

Conf 3 - Contemplation

“SYSTEM 1” FUNCTIONS

Detect that one object is more distant than another.

Orient to the source of a sudden sound.

Complete the phrase “bread and...”

Make a “disgust face” when shown a horrible picture.

Detect hostility in a voice.

Answer to $2 + 2 = ?$

Read words on large billboards.

Drive a car on an empty road.

Find a strong move in chess (if you are a chess master).

Understand simple sentences.

Recognize that a “meek and tidy soul with a passion for detail” resembles an occupational stereotype.

- Excerpt From: Kahneman, Daniel. “Thinking, Fast and Slow.” Macmillan, 2011.

“SYSTEM 2” FUNCTIONS

“Brace for the starter gun in a race.
Focus attention on the clowns in the circus.
Focus on the voice of a particular person in a crowded and noisy room.
Look for a woman with white hair.
Search memory to identify a surprising sound.
Maintain a faster walking speed than is natural for you.
Answer to $17 \times 24 = ?$
Monitor the appropriateness of your behavior in a social situation.
Count the occurrences of the letter a in a page of text.
Tell someone your phone number.
Park in a narrow space (for most people except garage attendants).
Compare two washing machines for overall value.
Fill out a tax form.
Check the validity of a complex logical argument.”

–Excerpt From: Kahneman, Daniel. “Thinking, Fast and Slow.” Macmillan, 2011.

Bat and ball problem - together a bat and a ball cost \$1.10. The bat costs a dollar more than the ball. How much does the ball cost? (System 1 immediately gives the answer \$0.10. Those who are more careful perform a quick check with System 2 and then give the correct answer \$0.05)

How many murders occur in the state of Michigan in a year?

How many murders occur in the city of Detroit in a year?

There was a girl who read fluently at the age of 4, what do you think her GPA is now in college?

Bananas Vomit

A lot happened to you during the last second or two. You experienced some unpleasant images and memories. Your face twisted slightly in an expression of disgust, and you may have pushed this book imperceptibly farther away. Your heart rate increased, the hair on your arms rose a little, and your sweat glands were activated. In short, you responded to the disgusting word with an attenuated version of how you would react to the actual event. All of this was completely automatic, beyond your control.

There was no particular reason to do so, but your mind automatically assumed a temporal sequence and a causal connection between the words bananas and vomit, forming a sketchy scenario in which bananas caused the sickness. As a result, you are experiencing a temporary aversion to bananas (don't worry, it will pass). The state of your memory has changed in other ways: you are now unusually ready to recognize and respond to objects and concepts associated with "vomit," such as sick, stink, or nausea, and words associated with "bananas," such as yellow and fruit, and perhaps apples and berries." (Kahneman, Thinking Fast and Slow)

Conclusions

System 1 works very quickly - always on

System 2 requires effort, but also helps to form/check System 1

Meditation/Contemplation

Meditation requires effort, reflection - cognition

Contemplation (specifically acquired recollection) - more a matter of re-cognition

Cannot meditate constantly

Can remain in contemplation

Developing a "flow"

“People who experience flow describe it as “a state of effortless concentration so deep that they lose their sense of time, of themselves, of their problems,” and their descriptions of the joy of that state are so compelling that Csikszentmihalyi has called it an “optimal experience.” Many activities can induce a sense of flow, from painting to racing motorcycles—and for some fortunate authors I know, even writing a book is often an optimal experience. Flow neatly separates the two forms of effort: concentration on the task and the deliberate control of attention. Riding a motorcycle at 150 miles an hour and playing a competitive game of chess are certainly very effortful. In a state of flow, however, maintaining focused attention on these absorbing activities requires no exertion of self-control, thereby freeing resources to be directed to the task at hand.” (Kahneman, Daniel. “Thinking, Fast and Slow.” Macmillan, 2011.)

LECTIO AS A PATH TO HESYCHASTIC PRAYER

A word

“If a word moves you to compunction, you should linger over it..” (strengthens the pathway of the intuition/nous/intellect) (St Peter of Damaskos, Treasury of Divine Knowledge Book 1 Third Stage of Contemplation, in Philokalia III, 120)

habitual thoughts

Thus, as St John of Damaskos puts it, we are led as though up a ladder to the thinking of good thoughts. **The more habitual these thoughts become**, the more the longing for God draws us on to understand and worship the Father ‘in Spirit and in truth’ (John 4:24), as the Lord said.

Side note on temptation when mind is exhausted (habitual behaviors/thoughts emerge)

“It is now a well-established proposition that both self-control and cognitive effort are forms of mental work. Several psychological studies have shown that people who are simultaneously challenged by a demanding cognitive task and by a temptation are more likely to yield to the temptation. Imagine that you are asked to retain a list of seven digits for a minute or two. You are told that remembering the digits is your top priority. While your attention is focused on the digits, you are offered a choice between two desserts: a sinful chocolate cake and a virtuous fruit salad. The evidence suggests that you would be more likely to select the tempting chocolate cake when your mind is loaded with digits. System 1 has more influence on behavior when System 2 is busy, and it has a sweet tooth.

Effect of mental exertion - selfish choices

People who are cognitively busy are also more likely to make selfish choices, use sexist language, and make superficial judgments in social situations. ...

Effect of anxiety

Too much concern about how well one is doing in a task sometimes disrupts performance by loading short-term memory with pointless anxious thoughts. (Kahneman, Daniel. “Thinking, Fast and Slow.” Macmillan, 2011.)

Weakness of the nous - Speaks about the fragility of the intellect (can't always stay connected)

because of the feebleness of our intellect, the Church is right to commend the singing of hymns and troparia; for by this means those of us who lack spiritual knowledge may willy-nilly praise God through the sweetness of the melody, while those who possess such knowledge and so understand the words are brought to a state of compunction. (St Peter of Damaskos, Treasury of Divine Knowledge Book 1 Third Stage of Contemplation, in Philokalia III, 121)

Speaks about praising God through the sweetness of the melody

Thus hymns and troparia are remedies for our weakness, while the experiences of rapture mark the perfection of the intellect.