

Uncommon Sense

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Dear David,

Welcome back. I hope this finds you well.

In this issue's **Self-Development** column we examine the dynamics of skills vs. talents.

In the **Elephant in the Room** column I once again turn the reigns over to Fin McCool, who produces the second of four parts outlining his view on why Mitt Romney's vote to impeach President Trump was a profound lapse in judgment.

In the **From Ara's Journal** column I share my take on the meaning of the oft-used word *spiritual*, and discuss what spirituality is all about.

And as always, the **World of Words** column brings up the rear with a vocabulary word you can adopt and use to sound more cultured.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



Self-Development

Skill vs. Talent

As we grow and evolve, we acquire **knowledge**. That is to say, we know things. Some of this knowledge is of low usage. (I know that the capital of South Dakota is Pierre - but just how useful such knowledge is remains a question.) Other types of knowledge can be useful at times - for instance, knowledge of how to do basic arithmetic comes in handy quite often. Then there is specialized knowledge, such as the knowledge needed to land a commercial aircraft, the knowledge of how to fire a military grade weapon if you're serving in a combat zone overseas, or the knowledge of how to perform open heart surgery on a patient who has been brought to you in full cardiac arrest. Some types of knowledge can be entertaining, such as how to perform magic tricks, how to do stand-up comedy, or how to quickly solve the mystery of the Rubik's Cube. Knowledge usually comes from study, or from experience, or occasionally from deep thought, where our minds work out thorny problems and eventually come to a breakthrough solution.

Then there's something called **skill**. I recall learning that the Chinese word for Kung Fu (*Chuan Fa*) actually means "skilled one" and it can apply to practitioners of a task outside of the martial arts. In Chinese thought, a plumber could be "Chuan Fa."

We pick up our skills over time through trial and error. We might be skilled at playing pool, perhaps the game of 8-ball. We might be skilled at archery. We might be skilled at proof-reading, finding errors in someone's report. Some people are skilled at the game of chess, or the game of Mahjong. But our skills can evolve if we work on them. A guitar teacher from my past, David Linebarger, once said to me that "It's a myth that 'practice makes perfect.' Practice does *not* make perfect. *Perfect practice* makes perfect. Too many people practice incorrectly."

David is correct. As we "practice" our craft, whatever it may consist of, we get noticeably better, but if we practice wisely, accurately, and efficiently, our skill increases quickly, sometimes exponentially. It takes discipline and focus (and a good coach) to really evolve our skills. But there are very few things we cannot improve in if we stay focused and consistent over a long time-horizon.

But it is **talent** that I find most fascinating. I differentiate talents from skills this way: skills include those things you are not naturally good at, but can get good at over time with intelligent practice. Talents are those things with which you were

born, things you are naturally good at. Mozart composed his first piece of music at age 5, and his first symphony (Symphony No. 1 in E flat major) at age 8 - and it's a pretty impressive piece of music. The late Kobe Bryant was innately cut out for basketball. Not baseball. Not hockey. Not boxing.



You were undoubtedly born with some innate talent or talents. You may be aware of them; chances are high you are not. For some people, it's a life-long adventure to discover one talent after another they were born with. It takes sensitivity and a bit of reflection to discover one's talents, but with thought, and quietude, and contemplation, one can begin to connect the dots as one considers those occasions where one has performed brilliantly. When you notice those moments of effortless brilliance, you need to step back and try to discern the underlying principles associated with such brilliance. Perhaps you baked a cake or created a multi-course meal that came out superbly. That may suggest something. It may suggest you are talented in the Culinary Arts. But it may also suggest that you are gifted when working with disparate elements and competent at fusing them into a cohesive whole. Perhaps that means you could be a talented painter. (Churchill took up painting in his early 40s). Or perhaps it means you are gifted at management.

Likewise, you may discover, through trial and error, that you are very good at giving advice. So you might be a talented business coach, or you might be

talented at Psychology, or perhaps a great political consultant, or even a movie or music critic.

The possibilities are endless.

Once you discover your talents, it is critical to place yourself in a position where you can capitalize on them and make the great contributions you were destined to make.

And there you have it.

