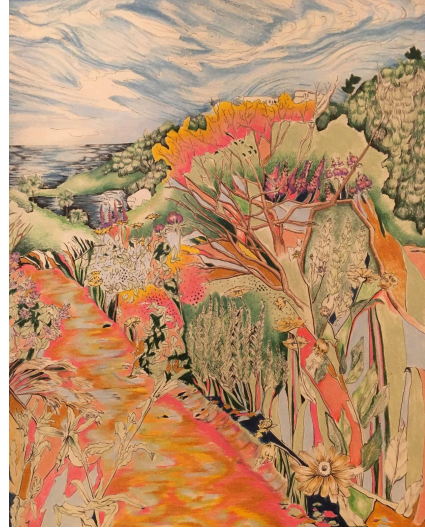


Ways of Thinking

Intro



Intro



Syntax

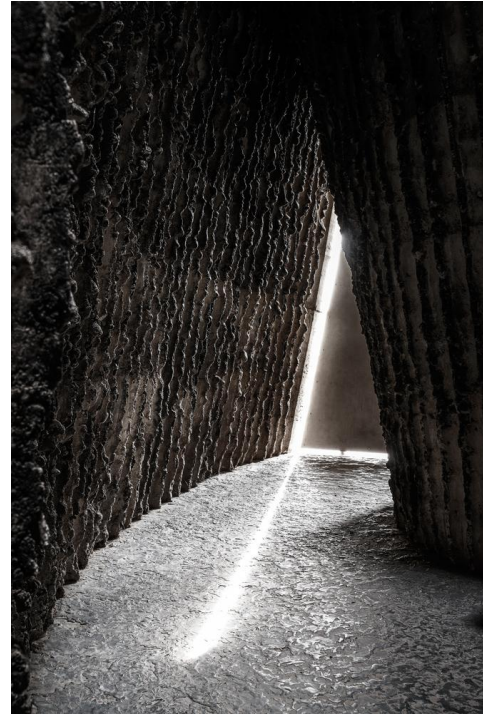
Syntax is the structure that we create to form networks of meaning and to communicate complex ideas in a structured way.

Syntax and language bridge the gap between interior experience and exterior representation of experience.

Poets and artists have explored the psychoanalytic concept that the unconscious, or the interior, is freed of the constraints of syntax, offering a form of transcendental truth or true experience, and have used their media as a tool to express this ineffable quality of consciousness.

“To see is to forget the name of the thing one sees.”
- Paul Valéry

“To lose yourself: a voluptuous surrender, lost in your arms, lost to the world, utterly immersed in what is present so that its surroundings fade away. In Benjamin’s terms, to be lost is to be fully present, and to be fully present is to be capable of being in uncertainty and mystery.”
- Rebecca Solnit, A Field Guide to Getting Lost



Peter Zumthor's Bruder Klaus Field Chapel
Through the Lens of Aldo Amoretti,
Arch Daily

Language: The Original Cognitive Bias

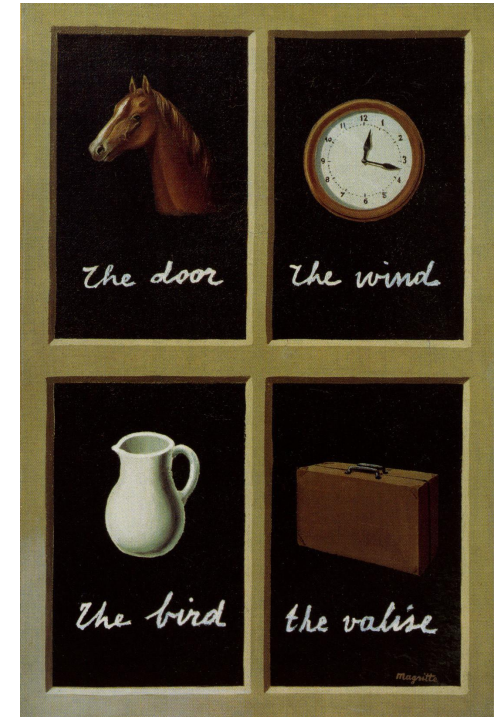
In psychoanalytic theory, the relationship between language and the unconscious is explored and debated.

