



Mental Traps: An Overview

by Andre Kukla

I've written a small (40,000-word) book of self-improvement entitled *Mental Traps*. By definition, mental traps are modes of thinking and acting that take up our time and deplete our energy without accomplishing anything of value for us or for anyone else in return. The novelty of my book is that it identifies a dozen patterns of everyday activity that satisfy the definition. These "mental traps" are absolute wastes of time. For example, the trap of *fixation* is fallen into when progress toward the goal is stalled and we merely "mark time" until we can get going again, instead of turning to other useful or pleasurable pursuits; we fall into the trap of *persistence* when we continue to work toward a goal that has lost its value, as when we finish a game that has become boring just "to get it over with". The material in this book is unique: there is no other work that systematically surveys the various ways of wasting time. Moreover, the advice I give is often novel,

and sometimes diametrically opposed to conventional or proverbial wisdom. For example, I deny the validity of Benjamin Franklin's dictum never to put off until tomorrow what can be done today. On the contrary, I maintain that work should be postponed for as long as further delay doesn't incur any penalty, for that way we lose nothing, but gain the advantage of having access to the latest relevant information before we act.

As my CV indicates, I'm a professor emeritus at the University of Toronto, where I taught courses in both the Departments of Psychology and of Philosophy. I've published numerous philosophical and psychological articles and books, including books by Oxford and MIT Press. *Mental Traps* is my first foray into writing for the general public. The entire manuscript is complete.