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# Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

## In This Issue

[Goal Setting Pep Talk](#)  
[Debating Radical Islam,](#)  
[Part 3 of 3](#)  
[Scholars and Business](#)  
[People](#)  
[Add Gauche to your](#)  
[Vocabulary](#)

## Quick Links

[Ara's Web Site](#)  
[Facebook Page](#)

## Join Our List

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Issue: # 110

December 28, 2015

## Greetings!

This is the last issue of the year 2015, but it's a good one in my estimation.

In addition to building your vocabulary with a word you should adopt, I share some musings about labeling -- a phenomenon that occurs quite often. Check out my remarks in the **From Ara's Journal** column.



If you've been keeping up with *Uncommon Sense*, you will probably be curious about how the 3-part debate on Islam ends. As promised, I surrender the **Elephant In The Room** column to my friend and colleague, Craig, and allow him free reign to clobber me at will -- with no follow up from me. And Craig delivers, with keen insight and sharp reasoning. I think he made some very good points in his rebuttal. But please be sure to click on the final link he provided about the cartoon! It's priceless, funny, and highly symbolic of our relationship. (Yes, we are still friends.)

But I begin with an important and engaging pep talk about goal setting in the **Self-Development** column. Writing about goal setting at this time each year is always a favorite topic for me, and one that many of my readers claim is highly valuable. I hope this column is no less valuable to you.

OK, let's get started.

## Self-Development

### Goal Setting Pep Talk

The year comes to an end and our thoughts invariably turn towards how our life might be different going forward. Our thoughts turn to, in a word, *goals*.

Very few things galvanize us the way goal setting does. This is because we are the architects of our lives and it is our goals that direct us to greater heights. Indeed, the setting of goals (which amounts to the charting of your life's course) is one of the most important endeavors one can take. It requires careful thought, and consideration of many factors, for the expectation is that you will actually *attain* your goals, not merely *set* them.



There are many approaches to effective goal setting. Here is my approach.

First, I *define my roles*. This is not an inconsequential exercise that happens only in my mind. I write down my roles as they stand at the present time. And my roles, while not exhaustive, are the major components of my life. Take a look at how I define my roles and see if they spark some clarity in your own situation:

**Teacher/Scholar:** this encompasses not only my formal, albeit part-time, endeavor of teaching at the college level, but it also includes my roles as a speaker and a scholar. This role is about me conveying information and knowledge and skill and wisdom to others, usually orally.

**Manager:** This involves my bread-and-butter work of managing other teams to carry out the vast majority of my working activities.

**Life-Long Learner:** This is the flip-side of my Teacher/Scholar role. This role is about me taking in information. I am the student here, not the teacher. This role is all about the things I plan to learn more about. I

am an apprentice, not an expert, in this role.

**Writer:** Similar to my Teacher/Scholar role in that it involves output on my part, but this time only in written form.

**Consultant:** As I run a consultancy, I need to continually grow the practice. Whereas the Teacher/Scholar role and the Writer role are devoted to my agenda, as a Consultant my job is to assist in the agenda of others; to bring value to other entities; to help them solve the problems or capitalize on the opportunities that mean something to them. The difference is nuanced, but important.

**Family Man:** As I head a family, it is important that I manage and lead and nurture every member in it, as well as maintain and manage our largest physical asset -- our home.

**Friend:** As my relationships with others are critically important to bring satisfaction and well-being to all involved, I recognize that I must cultivate and protect these key relationships.

**Musician:** While there is a business element to being a successful musician, there is also an artist element that has its own unique value. I have to give attention -- lots of attention -- to grow and develop as a musician, and to position myself (and my music partner, Venessa) to be able to bring our music to others.

**Disciple:** this word comes from the same root as the word *discipline*, which means that I have chosen to exercise a certain kind of discipline in the following of the Person I consider to be the greatest, most reliable, and most singular Source of wisdom and goodness -- Jesus Christ. So with this role, the question becomes how can I put off the weakness, the foolishness, the selfishness that is part of me (and probably part of all of us) and be a more virtuous human being.

Next, with those roles clear in my mind, I **simply ask myself if, for each role, there anything I wish to *have* in the coming year. . . Is there anything I wish to *do* or *experience* relative to that role. Is there anything I wish to *be*.** Essentially I am seeking growth and development in some way.

