
From: John Brockman [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 24, 2014 2:42 PM
To: Epstein Jeffrey
Subject: "On Kahneman" deadline Wednesday night - last call

HOW HAS KAHNEMAN'S WORK INFLUENCED YOUR OWN?
WHAT STEP DID IT MAKE POSSIBLE?

<http://www.edge.org/conversation/on-kahneman>
user id: edge_access
password: edgeaccess

Responses date: Richard Nisbett, Richard Thaler & Sendhil Mullainathan, =ric Kandel, Michael Norton, Nassim Nicholas Taleb, Joshua Greene, =alter Mischel, Steven Pinker, Nicholas Christakis, Rory Sutherland

I spent the weekend with Danny who is aware of the project. I am not =howing responses to him until publication.

Below are the "editorial marching orders" and snippets from the =beginning of the responses to date, which hopefully will inspire you to =it down and write a few words.

JB

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John Brockman [REDACTED]

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EDITORIAL MARCHING ORDERS: Please be brief send 500 words max to me at =rockman@edge.org as a Word file or email text. We plan to publish next =hursday, March 27th so I need pieces by Wednesday night.

This is Edge, so be Edgy. Just as we don't allow ad hominem comments =nd characterizations, neither is this the venue for birthday greetings, =marmy tributes, personal reminiscences, etc. As always, it's about the =deas, not the person. Write something serious and worthy of Kahneman. = Say something new, true, original, and interesting (no previously =published material). Surprise me. No referencing politicians, =residents, prime ministers, political parties. No editorials or OpEds: =acts and evidence, not opinions. No flippancy. Please avoid =self-promotion: referencing your own writing or books ("As I wrote in my =ook"); selling from the stage, pushing your well-known agenda. =dge is not an academic publication: no footnotes, academic citations, =r hyperlinks: stay on the page.

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RICHARD NISBETT

Only people of a certain age will recall that when Danny and Amos began =heir work on heuristics, every social and behavioral scientist knew =hat their job was strictly empirical: you report only what people do =nd think. It was absolutely forbidden to be prescriptive – to say =hat people ought to do or think. . . .

RICHARD THALER & SENDHIL MULLAINATHAN

Kahneman and Tversky made Behavioral Economics Adjacently Possible

Even in science, timing is everything. Charles Babbage's programmable computer was, in 1837, a step—or two—to early. Influential ideas are those that are novel but just familiar enough that existing researchers can build on them. Stuart Kauffman coined the term "adjacent possible" to describe the untapped potential that sits only one step away where scientists currently sit. Scientists who open the adjacent possible deserve the research equivalent of an "assist" in sports. . . .

ERIC KANDEL

Daniel Kahneman has not yet influenced my work on snails and mice, but I am only in an early point in my career and I still look forward to exploring his ideas in a molecular biological context in the future. . . .

MICHAEL NORTON

Danny Kahneman sets a nearly impossible standard for social scientists: design experiments that so perfectly (and subtly) capture two different versions of the world that you don't even need to see the results to have already learned something novel. . . .

NASSIM TALEB

The Problem of Multiple Counterfactuals

Here is an insight Danny K. triggered and changed the course of my work. I figured out a nontrivial problem in randomness and its underestimation a decade ago while reading the following sentence in a paper by Kahneman and Miller of 1986: . . .

JOSHUA GREENE

It's hard to overstate Kahneman's influence on my work. What I have done, essentially, is to look at moral thinking through the lenses around by Daniel Kahneman. In my first year of college I was introduced to the field of "heuristics and biases" and was struck by the power of these ideas—that some of the most important decisions we make are deeply myopic. Soon after, I was introduced to contemporary debates in ethics, much of which center around moral dilemmas such as the Trolley Problem. . . .

WALTER MISCHEL

"Answering an Easier Question"

I have known Danny Kahneman for more than 40 years, and am taking the liberty of bypassing the editorial instructions to avoid the personal and will mention how we first met. From my brief time as chair of the Stanford Psychology Department in the 1970s I recall two achievements: a new paint job and hiring Amos Tversky. Amos in turn brought Danny often onto the Tversky's campus home. Some of my most treasured memories of that time were watching them thinking, talking, and laughing when they were at the height of their collaboration. Since then, I have avidly absorbed Danny's work, and enjoyed every conversation we have had. It has all influenced my own thinking, not only about our science, but about how to try to do it right. . . .

STEVEN PINKER

As many Edge readers know, my recent work has involved presenting copious data indicating that rates of violence have fallen over the years, decades, and centuries, including the number of annual deaths in war, terrorism, and homicide. Most people find this claim incredible on the face of it. Why the discrepancy between data and belief? The answer comes right out of Danny's work with Amos Tversky on the Availability Heuristic. People estimate the probability of an

event by the ease of recovering vivid examples from memory. As I explained, "Scenes of carnage are more likely to be beamed into our homes and burned into our memories than footage of people dying of old age. No matter how small the percentage of violent deaths may be, in absolute numbers there will always be enough of them to fill the evening news, so people's impressions of violence will be disconnected from the actual proportions." . . .

NICHOLAS CHRISTAKIS

I heard of Danny in 1974 when I was 12, when my father, a nuclear physicist, handed me a copy of a paper that Danny and Amos Tversky had just published in Science. I first met him when I was in my 40's, when I had gone to Princeton to give a talk. And I now count him as a friend. But in the intervening decades, he had a profound effect on people like me who work at the intersection of the natural and social sciences—not so much (or only) because of the content of his thinking, but rather because of the manner of his research—because Danny's brilliant way of working highlighted how one could practice a beautiful kind of syncretic science.

RORY SUTHERLAND

Loss aversion was, of course, widely understood by the advertising industry long before it was adopted by economists. The slogan "Nobody ever got fired for buying IBM" suggests that people might be willing to pay a significant premium to avoid the small chance of a disastrous outcome. . . .

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