The Elephant in the Room

Guest Editorial: Mitt Romney, The Left, and the Impeachment Vote, Part 2 of 4 by Fin McCool

*"The hardest thing to explain is the glaringly evident
which everybody has decided not to see."
--Ayn Rand*

Consider the wisdom of this passage and see if it does not apply to all of us:

"Whoever among you is guiltless may be the first to throw a stone at her."
(Which no one was or is; and no one did.)

To be crystal clear, I advocate for truth, morality, principled behavior and actions. And like Romney, I too go to church. As it is, I do not believe church goers have a corner on reality, morality, or principles; nor do such necessarily get a deeper relationship with God because of their church attendance. But when Romney gave the reasons driving his vote for more witnesses in the Senate trial during Trump's farcical "impeachment" hearing, part of his statement to the press referenced his deep relationship with God, as if that makes him more truthful, principled or moral. Should it? Yes. Does reality teach us that this is always the case? No.

A principled life is good and needs no defense. Its goodness speaks for itself, and those that follow such a course are easy to identify. The opposite is also easy to identify. The Left are opposites. They lead lives largely void of morality and principals. They live "existentially." And, for the most part, they live godless lives. There is no good or evil to them, only what "is."

This is a Leftist philosophy that allows them to steamroll over anyone in order to achieve their end game, which is total control of the masses via government grabs, such as allowing illegal aliens into the country so they can one day gain their vote, and thus, remain in power for at least a generation.

Regarding the steamrollers, simply take a gander at Germany's Hitler, Venezuela's Chavez, China's Xi Jinping, Russia's Putin, Stalin and Lenin, Italy's Mussolini and one of the newest that makes the list: another teammate of Chavez, the current socialist coup-elected President Maduro. Maduro is also now a wanted drug "kingpin" with a US bounty of \$15mm on his head. And the list goes on.

Consider this: had Bernie Sanders been elected President, left unchecked, he would have stood in the shadow of these tyrants.

With this backdrop, let me start to make my point. There are times, unfortunately, when a particular danger level forces one to temporarily modify their principals because one is faced with a clear level of evil, one that puts life and liberty on the line. In such cases, for survival's sake, all bets are off.

If standing by your principals, morals or your version of the truth ends up empowering a clear and present evil facing you, you have to take drastic action; you have to go against the grain; you have no choice but to engage in temporary misdirection lest you hand the crown to the devil himself and subordinate yourself to its immoral, unprincipled and deceitful power. If evil's normal path is indeed unprincipled, immoral and untruthful as a matter of



course, then your temporary shift in your normative principles is, in fact, the moral thing to do. In these rare instances there's no choice but to do whatever is necessary to survive. On such occasions, it very well may mean temporarily jettisoning your usual standards and principles so as to not empower the evil facing you.

In short, if you truly believe you're facing evil and your life is on the line, or if you suspect you may empower your very enemy, then in that moment you say what you have to say to get out of harm's way. And in the aftermath, we will not cast stones at good people who in the moment had to make tough, temporary choices contrary to their belief systems in order not to empower evil.

Take the case of both the so-called Russia Collusion and the Impeachment Trial of President Trump. In both cases, and with all the information we had, and now have, does anyone really believe that the Left was guided by a desire for truth? Does anyone believe the Left acted in a principled or moral manner in their decision to investigate one, or take to trial, the other?

Instead, the Left cast aside any semblance of truth, morals and principles, then manufactured their own parallel universe of unreality to justify their cause. They followed Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* formula to the letter, doing their utmost to dispose of Trump. They want not only to root out Trump, but to root out the very people who elected him - you and I. Truth, decency, and morality has no place with the Left.

The Left is the model for lying, cheating, and stealing. Simply watch and listen. You can't miss it. They are as dependable in this as is the rising and setting of the sun. They cannot help themselves. Like ants enslaved to their genetic code, simply doing as they are coded to do, they will never leave room for

"the discussion." If "the discussion" does not ultimately, and with near immediacy include agreeing completely with their point of view, there is no "discussion," only their screams at you of your "meanness, bigotry, racism, misogyny," and whatever else they feel like throwing at you. This is their version of a "discussion."

