

Daring to Disagree with Albert E!

It's sacrilegious to disagree with the great Albert, but here goes...

Although we can agree sympathetically with Einstein's thought about the primacy afforded to reason, the truth is rather different. As Kahneman points out, 95% of what we do, say, think is actually generated pretty much automatically - out of an amalgam of sensory input, past experience, affect (emotion) and intention. Kahneman calls this System 1 thinking - automatic, instantaneous and everyday. It has little capacity to weigh up evidence or to balance alternatives. Add to this Jung's explanation of the psychic processes as being irreducible by psychophysics or any other form of measurement available to us at present, and we have a huge body of theory and knowledge that demonstrates the universality of these psychic processes in projection, introjection & symbolisation, that give shape, significance and tone to the world around us. Put these two ideas together and we find ourselves acting on autopilot most of the time.

The empirical evidence suggests that automatic responses, driven by emotion & heuristics, do rule the day and suggest the primacy of emotion and 'outside of consciousness' patterns. One result of this is that it is extremely difficult to reason anybody out of an opinion or decision that they did not arrive at by reason in the first place.

[I am sure that, like Freud, Einstein developed his ideas over the course of his life: in later years many of his quips showed sensitivity to other aspects of human nature - 'The only really valuable thing is intuition' - for example. But I don't think that's any more universally true than the primacy of reason. You need both!]

Like many of you, I am curious as to the limits - if any - of reason, but **even in the 21st Century, we cannot answer the hard question: 'How do all those itzy-bitsy electronic charges rushing along neurones get turned into a full-on, 3D world, packed with significance and meaning that seems so definitively *REAL?*'**

Answers to me please, on an A4 sheet!