

STINKING THINKING: PART I

Let's find the similarities in all these comments: "You should be able to grasp my next point", "Studies have shown", "Everybody knows that...", "America, love it or leave it", "We've got to stop them from banning pornography; soon they'll be burning all the books" and "After treatments with the drug, one-third of the mice were cured and one-third died" (The third mouse escaped).

Here's more: "collateral damage" and "adult language", "Pork-the other white meat", and my favorite, "I'm not sure if I fail to disagree with that or not" Huh?

A conga line of candidates are trying to tap dance away with our vote. As a doc, I wish I had antidotes for the anecdotal, euphemistic, fallacious or destructive reasoning I hear from many of them.

The above phrases are well studied examples of stinking thinking. All have fancy pants Latin names and are lecture topics in Logic, Critical Thinking and Argument and Debate classes, which most candidates never took

We rarely teach clear thinking. Not what to think, not spiritual and personal values systems; just how to do the voodoo we humans do so well which separates us from primeval slime. As a species, we are pretty adept at lust, greed, envy, anger, passion and pathos and a host of others. Yet when we ignore the noble notion of the thinking beast, it's our bacon in the frying pan causing stinking thinking.

Clear thinking is an E ticket pass to ride the carnival of life. Daily interactions, life altering decisions and deciding what and who to believe all benefit when our brain is well tutored and strapped on tight. In upcoming local and national elections, the stink of the lack of think can drive you to drink. So what to do?

We can all be like treasury agents and train to recognize counterfeit thinking by its flaws. I suggest we cast our first vote into the ballot box of our brains and smarten up on common counterfeit ways of "crapping on the cortex". There is plenty of political pooh to practice on. Just listen critically to many local and national candidates, read editorials and columnists, watch council meetings and admire post presidential debate media spin-meisters make leprechauns green with envy.

Over the next few weeks, as we sashay up to the ballot box, let's use this column to dust off the ole library of logic and together walk past the wall of shame of the most common types of conversation killers, assassinations of accurate analysis and rapes of reasonable thought that are practiced by politicians, in particular.

Here is my invitation to gather round the fireside with family and friends, listen to the news, read the daily paper or visit its web site, watch the debates and use the tools we will go over in the next few columns to show you just how smart you really are; and then vote that way.

I call our little project the “Go Forth and Ceribrize Citizens Survival Guide to Sound Reasoning”; a primer on how to amaze your friends and families by using your minds better than the politicians. This was Part 1.

In Part 2, “No Mothers, Man”, we will look at the techniques of personal attacks and cheap shots, a favorite of some local politicians. Part 3, “Mental Magicians Using Slight of Mind” illustrates types of air headed appeals and famous fallacies of reason often used to support arguments and win and influence people. Part 4, “Give Em the Ole Razzle-Dazzle”, addresses the ploys of distraction, delay and exaggeration; favorites of adolescents and politicians alike. Finally, in time to wow them at the ballot box, Part 5, “Go Forth and Ceribrize” summarizes your head start for a heart-felt finish of thinking more clearly and knowing stinking thinking and “cortical ca ca” when you see it.

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