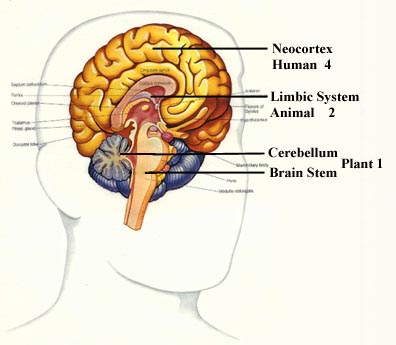
### Numbers cannot lie.

Your mind has been infiltrated. Your logical, conscious prefrontal cortex is ever thwarted by a powerful saboteurs hiding within the dark realm of your subconscious. The usurpers of your decision-making process are none other than the ignorant reptilian brain stem and emotional limbic system. They torture you with sadness for the slightest defiance. They drugs you with narcotic neurochemicals like dopamine to reward your obedience. This diabolical duo is responsible for all forms of irrational human behavior, such as racism, war, and marriage. Your only defense against these illogical bastards is to base our decisions on cold, hard numbers. For, unlike the flawed and mischievous parts of our brain, **numbers cannot lie.**

### The Triune Brain

You have a total of three brains: the reptilian brain, the paleo-mammalian brain, and the rational brain. In a sense, a human being is what you might get 9 months after a romantic evening between a crocodile, a dog, and a computer.

* **Brain 1: The Reptilian Brain -**The reptilian part of us, the **brain stem**, deals with the basic survival, instinctive and reproductive functions.  These functions are otherwise known as the four F's:
  + feeding
  + fornication
  + fight
  + flight

That’s all that crocodiles do with their tiny, pea-sized brains.  The reptilian brain is said to be “rigid, obsessive, compulsive, ritualistic and paranoid” and is prone to repetitive, programmed behaviors with little evidence of learning from mistakes.  We can think of the reptile brain as being responsible for all core tasks, above all self-preservation. This means that it is the seat of aggression since creatures have to fight to survive. Behavior is programmed, automatic and inflexible.

* **Brain 2: Paleo-Mammalian Brain** – The second evolutionary stratum consists of the ancient the **limbic system**. The limbic system, by adding feelings to instincts, can generate more nuanced, varied and flexible behavior. The limbic system classifies everything as “good or bad”.
* **Brain 3: The Computational Brain** – The characteristically human layer is the **neocortex**. This is the realm of reason and logic. It is this part of our brains that has given us philosophy, mathematics, science, and the Snuggie™.

### Why Our Brains Don't Work Rite

So we've got this top of the line neocortex which is perfectly capable of rational thought.  Why then, do we behave so irrationally as a species?  The problem is that the rational neocortex is enslaved by the lower brains.  It is not free to examine all available information in attainment of objective truth.  Instead, it frequently becomes a kind of a slimy neuro-lawyer serving the emotional limbic system. Break it down.

1. You are exposed to a piece of information.
2. The information is transmitted to the **limbic system**.
   1. The limbic system decides if this information is agreeable (true) or disagreeable (false).
   2. The limbic system attaches **positive** emotions to **agreeable** information or **negative** emotion to **disagreeable** information.
   3. That **feeling** gives that thought a sense of conviction or **truth**.
   4. This information/emotion combination is what we call a **belief**.
3. At that point, the **neocortex** is employed to protect and defend this belief.
   1. The neocortex puts forth all available evidence which supports this belief.
   2. The neocortex figures out ways to discount any contradictory information.

The limbic system, this primitive brain that can neither read nor write, provides us with the feeling of what is real, true, and important.  This emotional tag attached to a thought may very well have served an important evolutionary role because it would allow Homo sapiens a way to prioritize thoughts that give a survival advantage. These eureka-like emotions also feel good and might very well enhance the memory of survival thoughts. The problem is that irrational thoughts trigger the same eureka-like feeling of "truth". The limbic system of emotion, rather than any process of reason and logic, judges whether our ideas are good or bad, using its own often irrational and illogical criteria. It therefore poses significant dangers to us.

### Why No One is Reading this Sentence

Many of the hostile commenters on my site have expressed their own theories as to why this is.  However, I feel that the reason for this can be explained by something called "The Caveman Principle".  This principle states that our brains have generally evolved very little since the time of the caveman. The human brain has been around for 200,000 years.  The Stone Age only ended about 6,000 years ago.  So 99% of our ancestors lived in environments characterized by starvation and general scarcity of resources. Evolution crawls at a snail's pace, so we still have these caveman brains optimized for an environment millennia away from our own. We see no evidence that our brains and personalities have changed much since then. So our wants, dreams, personalities, and desires have probably not changed much in 200,000 years. We probably still think like our caveman ancestors.