“In Freud, language suddenly occupies a crucial place between perception and logic, without being reduced to either of them, but instead playing the intermediary between them.” (European Journal of Psychoanalysis).

Jeremy Skipper of the University College London, in his paper “A voice without a mouth no more: The neurobiology of language and consciousness”, raises “the argument that language has penetrated the brain to such an extent that it is a fundamental mechanism for generating and maintaining consciousness.”

“...substantial empirical evidence now demonstrates that language use shapes and even determines visual and emotional perception, learning and memory, reasoning and social cognition and vice versa, even when words are not explicitly being used.” (Skipper).

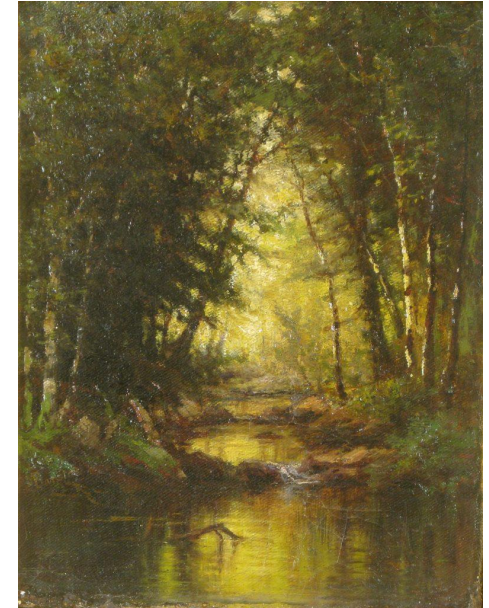
<https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/articles/freudian-models-of-language-a-conversation>
A voice without a mouth no more: The neurobiology of language and consciousness - ScienceDirect



René Magritte. La Clef des songes (The Interpretation of Dreams). Brussels, 1935 | MoMA

American Transcendentalism & Democracy

- The Transcendentalists were a literary movement centered around upstate New York. The movement included writers such as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, as well as artists such as the painters of the Hudson River School.
- The Transcendentalists believed in the individual capacity for Enlightenment, an idea that related closely to their democratic social values, such as Abolition, Women's Suffrage, improved conditions for workers, and other humanitarian causes.
- Transcendentalism is described as a uniquely American philosophy, although it relates to some of the values of the Romantic movement, which could be characterized as an individualistic backlash to the dehumanizing conditions of Industrialism in Europe, and the buds of a nascent Environmentalist movement.
- In the era of Industrialization, Orwell described coal workers as the “grimy caryatids” who bore the weight of the rest of the economy on their shoulders. Romantic era artists and writers pushed back against the dehumanizing conditions of Industrialism and sought out individual poetic truths in communion with Nature.



Susie M. Barstow, *Sunshine in the Woods* (1886)

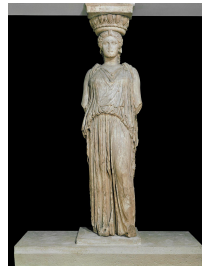
[Susie Barstow, a 19th-Century Artist Who Hiked Mountains in Bloomers to Paint Stunning Landscapes, Finally Gets a Museum Retrospective \(artnet.com\)](#)

“Nature has her proper interest; and he will know what it is, who believes and feels, that every thing has a life of its own, and that we are all one life.”

- Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Example of a caryatid, Classical Greek era, from the Erechtheion. (Female figurative statue that supported the architrave). 421-406 BC

[Use this image 117221001 - | British Museum](#)



Transcendentalism and the Observation of Nature: The Hudson River School

Chapter III BEAUTY

“A nobler want of [wo]man is served by nature, namely, the love of Beauty.

