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Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 019

January 11, 2012

Greetings!

Great having you with us in 2012! I am geared up for providing you high value and solid content for each of the 24 issues that will come to you this year.

I hope you have set some goals for 2012. And I hope you achieve them. In fact, I expect it.

This issue finds us starting out with a discussion of one key way you can do just that.

OK, let's get started!

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood



Succeeding in Unexpected Ways

I read an article some years ago that had a profound effect on me, so much so that I've never forgotten its basic message.

The article was discussing the legendary football coach Bear Bryant, who, upon his retirement as head coach at The University of Alabama, held the record for most wins of any college football coach. The authors of the article had asked Coach Bryant what the secret to his success consisted of. And the coach gave them his honest answers

- recruiting, conditioning, mental toughness, ball control, etc. Trouble is, the authors discovered, while all of those things did indeed appear to have some importance for the 'Bama football program, they ultimately proved to be of only moderate impact. What was revealing is that the researchers discovered THE KEY COMPONENT that contributed the most to the success of Coach Bear Bryant's football dynasty, and it was something never mentioned or even alluded to by the coach.

The researchers discovered that during practices, there were video cameras everywhere, all over the field, filming every conceivable stance, cut, fake, punt, pass, block, hike, reception, tackle, etc. Not only was everything filmed, everything was analyzed with the relevant players in the conference rooms. This dissecting of performance proved to be the major component of how Coach Bryant managed greatness - yet he never mentioned it to the researchers when they interviewed him.

Lesson learned: when you ask successful people how they do it, listen carefully to what they tell you. Then realize that you probably don't yet have the full story. Therefore, observe their actions and activities first hand; don't merely take their word for it when they tell you what makes them successful.



It's not that they (or Coach Bryant) are lying or trying to mislead you.

They (like Coach Bryant) may simply be oblivious to the key factors that contribute to their own superb performance. Or they may have simply overlooked the obvious. You can't simply take their word for it. To borrow a favorite Russian proverb often used by President Reagan, you must "trust, but verify."

Action plan: pick 3 to 5 people that perform brilliantly and who consistently get results in a field you are interested in - whether it's sales, cooking, piano performance, writing, management, building warm friendships, or public speaking. Ask them what they do to generate such results. Then observe them closely. You will almost certainly spot some things they do which they never so much as hinted at. There's your real answer.

Then, go and do thou likewise.

Why Thomas Friedman Abetted Anti-Semitism by Dennis Prager, Guest Columnist

After a lifetime of studying the left, I have concluded that leftism is a form of moral poison. It causes otherwise decent and kind people who take it into their systems to say and/or do cruel and sometimes evil things.



While not specifically about the left, a major new scholarly book, "Pathological Altruism" (Oxford University Press), explores this phenomenon of people wanting to do good things yet ending up doing bad. It applies to The New York Times foreign affairs columnist Thomas L. Friedman, who has a deep altruistic urge to bring peace to the Middle East. But because he sees the world through the liberal/left prism, he says morally reprehensible things -- statements that individuals associated with hate-filled, non-altruistic groups and ideologies would make.

In his Dec. 13 column, yet another of his attacks on Israel and its supporters, Friedman wrote: "The standing ovation (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu) got in Congress this year was ... bought and paid for by the Israel lobby."

If a non-Jew had written this, he would have been severely condemned for writing something outright anti-Semitic. The notion that Jews manipulate the levers of power in Western societies for their own nefarious ends is probably the most enduring of all the West's Jew-hating myths. It was a staple of Nazi anti-Semitism and is the single most repeated charge of those in the Arab and larger Muslim worlds who seek to annihilate Israel, since its purpose is to convince people that non-Jews who support Israel have been paid off by Jews.

But Friedman, who is a Jew and a liberal, can get away with it -- even though it is so morally repulsive that Jew-haters can now assert they are merely quoting a well-known Jew. Who's going to call him on it? The New York

Times?

To his credit, one congressman did condemn Friedman. Rep. Steven R. Rothman (D-N.J.) released this statement: "Thomas Friedman's defamation against the vast majority of Americans who support the Jewish State of Israel, in his New York Times opinion piece today, is scurrilous, destructive and harmful to Israel and her advocates in the U.S. Mr. Friedman is not only wrong, but he's aiding and abetting a dangerous narrative about the U.S.-Israel relationship and its American supporters.

"I gave Prime Minister Netanyahu a standing ovation, not because of any nefarious lobby, but because it is in America's vital national security interests to support the Jewish State of Israel, and it is right for Congress to give a warm welcome to the leader of such a dear and essential ally. Mr. Friedman owes us all an apology."

Friedman's charge, as Rothman points out, is not only "scurrilous, destructive and harmful" to Israel, but it is also a lie. The Congress of the United States -- including Republicans who have virtually no Jews in their district or state -- supports Israel for the same reasons Harry Truman recognized Israel against the advice of the U.S. State Department, Richard Nixon saved Israel during the 1973 War despite his anger at Jewish liberals, and Dick Cheney vigorously supported Israel despite Wyoming's having almost no Jewish population. They all believed that Israel shares America's moral values, while Israel's enemies (who happen to hate America as well as Israel) do not.

