking and today Google is the most valuable company in the world. Page says he *“lives by the gospel of x10”* (WIRED, Feb 2013, Cover).
- .
- . Like Jack Welch, Larry Page has also nicknamed x10 thinking. He calls it ... ‘moonshot thinking’.



## Part Seven

The Lateral Thinker: the Grey Pope.

Both Jack Welch and Larry Page are global CEOs who are renowned lateral thinkers.

Another great lateral thinker is the Argentinian, Jorge (haw-hay) Bergoglio.

Also known as Pope Francis, he is the current CEO of the world's biggest and oldest multi-national, Vatican Inc.

The wildly popular Pope Francis is more than a pontiff of the people.

He's an elite executive leader who's reforming the Vatican's troubled finances.

Pope Francis has evolved his own unique style of leadership.

Here are ten of his **personal leadership examples** with which he has exhorted his managers ... his bishops.

I have added short elaborated notes to each example:

### **Example #1 - Smell like your flock!**

Choose leaders who smell like their flock. Appoint managers who live with their employees. Select salespeople who know their customers. Set an example.

### **Example #2 - Don't be isolated!**

Don't hide in your mansion. Be in daily contact with ordinary people. Eat with your employees. Coffee with your customers. Set an example.

### **Example #3 - Get out of the palace!**

Escape from the executive suite. Get out of the boardroom. Leave the office. Get off your smartphone. Go and talk to your employees. Go and chat with your customers. Do it yourself. Set an example.

### Example #4 - Get out of the limo!

Leave the Mercedes behind. Drive around in your Ford. Forget the jet. Ride the subway. Set an example.

### Example #5 - Make a mess!

Tell your people to get out in the streets and make a mess. Don't be afraid to spread the word. Create bottom-up trouble in the branch offices. Get closer to the people. Get rid of top-down managementism. Stop the meetings, meetings, meetings. Get out! Do it yourself. Do it every day. Set an example.

## Example #6 - Hello, it's Jorge!

Escape from uncheck. Don't be afraid to pick up the phone and call your employees. Call your customers. Do it yourself. Do it every day. Set an example.

## Example #7 - Tu not lei.

Be informal not just polite. Leave pomp and ego behind. Eschew titles. Promote intimacy. Set an example.

## Example #8 - Get that thing down! (Francis ordered a statue of him to be removed)

Discourage celebrity. Avoid media for media sake. Get real. Set an example.

### Example #9 - Who am I to judge?

Be inclusive not judgmental. Use discernment. Take off your black hat. Think outside the square. Offer niceness. Forgive and forget. Set an example.

### Example #10 - Benedict, my mentor.

Consult your mentor. Value Grey Hat thinking. Think outside the square. Seek good advice. Value wisdom. Set an example.

And so we have come in a full circle back to where we started. We have seen how for nearly 800 years, since Thomas Aquinas, the Vatican has taught *judgment*.

We have seen how missionaries from the Vatican have spread this brain software (Greco-Roman Logic) around the world and into our brains since we were very small children.

Has it served us well?

Yes, it has served us very well indeed ... but it is not enough.

Defending our righteousness makes us very slow thinkers.

And, the high cost of the judgmental *I-am-right-and-you-are-wrong* confrontations and conflicts are exorbitant. We need a much better way of thinking.

If Pope Francis has his say, the Vatican will teach *discernment*.

As we said at the beginning, this is a very, very BIG transformational change in global policy.

It is enough to make him the greatest lateral thinker in the world. It is also enough for him to deserve the Nobel Peace Prize.

If he does nothing else during his pontificate but switch the Vatican *from judgment to discernment* then this will be enough to make him one of the greatest popes whoever lived.

The Grey Pope.

Go Francis!



This *iphonebook* has been  
purposefully designed  
to be read on your iPhone.

It's free. Pass it on.

Contact the author:

[michael@x10thinking.com](mailto:michael@x10thinking.com)



**Pope Francis** (*Latin*: *Franciscus*; *Italian*: *Francesco*; *Spanish*: *Francisco*; born **Jorge Mario Bergoglio**,<sup>[b]</sup> 17 December 1936) is the **266th** and current **Pope** of the **Roman Catholic Church**, a **title** he holds *ex officio* as **Bishop of Rome**, and **Sovereign** of the **Vatican City**. He chose Francis as his **papal name** in honor of **Saint Francis of Assisi**. Francis is the first **Jesuit** pope, the first from the Americas, the first from the **Southern Hemisphere** and the first non-European pope since the Syrian **Gregory III**, who died in 741. Born in **Buenos Aires, Argentina**, Bergoglio worked briefly as a **chemical technologist** and **nightclub bouncer**<sup>[2]</sup> before beginning **seminary** studies. He was ordained a **Catholic priest** in 1969, and from 1973 to 1979 was Argentina's **provincial superior** of the **Society of Jesus**. He was accused of handing two priests to the **National Reorganization Process** during the **Dirty War**, but the lawsuit was ultimately dismissed. He became the **Archbishop of Buenos Aires** in 1998, and was created a **cardinal** in 2001 by **Pope John Paul II**. He led the Argentine Church during the **December 2001 riots in Argentina**, and the administrations of **Néstor Kirchner** and **Cristina Fernández de Kirchner** considered him a political rival. Following the **resignation of Pope Benedict XVI** on 28 February 2013, **a papal conclave** elected Bergoglio as his successor on 13 March.

From

Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope\\_Francis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Francis)