The ancient Greeks called the world {kosmos}, beauty. Such is the constitution of all things, or such the plastic power of the human eye, that the primary forms, as the sky, the mountain, the tree, the animal, give us a delight in and for themselves; a pleasure arising from outline, color, motion, and grouping. This seems partly owing to the eye itself. The eye is the best of artists. By the mutual action of its structure and of the laws of light, perspective is produced, which integrates every mass of objects, of what character soever, into a well colored and shaded globe, so that where the particular objects are mean and unaffecting, the landscape which they compose, is round and symmetrical. And as the eye is the best composer, so light is the first of painters. There is no object so foul that intense light will not make beautiful. And the stimulus it affords to the sense, and a sort of infinitude which it hath, like space and time, make all matter gay. Even the corpse has its own beauty. But besides this general grace diffused over nature, almost all the individual forms are agreeable to the eye, as is proved by our endless imitations of some of them, as the acorn, the grape, the pine-cone, the wheat-ear, the egg, the wings and forms of most birds, the lion's claw, the serpent, the butterfly, sea-shells, flames, clouds, buds, leaves, and the forms of many trees, as the palm.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson



Thomas Cole View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a
Thunderstorm—The Oxbow, 1836, 51 1/2 x 76 in

The Hudson River School

“Kindred Spirits is the quintessential Hudson River School landscape. Its subjects are Thomas Cole (with portfolio), the founding father of the school, and William Cullen Bryant, the well-known nature poet and editor.” (Met).

“Durand was Cole's earliest disciple and a close friend of Bryant, and executed this picture at the request of Jonathan Sturges, a patron of both artists. Sturges gave the painting to Bryant in honor of the eulogy the poet delivered at the memorial service for Cole, who died in February 1848. Invoking a phrase from John Keats's seventh sonnet, "O Solitude," Sturges asked Durand to portray Cole and Bryant together as "kindred spirits" in the landscape. Accordingly, Durand adjusted his fastidious approach to natural forms, such as the rocky ledge and overhanging tree limbs, to suggest Keats's poetic references to "nature's observatory" and "boughs pavillion'd." Aside from its historical significance, the painting embodies the marriage of naturalism and idealization central to Hudson River School aesthetics.” (Met).



The Hudson River School

Sonnet VII [O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell]

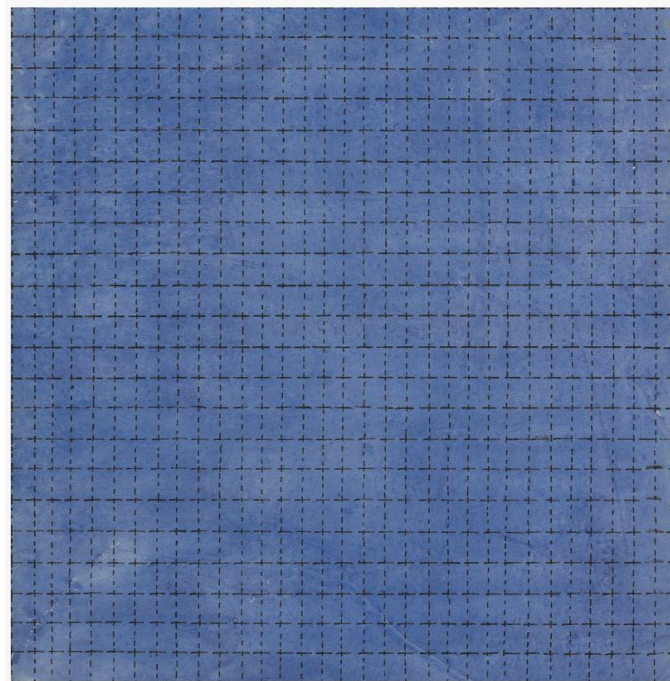
John Keats
1795 –1821

O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell,
Let it not be among the jumbled heap
Of murky buildings; climb with me the steep,—
Nature's observatory—whence the dell,
Its flowery slopes, its river's crystal swell,
May seem a span; let me thy vigils keep
'Mongst boughs pavillion'd, where the deer's swift leap
Startles the wild bee from the fox-glove bell.
But though I'll gladly trace these scenes with thee,
Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind,
Whose words are images of thoughts refin'd,
Is my soul's pleasure; and it sure must be
Almost the highest bliss of human-kind,
When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee.



