

Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

[Quick Links](#)

[Ara's Web Site](#)

[Facebook Page](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

[Click Here to Join!](#)

Issue #276

January 31, 2023

It is very satisfying getting you this latest issue of *Uncommon Sense* just under the wire for January.

In our **Self-Development** column, I give you a quick crash-course in Economics, and then point out some ways in which an understanding of the basics applies to your own life. Read it.

The Elephant in the Room column finds the current Press Secretary in the Biden Administration in my cross-hairs. I share a revealing window into the madness that passes for a Press Conference. It's almost cartoonish.

Definitely read the **From Ara's Journal** column, which has some important content that could have been in the Self-Development column.

The World of Words column? Oh yes: another gem of a word awaits you there.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



Self-Development
Understanding the Relevance of Economics

Very few people understand economics. Perhaps the subject bores them, or perhaps it intimidates them. This should not be the case. It's not all that difficult to understand the basics of economics, and once you do, you can readily see how this field of study applies to you personally.



Most college students who have taken an economics course would likely explain economics as a system of production and distribution of the goods and services we use in everyday life. And that would be correct as far as that goes. But it actually goes a bit farther.

The great economist Thomas Sowell was famous for pointing out that the Garden of Eden was not an economy because everything there was had in abundance. This brings to the fore the reality that if there is no scarcity, there is no need to economize, and therefore, there is no economics.

An astute British economist named Lionel Robbins once made the observation that "Economics is the study of the use of scarce resources which have alternative uses."

Think of the last time you flew on a commercial airline for a vacation. Did you fly First Class? Probably not. You flew "Economy Class."

But if you had truly wanted to fly First Class, could you have done so? Probably.

However, you would be spending a lot of money to do so, and that would mean you would have parted with money you might have used for other purposes. You would have had to "do without" on certain things. This is because you, like all of us, have limited financial resources.

Broadly speaking, *scarcity* is when what everybody wants adds up to more than there is. If everybody wanted beachfront property, it would be impossible to accommodate such a need because there are more people on this planet than there is beachfront property on this planet. So even if the government were to mandate that everyone is to have beachfront property, that mandate could not be carried out due to the innate limitations of available land. And because there are

always constraints in all of human existence, nothing has been more pervasive in the history of the human race as *scarcity*!

Economics is not just about dealing with the existing output of goods and services as consumers. It is also, and more fundamentally, about producing that output from scarce resources in the first place – turning inputs into outputs. In other words, it's about the raw ingredients that go into a can of soup, including the can and the label. It's all the "stuff" that causes toothpaste to become toothpaste (e.g., abrasives such as baking soda, sudsers, humectants such as sorbitol, flavors such as mint, sweeteners, whiteners, flourides, water, etc). In a service construct, such as gardeners or landscapers, it's the training acquired by the gardener to mow your lawn properly, and it's the equipment he uses, such as a lawn mower. Those are inputs. The output is the soup that is served on your table, or the toothpaste you squeeze onto your toothbrush, or the immaculate front law that the gardener caused to look so wonderful.

Thus, economics studies the *consequences* of decisions that are made about the use of various resources -- resources such as land, labor, capital, and other resources that go into producing the output which determines a country's standard of living.

And not only the concept of *scarcity*, but the concept of *alternative uses* is at the heart of economics. If each resource had but only one possible use, economics would be much simpler. But the resource known as *water* can be used to produce ice for your drink, or steam to run a train, or can be directed towards farms to grow corn, or can be used for recreational purposes, such as a water-oriented theme park like Hurricane Harbor. Likewise, petroleum not only can be used to produce gasoline for your car, or heating oil to warm your home, but it can also be used to make plastics to encase your flat screen TV, or asphalt we find on our roads, or even Vaseline Petroleum Jelly to soothe a burn.

So the question becomes, *How much of each resource should be allocated to each of its many possible uses?* Every economy has to answer that question, and each one does, one way or another, efficiently (as Japan and Switzerland do) or inefficiently (as Venezuela and Uruguay tend to do). Thus, different kinds of economies (e.g., capitalist, socialist, monarchical, theocratic, etc) are simply different ways of making decisions about the allocations of scarce resources -- and those decisions have repercussions on the quality of life of whole societies.

Final point: All of this applies to you as an individual. You have access to all sorts of resources. The decisions you make about those scarce resources will impact your quality of life. When you get your paycheck, you will have an opportunity to make hard and important decisions. Do you leave the lights on when light is not needed in your home? Great! You've just made the decision to throw more of your limited paycheck towards your electric bill. Do you spend all of your money each paycheck? OK. You have just made a decision *not* to discipline yourself to put money aside regularly in a savings account to prepare for what we call "a rainy day." You have no cushion to fall back on when those inevitable unexpected setbacks arise, such as major car repairs. Do you purchase only enough food to get you through the next two weeks? That's your call, but given the volatility of life, it might have been smarter to purchase a large freezer locker and fill it over time with as much frozen food as possible so that you don't starve if there ever is a food shortage, or you ever lose your source of income. Every time you use your credit card, with its obscenely high interest rate, you may well have become poorer, since those very interest rates are going to rob you of your spending power and sink you into an albatross of debt.

