

Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence


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Dear David,

 Ara Norwood

I hope you had an enjoyable Easter celebration this past weekend. It is the single most sacred holiday (holy day) in our Christian nation.

Check out the **Self-Development** column to get a quick primer on strategy. I think you'll find it useful.

In the **Elephant in the Room** column I explore a growing trend I am becoming aware of, one that essentially white-washes reality with gibberish masquerading as intelligence.

In the **From Ara's Journal** column, I ruminate on signs of societal decay that, while I certainly cannot prove are taking place, cause me grave concern. It's a bit controversial.

And in the **World of Words** column you will be able to add yet another gem of a word to your ever-expanding vocabulary. Try using it today.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood

Self-Development

Strategy


*"Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory.
Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat."*

Sun Tzu

Most business practitioners enjoy tossing around the word *strategy* in their high-level conversations. Unfortunately, far too many talkative business people have, at best, a fuzzy understanding of what strategy actually is. So let me cut to the chase: Where you are today is *Point A*. Where you wish to go next is *Point B*. Strategy is the bridge in between those two points. Strategy is how you will get from Point A to Point B. Simple enough?

There is a distinction between what has been referred to as a *Deliberate Strategy* (which is what you started out with) and an *Emergent Strategy* (which is what you often end up with). The reason for this is simple: *93% of successful endeavors do not succeed with the Deliberate Strategy*. Instead, leaders came to realize that the original strategy they set out to follow was simply not workable, in spite of the best

intentions of some rather smart individuals. This is due to the complexities of life. Sitting in a conference room for 9 hours with a group of colleagues and hashing out your strategy for some new initiative is, 93% of the time, going to bring disappointment. There are simply too many unexpected variables that will blindsides even the shrewdest of executives.

The successful initiatives are successful precisely because the leaders involved are both vigilant to signs of trouble,  Chess and nimble enough to course-correct, even to the point of jettisoning their original strategy and adopting a new, emergent strategy that is appropriate for the prevailing circumstances.

One final note: there is a question all leaders and strategists should have at the forefront of their minds whenever pursuing a new strategy. That question is: *What has to happen for this to work out as planned?*

Asking such a question forces one to forsake lazy thinking, not to mention wishful thinking. Asking this question puts one through the necessary exercise of mapping out the requisite flow of events that we all assume will take place in a perfect world. But the world is far from perfect. The world is messy. And therefore, to quote Ronald Reagan (who was quoting a Russian proverb -- "*Dovorey no provorey*"), we must "Trust, but verify." And the emphasis here is clearly on verify! Doing so enables us to conceive of contingencies to adopt when things do not go as planned.

Strategy is something all of us would do well to give thought to, engage in, and work through. Whatever it is you desire in life, whether it falls within the realm of money-making, health & fitness, mental acuity, relationships, spirituality, entrepreneurial ventures, team development, skill acquisition, or virtuous citizenship, sound strategy will bend the odds in your favor and put you on a path to significant accomplishment.

The Elephant in the Room

A Fish Discovers Water Last. . . Or Sometimes Not At All

One of the most fascinating (and disturbing) things about the secular Left is not merely the destructive things they stand for.


What is fascinating, as well as unsettling, is that the Left is increasingly denying that they are on the Left. In fact, they often deny the very existence of the phenomenon known as "the Left." The construct called "the Left" does not exist, if you ask a lot of Leftists. While it is easy to imagine that they are lying when they say such things, inasmuch as truth is not a Left-wing value, I am beginning to be persuaded that Leftists actually believe what they are claiming with ever-greater frequency -- that Leftism is as much a fantasy as is the Tooth Fairy. It seems they are so inured to the Leftist swill they bask in they have become desensitized to it.

I was recently in an online conversation with a dyed-in-the-wool Leftist, a woman I have known for many years. In the course of our conversation, she made the following absurd, reality-denying claims:

- No one on the Left is in favor of open borders.
- No one on the Left wants to dismantle capitalism.
- No one on the Left is trying to indoctrinate children re. gender dysphoria.
- No one on the Left is disparaging of white males.

And finally, the kicker:

- There is no such group called "the Left."

The Left doesn't exist except in the minds of Conservatives, so the thinking goes. It is a figment of their imagination. (I should hasten to point out that this one episode is not the sole manifestation Walking off Cliff of Leftists denying the very existence of Leftism. While I haven't documented it, I have personally seen such denials take place on MSNBC a number of times by the likes of Chris Matthews and others.)

