

Never - Ever - Always

No Way - Anyway  
Always

Never - Forever  
Evermore - Nevermore  
Everlasting  
Whatever - Whenever  
However  
Everywhere - Nowhere  
Nothing - Everything

Powerless - Powerful  
Thoughtful - Thoughtless  
Harmless - Harmful  
Faithful - Faithless  
Hopeless - Hopeful  
Fruitful - Fruitless  
Colorless - Colorful  
Doubtful - Doubtless  
Meaningless - Meaningful  
Joyful - Joyless  
Helpless - Helpful  
Careful - Careless  
Painless - Painful  
Restful - Restless  
Mindless - Mindful  
Useful - Useless  
Fearless - Fearful  
Lawful - Lawless  
Shameful - Shameless  
Artless - Artful  
Graceful - Graceless  
Thankless - Thankful  
Pitiful - Pitiless  
Cheerful - Cheerless  
Merciless - Merciful  
Nevertheless

## Comment

The above statement framed as a poem is probably not self-explanatory. So, I add this commentary. I am tired recently of hearing all the declarations on so many events of “Never Again,” “Never Forget,” and “Absolutely True.” Hyperbole at Best! Our language reflects the fact that as humans we love to carve up all aspects of our reality into opposites, either-ors, dichotomies, extremes: More – Less; Full – Empty; Long – Short; Fast – Slow; Rich – Poor; Strong – Weak; Good – Bad; Friends – Enemies; Right – Wrong, etc. Unfortunately, reality is Never so simple; it is Always composed of Entirely interlinked, interwoven continua. The dichotomies we impose conceptually and employ to communicate in oral and written language simplify reality and make it “easier” to manage. But these oppositions are in essence fundamental stereotypes that are Always getting in the way of full understanding and truly informed policies and actions.

As an example, consider our use of the labels “liberal” and “conservative.” We so easily toss people and groups into one or the other of these categories – often based on a single announced statement, commitment or action. Most likely that person or group is liberal on some issues, moderate on others, and conservative on still others, but we “know” them so superficially that we don’t recognize that our tendency to categorize leads us to “jump to conclusions.” This problem is especially dangerous in modern complex societies where we know only tangentially the vast majority of individuals and groups. Even our view of entire nations is clouded by these simplistic attributions: “China is a Communist country.” This, when modern China is a hybrid society more accurately described as having an expanding capitalistic economy significantly managed by an authoritarian government that projects itself as being democratic while it is mostly under the exclusive control of a very few leaders of one party – the “Chinese Communist Party.”

The poem above explores some of our opposites in English that get expressed as different suffixes are attached to the same root word. Of course prefixes accomplish the same thing – Unhappy, Prescribe, Foretell, Deconstruct, etc. As we bask in the wonders of our language capabilities, we need to Always recognize how Imperfect this instrument of thought and communication really is. Even in science, we rarely escape the fact that our tendency to gross conceptual simplifications in language are very influential in promoting an inaccurate view of reality.