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Issue: # 114

February 29, 2016

## Greetings!

You may be a long-time subscriber, or you may be among the dozens of brand new subscribers that read *Uncommon Sense*. Either way, I am delighted to have you on board.

In this issue, I offer some thought-provoking musings on the notion of sacrifice in the **Ara's Journal** column.

And in the **Elephant in the Room** column, I begin a series of reviews of our Founding Fathers, starting with Benjamin Franklin. I think you may find that both relevant and instructive.

But I begin my **Self-Development** column with the first of a 7-part series on leadership that are must-reads. Essentially, I am outlining what one must do to excel at leadership by avoiding the most common traps of would-be leaders. I call these the *7 Deadly Sins of Leadership*.

I urge you to sink your teeth into this issue. And feel free to let me know how it strikes you.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



### Leadership's Deadly Sins, Part 1 of 7

Although leadership has been a hot topic in business circles for several decades now, it is puzzling that even after all of the books, speeches, seminars, workshops, symposia, classes, think tanks, audio programs, podcasts, and home study courses, there does not seem to be an abundance of leaders roaming our businesses, hospitals, churches, military organizations, athletic teams, and in various branches of government. Case in point: can anyone name a transforming leader today in politics who possesses the leadership acumen of Thomas Jefferson or George Washington? Can anyone name a military leader today with the steely gifts of Winston Churchill? Where are all the leaders?

The truly frightening reality is that there are people who would answer my question by claiming I need not look any further than the White House for today's leadership.

Yet the current occupant of the White House has not demonstrated leadership; he has demonstrated activism, a counterfeit of what true leadership is. And when it comes to those who would take the reigns of the presidency come next January, are there any leaders -- from any party -- who have the finely honed skills to demonstrate transformative leadership? We won't know until after one of them takes office, but it's hard to imagine any current candidate possessing the necessary attributes to really lead.

Leadership is a hard concept to get our minds around, partly due to the dearth of leadership on today's scene. But there are certain attributes of authentic leadership that bear repeating. My own study of leadership, spanning more than 30 years now, has led me to the inescapable conclusion that today's would-be leaders suffer from any one of seven lapses. I call them the 7 Deadly Sins of Leadership. And here is the first of those seven:



#### **The First Deadly Sin of Leadership: *A failure to think.***

Having lectured on this subject to a wide array of audiences across many states (and countries, and continents) I can say that this one surprises people. Thinking is presumed to be the domain of philosophers, not leaders.

Yet all great leadership finds its genesis in the unique exercise of thought.

Our brains are marvelous instruments. The amount of information that seeps into our brains from the moment they first form is staggering. This information is stored there but then is compounded by additional buckets of information being

poured into our cranial vats, helping us to make sense of the world around us, but also influencing and polishing the original information that was captured at an earlier time, refining it and bringing coherence to it in the process. Some of us (think Leonardo Da Vinci, Thomas Edison, and Benjamin Franklin -- more on him below) take the thinking process more seriously than others, and actually churn out an array of inventions through the process of relentless innovation. Others (think Albert Einstein, Plato, Steve Jobs) allow their ponderings to conceive of new forms and new ways of conceiving of reality, and the results can be a sea-change of progress. Still others (think Michelangelo, Beethoven, or Shakespeare) use their minds to envision artistic possibilities that elevate our spirits.

We really don't understand much about our brains and how they work. But they do work, and that is what is important.

Great leaders approach the thinking process as a ritual. They actually take time to *still themselves* and to allow their brains to work their magic, by simply deciding to engage in the thinking process in quietude. Leaders worry less about what to think

of, and more about simply sitting still and postponing any dull, routine work and just allowing the brain to release its potential, by summoning their thoughts

