

THE DIOGENES REPORT
The Wit, Wisdom & Wituperation of Emanuel L. Strunin
“A few steps ahead of the curve”
May 2005, Vol. V, #6

NEW THINKING ABOUT THE WAY WE THINK

Modern technology is dispelling some ancient myths about our thought processes. Magnetic Imaging Resonance (MRI) is enabling us, for the first time, to recognize what parts of the human brain are responsible for various thoughts and behavior. The prefrontal cortex, the seat of rationality is where, we like to think, our decision-making comes from.

However, a growing number of MRI brain-mapping studies made while people are presented with decision-making problems show that a large number of responses are programmed—coming from the primitive (genetic) parts of the brain or from influences going back to the individual’s formative years. Basically, many (if not most) of our decision-making is not the result of so-called rationality or logic. Free will may not be as free as we thought.

Now, another study—described in Business Week, March 26, 2005—of “neuroeconomics” may help topple the notion of rational decision-making. According to BW, functional MRI studies show that “when people feel they’re being treated unfairly, a small area called the anterior insula lights up that overwhelms the deliberations of the prefrontal cortex. With primitive brain functions so powerful, it’s no wonder that economic transactions often go awry.”

Neuroeconomics, while still regarded skeptically by mainstream economists, holds the promise of describing people as they really are, “not as some oversimplified mathematical model would have them be.”

The BW article, aptly titled, Why Logic Often Takes A Backseat, notes: “Since the early 1900s, economists have mainly assumed that people have a stable and consistent set of preferences that they try to satisfy. When faced with an apparently illogical outcome, they try to explain it as the result of a reasoned decision process.”

To further quote: “In recent years, the assumption of rationality has taken some hard knocks....But to date, these attacks on rationality—under the broad heading of ‘behavioral economics’—have seemed more like a grab bag of anomalies than a consistent alternative theory. So the assumption of rationality survives.

The article notes that: “A key tenet of standard economics is that making people happy is a simple matter of giving them more of what they like. But neuroscience shows that’s not true. The brain’s striatum quickly gets used to new stimuli and expects them to continue. People are on a treadmill in which only unexpected pleasures can make them happier.

That explains why happiness of people in rich countries hasn't increased despite higher living standards. Neuroeconomics also challenges the notion that emotions can only corrupt the economic decision-making process."

One neurologist point out, however, that emotions grab peoples attention and motivate them to focus their rational brains on the issue at hand. He further claims that his studies of brain-damaged patients show that people who feel no emotions are bad at making decisions.

The article concludes that what to do with the findings of neuroeconomics is still very controversial.

While agreeing that the role of emotions in all aspects of human behavior is greatly underestimated, Diogenes wants to apply neuroeconomics to a specific situation. He asks: "When the Federal Reserve Board members are deciding whether or not to raise interest rates, does the rational part of their brains guide them to do what's best for American people, or does the primitive parts of their brains tell them to do what the man who appointed them wants so that they protect their jobs?"

Just asking.

SIMPLE SENIOR ASKS

S. S.: When you want a \$100 billion to invade Afghanistan and Iraq, what do you do?

Mr. Pres.: I go to Congress and ask them to vote a money bill.

S. S.: When you want \$100 billion to rebuild Afghanistan and Iraq, what do you do?

Mr. Pres.: I go to Congress and ask them to vote a money bill.

S. S.: When you want \$350 billion for the defense budget every year, what do you do?

Mr. Pres.: I go to Congress and ask them to vote a money bill.

S. S.: When you want \$5 billion to fight the war on drugs, what do you do?

Mr. Pres.: I go to Congress and ask them to vote a money bill.

S. S.: When you want \$50 billion for Homeland Security, what do you do?

Mr. Pres. I go to Congress and ask them to vote a money bill.

S. S.: If Social Security or Medicare or Medicaid run of money what should you do?

Mr. Pres.: That's a tough question, but I'd go to Wall Street and see how they can help.

NAMES

Names that fit and names that don't.

This one fits. Marc Juris has joined the executive staff of Court TV. (Business Week, May 16, 2005)

**FOR THOSE WHO ENJOY LANGUAGE
(OR SEVERE DISTORTIONS THEREOF)**

Old and new treats for the one or two of my readers who have a literary bent.

Those who jump off a bridge in Paris are in Seine.

A backward poet writes inverse.

A man's home is his castle, in a manor of speaking.

Dijon vu - the same mustard as before.

Practice safe eating - always use condiments.

Shotgun wedding: A case of wife or death.

A man needs a mistress just to break the monogamy.