Although I am not obligated to set a goal for each and

every role, I try to set at least one goal per role. Sometimes, if the goals are basic tasks that simply require discipline and execution, I might set several goals for that role. Here's an example: for my Life-Long Learner role, I decided to continue my study of six specific Founders of the United States. As there are six of them I seek to acquire expertise on, and as there are 12 months in the year, an obvious goal is to read two biographies on each of the six. I have even mapped out precisely which biography I will be reading in each of the next 12 months. This enables me to schedule how many pages need to be read each week to maintain that pace.

Some goals could simply be a *maintenance goal*, in that the goal simply enables you to continue to maintain a practice or a process. Many fitness goals fall into this category. For my Writer role, I set a single goal: to continue to publish *Uncommon Sense* twice a month next year. It's a maintenance goal.

As you consider your major roles, ask yourself these questions to help jump-start your imagination as to what is possible:

- Do I wish to finally organize a certain area of my life (perhaps my home) that has been ignored?
- Do I wish to take action to improve my financial strength?
- Is there a specific source of debt I commit to eliminate?
- Do I wish to acquire a tangible "thing" that I have always wanted to own?
- Are there certain relationships I wish to acquire, develop, strengthen, or rid myself of?
- Do I have a hobby I wish to develop or a skill I wish to enhance?
- Are there avenues for a new revenue stream? Are there new markets to enter? Are there new and better ways of doing something?
- What could I produce so that at the end of the year I will feel immense satisfaction?
- What could I learn that may come in handy in the future?

Questions such as these can open your mind to the possibilities that await you. And if you set your goals carefully, wisely, and intelligently, and then monitor your

progress with relentless regularity, chances are high you will nail most, if not all, of them.

And that's not a bad outcome.

## **The Elephant in the Room**

### **Debating Radical Islam, Part 3 of 3**

Dear Ara,

#### **Your rebuttal:**

At first I thought the style, tone and manner you wrote in obfuscated the issue by way of distraction, journalistic drama, sensationalism and even a bit of yellow. This surprised me. It caught me quite off guard, not what I was expecting. I was disappointed. I believed you caused a disservice to this most serious issue by taking the approach you did. Your written manner simply didn't treat the subject matter with the seriousness I believe it deserves.

I felt the distinct presence of Ayn Rand's character, Gail Wynand ("The Fountainhead"), owner of "The Banner." Your readers can research that for context. Why "The Banner" comparison? To cite only a few examples, and your retort was loaded with them, you used drama and exaggerations in far too many places. For example, you wrote:

1. "...you grossly overstate the hypnotic pull."
2. "Such would constitute a level of religious magnetism unprecedented in human history."
3. "But really, Craig, you believe such passages or commentary translates to a wholesale brainwash of all Muslims?"
4. "...you trotted out..."
5. "...taqiya has the sort of wide-spread, hypnotic, spellbinding, bewitching, and irresistible pull that you seem to attribute to it."
6. "Additionally, who is to say that every Muslim..."

So while my first impressions were of one kind, I ended up chuckling, too. No doubt you captured your audience's attention. You certainly captured mine, but mostly for the color.

#### **My reply to some of your rebuttals:**

You wrote: "As Emerson once said, 'What you are shouts so loudly, I cannot hear what you say.' Thus, it is very difficult for a person to conceal their character from others in the long-term." No one heard any "shouts" in Paris, or San Bernardino, or any of their other massacres. The only "shouts" are those of automatic weapons wiping out the innocent - and then it's too late.

You wrote: "...you trotted out the Islamic tenet called *taqiya*, which is a form of religious deception. But you also correctly pointed out that this tenet is particular to Shia Islam. This fact hurts your premise considerably, given that the Shia faction of Islam constitutes only about 10% to 15% of adherents to Islam. So 85% to 90% of Muslims, being of the Sunni faction, do not subscribe to this tenet."



You incorrectly argue that it "...hurts my premise considerably." It does not.

