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In *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, Thomas Frank pointed out that a great number of Americans actually vote against their own interests. In *The Political Mind*, George Lakoff explains why. As it turns out, human beings are not the rational creatures we've so long imagined ourselves to be. Ideas, morals, and values do not exist somewhere outside the body, ready to be examined and put to use. Instead, they exist quite literally inside the brain and they take physical shape there. For example, we form particular kinds of narratives in our minds just like we form specific muscle memories such as typing or dancing, and then we fit new information into those narratives. Getting that information out of one narrative type and into another or building a whole new narrative altogether can be as hard as learning to play the banjo. Changing your mind isn't like changing your body it's the same thing. But as long as progressive politicians and activists persist in believing that people use an objective system of reasoning to decide on their politics, the Democrats will continue to lose elections. They must wrest control of the terms of the debate from their opponents rather than accepting their frame and trying to argue within it. This passionate, erudite, and groundbreaking book will appeal to readers of Steven Pinker and Thomas Frank. It is a fascinating read for anyone interested in how the mind works, how society works, and how they work together.

The Political Mind: Why You Can't Understand 21st-Century American Politics with an 18th-Century Brain Details

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Blayne says

Lakoff, a cognitive scientist, looks at 30 years of scientific research on the human brain, and asks some political questions. What he finds is the political divide is “not just in geography, religion or even power”, it is in our heads (no pun intended).

Our country was born from the age of Enlightenment when reason was king, and emotion was irrelevant. Emotions were seen as just cluttering the issue at hand. The idea an educated, well informed, rational society will make rational, logical, fact based decisions and be able to adequately self govern. Rational being making rational decisions is an underlying foundation of our society, from the judicial system to the nightly news. Lakoff shows us that we do not act rationally, and asks why.

Science tells us that 98% of our thought is unconscious. We are only aware of 2% of our thoughts. Lakoff demonstrates that this heavily impacts our society through word choice, metaphors, and the framing of issues.. A good example is when the Republicans discussed the Democrats plan of a timeline to exit Iraq. Republicans used the term “cut and run.” A person can’t hear “cut and run” without the feeling of cowardness or surrendering . Another good example is using the term “surge” in the Iraq war, as opposed to using the word “escalation.”

Lakoff offers some constructive criticism for the “liberal” thought process. Liberals argue by listing of facts like an encyclopedia and expecting people to digest them like a machine and arrive at logical, rational conclusions. Sound familiar? It did to me. “Conservative” thought prefer to use emotions over lists of facts. Now you’ll have to read the book, because the liberal thought process is not just used by liberals, and vice versa, with the conservative thought process. Lakoff argues against the metaphor of politics being described as right and left.

Lakoff tempers the science of the brain with bits of pop culture, which keeps the reader interested and makes them aware of the ingrained nature of what Lakoff is discussing. He brings in the Anna Nicole saga, Reagan’s fictional “Welfare Queen”, the latest in neural science, and a analysis of framing and metaphors, to provide insight as to why reason alone is ineffective, that we need emotion, and new enlightenment.

Hands down this was the best book I read all year. It taught me to listen to what people are saying during a political conversation, instead of thinking of what I will say next to refute what I think they are saying. We all have more in common than we are lead to believe; that commonality should be the starting point for change, not the places where we differ. This book will help you be a better communicator, listener, and thinker.

Hakan Jackson says

The book was a bit dated being written back in 2008. We get to read about a simpler time when everyone thought Karl Rove was a genius and America was in disbelief in have George W Bush as president. It's still relevant with today's politics. Though it would really help if this book got an update in both the politics and

the social science.

David says

This is a very important book for progressives to read. Cognitive sciences are showing how our brains organize concepts results in consequences for politics. Most people's brains have developed in ways that can respond to terminology in a way that can activate emotional responses either consistent with conservative attitudes or progressive attitudes. The more times one version is activated by terminology, the more the strength of the structures supporting that view become. Therefore, the terminology progressives choose and implement affects whether listeners actually have their conservative or progressive structures activated and strengthened.