The best example I can think of is illustrated in how Pablo Escobar, the notorious narco-terrorist kingpin of Columbia, first threatened lives by giving "you and I" his infamous non-choice of *plata o plomo*, meaning "money or bullets." In the most practical sense, for most sensible folks, this translates to "take my money and sell your morals and principles, or take my bullets and be dead." Let's see how well your morals and principles work out for you when you're face down in the gutter, lifeless. Standing up to Escobar meant dying. There was no reasoning with Escobar. There was only one way. Do it my way, or die. This was Escobar's essential credo.

Like the Escobars of the world, the Left, too, cannot be reasoned with. Allow me to cite ANTIFA, a full-blown, card-carrying hit squad of the Left. Fascists are against the principles of democracy and ANTIFA epitomizes this philosophy. They are indeed emblematic of the Left.

ANTIFA is a group of utter loser-cowards who show up en masse to political gatherings and demonstrations - in masks - hiding their faces, bearing baseball bats and set about assaulting and maiming their non-violent opponents who hold contrary opinions. ANTIFA is not there to discuss or debate. These thugs, so completely out of touch, have so emotionally self-inoculated from reason that it is they who are the very Fascists they claim to be ridding society of. Hold a different opinion and you'll be beaten to a bloody pulp - in the streets of the USA, no less. One has no choice when facing ANTIFA but to momentarily abandon one's standards of honesty, but only in this special context, in order to survive and prevent a greater double-dip of barbarism from occurring - your savage beating and their deceit.

Life is just not simple and orderly all the time. There are occasions that confront us in life when we have no choice but to go against our own grain, and work out the aftermath with intellectual honesty after the fact; and if you're a man of God as Romney is, you take it up with Him later. Sometimes we have to hold our nose and reluctantly say, "Pablo, I accept your offer." And privately say to yourself, "I'll sort the rest out later among the living."

The Left is remarkably unified. They have each other's backs. And the Left is not shy about lying to achieve their agenda and cover for one another. Simply recall how they handled the following:

- The entire Trump "impeachment" trial for nothing more than perhaps "jaywalking."
- The Hillary server and the missing emails - not investigated.
- Joe Biden's unambiguous *quid pro quo* with a Ukranian investigation, and caught on video, no less - not investigated.
- Hunter Biden's board membership within a company for which he has zero experience - not investigated.
- Comey - nothing.

- McCabe - nothing.
- The FISA court, Steele Dossier matter - nothing.
- Obama's DACA abuse - absolutely nothing.
- Obama's spying on the Trump campaign - nothing.
- Obama's explicit interference in the Israeli elections - nothing.

Regarding Obama's interference in the Israeli's election, this is yet another Liberal Democrat (Leftist) showing their continuing disdain for not only the Jews in the USA, but for an entire separate sovereign nation of Jews - who are surrounded by our and their endless enemies. The Liberal Democrats (Leftists) never stand up for the Jews; why any Jew votes Democrat remains a mystery. It's always been the conservatives, not the Left, who have the Jewish people's collective backs.

Lying is simply part of what the Left does. It's in their DNA. It's part of their genetic code. They are wired to lie and obfuscate the way a common thief is wired to steal, and they have zero compunction about doing it. The Left lies with the ease which you and I breathe. They are followers of Marxist belief. On that note, I recommend everyone read Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* as well as Marx's *Communist Manifesto*. You need to know and understand the enemy.

These are folks who ardently believe in the notion of "by any means necessary," and "the ends justify the means." You don't matter to them, only the outcome they can extract from you matters to them. You're expendable. Remember, this is the party of infanticide.

Standby for part 3.

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

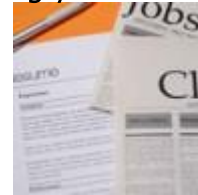
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From Ara's Journal

True Spirituality

In some of the circles I frequent, I see people describing themselves as "spiritual but not religious." I wonder what they mean by that. I suspect it means that they see themselves as decent people but they do not believe in any particular religious system and are not part of an organized faith community like a church. But what does it mean to be spiritual devoid of any association with like-minded believers?

I happen to believe that being spiritual, and being religious (meaning, for instance, a committed church-goer) can go hand-in-hand, but do not necessarily have to. Yet it is a matter of degrees.