The Evolution of American Transcendentalism: Modernism and Abstract Expressionism

- The Transcendentalists of the Hudson River School explored the pursuit of truth through direct observation and literal representation of Nature.
- The Transcendentalist movement and its ideas remained influential and prevalent in some works of abstraction in the mid-century American painting scene, but these ideas took on new forms.
- Modernists such as Agnes Martin and Helen Frankenthaler represented, expressed, and / or created in accordance with the Beauty of Nature through abstractions.
- However, abstraction itself was not a cohesive or homogenous aesthetic philosophy; it encompassed many attitudes and philosophies. Some abstractionists, like Malevich, were deeply nihilistic.
- Agnes Martin pursued Enlightenment and Beauty through her work with the physical media of paint.



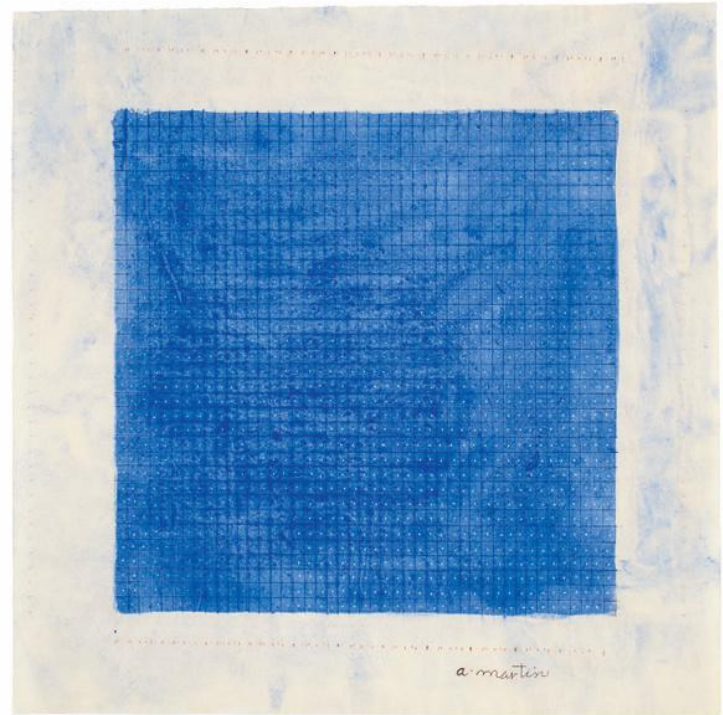
Agnes Martin, Starlight, 1963
Ink on paper
11 ¾" x 10 ½"

Representational Abstraction



The Bay, 1963, Helen Frankenthaler
Acrylic on canvas
80 3/4 x 81 3/4 inches (205 x 208 cm)

[The Bay - Artworks - Helen Frankenthaler Foundation](#)



Stars, 1963, Agnes Martin
ink and watercolor
12 in x 12 in (30.5 x 30.5 cm)

[Stars by Agnes Martin on artnet](#)

Beauty is the Mystery of Life

by Agnes Martin

“When I think of art, I think of beauty. Beauty is the mystery of life. It is not in the eye, it is in my mind. In our minds there is awareness of perfection.

We respond to beauty with emotion. Beauty speaks a message to us. We are confused about this message because of distractions. Sometimes we even think that it is in the mail. The message is about different kinds of happiness and joy. Joy is most successfully represented in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and by the Parthenon.