Lakoff explains how progressives tend to work under the assumption that political discourse is only a matter of facts, figures and unemotional logic. But that's not how the brain works. Terminology has associations with brain organization built up during our childhood and otherwise as an individual's brain attempts to make sense of personal experiences. Brain mechanisms relevant to politics are associated with feelings of right and wrong, fair and unfair, desirable and undesirable. Those are linked to emotions and emotion-related chemicals. Unemotional facts and figures just aren't as effective by themselves as the emotional terminology and approaches used by conservatives. Terminology that results in emotional activity in the brain is not necessarily blatantly emotional. But taking care to use wording that elicits empathy and other forms consistent with progressive thought will activate and strengthen brain structures that support progressive attitudes in your listeners.

This book is not presented as merely being a science popularization on cognitive theory affecting political thought. It's intended to educate people on incorporating scientific findings into practical political expression. Lakoff uses more scientific jargon in the practical political parts of the book than would be ideal. However, that shouldn't prevent you from getting the essential ideas.

Cognitive Policy Works makes available a free PDF download of Thinking Points. This is supposed to be more oriented to practical political applications, but I haven't read it yet.
<http://www.cognitivepolicyworks.com/w...>

Ken Horkavy says

George Lakoff's; The Political Mind. The most important book on politics over the last 20 years. Progressive's unite and read this treatise on how to take back our democracy.

Laura says

Says that once upon a time, we reasoned our way from our hypotheses about reasonable people to our conclusions about the best way to structure government:

- Since all people have the capacity for reason, we can govern ourselves, without bowing to higher

authorities like kings or popes or oligarchs.

- Reason makes us equal, and so the best form of government is a democracy.
- We use reason to serve our interests, and so an optimal government would serve the interests of all.
- Since we all have the same reason, the same laws can apply to all; this we can be governed by general, rational laws, not individual whims.
- Our inherent rational nature accords us inherent rights and freedoms.
- Government should be dedicated to the rational interests of all citizens, and must be structured so that no authority can overwhelm them.
- Reason contrasts with blind faith, and so government should be separate from, and independent of, religion.
- Science is based on reason, and so our government should recognize, honor, and develop scientific knowledge.
- Therefore, a government committed to reason will be a democratic government.
- When democratic values are violated, it is reason that must be restored.

(6). Then he explains why he doesn't think people make decisions on this basis, which I suspect is true. Also talks about "neural binding," which I don't know what is.

He says a lot of things that make me feel good, like, "Behind every progressive policy lies a single moral value: empathy, together with the responsibility and strength to act on that empathy," (47) and "Conservative thought . . . begins with the notion that morality is obedience to an authority – assumed to be a legitimate authority who is inherently good, knows right from wrong, functions to protect us from evil in the world, and has both the right and duty to use force to command obedience and fight evil." (60). He equates hierarchy, punishment, discipline.

I liked it. Didn't feel like I knew enough to judge a lot of what he was saying. The idea that metaphors are ultimately physical (he suggests we say a loving person is warm because we remember being cuddled; we say prices are rising because we saw water rising) is a little beyond my competence. But the basic notion that 18th century nation building had a certain conception of the human mind that has not stood the test of time – that seems dead on to me. That the republicans figured out how to take advantage of that before the democrats? Yeah, probably. That the reason some folks freaked out about gay marriage had to do with the threat to their own identity? I just don't know.

Certainly he's dead on that we fail when we accept our opponent's framing of the case. But that's first year lawyering.

Is he right in a deep level? Again, he might be, but he didn't persuade me, and I'm pretty sympathetic to his politics. Glad I read it, not sure I'll read it again.

Heather Denkmire says

Wow, I wish everyone in the country could read this book. Or, at least about 3/4 of it. Some of it I'll admit got a little Charlie Brown adult voice on me (game theory, and Chomsky's linguistics). But truly, I think this is the key to saving our Democracy. Reframing and not hiding from the progressive values of empathy and empowerment. Amazing stuff. It also helped me understand some people I know who think in the strict father model (as I'm about 100% nurturing parent model). I loved learning about the brain functions, though

some of it was pretty complicated. I liked it when he gave examples followed by the "of course, this is greatly oversimplified" apology. Those always made sense.

Owlseyes says

[Beware if you're a Democrat, Steven Pinker said that Lakoff's "prescriptio

John David says

I was drawn to this book mostly because I knew of the author's reputation as a cognitive scientist and as someone who was known for spelling out how cognitive science overlaps with, and largely explains, many of the phenomena that we recognize as falling along the left-right spectrum of political ideologies. And Lakoff certainly does offer some insights into how thinking occurs, and what in particular is unique about the way we think about political issues.