A person can be "religious" but not spiritual, meaning they attend church and go through all of the programs associated with their church, but they are, bone deep, more secular than spiritual, more focused on the pragmatic needs of getting ahead in life than on God and divine things. I know a lot of men who, even at church, can't seem to talk about anything other than their careers.



A person can be "spiritual" but not religious, meaning they do not adhere to a sense of community that comes with membership in a church or synagogue, and do not follow an established set of precepts (such as the Ten Commandments), but do have some elements in their life that they draw meaning from (perhaps from some form of yoga, or meditation, or through the writings of certain authors).

A person can be neither "spiritual" nor "religious." Many people seem to fall into that category.

And a person can be both "spiritual" and "religious."

In my faith tradition, (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), we have certain moral and spiritual "laws" or practices we commit to. Here are some examples:

- **Keep the Sabbath Day holy:** this comes from the 10 Commandments and is not unique to my faith tradition. In our faith community, it means we honor Sunday as the Sabbath and we are to attend worship services at Church, and keep the day different and sanctified from all other days of the week. We do this by not engaging in commerce, not going out to restaurants, not working, and being mindful of the kinds of music we expose ourselves to, the kind of television programming we watch (if we watch any at all) and generally make the day something unique from other days by focusing on spiritual matters.
- **The Word of Wisdom:** this refers to our code of health. We abstain from coffee, tea, alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, illegal drugs, etc. We favor wheat, we consume meat sparingly or in moderation, and things of that kind.
- **The Law of Chastity:** this refers to sexual purity. We believe that unmarried persons should not engage in sexual relations to any degree and that married persons should keep strict fidelity in their marriages.
- **The Law of Tithing:** We believe that we should return to the Lord (via the Church) 10% of our income for the operational expenses of the Church.

As I think about these four specific examples, it occurs to me that even keeping both the letter and the spirit of each of these principles does not guarantee a person will experience deep levels of spirituality - although it is difficult to imagine how keeping them perfectly would harm one's spirituality.

To my thinking, keeping these four practices is merely the beginning, merely the starting point for the spiritual life. It's like the price of admission. Once those practices are being honored, there is so much more that can happen to bring about a deeper sense of the holy. Fasting with a purpose; feasting on the words of holy writ; deep, meaningful, prolonged, yearning prayer - with no distractions and no interruptions - where there is a hunger to know God and commune with Him; anonymous service and sacrifice; teaching others about sacred things and bearing witnesses to the truth of such teachings. . . loving others with a divine love. . . all of these things and more can bring us into a divine realm and make clear to us the reality that this world, in spite of its many depravities, is simply pulsating with spiritual force of profound magnitude.

An Old Testament story bears this out. When an ancient Hebrew prophet named Elisha is targeted for destruction by the king of Syria, and found that his city was surrounded by the Syrian army's horses and chariots, Elisha's servant, witnessing this siege, was terrified and cried out to Elisha, "Alas, my master! [What] shall we do?" And Elisha, who had very advanced spiritual perceptions replied, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." (2 Kings 6:14-16).

And then something remarkable happened. Elisha prayed to God that his servant's spiritual eyes might be opened, and that he might see the things that Elisha could see. And this prayer was granted. The text reads: "And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." (2 Kings 4:17). There was a very real, but largely unseen heavenly army of angelic warriors on the scene that were there for the aid and deliverance of Elisha.

Being sensitive to those realities constitutes the highest levels of true spirituality. This is something worth striving for. Obedience to divine law is the first, but certainly not the last, step to achieving such spiritual depth.

The World of Words

Misgiving

Building Your Power of Expression

Misgiving n.

Pronunciation: mĭsgĭvĭNG



Meaning: If you possess a feeling of doubt or a general concern about the outcome or consequences of a matter, you are in possession of a misgiving. It's sort of like a differing opinion. It's the same as having contrarian feelings about a matter.

Usage:

- *I still have serious misgivings about the current state of the contract.*
- *My only misgiving about your presentation was you failed to tell how the sniper story ended.*
- *I felt a sense of misgiving at the prospect of retirement.*

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