SATURDAY November 18, 1:30 pm via ZOOM
SDIS Monthly Lecture

Design For a Better World--Don Norman

(Please note the special format, described below.)

Don Norman is Distinguished Professor (emeritus) of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. He is co-founder and first chair of the Cognitive Science department, and founder and first Director of the UCSD Design Lab. Business Week has named Norman one of the world’s most influential designers.

He will hold a question and answer session based on his new book, Design for a Better World. .

For more information about Professor Norman and his new book visit the following sites: https://jnd.org and https://dbw.jnd.org. In the jnd.org website you will find the book’s Table of Contents, and sample chapters. Additionally, the essays and video section provide much more material to give you the background so you can attend and have an interactive discussion with Professor Norman.

Please click the following link to join the zoom webinar . https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83716864012?pwd=bUhjSUlrRFpDYmVKTGRMUExjRFZhdz09

Meeting ID: 837 1686 4012
Passcode: SDIS
The Scholars Notebook is issued monthly during the academic year, except December, by the San Diego Independent Scholars. Editor: Arlene Gilbert

SDIS strives to promote opportunities for active learning and scholarship, for its members and for the San Diego community.

Public service activities of SDIS include free public lectures and cooperative educational projects with other organizations. SDIS members enjoy a variety of regular discussion groups, presently via Zoom.

SDIS, established in 1982, was instrumental in the founding of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars, an organization that unites eight similar organizations and has international membership.

For more information see https://sdscholars.org or contact sdisask@gmail.com

SCHOLAR’S NOTEBOOK
November 2023—Contents

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At our last meeting, the Biosciences group considered how inflammation and other immune responses might influence psychological and neurological disorders. We focused on microglial, the only immune cells that are resident in the central nervous system (the brain plus spinal cord).

Among the immune functions that microglia play in the brain are: (1) continual surveying of the neural tissue for dead cells, infection, debris and other signs of damage or infection; (2) engulfment and digestion of debris or dead cells; and (3) triggering the start of various types of immune responses.

Interestingly, microglia (but not comparable immune cells that inhabit other parts of the body) have evolved additional capabilities that are specific to the central nervous system. For example, microglia are crucial to a process called “synaptic pruning,” through which the connections (synapses) between nerve cells are continuously monitored for their degree of activity and unused synapses are eliminated. Thus, microglia improve the efficiency of the brain by favoring those neural connections that are frequently needed, but eliminating those that are less useful.

Interestingly, the removal of unnecessary synapses involves the same “engulf and digest” functions that microglia, as well as related immune cells in other parts of the body, use to remove cellular debris. This similarity has helped neuroscientists to rapidly unravel the process of synaptic pruning because the mechanisms through which immune cells ingest and destroy cell debris have been studied for many decades and are well understood.

Synaptic pruning is crucial to several neural functions, including both learning and neural development. Three critical windows of brain development are characterized by especially active synaptic pruning, namely times: (a) before birth, (b) in the first few years after birth, and (c) during adolescence.

A current research question is whether infection or inflammation, which stimulate the immune responses of microglia, might “highjack” their activity so that they are less available to perform synaptic pruning. If so, the result might be defective neural development. For problems occurring before birth, one might expect either too many synapses or too few. Autism is often characterized by more synapses than normal and shows some correlation with severe or chronic maternal infection during pregnancy. Schizophrenia is typically marked by fewer synapses than normal and may potentially be related to excessive synaptic pruning during adolescence.

The meeting will be on November 16, when we will continue to consider mind-body interactions, especially bodily reactions involving infection, immunity, or stress.

Dorothy Parker
INSIDE POLITICS
10 a.m. — Second Saturday--November 11 — via Zoom

On October 7, Hamas engaged in a surprise terrorist attack on Israel, massacring hundreds of Israeli civilians in an outdoor music festival and in their homes near the Gaza border. Hamas also kidnapped and took over 200 hostages back to Gaza, including many from the U.S. and other countries. Israel then declared war on Hamas, began bombing Gaza, and announced its intention to mount a ground invasion of Gaza in the near future.

President Biden then declared U.S. support of Israel in that conflict. In our next SDIS Inside Politics Zoom Study Group to be held on Saturday, November 11, at 10:00 a.m., we will discuss many of the political issues arising from this war, including whether the conflict threatens to spread to other nations in the Middle East.

Another subject sure to be discussed at our meeting will be yesterday’s election of a new Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives. It followed many weeks of disarray and inability to conduct any House business because of the GOP failure to agree on a new Speaker following removal of Speaker Kevin McCarthy. The House must now try to make up for lost time as it tries to agree on a budget and avoid a government shutdown. If you wish to join our monthly Study Group to discuss some of these hot political issues, please contact me and I will add you to our Zoom mailing list.

Al Korobkin

WORKS IN PROGRESS
3 p.m.— Thursday — November 16 — in person; location TBD

At the last meeting of Works in Progress, Tom Vazakas led the group in a guided conversation that introduced his novel method of mindfulness training and practice. This approach (called Efficient Delivery of Mindfulness) offers concise, rapid training in an approach that can be applied unobtrusively during the flow of a busy life – anytime, anywhere, and without any outward sign when others are present. It is specifically designed for people who, for some reason, cannot engage in meditation-based mindfulness training at that time.

