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Issue: # 027

May 13, 2012

Greetings!

I am struck by the number of terms that utilize the word *mother* in some way:

- Mother Nature
- Mother Lode
- Mother Country
- Mother-of-Pearl
- Motherboard
- Mother Tongue

all of which evoke a sense of origins, and the generative process of bequeathing life, or bringing about the beginnings of something. One gets a sense that there is something very profound about mothers and motherhood. It makes perfect sense to me that among the Ten Commandments is one calling for the honoring of one's Mother and Father.

Here's to all the mothers out there, three of whom are particularly dear to me: the mother of my children, the mother of the mother of my children, and my own mother, now deceased. Happy Mother's Day, and thank you for the incomparable work you do for not only your families but for civilization as a whole.

OK, let's get started!

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood



One Sure Way to Beat The
Competition

It's never been easier to get ahead of the pack than it is today. One reason I say that (and there are many) is due to an addiction that so many of your peers have.

The addiction to which I refer is not drugs, gambling, or pornography - although admittedly, those addictions are wreaking havoc on society. Instead, the addiction to which I refer involves gadgets such as mobile phones, tablets, portable gaming devices, and the like. It seems that many people are simply hooked on them. And as a result, far too many people are squandering time (their most precious resource) drowning in irrelevancies.

As for you moving ahead of the pack, it's easy. Make reading a habit. Devour books. It doesn't much matter if you prefer audio books, virtual books, or traditional, hard-copy books. But you can take this one to the bank: to the degree that you spend your discretionary time reading good books, you will be setting yourself up for success. Doors will open. You'll be better prepared and more informed to seize the day when opportunities arise.



Part of this is due to the quality of the material found in books. Consider this:

- Most published books represent the best the author has to offer. The author of a book has usually given careful thought to what they are trying to say. Often what is written is based on research or solid experience.
- Books that are published are invariably edited by one or more individuals whose full-time job is to polish the writing of the manuscripts they receive. The books are vetted and/or refereed, so to speak.
- Consider that with books, unlike a live lecture, you can stop after reading a given paragraph and contemplate what you just read. Further, you can re-read what you just read a second or third time. You can put the book on the shelf and then pick it up again for a second reading. As one who has read many of my favorite books a second time, I can testify to the value of a second reading, as I always gain much the second time around that I overlooked

the first time.

- Reading usually helps you expand your vocabulary.
- Reading enables you to consider concepts that you otherwise might never come into contact with.
- Reading makes you more informed. The more you read, the smarter you come across. And that alone opens doors.

So let your peers be hooked on their obsession with the steady stream of nonsensical text messages that swarm their electronic devices. Break with the pack and pick up a good book.

(Editors Note: for a glimpse of my top ten books, plus a host of other books on many subjects that inform my thinking, check out the annotated bibliography on my website. [Click here to go there!](#))

A First: An Endorsement of the Redefinition of Marriage by a Sitting President

This week was historical in some ways: it is the first time that the redefining of the institution of marriage was countenanced by the President of the United States. Yes, President Obama is a Democrat, but the last Democrat to occupy the White House instituted the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, keeping homosexuals in the closet who served in our Armed Forces. So this is unprecedented.



Yet, since President Obama is the most far-Left President in U.S. history, with no previous President coming even remotely close to his socialist mindset, no one should be surprised at his decision to go public with his views that gay marriage should become law. I am surprised only in that it took this long for the President to state his views with such candor - even though his statement was a contradiction of previous statements he has made on the issue (which, by itself, is not an issue to me; people do have the right to change their mind.)

What I find noteworthy, however, is his rationale for approving of gay marriage. He cites the New Testament as his guide for approving of same-sex marriage, specifically, the Golden Rule as found in Matthew 7:12. Here is Mr. Obama in his own words:

"When we think about our faith, the thing at root that we think about is not only Christ sacrificing himself on our behalf, but it's also the Golden Rule. ... Treat others the way you would want to be treated."

I wonder if the President has ever read other portions of the New Testament which speak more directly to the issue:

*For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly. . . Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Romans 1:26-27, 32.)**

An even more interesting element of the story concerns Mr. Obama's daughters, Malia and Sasha, who are said to have friends whose parents are same-sex couples. Consider carefully the President's thought process:

"It wouldn't dawn on them that somehow their friends' parents would be treated differently. It doesn't make sense to them and frankly, that's the kind of thing that prompts a change in perspective."

