

words, are the patrons influenced by the selections of the others around them? Second, if this is the case, does it encourage conformity or nonconformity? In other words, would the patrons sitting around a table intentionally choose beers that were different from or the same as the choices of those ordering before them? Finally, we wanted to know whether being influenced by others' choices would make people better or worse off, in terms of how much they enjoyed their beer.

THROUGHOUT THIS BOOK, I have described experiments that I hoped would be surprising and illuminating. If they were, it was largely because they refuted the common assumption that we are all fundamentally rational. Time and again I have provided examples that are contrary to Shakespeare's depiction of us in "What a piece of work is a man." In fact, these examples, show that we are not noble in reason, not infinite in faculty, and rather weak in apprehension. (Frankly, I think Shakespeare knew that very well, and this speech of Hamlet's is not without irony.)

In this final chapter, I will present an experiment that offers one more example of our predictable irrationality. Then I will further describe the general economic perspective on human behavior, contrast it with behavioral economics, and draw some conclusions. Let me begin with the experiment.

TO GET TO the bottom of the sudsy barrel of questions that we thought of at the Carolina Brewery, Jonathan and I decided to plunge in—metaphorically, of course. We started by asking the manager of the Carolina Brewery to let us serve free samples of beer to the customers—as long as we paid for