The lesson: Choose wisely.

The Elephant in the Room

The White House Press Secretary

When Karine Jean-Pierre was first introduced at the podium as President Biden's new Press Secretary on May 13th, 2022, she made it clear that something remarkable had happened -- [a series](#)



[of firsts](#) -- that qualified her to be the new Press Secretary: she was a black, gay, immigrant woman. Somehow, the color of her skin, her gender, and the fact that she was sexually attracted to females were, in her mind, profound traits that really set her apart from others and made her uniquely suited to serve the Biden Administration as the "Face-to-the Press."

How has she fared thus far?

I've been studying this peculiar woman for some time. Every time she goes to the podium to face a mostly adoring press (precisely *because* the mostly Left-wing press corps imagines that skin color and sexual preference -- provided it is part of the LGBT world -- really does matter) I find myself riveted, hanging on to every word she utters.

Unfortunately for me, she doesn't utter many words of substance, leaving me feeling a bit. . . starved. And the words she does utter leave me feeling as if I am stuck in Ground Hog Day because those few words have a haunting familiarity. They get played over and over and over again in every single Press Briefing she conducts.

Here are some things I have noticed she tends to say or do while running a Press Conference:

- "I talked about this yesterday. . ."
- "I am going to refer you to the White House Counsel."
- "I would refer you to the Department of Transportation."
- "This is something we take very seriously."
- "I would refer you to the Department of Transportation."
- "Again, that's something, as I mentioned last week, that happens every five years... Don't have anything to share on specifics. Again, as you know, this is something, as I just mentioned, ... this is something that is a priority... I don't have any specifics on the action that Congress is going to take."
- "That is something that you've heard me say many times from this podium."
- "That is something I'd refer you to the State Department about."
- ". . . but we've been really clear."
- "Don't have any other specific actions than what I just laid out."
- "I don't have a conversation or a call to read out."
- "Republicans need to act."
- "So, I'm going to say this, and going to keep it really short today: As it relates to this particular issue, as it relates to an ongoing legal matter, I'm going to refer you to the Department of Justice with that specific. As it relates to anything you want to ask of us about this legal matter, I would refer you to the White House Counsel Office. I'm going to leave it there. Not going to go into it further."
- "I already answered your question."
- "Look, we have addressed this. The Democratic National Committee has addressed this. I'm just not going to go any further to what we've already shared about this. So I'm just going to leave it to the statements that we put out just a couple

of weeks ago on the process. I'm just not going to dive into the process from here."

- "I'm going to say this: the President takes classified information seriously... You heard that directly from him last week. And I'm just going to leave it there. I'm not going to open this up for discussion.
- "I would refer you to the Department of Justice. And any questions that you may have of us, I would refer you to my colleagues at the White House Counsel's Office. So I'll leave it there."
- "I don't have any more specifics."
- "Twice he spoke to this just last week."
- "Anything specific dealing with this issue, I would refer you to the Department of Justice or the Special Counsel, and I'll leave it there."
- "So look, I've been very clear and I just said this moments ago."
- "That is something for [Republicans] to respond to."
- "But it is not for me to answer that question."
- "I'm not in a position to talk about reform or how this process should go forward."
- "This is something that is being reviewed by the Department of Justice. I would refer you to them. I would refer you to the Special Counsel. I'm just not going to go any further than that."
- "I was asked this question yesterday... But I don't have any new announcements."
- "I don't have a comment on specific moves."
- "I talked about this from this podium just yesterday."
- "So look, I'm not going to comment..."
- "So look, we have said this before, and I think I said it probably the first few days of this new Congress..."

This should suffice. All of this comes within [the first 34 minutes](#) of a Press Conference held on January 18th of this year. And this press conference is a carbon copy of all press conferences run by the current White House Press Secretary.

Here are the key patterns I see:

1. The Press Secretary tries to invalidate virtually every question posed to her by suggesting that the question has already been addressed.
2. The Press Secretary stoutly refuses to answer any of the questions. Even when she offers a reply to a given question, her reply does not actually address the question that was asked, but instead covers peripheral and irrelevant talking points that are loosely related to the topic.