All artwork is about beauty; all positive work represents it and celebrates it. All negative art protests the lack of beauty in our lives. When a beautiful rose dies, beauty does not die because it is not really in the rose. Beauty is an awareness in the mind. It is a mental and emotional response that we make. We respond to life as though it were perfect. When we go into a forest we do not see the fallen rotting trees. We are inspired by a multitude of uprising trees. We even hear a silence when it is not really silent. When we see a newborn baby we say it is beautiful – perfect.

The goal of life is happiness and to respond to life as though it were perfect is the way to happiness. It is also the way to positive artwork.

It is not in the role of an artist to worry about life – to feel responsible for creating a better world. This is a very serious distraction. All your conditioning has been directed toward intellectual living. This is useless in artwork. All human knowledge is useless in artwork. Concepts, relationships, categories, classifications, deductions are distractions of mind that we wish to hold free for inspiration.

There are two parts of the mind. The outer mind that records facts and the inner mind that says "yes" and "no." When you think of something that you should do, the inner mind says "yes" and you feel elated. We call this inspiration.

For an artist this is the only way. There is no help anywhere. He must listen to his own mind.

The way of the artist is an entirely different way. It is a way of surrender. He must surrender to his own mind.

Vija Celmins



Vija Celmins, *Star Field III*, 1982–83
Graphite on acrylic ground on paper
21" x 27"

Vija Celmins: Transcendentalism and Observation In the Postmodern Era of Media Self-Referentiality

- The Postmodern Era saw a turn toward increased access to media, with a subsequent emphasis on intertextuality and the canon, or the archive.
- The artists of this era are sometimes referred to as the “Pictures Generation”, for their focus on pictures.
- “Celmins bases her paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints on the world around us—sometimes through direct observation but more often through what she calls “redescription,” a process of translating photographic images from one medium to another.” (Met).
- The late 1960s saw the culmination of the great ‘space race’ between the Soviet Union and the USA. “On 20 July 1969 the spaceflight Apollo 11 landed on the moon and the media was full of dramatic images of outer space. Celmins was inspired by these images and began to use them in her work.” (Tate).

“The photograph is an alternate subject, another layer that creates distance. And distance creates an opportunity to view the work more slowly and to explore your relationship to it. I treat the photograph as an object, to scan and re-make in my art.”

-Vija Celmins (Tate)



Vija Celmins, *Untitled (Source Materials)*, 1999.
Iris print of artists' drawing source materials

Stars; Nature and its Syntax(es)

(left): **Night Sky #2**

Vija Celmins, 1991

“*Night Sky #19* is a charcoal drawing on coated white paper that depicts a vast field of stars in the night sky. It is signed and dated by the artist at the bottom right corner of the landscape-oriented sheet of paper. This drawing – as is the case with the majority of Vija Celmins’ drawings, prints and paintings – is based on a photograph rather than the direct observation of nature.” -Tate Museum