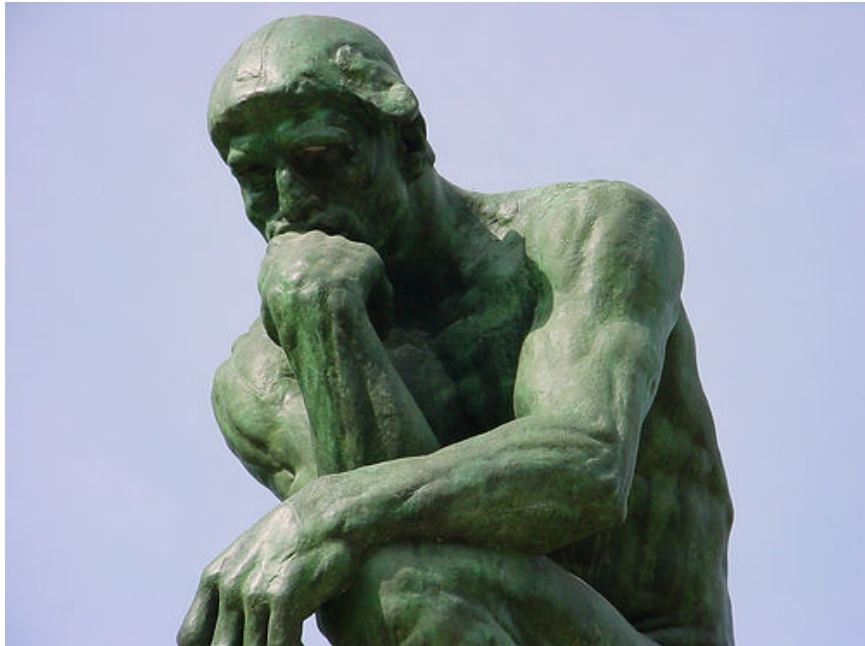
in deliberative ways.

Sometimes these thoughts are about overcoming problems -- the presence of something undesirable. Other

times these thoughts

are about capitalizing on opportunities -- the absence of something desirable.

At times these thoughts are focused on meaning, or possibilities, or patterns, or people. Regardless of the specifics, great leadership is not possible without some degree of careful, regular thought. Actions can follow later.



If leadership is of interest to you, here is a prescription to consider: get into the regular habit of sitting down in a quiet place, where interruptions are unlikely, and allow yourself some thinking time. Perhaps 20 minutes on the low end. Trust that your brain has collected so much disparate data over the years that it is capable of churning out unexpected and, in some cases, startling possibilities. And when brilliance or breakthroughs come into your mind, be prepared to capture them, either through putting pen to paper, hand to keyboard, or through verbal dictation into an audio recording.

Do these things and you will be laying the foundations of transforming leadership.

## Summarizing Franklin

In taking measure of the man that many historians refer to as "The First American," I am heartened by the fact that there is much in the historical record to draw upon. Benjamin Franklin was born in 1706 and died in 1790, his 84 years of life spanning most of the 18th century in which he was such a pivotal figure. His popularity of that time period as the most famous person in America (if not the world) was rivaled by none with the possible exception of George Washington. Yet he seemed to lack the qualities we normally associate with The Great Man (physical strength, strong personality, political power, etc.) Franklin is a quaint and amusing and almost whimsical figure; indeed, one biographer calls him "the Founding Father who winks at us." Yet he was a profound force and a key player in the formulating of this great experiment called America.

Born in Massachusetts but relocating to Pennsylvania as a young man, Franklin was a child of the Enlightenment. With a penchant for tolerance, pragmatic accommodation, and compromise, Franklin's restless mind was always moving. And the results were one of the truly great performances of the 18th century.

A harmless flirt, Franklin loved women but was not a seducer of them. However, when it came to persuading men in the great questions of his day, he did not like to confront; he preferred to seduce others to his way of thinking. Franklin was indeed a master of the relationship between power and diplomacy.



Intellectually, Franklin was a practical genius, wanting to know *how* nature acted as it did, not *why* it acted as it did. This attitude, coupled with his lack of grounding in theoretical math or physics is why, ingenious as he was, he was no Galileo or Newton. Nor was he a profound political philosopher on the order of a John Locke (or even, for that matter, a Thomas Jefferson.) But he was a practical experimenter, eventually figuring out meteorological phenomenon that represented the beginnings of weather prediction, demonstrating that electricity is a single fluid, understanding the distinction between insulators and conductors, notions of electrical grounding, and coming very close to determining the size of a molecule after experimenting with the calming effect oil has on water. He offered novel and accurate theories on the cause of the common cold, on the study of exercise (correctly calculating that body warmth generally increases with quickness of pulse), the effects of lead poisoning, and why ships moving through canals do so slowly. And he invented a wide variety of practical and amusing things, including

the lightning rod, a new type of stove that maximized heat while minimizing smoke, bifocals, a urinary catheter, swim fins, a device called the "long arm" for retrieving books from a top shelf, a combination ladder-chair, an overhead fan, a musical instrument called the glass armonica (and that is not a typo; it's "armonica" not "harmonica"), and even social conventions such as daylight savings time, paying forward, and matching grants. And all this without any formal education to speak of.