Lakoff's main idea, which should be apparent to anyone who watches endless hours of cable news in rapture as I do, is that whoever controls the narrative frames of a debate controls the issue itself, and therefore always wins. How is this the case? Lakoff says that our view of rationality is largely, and erroneously, informed by the Enlightenment, which assumed it was conscious, universal, disembodied, logical, unemotional, value-neutral, interest-based, and literal. He shows several reasons why almost none of these are actually true. For example, we make decisions, to help others perhaps, that don't actually maximize our own self-interest, and that are tied up with value and emotional content.

He claims that Democrats - very often with a grating, whiny tone - remain stuck in this view of rationality. Because of this, they are still in the habit of trying to lasso the facts, build charts and models, and explain why Republicans are simply wrong on many of the issues. Lakoff claims that this just isn't enough. Evidence, reason, facts, and figures won't win debates, he claims. But Republicans have learned how human reason really works – that it is in fact couched in tropes, metaphors, emotional phrases and associations – and they use them to their advantage in shaping political issues and talking points. Republicans just couch the issue in the terms that will help them (their “narrative frames”), and then repeat that frame over and over again until it sticks in the minds of the public. Once stuck, it's difficult, but not impossible, to dislodge. But doing so would just be a matter of finding the right frame that speaks to your political basis, and saying it repeatedly.

For example, conservatives have controlled the ideological frame regarding the “war on terror” for the last decade, and therefore they control many of the issues that we associate with “homeland security” (another phrase unused unquestioningly, according to Lakoff, that plays into Republican and neoconservative hands). Instead of accepting the frames of questions like “Do you think we should continue to fight the war on terror, or pull out?” or “Should middle class tax cuts be extended, or should they get a tax hike?” the issues need to be reformulated to emphasize what Lakoff thinks are the values of liberals and progressives: fairness, equality, and government accountability. In other words, re-frame the issues in such a way that benefits your own positions. And then repeat that framing. Over and over and over again – because, according to him, that's the only way you're going to win the debate.

There are a lot of problems with this book, though. With an objective-sounding title like “The Political Mind:

A Cognitive Scientist's Guide to Your Brain and Its Politics," I didn't really want any of Lakoff's partisan comments. I knew before opening the book that he's a committed liberal (many of my own sympathies, too, are very much left of center), but he spends too much time demonizing one political perspective, glorifying another, and too little time providing details and supporting evidence for the claims that he's making. I feel that this saps the book of almost all of its credibility. In order to have a book be a powerful explanatory tool, instead of a passing as a fat pamphlet for the Obama campaign, it should stick to the facts of the matter accompanied, perhaps, with some reasonable inductions, predictions, and details of methodological practice. Calling President Bush a "traitor" (which he actually does) accomplishes nothing. Furthermore, it made me realize more and more as I read it that this book is simply an example of what he was talking about: a successful example of framing issues in an advantageous way. Of course, he would be the last person to actually bring that to the reader's attention.

I think the book may have suffered from being written for too popular an audience, too. It seems that the political potshots were filler for an audience who was more eager to see their opponent trashed than to actually read something about how cognitive science can help us better understand how we think metaphorically about political issues. I came really close to giving this two stars, which I almost never do, but thought there were a couple of insights that salvaged it from being a total loss, so I opted for three stars instead. For someone interested in this topic, I suggest looking elsewhere.

Johanna says

(audio book) First off, I can't recommend this book as an audio book. Its densely academic writing style requires way too much brain power to process, especially while driving. But if I hadn't been listening to the audio book, I probably wouldn't have finished the book. What the book has in academic writing style, it seems to lack in academic proof. Perhaps the print copy has citations, but mostly what I heard was a complex narrative based on unproven axioms.

Here's what I did get out of the book, and it's a reminder of what I learned from a linguistics course in college: our thinking is shaped by our language and we don't realize it most of the time.

Taking to heart Lakoff's points about metaphors and the unconscious connotations they bring into our thought-process is a mental diet for me. It helped me be more aware of the use of underlying metaphors in political sound bites and helped me hear them with more detachment. It's also helped me take political rhetoric less personally, which is a godsend right now.