(right): **Starlight**

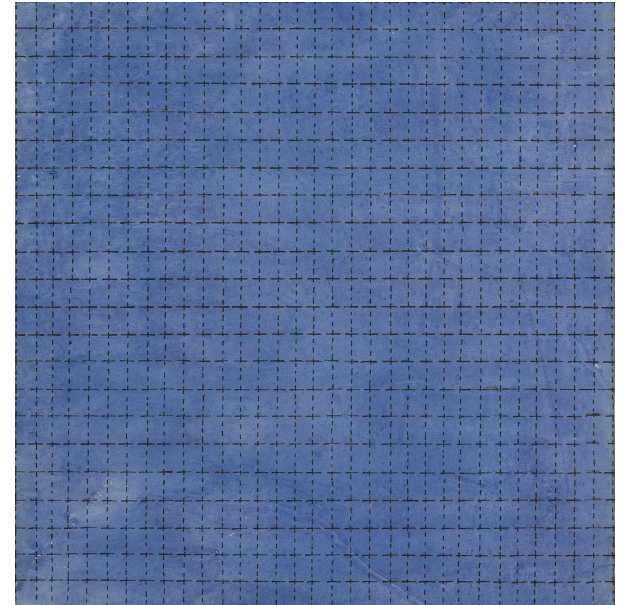
Agnes Martin, 1963

ink and watercolor on paper

12 by 12 in. 30.5 by 30.5 cm

Watercolor, Ink and Paper. Image is ©

Estate of Agnes Martin, and used according to Educational Fair Use



Poetry: Free(r) Syntax

- Poetry offers an alternative to traditional syntax, a space in which poets explore deeper, more complex, or more subjective truths than would be possible while working with the constraints of written language.
- Although the constraints of traditional syntax allow us to quickly process information and communicate ideas, the constraints are also limitations.
- Structured poetry allows writers to create a formally beautiful and/or structured piece of writing, which we can relate to intuitively, without relying on traditional forms of syntax.
- Poets, like artists, have varying degrees of conceptual rigor and formal structure, as well as varied ideological frameworks.

“A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books.” - Walt Whitman in Song of Myself

Kahneman - Heuristics

- Daniel Kahneman is a Nobel Prize winning economist, whose book *Thinking Fast and Slow* deals with **heuristics, cognitive biases and behavioral economics**.
- Kahneman describes two types of thinking- **System 1 Thinking, which is rapid and automatic, and System 2 Thinking, which requires sophisticated or nuanced thinking to arrive at a true and potentially unexpected outcome through deliberation and effort.**
- Heuristics are mental shortcuts that we use to ease our cognitive load while problem-solving, but **heuristics can also lead to cognitive biases**, which at times, lead us astray.
- One example of a heuristic is the “availability”, or “recency” heuristic, in which we are more prone to present a specific solution to a problem if we have recently seen or used that solution, as it is top of mind.

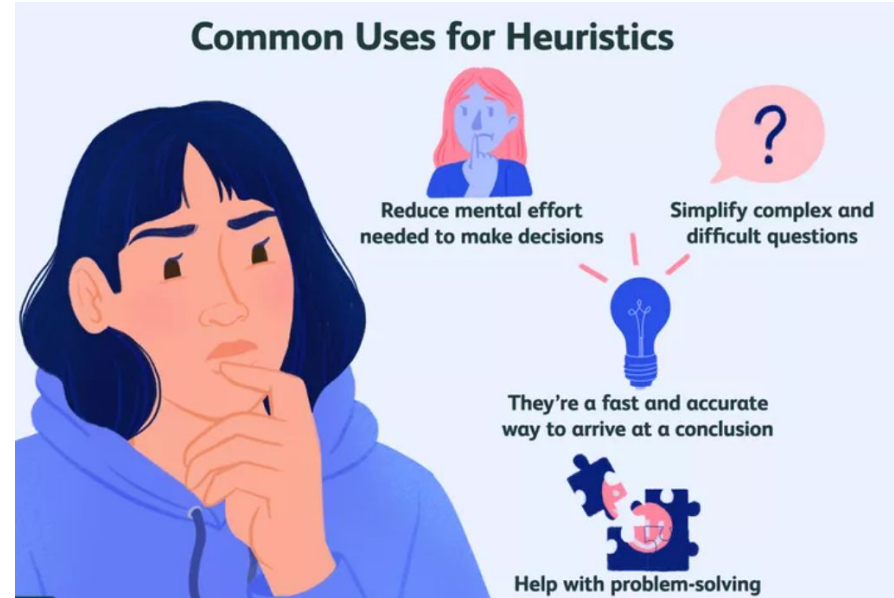


Image credit: Cindy Chung for Verywell Mind

[Heuristics: Definition, Examples, and How They Work \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/Heuristics-Definition-Examples-and-How-They-Work-verywellmind.com)

Kahneman - Heuristics



The availability heuristic might lead a designer to suggest conventional solutions to design problems, such as surface parking lots to support vehicular transportation.