Lest you misunderstood my premise, let me restate it here with the same theme, but in another way. While you point out the percent difference between the two, given the context of this day and age of Radical Muslim extremists, you simply cannot know with any certainty if your Muslim "friends" are Sunni or Shia because the Koran allows lying. Your Muslim Shia "friends" could be masquerading as Sunni. I found [the following quote](#) after (not before) I took my position:

"Interspersed among the much more numerous Sunnis, who currently make up approximately 90 per cent of the Islamic world, the Shia often performed *taqiyya* by pretending to be Sunnis externally, while maintaining Shia beliefs internally, as permitted by Quranic verse 16:106." So my argument had precedent that I was heretofore unaware of. Turns out I'm not alone, even if I'm alone here.

I am confident beyond a shadow of a doubt that the dead in Paris and San Bernardino would agree with me. Do you take the position that those killers, Shia or Sunni, were not

lying to their coworkers, that they had no friends at the office? These killers were invited to an office Christmas party and best, the "friends" of these upstanding characters threw a baby shower for them. Started off friendly enough didn't it? Quite a payoff for the "friends" of this couple! And let's leave for another day that this terrorist worked for, infiltrated, the US government. (With the Libs in charge, the Oval Office will be next.)

[Also](#), "This concept of taqiyya has historically been practiced widely between Sunnis and Shia, even to current times. It is recognized and practiced by practically every Islamic sect (Al-Taqiyya Fi Al-Islam). The concept and practice of taqiyya is equally prevalent in modern-day Islamic politics, as it is in religious practice, especially in dealing with non-believers ("Infidels")."

### **Restating my position:**

Let me be clear on my only purpose: I am shining as bright a light as readers are willing to see on not just Taqiyya, but the requisite "next steps" that are associated with this Law, e.g., the grotesque and deathly violence as a natural segue of Taqiyya.

I initially pointed out taqiyya because I find it incomprehensible that the Koran sanctions such violence in the name of God for the "good" of advancing Islamic faith. It's pretty crazy material. For all our sakes, get up on that information curve. This is really dangerous stuff in today's context. I stand by my original argument. But I didn't complete it, so let me try here.

### **What you missed:**

You got locked up on "lying" as the primary issue - and that is a huge issue, more so for Koran believers.

The only difference between the two sects is that the Shia uses deception to kill, the Sunni you argue, do not. So by that standard, the Sunnis are the "kinder," more honorable sect. The irony is that they both agree on perpetrating serious acts of violence against Christians and infidels of any kind, including one another. For Sunnis, deception is unnecessary. One lies, the other does not. But they both want to kill us. Choose your poison. You get killed by the Sunni coming "honorably" at you swords a blazing, or by [the smiling face of a Shia](#) reaching out to shake your hand only to shoot you with a gun in the other.

"According to the four recognized schools of Sunni

jurisprudence, war against Infidels will go on in perpetuity until, "all chaos ceases and all religion belongs to Allah" (Quran 8:39). Jihad will exist as long as universal domination of Islam has not been attained. Peace with non-Muslims is only a provisional condition between nations and there can be [no peace treaties](#) - only truces - which cannot, in principle, exceed 10 years duration. However, even a truce of 10 years can be broken when, as Muhammad himself said, a better deal exists, or situations change. The truce itself can be deception, and any truce can be repudiated unilaterally if it be more profitable for Islam to resume its offensive course of conduct."

Let me add a few other bullet points on this as well: Sunnis everywhere are dead silent on the matter of radical extremist violence against Americans. They view you and I as infidels, as well as the rest of the world. Their silence says they're complicit, so say I.

And one more sobering fact for you: the grand mastermind of 911, Osama Bin Laden, was a Sunni.

I'm not telling you or anyone not to have Muslim "friends." I'm simply pointing out the objective problem that comes along with that given today's context of Muslim extremism.

Let me add a few other bullet points on this as well: Sunnis everywhere are dead silent on the matter of radical extremist violence against Americans. They view you and I as infidels, as well as the rest of the world. Their silence says they're complicit, so say I.

And one more sobering fact for you: the grand mastermind of 911, Osama Bin Laden, was a Sunni.

I'm not telling you or anyone not to have Muslim "friends." I'm simply pointing out the objective problem that comes along with that given today's context of Muslim extremism. Thus, in reference to your closing comment, "And I'm willing to take that chance," naturally I support your choice.