A hangover is the wrath of grapes.

Does the name Pavlov ring a bell?

Reading while sunbathing makes you well red.

When two egotists meet, it's an I for an I.

A bicycle can't stand on its own because it is two tired.

What's the definition of a will? (It's a dead giveaway.)

Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.

In democracy your vote counts. In feudalism your count votes.

A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.

If you don't pay your exorcist, you get repossessed.

With her marriage, she got a new name and a dress.

When a clock is hungry, it goes back four seconds.

The man who fell into an upholstery machine is fully recovered.

You feel stuck with your debt if you can't budge it.

Local Area Network in Australia: the LAN down under.

He often broke into song because he couldn't find the key.

Every calendar's days are numbered.

A lot of money is tainted - It taint yours and it taint mine.

A boiled egg in the morning is hard to beat.

He had a photographic memory that was never developed.

A plateau is a high form of flattery.

Those who get too big for their britches will be exposed in the end.

Once you've seen one shopping center, you've seen a mall.

Bakers trade bread recipes on a knead-to-know basis.

Santa's helpers are subordinate clauses.

Acupuncture is a jab well done.

If you skip a day of counting the omer would you call it a misnomer?

STATE MOTTOS

I received 50, but kept only those I thought were clever. For the complete list send your request to Diogenes.

Alabama - Hell Yes, We Have Electricity.

Alaska - 11,623 Eskimos Can't Be Wrong!

Arkansas - Literacy Ain't Everything.

California - By 30, Our Women Have More Plastic Than Your Honda.

Connecticut - Like Massachusetts, Only The Kennedy's Don't Own It Yet.

Delaware - We Really Do Like The Chemicals In Our Water.

Florida - Ask Us About Our Grandkids.

Georgia - We Put The Fun In Fundamentalist Extremism.

Hawaii - Haka Tiki Mou Sha'ami Leeki Toru (Death To Mainland Scum, Leave Your Money)

Indiana - 2 Billion Years Tidal Wave Free

Kansas - First Of The Rectangle States

Kentucky - Five Million People; Fifteen Last Names.
Jay Leno has changed Kentucky's to "Got teeth?"
Massachusetts -Our Taxes Are Lower Than Sweden's
Michigan - First Line Of Defense, From The Canadians
Minnesota -10,000 Lakes...And 10,000,000,000,000 Mosquitoes
Mississippi -Come And Feel Better About Your Own State
Missouri - Your Federal Flood Relief Tax Dollars At Work
Nebraska -Ask About Our State Motto Contest
Nevada - Hookers and Poker!
New Jersey -You Want A ##\$%##! Motto? I Got Yer ##\$%##! Motto, Right here!
New York - You Have The Right To Remain Silent, You Have The Right To An Attorney...
North Carolina - Tobacco Is A Vegetable
North Dakota - We Really Are One Of The 50 States!
Oklahoma - Like The Play, But No Singing
Oregon - Spotted Owl...It's What's For Dinner
South Carolina - Remember The Civil War? Well, We Didn't Actually Surrender Yet
South Dakota - Closer Than North Dakota
Tennessee - The Ed..Yoo..Kay..Shun State
Texas - Se Hablo Ingles
Utah - Our Jesus Is Better Than Your Jesus
Vermont - Ay, Yep
Washington - We have more rain than you do
West Virginia - One Big Happy Family...Really!
Wyoming - Where Men Are Men... And The Sheep Are Scared

DIFFERENTLY-AGED DRESS CODE

Despite what you may have seen on the streets, the following combinations DO NOT go together and should be avoided:

1. A nose ring and bifocals
 2. Spiked hair and bald spots
 3. A pierced tongue and dentures
 4. Miniskirts and support hose
 5. Ankle bracelets and corn pads
 6. Speedos and cellulite
 7. A belly button ring and a gall bladder surgery scar
 8. Unbuttoned disco shirts and a heart monitor
 9. Midriff shirts and a midriff bulge
 10. Multiple ear piercings and a hearing aid
 11. Pierced nipples that hang below the waist
 12. Bikinis and liver spots
 13. Short shorts and varicose veins
 14. Inline skates and a walker
- And the ultimate in "bad taste" for the differently-aged:
15. Thongs and Depends

HEADLINES AND COMMENTS

Headlines from the world's press. Comments by Diogenes.

Gay Men Are Found To Have Different Sense Of Smell

Is that Obsession I detect?

No. 2 At State Dept Was Said To Put Restrictions On Bolton

Comparing this with his public comments, I believe he is really No. 2.