So let's think this through: the President's daughters, ages 13 and 10, do not grasp something as complex as what kinds of rights same-sex couples should or should not have, and thus, the President of the United States is going to change *his* position on the matter and announce it to the world during an election season. One would think something more robust or profound than the lack of wisdom and understanding possessed by his young daughters would bring about a public statement of such gravity on the part of the President of the United States.

**Lest I be misunderstood, I should point out that my motivation*

in citing the passage in Romans is not a subtle way of claiming I advocate the death penalty for homosexuals. I do not. My point is that if President Obama is going to cite the New Testament as a basis for supporting same-sex marriage, I would be interested to know how he squares that rationale with the passage in Romans, a passage which unequivocally condemns homosexual practice.

Shameless Plug: Reader Weighs In on Uncommon Sense

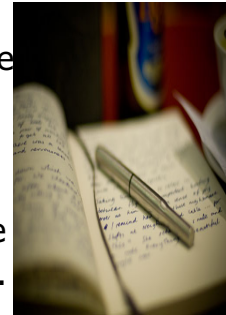
We received the following commendation from a reader:

Uncommon Sense articulates well-thought-out reasoning that challenges fundamental assumptions behind our culture's heavy emphasis on the need for political correctness. Each installment comes as a breath of fresh air by providing expression to reality that is deeply held by the silent majority but discarded and trampled by much of the media and political elite in today's society.

David Dorough
Los Angeles, California

From Ara's Journal

I had a wonderfully engaging dinner conversation this week with a woman whose birthday I was helping to celebrate. A prominent, world-renowned scholar and expert on leadership, she was one of my most valued professors during my graduate school days, and she was as tough as nails. Now, at age 80, she seemed slightly more stooped and smaller in stature than I recalled, but her intellectual skills remained vast, deep, and highly honed.



At one point she told me she was a non-practicing Jew, which is something I wasn't expecting to hear, as I never had any conception of what her religious faith, if any, might consist of. It had never come up while I was pursuing an advanced degree with her.

Also revealing was her statement that she was an atheist. Whenever I hear someone tell me they are an atheist, I always wonder if they mean "agnostic". So I asked her:

"Are you saying that you know there is no such thing as God and an afterlife, or are you saying you're not sure if there is a God and an afterlife?" She astutely replied that in her view, no one can absolutely know either way, but inasmuch as she has no evidence that there is a God or an afterlife, it is her firm conviction that there is no God or afterlife. Furthermore, she wondered aloud why a God would allow so much human suffering. If there were such a person as God who allowed so much unjust suffering, she reasoned, she wanted nothing to do with such a Being.

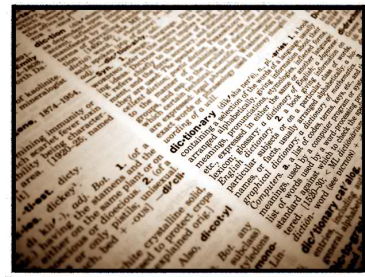
As I listened to her, the wry observation by a religious leader from her tradition came to mind. Rabbi Milton Steinberg once quipped, "The believer in God has to account for the existence of unjust suffering; the atheist has to account for the existence of everything else." But I didn't quote that line to her. Instead, I told her that I acknowledged that the mystery behind human suffering is a thorny one. However, I told her that if there is such a Being as God (as I am rather confident there is), such a Being would possess an infinitely more vast perspective on things than do we puny humans - much like my ability to perform trigonometry, write poetry, or compose a piano sonata would utterly elude the mental processing of an ant.

As my professor had, earlier in the conversation, quoted the Old Testament prophet Isaiah to me, I turned to that same Old Testament figure who recorded the words of the Almighty to him as follows:

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.
(Isaiah 55:8-9.)*

Thus, I reasoned, whatever we humans believe about unjust human suffering, our thoughts, assumptions, biases, and mental models are as primitive ramblings when compared to the wider, deeper, more evolved perceptions of a divine Being.

She shrugged, and changed the subject.



Strictures, n.

Pronunciation: 'stri:k ch ərs

Meaning: This word is often confused by others as a misspelling of the word "structures" and I have had more than one person who read my written use of the word assume I had made a spelling error. The word essentially refers to confines or boundaries. Think of it as a restriction imposed on a person or an activity.

Usage:

- *Given my role, I have no choice but to operate within certain narrow strictures of decorum.*
- *This new job opportunity removes most of the previously troublesome strictures that annoyed you.*
- *Perhaps, given the strictures within which we assess the students, all instructors should have had a hand in crafting the assessment instrument itself.*

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,

Ara Norwood
Leadership Development Systems