

Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Dear David,

I have to confess, so much has been going on in my life this month that I am just now getting out the first of two issues of *Uncommon Sense*! You can expect the next one to hit your In Box on the 31st.

The **Self-Development** column introduces readers to the important topic of systems. And I recommend a seminal book on the topic which I hope you will read.

In the **Elephant in the Room** column I focus on the spread of a highly contagious disease I hope you will avoid.

In the **From Ara's Journal** column I briefly touch on a recurring theme, dealing with grief.

The **World of Words** column provides you with another gem of a word that I hope you will incorporate.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



Self-Development

Systems

"Systems are bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions, which often take years to fully play out their effects on each other. Since we are part of that lacework ourselves, it's doubly hard to see the whole pattern of change. Instead, we tend to focus on snapshots of isolated parts of the system, and wonder why our deepest problems never seem to get solved."

Peter Senge

The above quote comes to us courtesy of Senge's seminal work, [*The Fifth Discipline*](#). I read it when it was published in 1990, and it remains one of my all-time favorite books. However, the portions of this book dealing with systems -- *systems thinking* to be precise -- were not easy reading. But I was so curious about that world of nonlinear dynamics that I became a member of the System Dynamics Society. By interfacing with practitioners of Systems Thinking, I gained a greater understanding of systems and how they impact individuals, organizations,

and society. Here is a small sampling of some of the things I came to understand (and I urge you to read *The Fifth Discipline* yourself -- it's too significant a book to pass up):



- Systems can be thought of as a set of connected parts forming a complex whole, a set of connected parts that affect and influence each other, in that these interconnected parts work together as component parts of an interconnecting network.
- Systems permeate all of life. Indeed, the cosmos is made up of systems. Think of the earth with its various systems. There is the atmosphere, containing the gasses surrounding the earth. There is water, in the form of oceans, rivers, streams, lakes, lagoons, and many other types of bodies of water. There is land, consisting of mountains, plains, deserts, jungles, and prairies. There are various life forms, such as plants, insects, animals, and human beings. All of these component parts have an interrelationship with the others.
- We even speak of the human body as consisting of various systems (the endocrine, nervous, circulatory, respiratory, muscular, and skeletal.) If one part of any system within the human body is impacted by something (perhaps disease, or improved health), the other systems are also impacted in some way.
- The vast economy contains many elements: industries, consumers, GNP, the money supply, government policy, interest rates, long-term and short-term debt cycles, etc. When a significant impact takes place in one area, the other areas are often affected as well.

Experts in the field of nonlinear dynamics have identified important characteristics of systems to help us manage them more effectively and sustainably. Complex systems, from an ant colony to a business to a society, have inherent traits which include:

They are governed by feedback: Our decisions alter the state of the world, causing changes in nature and in the behavior of others, which then feed back to change our own behavior. Cut prices to gain market share and your competitors may respond the same way, leading to a price war. Suppress forest fires and fuel accumulates in the forest, leading to more damaging fires.

Systems are subject to delays: Feedback processes often involve long time delays and accumulations (stocks and flows) that can often catch us off guard due to their seemingly unconnected elements. A personal example: In early August 2014, an 18-year-old man drove his father's BMW 7-Series carelessly in a parking lot, crashing into me and totaling both cars. Fortunately, no one was hurt. But two months later (October 2014), I opened my cell phone bill to discover it was

240% higher than usual. The expensive cell phone bill was a direct result of that car collision. How could that be? Simple. I used my cell phone to dial 911 at the time of the crash. Doing so nullified the data allowances I allocate to my children who had cell phones on my plan. This nullification enabled them to continue texting beyond their usual monthly allowances. Since we didn't have an unlimited plan at that time, I ended up being charged for the thousands of text messages my children were able to send and receive for that subsequent billing cycle. A seemingly isolated event (a car accident) was somehow "connected" to my cell phone plan. And I paid a heavy price for it.

Systems are nonlinear: We in the West tend to "see" things in terms of straight lines. But reality is more akin to circles. Effect is rarely proportional to cause. Complex systems can cross "tipping points" that cause dramatic and often irreversible changes in their behavior. Take a few fish from the supply and fish stocks recover; take too many and the fish stock collapses.

Systems are characterized by trade-offs: Time delays in feedback processes mean that the long-run response of a system to an intervention often differs from its short-run response. Ineffective policies often generate transitory improvement before the problem grows worse, while policies that can create enduring value often cause worse-before-better behavior.

Systems are counterintuitive and policy resistant: In simple systems, cause and effect are in close proximity. In complex systems, cause and effect are distant in time and space, while we tend to look for causes near the events we seek to explain. Our attention is drawn to the symptoms of difficulty rather than the underlying cause. As a result, many seemingly obvious solutions to problems fail or worsen the situation.

Again, if some of this sound complex, go get a copy of Peter Senge's masterpiece, *The Fifth Discipline* and read it carefully. You'll find it mind-blowing.

The Elephant in the Room

Trump Derangement Syndrome Mushrooms. . . But Why?
Here's Why. . .

