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Dear David,

 Ara Norwood

I love the season we call Spring. I'm sure you do as well. The notion of new life, regeneration, continuation and the like are all very near and dear to my heart. More on that below.

We continue our exploration of great leaders from the past, with a look at a true Renaissance Man -- Leonardo Da Vinci. Check out my brief profile in the **Self-Development** column.

I share an Opinion piece from the *Wall Street Journal* that came out a few weeks ago. It deals with Yale University and their Admissions procedures, and it doesn't look good. See my **Elephant in the Room** column.

And as you are receiving this during Passover and Easter season, I share some musings about them both in the **From Ara's Journal** column.

Happy Easter. Happy Passover.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood

Self-Development


Great Leaders of the Past: Leonardo Da Vinci


Walter Isaacson, the contemporary biographer, has [a new book out](#) on Leonardo Da Vinci. I purchased a copy right when it came out, but I have not opened it yet. My friend and colleague, [Godfrey Harris](#), a Los Angeles-based public policy consultant and author of dozens of books on a wide swathe of subjects, and whom I consider to be a Renaissance Man of sorts, has in past years put on exhibits featuring the works of Leonardo. I regret having missed those events. But I have spent some time looking at this singular figure, and I consider him to be one of the great lights of our past.



Leonardo was a truly amazing phenomenon.

His only rival in terms of artistic greatness was Michelangelo, and they were contemporaries. When Michelangelo was born, Leonardo was 23. When Leonardo died at age 67, Michelangelo was 44. Michelangelo died 45 years later at age 83. The historical record suggests that Michelangelo was contemptuous of Leonardo, and was openly insulting and sometimes loaded for bear; but Leonardo wasn't a fighter and would patiently try to parry the darts of his younger rival.

Leonardo can claim two of the most famous paintings of all time: he completed The Last Supper depicting the final days of Jesus as narrated in the  Mona Lisa Gospel of St. John, chapter 13, when Jesus announces that one of his 12 Apostles will betray him. Leonardo was about 46 at the time. 8 years later, he finished what is perhaps his most famous painting, the Mona Lisa, completed in 1506 when Leonardo was about 54 years old. Certainly Mona Lisa is the most famous portrait ever created, and arguably the single most famous painting in any genre.


His drawing known as the Vitruvian Man is also regarded as a cultural icon, found on the Euro, on T-Shirts, Album covers,  Vitruvian Man alternative medicine logos, and all sorts of things. The drawing is based on the correlations of ideal human proportions with geometry described by the ancient Roman architect, Vitruvius. This drawing, in pen and ink, depicts a male figure in two superimposed positions with his arms and legs apart and simultaneously inscribed in a circle and a square. This drawing stands as Exhibit A for Leonardo's fascination with proportion. But this drawing also serves as a springboard to Leonardo's fascination with . . . well, EVERYTHING! And his interests were far-reaching: anatomy, zoology, architecture, botany, viticulture, civil engineering, music, robotics, costume design, mechanics, mathematics, star gazing, aerodynamics, fossil studies, optics, hydrography, and philosophy. Oh, and did I mention Stage Design?

The man's curiosity is endless. He takes on tasks large and small, as seen in these notes to himself: "Describe how the clouds are formed and how they dissolve, and what causes vapor to rise from the waters of the earth into the air, and the causes of mists, and of the air becoming thickened, and why it appears more or less blue at different times."

In another note to himself: "Describe what sneezing is, what yawning is, the falling sickness, spasm, paralysis, shivering with cold, sweating, fatigue, hunger, sleep, thirst, lust... Describe the tongue of the woodpecker."

When he would sign his name, he would add this flourish: "Leonardo da Vinci, *disscepolo della sperientia*" which could be translated either *disciple of experience* or *disciple of experiment*. I favor the latter.

Another quirk worth noting: whenever Leonardo wanted to try out a new pen nib, he habitually doodled the same thing each time -- *Dimmi* -- which could be translated "Tell me." This man simply had a need to know.

His leadership lies in his ability to envision the world as filled with possibilities rather than with limitations. Thus, he conceived of such diverse tools as an artillery park, a stretching device for a barrel spring, a design for a boat, the ornithopter flying machine (which was never actually created.) It was a design that Leonardo made to show how man could fly. Some experts say that the modern day helicopter was inspired by this design. The sketch below shows that he conceived of an Armored Car - precursor to The Tank? In military matters, he conceived of a gigantic cross-bow. He sketched  Leonardo Tank out a machine for breaching walls, an 8-barreled machine gun, and a parachute.