Now, I have been debating this lady for quite some time on a myriad of issues in the social media space, but once she made such claims with a straight face, I made the decision that I would no longer respond to her. The reason is because I have come to believe she is disassociated from reality, unhinged from the natural world of reason and rationality. I have learned there is wisdom in refraining from engaging the farcical.

In the meantime, here is what you can expect: Leftists will continue to shed the label of Leftism and deny that it exists. They will do this because they see the label denoting something outside of the realm of normative thinking. They instead will continue to give preference to the label "progressive" because that term has a ring of innovation, growth, forward-thinking, and development. Further, Leftists will continue to make the term "Conservative" a dirty word, a pejorative that should bring about shame to those who believe in traditional American values, people who are said to be on the wrong side of history.


But I would suggest that just as a disease like cancer or multiple sclerosis or lupus can be said to be progressive, with very damning implications, so, too, to the contagion known as Leftism can be "progressive" in precisely the same sense. Yet in actuality, it is a counterfeit of true progress.

Leftism brings about regressive outcomes to our society.

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.

Need Help Preparing For That Next Big 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 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  Job Interview


the world of interviewing from both sides of the table, 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.)

If you are interested in purchasing the product, you can [click here](#) to make your purchase. The advice you will glean from this eBook is golden! I would charge you six times the price of the eBook to give you the same advice in person.

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

Devolving Norms

I am sitting in a Starbucks as I  Journal Writing write this. Though not a coffee drinker myself, I do find it contains the ambiance I like for getting work done. I also engage in a fair amount of people-watching. And today, I am noticing the number of people, mostly younger than me, that sport a great number of tattoos. One fellow came in with tattoos covering both arms, and going up his neck, up his face, on his eyebrows, and even on his shaved head. Another fellow came in equally covered, with an interesting hair color. His relatively short hair appeared to be lilac in color. In addition, he had disfigured his earlobes, having had someone cut large holes in them, and then inserting what are referred to as gauges. Still others sported a variety of piercings - - not just ears, but noses, eyelids, lips, nipples (yes, I saw that as well), navels, and chins. At this exact moment, not including myself, there are 18 customers in Starbucks. Having just left my table and wandered through the place, ostensibly to stretch my legs, I was readily able to see that 15 of them had tattoos that were visible. It is unknown if there were additional tattoos that were concealed.

What I am describing here is not uncommon. I go to Gold's Gym quite often. Obviously, in a place like that, there is a bit more skin being exposed. It is highly unusual for me to see a person in that environment displaying no tattoos. Almost everyone there has them. Those who do not are now the new minority.

While I can't quite explain the impression, I have this growing sense that the proliferation of tattoos, gauges, and piercings (beyond the traditional practice of a

lady wearing a pair of pierced earrings) suggests a trend towards something that isn't uplifting. And in no way am I suggesting that if a person gets a tattoo, they are further branding themselves as a "bad" person. I once started a conversation with a young man out on an athletic field where we were both working out who had both arms completely covered in tattoos, and from that conversation, he struck me as a very interesting and enjoyable conversationalist.

Still, I am curious about the draw that tattoos have for so many today. Perhaps for some, it's a sign of them skidding towards paganism. For others, it might be a reflection of some kind of body worship rather than worshipping God, and for others, it just might be a sign of insecurity -- either because they need the attention, or because they are simply followers, jumping on whatever bandwagon happens to be trendy. But whatever the motivation, the feeling I get, and I readily acknowledge it is merely a feeling, is that too many people are not aspiring toward virtue and elevating the human species, but instead are slouching towards vice, towards the drab, towards the uninspiring.

And it worries me. I have a sense that society as a whole is degenerating rather than elevating. Appearances do matter. They may not tell the whole story. But they do tell a story.

I am uneasy about where this story may be taking our world.

The World of Words

Artifice

Building Your Power of Expression



Dictionary

Artifice, n.

Pronunciation: ɑrdəfəs

Meaning: This word can be used in various ways. Any clever or artful skill that shows some ingenuity. It also has been used in the sense of false or insincere behavior, such as trickery or deception.

Usage:

- *She got her appointments through artifice and outright fakery.*
- *They succeeded in revising the state's constitution through a series of legal maneuvers and clever artifice.*
- *He is unfailingly polite, and still slightly awkward with the artifice of campaigning after all these years.*

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email (ara@aranorwood.com).

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Sincerely,

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