Lastly, but not "leastly," your readership should know how valuable your friendship is to me, what a stellar man you are, of the highest character. The second you learned of it, you're the man who drove "a 1000 miles" to support me when my brother lost his battle to cancer. I'll never forget you for that. Thank you again for that support at a time I most needed it. I ask your readership to please [watch this old time cartoon clip](#), less than two minutes, and it's



amusing. [Despite the battles Ara and I sometimes have, it near perfectly illustrates the closeness of our friendship, depicted at the end.]

## Shameless Plug

### A Successful Speech in Redlands

I had a wonderful time as the recent luncheon speaker for the Rotary Club of Redlands. Addressing the Founding Fathers, my speech (titled Six Great Men) focused on six titans who were instrumental in the founding of our

republic -- the United States of America.

Those six are Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John Adams,

Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton. I covered their relationship with their parents, their intellectual acumen, and their relationship to slavery.



It was an interesting and engaging experience. I particularly enjoyed the Q&A after my remarks were complete. This group asked some insightful questions. One particular attendee, Mr. Joseph Vadnay, wrote to me afterwards as follows: "*You are an excellent communicator and I am honored to have been in the presence of someone so mentally sharp. Thank you for your informative presentation on The Founding Fathers and for sharing your knowledge.*" Such feedback is deeply appreciated.

I will be speaking on the same subject in late January at the Oakmont Country Club in Glendale.

Should your organization benefit from a hard-hitting leadership program of this kind, simply send me an email (ara@aranorwood.com).

## From Ara's Journal

### Scholars and Business People

I lead a rather multi-dimensional life. I most always have. In fact, it started when I was in high school.



Although it meant nothing to me at the time, I remember that when I was in my vocal jazz ensemble at Los Altos High School known as The Harmattan, I was often looked upon by my fellow jazz vocalists as a bit of an outsider. Why? Because I was on the wrestling team. The jazz vocalists I performed with saw me as something of a "jock" -- code language for athlete.

Guess what the athletes thought of me? They viewed me as a musician, an artist, and not really a true-blue athlete.

Such labeling, such pigeon-holing, carries over into adult life.

I notice that my colleagues in the business world see me as rather academic, with a professorial bent. Why? Well, for one, I don't shy away from theoretical concepts. For another, I have a fairly wide vocabulary of the English language, and some of the words I use naturally (naturally to me) sound highfalutin to others. But mostly because they are aware that I work as a college professor on a part-time basis. They see me as, fundamentally, a college professor who happens to have landed a job in the business world.

Conversely, my colleagues in the academe see me as not-so-academic. They see me as an experienced business professional who happens to do the college professor gig in my spare time. And there is some justification for this. Even my college students tell me, uniformly, that I am unlike any other college professor they have come across. (This is said, usually, as a compliment, I am happy to report.)

What neither my business colleagues nor my academic colleagues understand is that I am both, rather than one or the other. While I bring elements of scholarship to business, and while I bring elements of a seasoned business professional to the college classroom, I am not wholly cut from the cloth of academics and I am not wholly cut from the cloth of commerce.

It would be entertaining to listen in on a conversation about me held between one of my colleagues from the

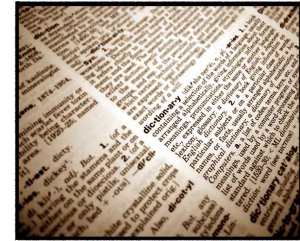
world of scholarship and one from the world of business. They would each be telling the opposite story, attributing to me qualities from the world of the other person.

In no other area of life have I found such amusement in being mis-labeled, mis-diagnosed, and mis-understood.

## The World of Words

### Gauche

#### Building Your Power of Expression



Gauche, adj.

Pronunciation: gōSH

**Meaning:** This word is best used to describe a person who is lacking in ease or grace. Any person who is unsophisticated or socially awkward could be said to be gauche.

#### Usage:

- *That fellow is far too gauche, far too clod-like, to be hired by this firm.*
- *Even though the comic's act was crude and gauche, he filled the club to overflowing every night.*
- *His gauche table manners made me cringe, especially when he would try to speak with his mouth full of food.*

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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](mailto: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,**