His significance on the course of history did not go unnoticed. Here are some of the assessments of him by others:

"His genius was so rare and universal that it can be said that nature worked a miracle on his behalf ..." Antonimo Gaddiano, 1540

"In the normal course of events many men and women are born with remarkable talents; but occasionally, in a way that transcends nature, a single person is marvelously endowed by Heaven with beauty, grace and talent in such abundance that he leaves other men far behind, all his actions seem inspired and indeed everything he does clearly comes from God rather than from human skill. Everyone acknowledged that this was true of Leonardo da Vinci, an artist of outstanding physical beauty, who displayed infinite grace in everything that he did and who cultivated his genius so brilliantly that all problems he studied he solved with ease." Giorgio Vasari, 1568

"There may not be in the world an example of another genius so universal, so incapable of fulfillment, so full of yearning for the infinite, so naturally refined, so far ahead of his own century and the following centuries." Hippolyte Taine, 1866

"Leonardo is the one artist of whom it may be said with perfect literalness: Nothing that he touched but turned into a thing of eternal beauty. Whether it be the cross section of a skull, the structure of a weed, or a study of muscles, he, with his

feeling for line and for light and shade, forever transmuted it into life-communicating values." Bernard Berenson, 1896

"The most relentlessly curious man in history." Kenneth Clark, 1939

Leonardo personified the Renaissance ideal that the ascent of man is within the grasp of all of us, and he gives us a glimpse of the artist as leader who enabled us see the world in a new light. Leonardo gave us new filters, wider prisms by which to become acquainted with the world in which we live.

Viva Da Vinci!

The Elephant in the Room

Social Justice Warriors and Yale University Admissions

In the March 7, 2018 print edition of the *Wall Street Journal*, an opinion piece was published by Walter Olson of the Cato Institute. I found the piece so interesting and so important that I reprint it here in its entirety, with permission. My brief comments will follow below.

Answering a question about which there could hardly have been much doubt, Yale's admissions blog said last month the university would not penalize prospective students who are suspended for joining antigun protests in the wake of the Parkland shooting. "Yale will NOT be rescinding anyone's admission decision for participating in peaceful walkouts for this or other causes."

So far, so routine. A university like Yale would not ordinarily snatch back an admissions offer just because an accepted senior had skipped a day of class, no matter the reason.

But there's more. The post's author, senior assistant director of admissions Hannah Mendlowitz, makes clear that Yale considers participation in such a walkout to be a plus, rather than a subject of indifference.

"For those students who come to Yale, we expect them to be versed in issues of social justice," Ms. Mendlowitz writes. "I have the pleasure of reading applications from San Francisco, where activism is very much a part of the culture. Essays ring of social justice issues." Even if applicants from less-fortunate areas of the country cannot be expected to meet the Bay Area standard, the message is clear. The post is titled "In Support of Student Protests."

This endorsement of activism raises a few questions. Would Yale really turn away a brilliant young flutist, chemist or poet who, while solidly educated in history, religion and government, is not specifically "versed in issues of social justice"? What about students who have pursued courses based on great works of the past? Must they be versed in contemporary views of social justice too? Besides, which causes constitute social justice?

Yale's admissions blog is eagerly read by high-school students who have not yet applied. What should one advise aspiring Yalies who are not versed in-or worse, not zealous for-the Bay Area ideologies that so please the admissions office?

It might be best not to feign progressive political views in hopes of snagging a coveted Yale slot. That would be insincere, after all. But maybe it would be prudent to conceal any contrasting views.

Suppose a student had been deeply influenced by Friedrich Hayek's "The Mirage of Social Justice." After reading it, she had concluded social justice does not offer a particularly useful "take" on the moral problems of society, and that other standards-justice toward individuals, protection of personal rights, peace and nonaggression, neutral and impartial application of law-are better.


Now suppose she put that in her Yale application, knowing that screeners would be looking for some indication she was "versed in social justice." Would it affect her chances of making the cut?

A similar scenario played out for Hayek, actually. Despite his illustrious career at the London School of Economics, he had trouble finding a suitable berth in American academia and eventually landed in a nonstandard appointment at the University of Chicago through its Committee on Social Thought. His thinking didn't quite fit in, even though it was destined to become immensely influential in several fields.

Yale says it will overlook walkouts "for this or other causes." To test that, an applicant might engage in a peaceful walkout for a cause of which the admissions staff disapproves-say, Second Amendment rights. But what high schooler would want to be that test case?

The issue is of principle, not law: As a private university, Yale is not subject to the First Amendment and need not guarantee applicants a neutral forum. It can set what standards it pleases, including screening out students who march for a not-Yale cause. By contrast, administrators in public high schools are barred from playing favorites, so they can't approve or disapprove peaceful walkouts based on whether or not they approve of the cause.

That being said, Yale started out as a base for the training of Puritan clergy. One wonders whether it has really changed all that much.

