

Unc ommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 037

October 15, 2012

Greetings!

I don't know if you sense it, but there seems to be a lot of excitement in the air. It seems to me that every day brings with it new challenges, new possibilities, and new options. Some days absolutely do bring problems, headaches, even tragedies, while others bring great fortune, fond memories and captivating experiences. I myself have witnessed or experienced just this past week events that could truly be termed crises. Yet somehow, I have been blessed with the ability to compartmentalize my life's experience and not allow the dark clouds of trouble to derail me.

We are surrounded by a long train of good fortune, either immediately, or soon. We must not divert our attention away from that truth when buffeted by life's sorrows.

Trust me on that.

OK, let's get started.

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood



Reading More Effectively

I have advocated for greater amounts of reading. I think it high time I explain something about reading.

We need to keep in mind that reading is a means to an end, and therefore, merely plowing through a book just so you can say you've finished it misses the point. There is a hierarchy to the value of reading. Here is my attempt to

describe that hierarchy, moving from low levels of effectiveness to high levels of effectiveness:



- It's one thing to read (and finish) a book.
- It's another thing to grasp the message and main points of the book.
- It's yet another thing to maintain a remembrance of what the book contained.
- It's still another thing to be in a position to talk about, intelligently, what the book contained, its main points, its thesis, etc.
- Finally, the crowning achievement of effective reading occurs when you've read so carefully, so finely, and so rigorously, that you've made the book's contents a part of your character. You then are in possession of new and better beliefs, attitudes, and even habits or practices.

Needless to say, effective reading is no easy task, and usually doesn't occur from merely one reading of a given book.

The Blight of Two Americas

I usually use this column to report on some news item that caught my eye. Here I will deviate from that practice and simply share a few thoughts about the upcoming presidential election and offer my perspective about how to approach the voting booth on November 6th.

Political parties, which our founders called factions, have not been good for America. But they have been a part of

you would like to attend, send me an email



(ara@aranorwood.com) and I'll make the necessary inquiries.

From Ara's Journal

One of my favorite stories is about the Six Blind Brothers of Indostan. I first learned about this story when I was in high school. At the time, it was presented to me in the form of poetry. I won't recite the poem here, but I will share the essence of the story.



There were six blind brothers who were traveling together, when they came upon an elephant. Having never experienced an elephant before, they used their tactile resources to size up this large mammal. Each of the brothers proclaimed, incorrectly, what they believed they had encountered based on their sense of touch.

The first brother, who had wandered into the tail, believed they had encountered a vine. The second, grasping a leg, was convinced it was a tree trunk. The third, feeling the massive body of the elephant, insisted it was neither a vine nor a tree trunk, but a large boulder that had blocked their path. The fourth brother, feeling the ear, corrected them all and proclaimed it was a leafy plant. The fifth brother, whose hands had found the tusk, was sure they were dealing with some sort of ivory statue. And the sixth brother mistook the trunk of the elephant for a large python.

All of the brothers were seemingly accurate in their limited descriptions of what they believed they had encountered, yet all of them were wrong - none of them could perceive the whole elephant. They were left flailing away, describing (inaccurately) a very big whole by a very small part.

The story is apt. It describes what many people do in life, be they atheists who bellow out their cocksure denunciations of the existence of deity based on what they imagine is "evidence", or political hacks who insist "their guy" won this or that debate simply because he is "their guy." We even see it in the hard sciences from time to time, when observable but inconvenient facts are supplanted with bias, and contrary evidence is ignored in favor of a preexisting agenda.

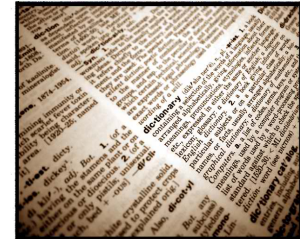
There are very, very few who practice what I call *panoptics* - the attempt to truly see wholes, to look carefully at the total landscape, the entire constellation of relevant data. And as a result, we become tied to our pet projects when truth should be our ultimate desire.

The World of Words

Building Your Power of Expression

Neanderthal, n

Pronunciation: nē'andər thôl



Meaning: I normally use this word in a way that is not meant to be flattering to the recipient. It is used to describe a person who is uncivilized, uncouth, primitive, or unenlightened.

Usage:

- *Your constant use of profanity exposes the poverty of your expressive abilities and makes you appear to be something of a Neanderthal.*
- *The football hooligan behaved like a Neanderthal.*
- *His head and jaw are huge! I think he may be part-Neanderthal.*

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,