So, like, what were cavemen into?  Surviving long enough to successfully replicate one's genes in a situation like this requires brains with very specific interests.  Hence, the types of brains which survived typically paid a great deal of attention to these questions:

* Can I eat it?
* Will it eat me?
* Can I mate with it?
* Will it mate with me?

Note these items, which are suspiciously **absent** from this list:

* Statistics
* Economics
* Formal Cost-Benefit-Analysis Calculations

An interest in these topics was pretty much worthless to primitive humans struggling to survive in ancient Africa.  This is especially true since math and written language didn't even exist.  Evolutionary theory states that traits that offer no survival or reproductive advantage will not persist. Hence, these subjects are as boring to us as is Al Gore describing his experience watching paint dry.

Evolution has made these subjects brutally boring. So that, my non-existent reader, is why you are not reading this sentence, and are instead viewing one of the many fine pornography websites that the prestigious internet has to offer.

### Let's Get Ignorant!

"It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data, fool."  - Mr. T

A general disinterest in economics and statistics wouldn't be a big deal if we lived in a dictatorship.  But in our political system, government action is a product of public opinion.  Thomas Jefferson once said, "An informed citizenry is the bulwark of a democracy."  Based on this quote, I think it's safe to say that our democracy is currently bulwark-free.  The fact that I don't know what a bulwark is further proves that we do not have an informed citizenry.

The only way to understand the important details of complex and large-scale societal issues is through the use of statistics and economics. Additionally, formal cost-benefit analyses are the only way to make optimal decisions on complicated issues.  Most Americans don't even know what a cost-benefit analysis is, let alone have a grasp of the statistical data needed to perform such an analysis.

Here's a list of **what the average voter doesn't know:**

* How much their government spends on:
  + [foreign aid](http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/brunitedstatescanadara/670.php?nid=&id=&pnt=670&lb=brusc)
  + [wars](http://pewresearch.org/databank/dailynumber/?NumberID=1139)
  + [education](http://pewresearch.org/databank/dailynumber/?NumberID=1139)
  + [Medicare](http://pewresearch.org/databank/dailynumber/?NumberID=1139)
  + [interest on the debt](http://pewresearch.org/databank/dailynumber/?NumberID=1139)
* How many [troops](http://pewresearch.org/pubs/762/political-knowledge-update)have been killed in our various and sundry wars
* How many [civilians](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17310383/) have been killed in our various and sundry wars
* How much they pay in [taxes](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-6201911-503544.html)
* What the rate of [inflation](http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/1199-econgen.cfm)is
* What the [unemployment](http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/1199-econgen.cfm)rate is
* How much [profit](http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/1199-econgen.cfm) corporations make
* What the [Dow Jones Average](http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1179/economic-news-iq-quiz) is
* [Who](http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2003-09-06-poll-iraq_x.htm) was involved in perpetrating the 9/11 attacks
* How wealth is [distributed](http://www.people.hbs.edu/mnorton/norton%20ariely%20in%20press.pdf)among classes
* How [many](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0465077714/crooksandliar-20/ref=nosim) branches there are in the federal government
* That the president [cannot](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0465077714/crooksandliar-20/ref=nosim)legally suspend the Constitution

Without factual data for our neocortices to use in doing a cost-benefit comparison of the candidates, our stupid brain stems and emotional limbic systems get to choose who we vote for.

The US government is the most powerful man-made entity in the history of the world. Allowing an ignorant public control of this colossus is like giving a baby a nuclear bomb.  The goal of this website is to upgrade our democracy to the equivalent of a toddler with a nuclear bomb.

## Keep In the Vote!

"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be." -- Pee Wee Herman

Elections are won and lost not primarily on “the issues” but on the values and emotions of the electorate, including the “gut feelings” that summarize much of what voters think and feel about a candidate or party.

The goal in selecting any candidate it to choose the one that will maximize the overall well-being of the citizenry. If the **neocortex were in charge**, politicians would be selected solely based on:

* **INTELLIGENCE** - The intelligence necessary to effectively identify and execute policies that maximize the generalwelfare of the populace.  The best way to measure intelligence would be for the candidates to take psychometric tests and make their scores public.
* **KNOWLEDGE** - An immense level of knowledge over a wide range of issues (economics, history, science, etc.) is necessary to identify and properly execute optimal public policies.  This could be evaluated through standardized testing of the candidates.
* **RECORD** - The candidate's record proves whether or not they actually support policies that better the general welfare of the citizenry.  It also indicates whether or not the candidate possesses the integrity necessary to resist the influence of special interests.   These are small but powerful groups who would impose their own selfish policies at the expense of the greater society.