Christian Rock For Muslims

About time the Muslims were on the receiving end of rocks or even one rock.

U.S. Warns North Korea Against Nuclear Test

The warning was delivered from an underground bunker at the nuclear test site in Nevada.

Report To German Ruling Party Faults Overseas Investors

That's so very German—blame someone else for your problems.

Comedian Jackie Mason Blasts Israeli Concessions

And that's no joke!

United Air Wins Right to Default On Its Employee Pension Plans

Not to worry, the employees will soon be able to access their private accounts.

Police: More People Using Cars For Storage, Living

This is Republican prosperity: it's ownership—the family owns the car; and only one family is living in the car. It's the American dream: a man's home is his castle.

Why So Many Americans Aren't Buying Into Bush's Ownership Society

Because Americans believe they already own the whole country and Bush wants them to trade the whole in for just a tiny bit.

Terror Suspects Sent To Egypt By The Dozens, Panel Reports

Are the Egyptians sending them through the tunnels into Gaza?

Don't Be Afraid Of Your Lawyer (Yellow pages ad)

When you pick this guy for your lawyer you'll have something to be afraid of.

UN Blames Israel, US For Lack Of Arab Reform

Why don't they blame the Jews for introducing Muhammad to the idea of one God. That was the last reform the Arabs underwent.

Social Security Campaign Goes Out West

It went west the day it was announced.

(Israeli) Cabinet Eases Restrictions On Arab Immigration

Crazy Jews!!!

Heavy Hurricane Season Expected

Expect good deals on Caribbean cruises.

PA TV Sermon: Subjugate Christians, Exterminate Jews!

Before they flushed the pages from the Koran down the toilet, I trust they made some practical use of them.

The Day After Peace: Designing Palestine

Hey, mister architect, don't forget to give them lots of closet space to store guns, ammo and bombs.

QUOTES I LIKE

Diogenes considers them clever and/or informative,
not that he necessarily agrees with them.

Ariel Sharon: the man who is leading Jews back to Auschwitz, but not as tourists.

- Diogenes

Is there another word for synonym?

- Tim O'Brien

Most banks have branches, we have roots.

- Patriot National Bank (Stamford, CT)

Life is easier to take than you think; all that is necessary is to accept the impossible, do without the indispensable, and bear the intolerable.

- Kathleen Norris

It is a good thing to be rich,
It is a good thing to be strong,
but it is a better thing
to be beloved of many friends.

- Euripides

The best part of married life is the fights. The rest is just so-so.

- Thornton Wilder

If it weren't for marriage, men and women would have to fight with total strangers.

- Anonymous

The Saudis have nothing to offer us but our blood, oil, our tears and our sweat.

- Winston Diogenes

There is an increased demand for codes of ethics in politics, although most office holders are sworn in with their hand resting on one.

- Bill Vaughn

Adversity makes men; good fortune makes monsters.

- French proverb

Let's hope that scientists discover Mars is uninhabited. We can't afford to bring democracy to another place.

- Diogenes

Everyone knows that in the United States we have no classes. Furthermore everyone knows he belongs to the middle class.

- Sam A. Darcy

Jazz was born in a whiskey barrel, grew up on marijuana, saw its end on heroin.

- Artie Shaw

Rush hour traffic is so slow in Los Angeles that they just had their first drive-by stabbing.

- Jay Leno

Instead of dismantling Jewish settlements in Gaza and Shomron, the settlers should dismantle the Prime Minister's office.

- Diogenes

Along with success comes a reputation for wisdom

- Euripides

Money may be the husk of many things

But not the kernel.

It brings you food, but not appetite;

medicine; but not health;

acquaintance, but not friends;

servants; but not loyalty;

days of joy, but not peace or happiness.

- Henrik Ibsen

READERS' COMMENTS

Re: China On My Mind

In taking the long view, you warn that China bears watching. However, you ignore a long-term demographic menace posed by both China and India. Not only do they have huge populations, but both societies employ abortions to rid themselves of unwanted female offspring. What will be the result during the next generation of all those unmarried young men, starved for sex, with a craving to raid other countries to rape, pillage and acquire mates? Will their governments, of necessity, become far more aggressive

Re: Laura Fell Short At Standup
I loved the Laura Bush script. Did you write it?
Diogenes: Yes

Re: Here Come The Judge
As for the happy judge: Couldn't his defense be: one hand didn't know what the other was doing. (A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.)
Who said the hand is quicker than the eye. Obviously, it wasn't quick enough!

Comments welcome. e-mail to: editor@diogenesreport.com