We meet at 3:00 on November 16, when Dr. Jaime Pineda will tell us about his new book, Controlling Mental Chaos: Harnessing the Power of the Creative Mind, which was published this year by Rowman and Littlefield.

Dorothy Parker
Continuing our focus on photography, we will read “Hold Still” -- a National Book Award finalist from acclaimed photographer Sally Mann.

“In this groundbreaking book, a unique interplay of narrative and image, Mann’s preoccupation with family, race, mortality, and the storied landscape of the American South are revealed as almost genetically predetermined, written into her DNA by the family history that precedes her.

Sorting through boxes of family papers and yellowed photographs she finds more than she bargained for: "deceit and scandal, alcohol, domestic abuse, car crashes, bogeymen, clandestine affairs, dearly loved and disputed family land . . . racial complications, vast sums of money made and lost, the return of the prodigal son, and maybe even bloody murder."

In lyrical prose and startlingly revealing photographs, she crafts a totally original form of personal history that has the page-turning drama of a great novel but is firmly rooted in the fertile soil of her own life”.


We welcome SDIS members who’d like to join us, whether as “drop-ins” to sample our pursuits, or permanently. If this describes you, please contact me for further information.

Gerry Horwitz

Sally Mann
PHYSICAL SCIENCES GROUP

2 p.m. — Wednesday — November 8 — via Zoom

The Physical Sciences Group is continuing its review of the material in our text, Peskin and Schroeder, previously covered. In our last session on Wed. Oct. 25, we reviewed the discrete symmetries of Parity, Time Reversal and Charge Conjugation.

We then moved on to explore interactions Hamiltonians in three cases: 1) self interaction of the Klein Gordon Field, 2) Interaction of the Fermion Field with the Electromagnetic Field, and, 3) the Yukawa Field. We discussed the limiting factors on possible Interactions, specifically the requirement that the theory be renormalizable - that no unresolvable high energy divergences occur in the scattering amplitudes.

We then reviewed the machinery for a perturbative approach to solving problems for the allowed interactions, including developing perturbative expansions in Time Ordered integrals of the fields. This led to our review of the equivalence to Time Ordering to Normal Ordering, leading to Wick’s Theorem, which leads directly to Feynman Diagrams. The next meeting will take place on Wed., Nov. 8 at 2:00pm.

Alvin Halpern

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COLLOQUY CAFÉ

1:00 p.m. — Wednesday, November 15

Members of this group now meet in person, in the apartment of one generous member inside La Jolla’s senior living community, “Vi”. Our discussions take place on each month’s third Wednesday afternoon at 1:00; the coming session will occur on November 15.

Our subject will be “Sympathy/Empathy”. How do they differ? How are they alike?

October’s meeting focused on “mood”. We discovered that mood is always changing, whether for individuals or groups.

SDIS members who are not familiar with Colloquy Cafe and would like to experience it can learn more if they contact me.

Gerry Horwitz
FILM GROUP

The Film Group will meet Wednesday, November 1 at 10 am to view
“Young Man With a Horn”

On Wednesday, November 1st at 10am, The SDIS Film Group will present “Young Man with a Horn,” a 1950 Warner Brothers musical drama about a self-destructive jazz musician and his rehabilitation by those around him.

IMDB features the following user review:

“Rick Martin is a young boy who finds the love for music after his mother dies. The trumpet becomes his instrument, and he learns to play it from an old master called Art Hazzard.

Young Man with a Horn from 1950 is directed by Michael Curtiz. Rick Martin is first played by Orley Lindgren, then by Kirk Douglas. Lauren Bacall plays his troubled wife Amy North. Doris Day is the singer friend Jo Jordan. Hoagy Carmichael is the pianist friend Willie ‘Smoke’ Willoughby. Juano Hernandez portrays Art Hazzard.

The cast is quite superb. Douglas does an excellent job in the lead. Especially when Rick starts having problems with the alcohol, then Kirk really has to act. And that he does really well! I think the movie becomes more interesting when it portrays all those problems this young man starts having. Problems with marriage, drinking. When it's not just about music and how good he is at it.

Bacall's performance is very film noir, which works fairly well in this movie. Day is very touching in the caring she has for her friend. And she can really sing, which we all knew! If you're a fan of the main trio, if you like good music, if you like drama you should see this movie.”

Although Douglas and Day did not to get along off camera, they work well on screen, and Bacall, whose husband was Warner star Humphrey Bogart, puts in a subtly bisexual film noir performance. Betty Grable’s husband at the time, Harry James is responsible for the music emanating from Douglas’s horn.

Directed by Michael Curtiz, most famous for Bogart’s most famous film, “Young Man with a Horn” runs 112 minutes. The Film Group asks members of SDIS to arrive ten minutes before the meeting starts. Those who are not members of the Film Group may contact Barbara Heckler for the link to the meeting.

Barbara Heckler and Ken Krauss
### November 2023

Some meetings and events listed are via Zoom

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Note: the Notebook will not be published in December.