Functional design easily understood through System 1 Thinking



Revolutionary, exceptional design.

Clear

Type 1 Thinking

Popular art and design culture.

Unoriginal

Mainstream design and media.

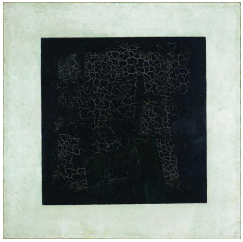
Original

Incomprehensible even with System 2 Thinking and Analysis. Bad design.

Type 2 Thinking

Avant-garde experiment that may fail to gain traction or relevance.

Unclear



Mathematics



Abstract



Poetic Truth



Intuition

*The World According to
Materialist Philosophy*

Justice

Beauty

Emotion

Quotidian Perception

Mythology / Allegory

Subjective

Objective

*Physical States and
Measurable Characteristics*

Needs

Color/Visual Perception

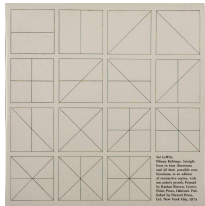


Pain

Analysis

Scientific Truth

Concrete



Kahneman - Cognitive Ease

- Cognitive strain indicates the “increased mobilization of System 2.”
- Poorly designed spaces or graphic design can induce cognitive strain by forcing us to be more effortful in achieving understanding of a space or series of instructions ; “*Signage is the effect of bad design.*” -Mark Hall
- Familiarity can become associated with truth, because we process the familiar with less cognitive strain than is required to process the novel.
- “A reliable way to make people believe in falsehoods is frequent repetition, because familiarity is not easily distinguished from truth.” (Kahneman).
- “If you care about being thought credible and intelligent, do not use complex language where simpler language will do.” (Kahneman).
- “What psychologists do believe is that all of us live much of our life guided by the impressions of System 1- and we often do not know the source of these impressions. [...] People can overcome some of the superficial factors that produce illusions of truth when strongly motivated to do so.” (Kahneman).
- Kahneman further indicates that people have a tendency to “answer questions with the first idea that comes to their mind, without checking it.”

Kahneman - Intuition and Creativity

- “Mood evidently affects the Operation of System 1 [our intuition, or “gut feeling”]: when we are uncomfortable and unhappy, we lose touch with our intuition.” (Kahneman).

“These findings add to the growing evidence that good mood, intuition, creativity, gullibility, and increased reliance on System 1 form a cluster. At the other pole, sadness, vigilance, suspicion, an analytic approach, and increased effort also go together. A happy mood loosens the control of System 2 over performance: when in a good mood, people become more intuitive and more creative but also less vigilant and more prone to logical errors. Here again, as in the mere exposure effect, the connection makes biological sense. A good mood is a signal that things are generally going well, the environment is safe, and it is all right to let one’s guard down. A bad mood indicates that things are not going very well, there may be a threat, and vigilance is required. Cognitive ease is both a cause and a consequence of pleasant feeling.” (Kahneman Chapter 5).

SPEAKING OF COGNITIVE EASE

“Let’s not dismiss their business plan just because the font makes it hard to read.”

“We must be inclined to believe it because it has been repeated so often, but let’s think it through again.”

“Familiarity breeds liking. This is a mere exposure effect.”

“I’m in a very good mood today, and my System 2 is weaker than usual. I should be extra careful.”

Kahneman - Intuitions vs. Formulas

- Numerous studies have proven that algorithms are more effective than trained human experts at predicting the outcomes of various domains known as “low-validity environments” (environments with uncertainty and unpredictability), such as the odds of recidivism among juvenile offenders, the susceptibility of babies to sudden infant death syndrome, the evaluation of credit risks by banks, and even the future prices of Bordeaux wine.
- “There is no controversy in social science which shows such a large body of qualitatively diverse studies coming out so uniformly in the same direction as this one.” (psychologist Paul Meehl quoted by Kahneman, Chapter 21).
- “Another reason for the inferiority of expert judgment is that humans are incorrigibly inconsistent in making summary judgments of complex information. When asked to evaluate the same information twice, they frequently give different answers.” (Kahneman Ch. 21).