But Franklin was well-read, having amassed a personal library of over 4,000 volumes, the largest private library in America -- even larger than Jefferson's at that time (although Jefferson surpassed that collection some decades later with over 6,000 volumes).

As for his political philosophy, Franklin was thoroughly non-partisan. He was both liberal and conservative. He favored hard work, individual enterprise, frugality, and self-reliance. He was not one to depend on government handouts or bailouts. He possessed a strong belief in social mobility and of the bootstrap values of rising through industry, energy, and productivity. He would not have been amused by much of today's Leftist values espoused by groups that blame others and whine at their alleged misfortunes (think Black Lives Matter, Occupy Wall Street, etc.) He was distrustful of both the elite and the rabble. He believed in limited government and he worried that too much government intervention in relieving the suffering of the poor might cause an unhealthy dependence and lead to laziness. Franklin saw America as a place where anyone, regardless of social class, could rise to wealth and status based on their willingness to be industrious and cultivate their virtues. The strength of his political philosophy was in its practicality.

Although often labeled a deist (as he clearly was early in his life), Franklin, though not a regular church-goer, held deeply religious values. His many recorded statements are a testament to his deep and abiding faith:

- "I believe there is one Supreme most perfect Being."
- "I conceive that He has in Himself some of those passions He has planted in us, and that, since He has given us reason whereby we are capable of observing His wisdom in the creation, He is not above caring for us, being pleased with our praise, and offended when we slight Him or neglect His glory. I conceive for many reasons that He is a good being: and as I should be happy to have so wise, good, and powerful a being my Friend, let me consider in what manner I shall make myself most acceptable to Him. . . I love Him, therefore, for His goodness, and I adore Him for His wisdom. Let me, then, not fail to praise my God continually, for it is His due, and it is all I can return for His many favors and great goodness to me; and let me resolve to be virtuous, that I may be happy, that I may please Him who is delighted to see me happy. Amen!"
- "I never was without some religious principles. I never doubted, for instance, the existence of the Deity, that He made the world and governed it by His providence, that the most acceptable service of God was the doing

good to man, that our souls are immortal, and that all crime will be punished and virtue will be rewarded either here or hereafter."

In fact, it was none other than Benjamin Franklin who, at age 81, first suggested that prayers open each session of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, directly addressing George Washington as follows:

*"In this situation of this assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illuminate our understandings? . . . I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth - that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings that 'except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.' I firmly believe this; and I also believe that, without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel. . . . I therefore beg leave to move that, henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of heaven and its blessings on our deliberations be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service."*

Franklin was in no way perfect and had his failings. He failed to inoculate his son, Franky, against Small Pox, resulting in the death of his son at age 4. And he wasn't the most attentive of fathers, failing to attend the weddings of his son William or his daughter Sally. He failed to fight the Stamp Act with much vigor, and he was clearly wrong about the nature of the bloody French Revolution, though he would not live long enough to know this. But he was a strong and playful -- and witty -- man who was largely without guile. We all find great amusement in his many aphorisms:

- "Keep your eyes wide open before marriage, half shut afterwards."
- "Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."
- "There never was a good war or a bad peace."
- "The only sure thing is death and taxes."

Franklin's legacy and major accomplishments are legion:

- He established the academy that later became The University of Pennsylvania.
- He was the founder of the American Philosophical Society.

- He was the first Postmaster General.
- He was an Ambassador to France.
- He is the only person to sign all four of the major Founding Documents: the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty with France, the Peace Accord with Britain, and the U.S. Constitution.
- He was the oldest delegate at the Constitutional Convention.
- Immanuel Kant called him the "new Prometheus" for stealing the fire of heaven. And the French statesman Turgot composed the two-part epigram in his honor: "He snatched lightning from the sky and the scepter from tyrants."
- He came up with the motto *E Pluribus Unum* (out of many, one) to be on the Great Seal of the United States, something that flies in the face of today's Leftist penchant for deifying the notion of multi-culturalism.