3. The Press Secretary routinely punts on answering most questions, hiding instead behind a disingenuous "referral" of the questioner to some other government department.
4. The Press Secretary tries to burnish her own reputation by saying she has been very clear, or the Biden Administration has been very transparent, very diligent, very effective, etc.
5. The Press Secretary attacks the Republican Party whenever possible, referring to "extreme Maga Republicans."
6. The Press Secretary strikes one as both ill-informed and glued to her prepared notes that someone has put together for her. Essentially, she hears a question, tries to find a sheet of talking points in her notebook, and then robotically reads whatever was written therein, betraying not a shred of understanding of what it is she is reading. Were she to be sitting down with a college freshman who is a Political Science major for an interview, and she didn't have her notebook with her, it is doubtful that she would have the slightest comprehension about energy, economics, governance, diplomacy, security, transportation, military matters, intelligence, immigration, law, or crime. For the college freshman, it would be like interviewing a jellyfish.

But let us not forget: she *is* qualified. Because she is black, and she's a lesbian. After all, she told us so on Day 1.

* * * * *

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

From Ara's Journal

Beyond "Know Thyself"

The phrase "Know thyself" had developed strong coinage in some circles. The words come from a translation of a Greek inscription found engraved on a wall of the ancient temple ruins of Delphi. The intelligentsia acknowledges that the words come to us via the Latin



phrase *Nosce te Ipsum* (which, in turn, come from the Greek ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ) and that we do not know who actually wrote it, or when, or whether the writer was male or female. Scholars simply refer to the unknown author as “the oracle at Delphi.”

I myself draw attention to the phrase when I am teaching my college students about self-leadership. I use the term as a springboard to put them through a series of heady exercises that attempt to raise their own self-awareness by developing a small set of core values they will adopt as their own, and by crafting a personal mission statement.

But I have been reflecting on the phrase at a deeper level recently. In doing so, I have come to realize that knowing oneself is quite valuable, but its value only goes so far. I agree with Daniel Kahneman, author of *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, that in spite of what we may believe, we really do not know ourselves all that well. Knowing who we are today, at this moment in time, has limited value.

Why?

Because we are dynamic beings.

We are always in flux, evolving or devolving, becoming more expansive or more shriveled, embracing greater sanctification or descending into moral emptiness. That being the reality with the human condition, it is one thing to know oneself as one is at the present time, yet it is another thing entirely to know where one wants to go. We are all travelers in a sense. While it is possible, as a traveler, to somehow maintain one’s spatial center and go neither forward nor backward, standing stoically in one place, the more common phenomena is to see people either ascend or descend from where they are, taking a number of steps forward, or backward, or both. Some people make modest strides forward (think “two steps forward, one step backward”). Others make gradual, almost imperceptible “reverse progress” (such as one step forward, two steps backward). Occasionally, you find a very impressive individual who is continually stepping forward, taking on new goals and achieving them, ascending to new heights, acquiring new capabilities and using them for good.

So perhaps “Know Thyself” should be supplemented with “Know The Self You Wish To Become.”

Because who we are today may not measure up to who we want to be tomorrow.

There are many who would argue for their flaws by exclaiming, "This is who I am!" That may be who they are at the present time, but is that who they really want to be? Is that really *what* they want to be? Do they not have the courage to overcome what they are? Do they lack the vision that reveals a profoundly more decent, pure, strong, or wise individual? Are they truly willing to forgo additional development and growth in the name of "This is who I am"?

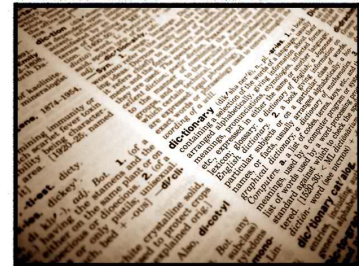
We humans are a mixed bag, packaged with a fair amount of ingredients that are praiseworthy, and also packing some baggage that we would be better off relinquishing. We need to consider the possibilities and begin trying to "know the self we wish to become."

The World of Words

Restive

Building Your Power of Expression

Restive, adj.



Pronunciation: ˈrestɪv

Meaning: This is a descriptive word which means what one might guess it means: restive refers to a sort of restlessness. If a person is agitated and is unable to keep his composure, and he is prone to lose his cool, that person is restive. Think of an impatient person, or a person who is dissatisfied, or perhaps bored. If that person becomes a bit too fidgety, or tense, or agitated, that person could be said to be restive.

Usage:

- *I could no longer mask my disgust with the cold, stale french fries I received from the Drive Through fast food joint; I was so restive I just had to take them back and demand a fresh order.*

- *The crowd had been waiting for hours for the doors to open and many were becoming restive.*
- *She is characteristically on edge all the time and perpetually restive.*

New subscribers, the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" should be in your In-Box within 24 hours from the time you subscribed. 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 Facebook (keyword "Leadership Development Systems") or via my website:
www.aranorwood.com

Sincerely,

Ara Norwood
Leadership Development Systems

[Visit our website](#)



Leadership Development Systems | P. O. Box 12983, Chandler, AZ 85248-0018

[Unsubscribe \[ara@aranorwood.com\]\(mailto:ara@aranorwood.com\)](#)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by ara@aranorwood.com powered by



Try email marketing for free today!