The Drive toward Rationality: Scientific Methods in Design

F.W. Taylor (1856-1915) was an American engineer who pioneered the ways we think about the optimization of human processes in a machine-like way to achieve maximum workplace efficiency. There is an echo of Taylorism in many of the ways that we discuss spatial organization in workplace or factory environments.

“These new, immediate possibilities motivate workplace consultants like Arjun Kaicker, a collaborator of Blum’s at ZHA and the former head of workplace design at Foster + Partners. “In the past it was incredibly difficult to have a sophisticated approach to dealing with people individually,” he explains, and so more often than not planners spoke only to leadership. Even then, he adds, “if you had even 20 people, you had too many computational variables. Now we can do it instantly for 4,000 people.”” (ArchDaily, “Firms like ZHA Are Revolutionizing...”)

Data analysis and quantitative approaches to design can be used to facilitate “mass customization.”

For an example use-case, here is an excerpt from writer Avinash Rajagopal of ArchDaily’s interview with Google’s global director of workplace strategies, Riku Pentikäinen:

“AR: You’re talking about taking data and using it to inform, say, square footage or space allocation. But do you foresee a future where it might be able to inform design decisions?”

RP: We have in a pilot phase the ability to use a wireless LAN to triangulate positioning and then create heat maps, which tell us what kinds of spaces are being used. That’s something we will launch in due course. We are bringing in the data feed on how space is being utilized.” (ArchDaily, “How Microsoft is Making...”).

Three Poems from Rilke's Sonnets to Orpheus

No. 18

My friend, do you detect the sound of the
Modern?
Rumbling and shaking?
Its prophets come
To extol it.

Truly there is no hearing left intact
In the raging tumult,
But still the realm of machines
Would have our pledge.

Behold the Machine:
As it revolves upon itself, avenges itself,
And maims and enfeebles us.

But as it also draws strength from us,
Let us, passionless,
Make it our pursuit, our service.

No. 19

Like the shapes of clouds,
So swiftly changes the world.
All consummations
Return to the primaeval.

Above mutability and progress,
Towards the boundless and liberation,
Your song as prelude endures,
God with the lyre.

Nor are sorrows understood.
Nor has love been learned.
And what recedes from us into death

Is not revealed.
Only the Song above the world
Sanctifies, holds celebration.

No. 20

But what offering can I consecrate to you, oh Master? -
You, who have bestowed hearing upon all creatures?
- My memory of one spring day,
In the evening, in Russia, - a stallion ...

Running alone from the hamlet across to us
The pale horse, a tethering-peg dangling from his
fetlock,
To spend a night solitary in the meadow;
How he shook his tangled mane,

Tossed in time to his haughty step,
Despite his clumsily impeded gallop.
How the fountains leapt up of his charger's blood!

He intuited the vastnesses and, oh from that
He sang! He heard! - yes, your cycle of legends
Was embraced within him.

His image: that I offer.

The Good, The Agreeable, and The Beautiful

(Paul Fry's case for the Autonomous Artwork)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mT7roDHocuc&t=1295s>

21:35-28:21

Activity

Take 2 sheets of paper and fold each into 4 quadrants.

Paper 1

In the upper left, draw something true and subjective, with no syntax.

In the upper right, draw something true and subjective, with syntax.

In the lower left, write something true and subjective, with no syntax.

In the lower right, write something true and subjective, with syntax.

Paper 2

In the upper left, draw something true and objective, with no syntax.

In the upper right, draw something true and objective, with syntax.

In the lower left, write something true and objective, with no syntax.

In the lower right, write something true and objective, with syntax.