

# Unc ommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 046

February 25, 2013

## Greetings!

As I write this, I am sitting in a college classroom, getting ready to teach a 3 hour course on management, which begins in 3 minutes.

I am also mindful that today is my eldest daughter's birthday. Happy Birthday, Nicole! I remember very clearly that night 24 years ago when she came into this world and I've watched her grow into a young lady. It's been quite the ride but I wouldn't trade it for anything.

In this issue I try to distill some value that may assist you in having the next 24 years of *your* life be pleasant and rewarding. Feel free to send it to your favorite social networking site by using the links above.

OK, let's get started.

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood



## Self-Development

### Mental Models

We all carry in our heads certain perceptions or ways of seeing the world around us. I am not referring to our attitudes, which can shift from moment to moment. I am talking about something deeper. Some would use the term *paradigm* to describe what I am referring to. That word comes from the Greek word *paradigma* which is translated as "pattern." We all have patterns in the way we think,

and in the way we process. Sometimes they are healthy. Often they are not.



These patterns can become ingrained and can keep us in a mental rut. If the rut was limited to the mental, it would not be so bad. However, all of our behaviors, including the words we speak and the actions we take, are a direct consequent of our mental models. Thus, if a sense of helplessness or victimization is too ingrained, people won't bother to take the necessary actions to better their situation.

Face it: the mental model of a person who lived in during the Dark Ages was vastly different from that of his counterpart during the Renaissance. The former was doomed to a life bereft of the attributes of curiosity and a willingness to experiment. The latter flourished in both arenas.

In our day and age, it is easy to become complacent in our way of doing things. However, it is important to be mindful of the concept of our mental model or paradigm, and to be prepared to break out of normative ways of doing things when those norms do not lead to fruitful results. I'll talk more about this in a future issue of *Uncommon Sense*. But for now, allow me to share a story that bears on this subject.

A young married couple was preparing to make dinner for each other. The wife was preparing the ham while the husband was putting together a salad. The wife placed the ham into a pan and then took out her best knife and cut off both ends of the ham and put them aside. The husband, finding this curious, asked her why she had cut off both ends of the ham. She replied she didn't know why, precisely, but said that her mother always did so when she was growing up, and her mother taught her to do it this way. Yet she acknowledged that the practice was peculiar and that its purpose eluded her.

Curious, they decided to call her mother to find out the reason for this odd culinary practice. The mother, now in her mid-50s, confessed that she didn't know, either. She admitted that, like her daughter who was now on the

phone with her, she had acquired the practice from her own mother (the young woman's grandmother) who was still alive. So they called the now 80-year-old matriarch to learn the secret behind cutting off the ends of the ham before baking it.

"Mom, why do we always have to cut off the ends of the ham before we bake it?"

The elderly woman replied, "I don't know why you cut them off. But I always had to cut them off in order for the ham to fit inside my smaller-sized pan."

## The Elephant in the Room The Anarchy of Art

Once upon a time art was something that was meant to inspire and to elevate the human consciousness. Not any longer. Now, a certain group of "artists" have been pushing the boundaries of propriety and creating ungodly and unseemly displays of filth and disgust and calling it art. Amazingly, they are in cahoots with many art gallery curators who welcome the putrid and the ugly without embarrassment. It's an upside-down world.

One of the more lurid works comes from an American photographer named Andres Serrano (seen below). What Mr. Serrano's imagination led him to do was to urinate in a glass, submerge a crucifix in that glass, take a photograph of it, and call it "Piss Christ." The large, 60" x 40" photograph was instantly awarded a \$15,000 grant, followed by another \$5000 grant, from the taxpayer-funded National Endowment of the Arts. Art critic Lucy R. Lippard describes the exhibit as "a darkly beautiful photographic image, . . . that is both ominous and glorious." I would agree with her on two counts: it is dark, and it is ominous.



It is interesting to note that when President Obama was called upon last September to condemn the display as being offensive to the religious sensibilities of millions of Christians the world over, [he took a pass](#) - even though he had no qualms about denouncing an anti-Islam film,

*Innocence of Muslims*, that same month.

That is the latest elephant in the room.

## **Shameless Plug**

### **Norwood to Speak on The Founders**

On Wednesday February 27th I will be privileged to be the luncheon speaker for The Wilshire Rotary Club of Los Angeles. My topic is titled "Six Great Men" and profiles the lives of six of the major Founders of our Republic (Franklin, Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton.)



The luncheon meeting will run from 12:00 to 1:30 PM and will be held at The Ebell in downtown Los Angeles.

If you would like to attend, please email me at [ara@aranorwood.com](mailto:ara@aranorwood.com) and I will ask the meeting planner if this can be arranged.

## **From Ara's Journal**

### **Nurturing Friendships**

One of the problems I have started to notice with the elderly is that many of them have not paid attention to their physical health. The result is predictable: as they age, they lose something in terms of physical mobility, motor coordination, and the like. Similarly, I notice a great many old people seem to be mostly alone and lonely. In many cases, though certainly not all, their social lives seem to have deteriorated. I find that both sad and troubling.



I have never been in their shoes as I am not yet what one would call old. I'm not young, either. I'm somewhere in between, but I'm heading in their direction and moving away from my youth. I would like to think that my golden years are not fraught with loneliness. Solitude has its place, and is something I treasure. But I am a social animal (as most of us are, to varying degrees.) As such, I

would like my closing years to be enriched to whatever degree is possible, with the warmth of companionship. Granted, as I outlive my friends, that unique circle will get smaller. But while certain friends are irreplaceable (MN, MS, AZ, DB, CM, RB, CD, DG, LB, KT, NM, SE, and TF) there is no real reason why a person cannot continue to seek out and develop new friendships throughout one's life.

There seems to be a small handful of elements that nurture and strengthen a solid friendship. Trustworthiness is one of them. Bringing something to the table is another (i.e., not being a taker 100% of the time but being a gracious receiver as well as a consistent giver). Remembering the birthday of your friend seems to help. Having compatible, though not necessarily identical, values helps. And finding ways to have fun together, to laugh, and to enjoy the simple things this life can bring, seems to go a long way.

Also, sometimes blunt boldness is required. Thoreau put it this way: "I do not wish to treat friendships daintily, but with roughest courage. When they are real, they are not glass threads or frostwork, but the solidest things we know."

I intend to make the nurturing of friendships, new and old, a life-long pursuit.

## The World of Words

### Vacuous

#### Building Your Power of Expression

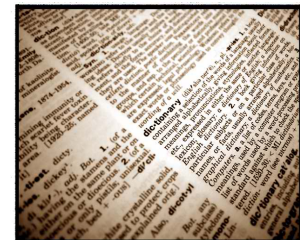
Singular, adj

Pronunciation: 'siNGgyələr

**Meaning:** I often employ this word to describe someone or something that is unique, a standout, or remarkable in some way.

**Usage:**

- *Every person is important, every person has their own unique gifts, every person is so singular.*
- *Your style of oratory is so singular and distinctive, that I can't think of anyone to compare it with.*
- *I would suggest our approach to satisfying*



*customers be something that is seen as singular, as one-of-a-kind, and as memorable.*

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New subscribers, the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" should have been sent out to you already. 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](http://www.aranorwood.com)

**Sincerely,**

Ara Norwood  
Leadership Development Systems