

Advantages of Stupidity

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 10 Nov 2013 20:50

There is a disagreement in the world about whether people are smart or stupid.

One view is that people are basically smart. We make assessments all day long, and basically we are on target. When we do something counterproductive, or even immoral, this is because we have an evil inclination. Like a daemon, the evil inclination takes the wheel, so to speak. For example, we can get angry at someone and then later say "if only I had known ..." According to this view it was the evil inclination that got angry. We might end up doing porn and later regret it, after all we have an evil inclination. There is a lot of evidence that this view is correct. We use our intelligence all day long. If it were not for our intelligence we would not have electric light, central heating, antibiotics, etc.

There are some areas where we don't seem to be effective. For example in the US the cost of health care is out of control, you used to be able to support a family with one salary, then you used to be able to support a family with two salaries, and now you can't even do that and retirement is just a dream. General Motors was the world's largest car maker, then Toyota ate their lunch. According to this view the reason that we are not effective on these problems is because they are not well-defined problems, they are essentially unsolvable. Because of this view, some doctors believe that when a person says he has terrible defects of character he must basically be right, *because if he is saying it himself he must surely know*. Sort of makes sense, doesn't it?

There is another view, which says that we are not really so smart. Sometimes we are smart, and sometimes we are stupid. According to this view if a person says he has terrible defects of character the doctor starts asking questions, and sometimes contradicts the patient. Since we are not always right, the patient could be wrong even about himself. There used to be an idea that when you build a car you build it, and then you test it. This is how GM used to build cars. Toyota figured out that this is a very expensive and ineffective way to achieve quality in cars. They started testing each step in the process instead of the final product.

This type of behavior is quoted in the Mesillas Yesharim as follows:

"I see a need for a person to carefully examine his ways and to weigh them daily in the manner of the great merchants who constantly evaluate all of their undertakings so that they do not miscarry." In other words, if you don't watch out, you can do something counterproductive. Since I have a choice to do what I want, it's a matter of wanting things that are good for me. The challenge is seeing what is good for me and what is not. According to this view this is where the

challenge is. The evil inclination is not a daemon that takes the wheel, it's just what we call wanting the wrong thing because it seems good.

Most people are definitely in the first camp. However now and then you run into someone who is in the second camp. For example, the CEO of a company once gave his last speech before retiring, and he showed a diagram of his decision process. He used to be a stock boy at Walmart and by constantly inspecting his choices and viewing the actual results he got himself through school and became a famous CEO. The employees looked at this and failed to see why this was such a pearl of wisdom. At Toyota they figured out that new quality control method, and now everyone in manufacturing uses it, but most people don't really understand why. They just think this is the proper way of doing things. Orthodox Jews learn the Mesillas Yesharim religiously because they think there is kedusha there, because it makes them great, because it's full of chiddushim, but the vast majority does not reflect at a regularly appointed time of solitude because they don't see the point. Why would talking to myself cause me to become a better Jew? I already know I am obligated.

The reason the view that we are basically stupid is hard to relate to is because it's bad news. We are not that good when it comes to drawing conclusions. We often don't know what's good and what's bad. The best way we know how to figure it out is to try it, and by then it's too late. In school they certainly don't teach you how to check your perceptions. Not until they send you to the school psychologist.

The truly smart people are the people that know that they are stupid. "Who is wise? He who learns from every person." A wise person knows that he needs constant input and different views so he can see a situation in the most productive way. His wisdom is that he knows that coming to the right conclusions takes work.

So being stupid hurts, you know you are stuck with your das which is not very good. The average person doesn't feel that. Depressed people, manic people, addicted people *know* that their das doesn't work. A person who knows that he is stupid feels this pain even if he is not depressed, manic, or addicted, and we only want to feel good things. But the advantages of knowing that we are stupid outweigh the disadvantages if we know how to compensate for our shortsightedness.

Unfortunately that is a skill that needs to be learned and practiced, we are not born with it, and they don't teach it in school.

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Re: Advantages of Stupidity
Posted by Joenoahi - 27 Mar 2014 19:36

It is very true that one of people's weaknesses is that they think they know everything. One of the most empowering beliefs to have is that "everyone is enlightened but me." This belief will open new doors of perceptions for everyone and truly being stuck in one perspective limits growth.

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Re: Advantages of Stupidity
Posted by Joenoahi - 27 Mar 2014 19:49

Why does it seem like people who are dumb enough to not be aware of the problem don't suffer as much as those who are aware of it. Does our awareness of the problem cause us to have

PS: I'm actually happy that I realized I had an issue, even though I often over think my problem.

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more anxiety and over think the problem? Just a weird philosophical question I guess.