Unfortunately, we have an informational vacuum between our ears with regard to this stuff. Hence, our neocortices are unable to perform a rational calculation. This leaves the decision up to our stupid brain stems and emotional limbic systems. They know nothing about government or current events. They can't follow arguments of any complexity. They stuff themselves with slogans and advertisements. They eschew fact for myth. They operate from biases and stereotypes, and they privilege feeling over thinking. The result is a political system of daunting irrationality,  Some of the factors influencing their electoral decisions include:

* **LOOKS -**[70%](http://www.physorg.com/news112376210.html) of elections are won by the candidate with the prettiest face.  Another [study](http://pcl.stanford.edu/research/2008/bailenson-facial-similarity.pdf) illustrates voter preference for candidates with similar facial features to themselves.
* **LOVELIFE**- Although infidelity may say something about a politician's character, it has no direct impact of the lives of the voters.  My theory is that throughout evolutionary history, man tended to live in small groups.  Hence, the chosen leader was likely to come into direct contact with the voter's spouse.  Individuals with power elicit a greater ability to seduce spouses.  Therefore, prehistoric voters who chose faithful leaders were less likely to have their spouse impregnated by this leader.  This would leave their spouse’s womb available for their own progeny.  Ultimately, their characteristic appreciation of fidelity would be passed to their offspring.  This is how common personality traits are evolved.
* **ELECTABILITY -**Many people choose not to vote for a third party or independent candidate that they prefer because they're unlikely to win. Their reasoning is that they would be throwing away their chance to help elect the lesser of two evils. A survey of college students shows that 79 percent of the students "felt that their vote makes a difference." In reality, there is only a one in 60 million chance of a randomly selected voter affecting the presidential election.  It much more likely that that voter will die in a car accident (1 in 1 million) driving to the polls.  Hence, it's irrational to believe that your vote is any more than a one data point in an opinion poll.
* **TRIBAL LOYALTY**- Blind loyalty to political parties often distorts decision-making.  Many would claim that their loyalty to a party's candidate is a result of their agreement with that candidate's policies. However, for a lot of partisans, the causality is reversed.   Often individuals will modify their support for policies to achieve agreement with their candidate of the party to which they are loyal.  Upon the election of Barak Obama, a lot of republicans suddenly started complaining about the nation’s budget deficit. At the same time, many democrats suddenly stopped complaining about the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan. The odd thing is that, just a short time ago when [George W. Bush](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_W._Bush) was president, these same republicans were not complaining about the nation’s [budget deficit](http://www.usdebtclock.org/), despite the fact that Mr. Bush ran up $4 trillion in debt. Similarly, before [Barack Obama](http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/ofasplashflag/)‘s election, these same democrats friends couldn't stop complaining about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.  Coincidence?
* **VOTER'S MOOD -**An [experiment](http://www.pnas.org/content/107/29/12804.full)indicates that being in a bad mood while voting makes you more likely to vote out incumbents.
* **FLAGS -**The appearance of the [American flag](http://cornellpsych.org/people/travis/materials/Carter-etal-Flag%202008%20Election.pdf) makes voters more likely to vote Republican.

We're damn lucky that CEO's aren't elected by popular vote.  If the public got to decide who ran Microsoft, I would be typing this sentence on a typewriter.

## How to Beat Out Your Brains

Utopia, a world without disease, starvation, violence, and suffering, is the ultimate goal and destination of society. The thinking, rational mind has the power to make utopia a reality through innovation.  We've had a few hundred thousand years to get there, yet it remains a distant dream. Irrational or uniformed decisions are the primary reason why humanity fails to reach its true potential.

In a democracy and a free enterprise economy, voters and consumers are the deciders. Our prehistoric brains decide to waste society's resources on wars and short-term gratification through erroneous decision-making. They are a drain on the economy, public welfare, the environment, and national security. Resources are misallocated, good ideas are rejected, and bad ideas are accepted. Money is wasted. Life and health are put in jeopardy. Irrational beliefs are sand in the gears of the entire economy.  It’s virtually certain that your life will be shorter and less happy as a result of emotion-based decisions.

The only way to break the shackles put on our neocortices by its evil stepsisters is through the use of numbers.  When our rational mind has cold, hard statistics to support its arguments it's much more likely to overcome the emotion-based arguments of the primitive brains.  Providing your neocortex with this ammunition is the purpose of this site.  Using numbers we can overthrow this idiocracy and ignite a revolution of reason.  Suffering can be eliminated and utopia can be realized.

There is no greater impediment to the advancement of knowledge than the ambiguity of words.