Benjamin Franklin gave a very profound summation at the end of the Constitutional Convention of 1787. As the delegates were lining up by states to sign the document, he turned their attention to the sun carved on the back of the chair that had been occupied by George Washington and observed that painters often found it difficult to distinguish in their art a rising sun from a setting sun: "I have often in the course of the session, and the vicissitudes of my hopes and fears as to its issue, looked at that behind the President without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting. But now at length I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting sun."

When I think of the truly great lights that have walked on American soil, it is difficult to identify many who are more consequential than this winking Founding Father.

And that, my friends, is the latest elephant in the room.

**Shameless Plug**

**Need Help Preparing for that Next Big Job Interview?**

So you have trouble with job interviews? You get nervous? You feel unprepared? You get psyched out? I understand. And that is why I am pleased to alert you to my new eBook: *Your Interview Roadmap*. At over 12,000 words and with six appendices, this guide book will open your eyes to what really goes on in the world of interviewing from both sides of the desk, and will prepare job seekers to hit it out of the park 80% of the time. (OK, more like 90%, but I prefer to be understated.)

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If you've done poorly in job interviews in the past, you can turn it around. The answers are there. Take action!

## From Ara's Journal

### Sacrifice As Investment

Although I am by no means what one would call a rich man, I have been blessed to have accomplished some wealth-building milestones that many aspire to. Among other things, I have several streams of income. Yet somehow, I have not yet felt as though I've arrived at a point where I can live a life of leisure and comfort. I still struggle, even while enjoying some of the finer things of life on occasion.



There are several reasons for this.

One major reason is that a substantial portion of my income never makes it into my wallet. The reason is that I have set up systems to redirect that portion to various financial instruments in order to prepare for retirement. In fact, it is interesting to reflect on a recent Q&A segment of my management class where a student -- a very perceptive young lady -- asked me what I fear the most. After fumbling around for an answer, I recalled precisely what it is I fear most: outliving my money. Hence, my decision to not spend all of the money that I earn, but instead, invest it in the hopes that it will grow and carry me through my retirement years.

What I am doing with my money is sacrificing the pleasures it would bring me today by socking it away for a later day. I am well aware that I may breathe my last breath long before I ever get to enjoy the good things of life these investments may bring. I am also aware that a catastrophic economic meltdown could possibly erode both my interest and my principal. There are no guaranteed outcomes, and risks are part of the human condition.

But it is sound and wise to take such risks.



So it is with many aspects of life. I exercise in large part because I know that doing so may extend not only my life but the quality of that life. Of course, when I am out on a long run, I am experiencing a certain amount of stress, trauma and fatigue. I am experiencing discomfort. I would be far more comfortable sitting on the couch in front of the television, or taking a nap. But in sacrificing such comforts today, and paying a price, I am (theoretically) preparing for a better tomorrow. It's an investment in what will likely be a healthier future.

Likewise, I am very involved in the raising of my grandson. He is two years old, and I am his hero. I enjoy this little boy more than I can express. Yet every second I am involved with him, I am sacrificing time and productivity away from other endeavors. However, I gladly make such sacrifices. He is precious and my time with him is building character in him. I hope he will be a better man and a better father and husband some day because of such sacrifices. I see my time with him, apart from the unspeakable joy it brings me personally, as an investment in the future -- his future, his family's future, society's future.

Sacrifice -- putting off today's pleasures for tomorrow's joy -- is an important principle, a wise endeavor, and a sound investment.

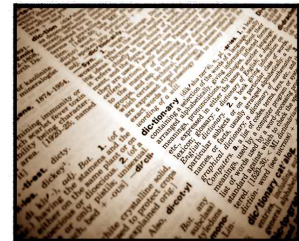
## The World of Words

### Tenuous

#### Building Your Power of Expression

**Tenuous**, adj.

**Pronunciations:** 'tenyōōəs



**Meaning:** When something is flimsy, or weak (as in a weak argument) or when the odds of something happening are unlikely, we could say that thing is tenuous.

**Usage:**

- *His chances at winning this election are tenuous at best.*
- *This primitive looking bridge is one I dare not attempt to cross, given how dilapidated it appears, not to mention the tenuous appearance of the cords holding it together.*
- *I think I better request a refund for these tickets, given the now tenuous relationship I have with her.*

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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)).

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**Sincerely,**

Ara Norwood  
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