So how does Mr. Friedman, whom I assume is an honorable man and well-intentioned seeker of peace in the Middle East, write something that is equally mendacious and hateful, that abets anti-Semitism and that labels every pro-Israel congressman and senator a political whore?

Because he is a man of the left.

When good people adopt the leftist worldview, they eventually support ideas and say things that are cruel. Thomas Friedman did not write this anti-Semitic libel because he is an anti-Semite. Of course he is not an anti-Semite. He wrote it because he is a leftist.

Leftism poisons everything it influences -- from journalism to the arts to universities to religion to government to male-female relations. And ultimately leftism poisons

character. This does not mean that everyone with left-wing views becomes a bad person, and it doesn't mean that everyone with conservative views is a good person. Both judgments are untrue and foolish.

But it does mean that leftism leads to pathologic altruism, i.e., bad things done by people with pure intentions. Just as Mahatma Gandhi's hatred of violence led him to tell the Jews of Europe not to resist Hitler, so too has leftism led decent people who would weep at Israel's destruction to mouth the very same lies about Israel as those who seek its annihilation.

Shameless Plug

Ara
Norwood
will be
delivering a
3-day



management development workshop to a private corporation, but has been given permission to open up two seats for guests. If any of the readership of *Uncommon Sense* would like to attend all or part of this seminar, let us know.

The dates are January 17-19 in Orange County.

From Ara's Journal

A Profound Question

A profound question I have for myself and for others is this: If you were to embrace the premise that there is no evidence for or against the existence of God and an afterlife, what do you hope is the case? Do you hope there is a God, or do you hope there is no God? In other words, are your inclinations and your preferences in favor of a reality in which there is an afterlife with a Divine Parent, a Plan, etc., or would you rather that this



mortal existence be all there is, and that the notion of a God with moral absolutes be a myth?

I want to proffer an admission. When it comes to the question of whether there is a God and an afterlife, I fall on the side of innately hoping it is so. And I think my profound question is a fair one that should be asked of anyone - particularly atheists and agnostics - as I think discussions about the existence of God between theists and atheists often get bogged down and mired in arguments about the nature of evidence (i.e., whether the evidence is strong, etc.)

And that is why I framed my profound question within a context of taking evidence (strong or weak) out of the equation altogether. (I should say in passing that my overall belief in the existence of God does come from a wide swathe of evidences, some normative and some esoteric, but that is the subject of another time.) I do not wish to allow evidence to muddy the waters of an important observation about human nature: *bias and inclination tends to color how we see evidence.*

Here's a quaint little couplet that may make my point rather clear:

*"Two men looked through prison bars,
One sees the mud; one sees the stars."*

As is evident in the couplet above, our bias, our "way of being" determines what we see.

I wonder what it is about an atheist that maintains the chutzpah to deny the existence of God. Many an atheist will decry the alleged arrogance of the theist for claiming to affirm the belief in a higher power that the atheist insists is a myth. How is it the atheist, aware of the haughty conceits of the theist, is blind to his own haughty conceits? Even more importantly, what is it that drives the atheist to embrace a world-view of faith in faithlessness? Why default to that bleak paradigm?

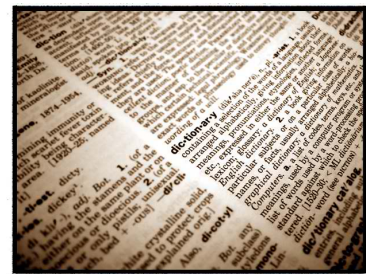
Aside from the obvious overdose of hubris employed by the cocksure atheist, I wonder why they embrace an assumption of a godless universe. . . Could it be that they are of a character that is more comfortable, more "at home," in such a universe? Is it somehow important to their psyche to live their lives in a world where the operating principle is godlessness, purposelessness, and

moral relativity (i.e., anything goes)? Is the atheist truly operating from a deep belief that there is no evidence for God, or, rather, is it possibly the case that the atheist simply has a predisposition to hate holy things and love un-holy things, and such loyalties cause them to parade around in the guise of a "reasoned, progressive, scientific, rational" child of the enlightenment?

Some enlightenment!

The World of Words

Building Your Power of Expression



Furtive, adj.

Pronunciation: 'fərtiv

Meaning: This splendid word generally suggests a situation in which someone wishes to remain unnoticed, undiscovered, etc., usually due to the belief that if found out, trouble would follow; the sense of something being done in a covert or clandestine manner.

Usage:

- *The bashful young man attempted to steal a furtive glance in the direction of the women, all of whom were already staring at him.*
- *The couple stole away for a furtive day of revelry and passion.*
- *We never saw her leave the room; she must have used a side exit in a stealthful and furtive manner.*

Subscribers, the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" is now complete and has been sent out. If you have not received it, please communicate that to me via email (ara@aranorwood.com).

For more information on my work, follow me on Twitter ("Ara Norwood"), or on Facebook (keyword "Leadership Development Systems") or via my website: www.aranorwood.com

Sincerely,