—THOMAS REID (1710–1769), SCOTTISH PHILOSOPHER

The amount and kind of knowledge a person has on any particular economic issue ought to depend on the costs and benefits of acquiring such knowledge. Our survey was thus designed not only to measure how well-informed respondents are, but also how and where they get their information.

* Overestimation of Risk from Other Tribes
* Respect for Social Hierarchy
* Desire for Revenge
* Territorialism

In this situation, violent acquisition of resources from other groups was often a necessary survival technique.  Hence, human brains most hyper-vigilant and aggressive toward competitor groups were most likely to survive and propagate these characteristics.  "Survival of the fittest" has bred aggression in human beings. It is thus "human nature" to be aggressive. Aggression is one technique that humans use as they strive for mastery of material resources, as well as for respect from and connectedness to others.

More recently up until the advent of technology

Another thing our idiotic limbic system does is direct our attention

* Yet it would be wrong to think that it might be invaluable for the rational brain to detach itself from emotions. Without emotions, without values, a person engaged in reasoning would have no rational ends to aim for. After all, what would a purely rational brain aspire to? If it had no feelings, no desires, no values, it would rationally do nothing since there is nothing to rationally motivate it to do anything. Reason cannot admire itself because that would involve emotion. It cannot aim to be even more rational or aspire to solve all of the rational problems of the cosmos and become God because, again, it would have to be emotionally motivated to pursue such ends. A computer has no desire to be a better computer. It does not wish to prevent a user from switching it off. It does not set itself the task of solving the problem of “life, the universe and everything.” It has no desire to be God. Why? Because it has no feelings, does not desire anything and places no value on anything. None of those things are connected with reason and logic. Reason and logic are tools; they’re not drivers, they’re not self-propelling agents. The most obvious feature of our world is that the rational mind is largely held in contempt. Few people are rational. Politicians, religions, advertisers, business, law and order etc… They all target the lower, more animal strata of the human brain.
* **The Emotional Method:** Subconscious, [emotion-based decision making](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somatic_marker_hypothesis) the is the source of the majority of our decisions.  enabled human beings to survive during their long period of evolution and remains today This system represents risk as a feeling that tells us whether it is safe to walk down this dark street or drink this strange-smelling water.  In contrast to economic theory, the somatic marker hypothesis proposes that emotions play a critical role in our ability to make fast, rational decisions in complex and uncertain situations.
* PROS
* Fast - Decisions can be nearly instantaneous.
* Easy - This system is intuitive, mostly automatic, and not very accessible to conscious awareness.
* **The Numerical Method:** This consists of formal cost-benefit analyses based on factual statistical evidence and probabilities. It is relatively slow, effortful, and requires conscious control. According to economic theory, human decision-making is devoid of emotions and involves logical reasoning based on costs-benefit calculations.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somatic_marker_hypothesis#cite_note-5)  This theory assumes that individuals have unlimited time, knowledge and information processing power and can therefore make perfect decisions. It’s generally a big pain in the ass, but it's been long been proven the most consistent method of producing optimal outcomes on issues of great complexity, such as public policy.

99% of human evolution occurred prior to the invention of mathematics and without access to statistical data. Hence, our brains have not evolved to effectively reason using these extremely powerful tools.

real estate not look in house judge on emotional outside

decisions government by emotion and sometime at best augmented by reason statistics at worst complete emotions

There's a war going on in your brain.  It's the ultimate struggle for control over your actions.  On one side in this conflict is the reptilian brain stem.   Your subconscious instinctual is two fundamental ways in which voters make decisions. Proponents of formal risk analysis tend to view affective responses to risk as irrational. Current wisdom disputes this view. The rational and the experiential systems operate in parallel and each seems to depend on the other for guidance. Studies have demonstrated that analytic reasoning cannot be effective unless it is guided by emotion and affect. Rational decision making requires proper integration of both modes of thought. Both systems have their advantages, biases, and limitations. Now that we are beginning to understand the complex interplay between emotion and reason that is essential to rational behavior, the challenge before us is to think creatively about what this means for managing risk. On the one hand, how do we apply reason to temper the strong emotions engendered by some risk events? On the other hand, how do we infuse needed “doses of feeling” into circumstances where lack of experience may otherwise leave us too “coldly rational.”

### Thus: (2) Ki = g(EDi , Di , Si , Qi , Xi ) + e2i , where D is a survey measure of how strongly the respondent desires to be informed about the economy and economic policy, S is a vector representing the sources of information that the individual uses, and Q is an indicator of the quantity or intensity of information. The specific definitions are explained in the next section.

You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you mad. -Aldous Huxley