As for my own comments on Mr. Olson's contribution, I believe he has detected something very important. It is clear that Ms. Hannah Mendlowitz, who holds a key position of power at Yale  Anti Conservative University in terms of who gets admitted and who doesn't, favors Leftist radicals and has a bias against Conservatives. Should an incoming freshman give any indication on their Admissions Application that they are a believing Christian, or a fan of [Prager University](#), or a reader of [National Review](#), or an aspiring member of [College Republicans](#), or in possession of deep reverence for the symbolism of the American Flag, or a strong advocate for Immigration Law, or a fan of the current President of the United States, or opposed to most abortions, or a believer in the traditional view of marriage being between one man and one woman, or someone

who has passed out free copies of the United States Constitution on high school campuses, you can rest assured that Ms. Mendlowitz would have an unfavorable view of that student, regardless of that student's accomplishments, or SAT Scores, or Grade Point Average, and would not want that student to be admitted to Yale University.

This is a consequence of the takeover of our elite universities by lawless Leftist radicals who think of themselves as Progressives.

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

Check out [my website](#) for tools to help you with your career, your presentations, and other matters.

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* * * * *

"I purchased Norwood's résumé guide last month and it's amazing! He goes through the processes step-by-step and you end up with not only a résumé that will get you that interview, but the skills necessary to be confident so you succeed in your interviews resulting in you receiving job offers (yes, offers)." -- D Smith, Santa Clarita, California

"I could not have gotten my first job without your expertise. Thank you so much! I learned that I had to reword and improve my résumé in order to be taken seriously in the workforce. I had been given tips from my professors in Health Science and other professionals but your advice was just what I needed. It took weeks of frustration waiting for interview calls when I happened to stumble across your website and discovered that I needed help. Your publication enlightened me with your knowledge on the wording and format needed to attract an employer. Furthermore, your booklet helped me recognize certain skills and work experience that I would have never considered important until you got me thinking about it. Thanks for a great product!" -- R. Espana, Valencia, California

From Ara's Journal

Celebrating Redemption

Perhaps you, like me, will find it noteworthy that two of the most solemn celebrations in the Judeo-Christian tradition involve Passover and Easter. Passover, celebrated by Jews, takes place in the Spring, as does Easter, which is celebrated by Christians. Spring is evocative of new life, renewal, another chance for growth, development, and life. I find that fitting.



Passover may be the single most important Jewish act of remembrance. Remembering the dark days of their forbearers as slaves in a foreign land, driven like cattle by the cruel whips of Egyptian overlords, brings to Jewish communities a recognition that they, as a people, are no longer bound in servitude. Why are they no longer bound? Because the God of Israel eventually heard their cries and made arrangements for Pharaoh to be brought to his knees and release the Israelites. A plague was to envelope Egypt, involving something called the Angel of Death, which would kill the firstborn sons throughout the land. Moses was instructed by the Almighty to have all Israelite families to sacrifice a paschal lamb and smear the blood of that lamb on the door-posts of their houses. In this way, the Angel of Death (which could just as easily be called the Angel of Life from the perspective of the Hebrew people) would see this smeared blood as a sign and a token that this was the home of an Israelite, and would pass over that home, and not unleash the horrific powers of death. The result of this carnage, which did not spare Pharaoh himself, was so devastating, that the unyielding tyrant was quashed, and he released the Israelites from bondage. The Hebrew people had finally found redemption.

Easter is also about redemption, but unlike the Passover, which is about communal redemption from slavery, Easter is about individual redemption from the effects of sin. With Easter, we have the Messiah who sheds his blood as the Paschal Lamb, opening the door to release all of humanity who are not under the bondage of a taskmaster, but the bondage of sin. Through faith and repentance and the making and keeping of covenants, a person grows in righteousness and holiness, becomes sanctified (from where we get the word "saint") and elects to follow Jesus, learning

to love one's enemies, to forgive those who have wronged us, and do real good in the world.

Both Passover and Easter contain strong elements of hope -- hope for a better world in this estate (Passover) and hope for a better world in the next (Easter.)

The deliverance brought about by the Angel of Life and which saved believers in Egypt is mirrored by the deliverance brought about by the Resurrection of Christ, who saves believers from eternal death. And while I have no particular problem with the secular elements that have crept into the meaning of Easter (i.e., Easter Bunnies, Easter Eggs, etc.) I am heartened by the fact that these two celebrations exist, Passover for one people, Easter for another. Both bring deliverance, hope, and the promise of a better tomorrow.

The World of Words

Gravitas

Building Your Power of Expression



Dictionary

Gravitas, n.

Pronunciation: gravə'tās

Meaning: Gravitas refers to a quality of seriousness, sobriety, and solemnity of manner.

Usage:

- *He was given the post because he has the necessary expertise and the requisite gravitas.*
- *All the moralizing and gravitas that accompanies a star player being arrested should be viewed as a form of Kabuki theater.*
- *Kimberly Strassel of the Wall Street Journal has the both the brains and the gravitas of a deep thinker.*

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).

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