One of President Trump's harshest critics, among a large cluster of them, is lawyer Michael Avenatti. Mr. Avenatti has made bold pronouncements that the President of the United States should be indicted, all the while committing crimes for which he himself is [now being indicted](#). Mr. Avenatti has declared emphatically that there is no way Mr. Trump is going to be able to finish his first term as President, all the while he himself has [behaved in ways](#) that are sure to prevent him from practicing law again. Basically, Mr. Avenatti, a third-rate low-life, is guilty of projection -- projecting on to the President of the United States bad characteristics that he himself possesses.



Steve Cohen, an angry Congressional Democrat from Tennessee, confronts Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, demanding she move forward with impeachment proceedings against President Trump. Mr. Trump's crime? According to Mr. Cohen, the President of the United States is [guilty of rape](#). Who did he allegedly rape? The country. I think it safe to say that Mr. Cohen suffers from terminal Stage 4 Trump Derangement Syndrome, and that his barely coherent screeching in the face of the Mueller Report's findings on the Russian Collusion hoax demonstrates that it is Mr. Cohen is the one who is raping the very notions of justice, common sense, and reality itself.



Similarly, the bartender-turned-philosopher-and-political-theorist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez offered this bit of erudition: "Just as impeaching without a cause [is a bad thing], choosing not to impeach where there is [a cause]" is also a bad thing. Profound.



CNN's Jim Acosta, who regularly labels the President of the United States a liar, turns around and [lies about the President](#) when the President says, correctly, that "We must also restore the integrity of our broken asylum system. Our Nation has a proud history of affording protection to those fleeing government persecutions. Unfortunately, legitimate asylum seekers are being displaced by those lodging frivolous claims." Mr. Acosta, who is not a news reporter but an anti-Trump partisan posing as a news reporter, spins the President's remarks, lying in the process: "Trump in Rose Garden speech paints asylum seekers with broad brush accusing them of misleading immigration authorities at border. 'These are frivolous claims'" -- as if President Trump was saying that all such claims for asylum were frivolous. Mr. Acosta lied. Deliberately.



Law professor Laurence Tribe, who not long ago drew attention for likening Trump's impeachment to shooting him ("If you're going to shoot him, you have to shoot to kill" he said on CNN last year, where no one challenged him in the least), [now claims](#) that President Trump shares "horrifying" resemblances to Adolf Hitler, both "physical and behavioral." And this man teaches at Harvard. . .



New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio, [commenting on](#) and labeling the savage attacks of Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn an example of "White Supremacy" for which, based on his past remarks, President Donald Trump is responsible -- even though the attackers were black.



The *Washington Post*, posing as a legitimate source of journalistic news when in fact it has less credibility than the tabloids, suggested that President Trump endorsed "tacitly [encouraging extrajudicial killings](#) and brutality" against caravans headed to the United States. What President Trump actually said was that he "would never let" law enforcement officials use weapons to keep them from entering the country illegally. But because truth is not a Left-wing value, WAPO feels perfectly justified in bastardizing the President's words beyond recognition, making them precisely the opposite of what he said.

Presidential hopeful Joe Biden tries to paint President Trump in a bad light by claiming that various heads of state have recently confided in him that they are concerned about President Trump (whatever that means). One of these heads of state that confided in him, according to Mr. Biden, was none other than Margaret Thatcher -- a woman [who died in 2013](#), almost two years before Mr. Trump even announced he was running for President. Is Mr. Biden holding seances and speaking to dead people?



Trump Derangement Syndrome is real. It is highly contagious. People affected with it seem to have lost their collective minds. In light of the fact that there is no known cure, all one can do is hope that those afflicted with this dreaded malady will suffer as little pain and physical discomfort as possible as they fade from their 15-minutes of fame.

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.

[Shameless Plug](#)

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 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

Dealing With Grief and Despair

Although I myself am riding high, not everyone is. And so I wish to address those who face grief and despair.

So many of us face consequential hardships from time to time: serious problems with family members, divorce, loss of a key friendship, significant physical injury or illness, crime, or just depression about the state of the world. What is one to do when such feelings descend and feel overwhelming?



I try to remind myself that my feelings at any given time are much like the weather. They change. If I can keep that in mind, I have hope, because I know that both the good feelings and the bad are cyclical.

And that reality is something I can handle.

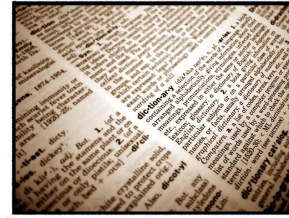
The World of Words

Demagoguery

Building Your Power of Expression

Demagoguery, n.

Pronunciation: deməgäg(ə)rē



Meaning: A demagogue is a political leader who seeks support by appealing to popular desires and existing prejudices rather than by employing rational argument. When such leaders (who are usually toxic to some degree) approach things in such a manner, they are engaging in demagoguery.

Usage:

- *I would like to propose my own candidate for the most loathsome display of demagoguery in the past 25 years.*
- *The supporters of Antifa are resorting to violent demagoguery.*
- *That's why their unnecessary meltdown over a tasteless stand-up act is pure demagoguery.*

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

Sincerely,

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