I can't recommend the book because the noise-to-insight factor was just too high for me. So to help out, I'll include the list of 7 biases that we as humans should be aware of in our thinking, according to Lakoff. You can look up the background research on your own if you're inspired.

1. Optimism bias - We don't like to plan on worse-case scenarios
2. Control bias - That we have more control over the situation than we do.
3. Reactive devaluation - If our opponent presents an idea, we automatically think it's bad
4. Fundamental attribution error - Other people's bad behavior or opinions are because they are bad people; our bad behavior or opinions are based on our circumstances
5. Loss aversion bias - We will do more to avoid loss than chase gains. We'll avoid certain loss for uncertain gain
6. A specific example is taken as the average example - If you only hear one example, you don't assume it's

the best or the worse, but rather, the most common

7. We always think rationally and are aware of anything influencing our thoughts

Tomislav says

I read this book because it was chosen by a (face-to-face) book club I belong to, and I believed it to be a science read. My initial response was great disappointment, because this is very much a book of politics rather than science. So you know where I'm coming from, I should explain that I am a biomedical engineer working in the field of magnetic resonance imaging. Going back to childhood, my favorite subjects were math and art, and I began eschewing social studies in high school. At this point, I have a considerable gap regarding current thought in psychology/sociology. However, this book does briefly touch on MRI and on Artificial Intelligence, both of which I have background in, from one time or another in my career.

Part 1 is "How the Brain Shapes the Political Mind". The substance of the book is explained here - namely that progressive and conservative political thought in the US is rooted in a pair of interfering fundamental neural frames. Diverse progressive political positions are associated with empathy, while diverse conservative political positions are associated with authority. It is much more complex than that, but I just want to give the gist of it here. What little there is of science in the book, is explained in this section.

Lakoff identifies himself as a progressive, and the book is heavily slanted that way. In fact, a lot of it consists of recommendations on how to sway conservatives to progressive positions. He goes so far as to label "biconceptuals" like me as "confused" and "hypocritical". His own views are the "New Enlightenment" and quite glorious.

Part 2 is "Political Challenges for the Twenty-first Century Mind". This part was somewhat repetitive, but clearly uses examples to explain how progressive and conservative political frames operate. It is very specific on US national political issues of 2008, most of which are still with us in new form. The civil war in Iraq and now Syria has moved on to a whole new scenario since then. But the coverage of health care and the role of government is quite relevant.

Part 3 is "The Technical is the Political" This part was a hodge-podge of additional topics or expansions of earlier topics. In "Exploring the Human Brain" he briefly and accurately gives the reasons fMRI is of limited utility in his field. Unfortunately, this means that the majority of his research is done using word association tests of human subjects and the like. In "The Metaphors Defining Rational Action" he ventures into logic and decision trees. Probably this is an issue in his own field, but somewhat trivial and off topic from this book, in my opinion. In "Language in the New Enlightenment" he gives some of the academic background for his work, touching on AI, which I enjoyed and would have appreciated much earlier.

Apparently, this is not his first book on the subject, but I am unfamiliar with the others. I feel that this book covers important material, but that it does not cover it effectively. In particular, I think it descends into overblown claims of importance, name calling, and villianization, thereby undermining its own credibility. I downloaded a sample of one book he referenced - The Political Brain, by Drew Westen - and in its beginning at least, it seems more to my liking.

Alex Lee says

I was first introduced to George Lakoff through his work in 2nd language acquisition. His thoughts and work in that area was quite impressive, so when I ran across this book I was eager to look into it.

First let me say that this book isn't really academic. Yes, it is written by an academic, but it's also meant for general consumption. I didn't read the reviews below before reading this book, but in skimming them, I am surprised by how people had to mention how academic it was or how technical it is. Honestly, I wish it was more technical.

Also, I had a hard time starting this book because it sounded too much like a liberal griping about conservatives. The way the book eased into framing really annoyed me, because it read too much like loose rhetorical/discourse analysis. I didn't care about discourse analysis, since I've read much more substantial ones... but then surprise: Lakoff made a claim about cognition in terms of discourse.

Suddenly things were not words anymore. He was talking about not only how we think with regular structures, but how invoking those internal structures through language was how people got to emphasize different aspects of cognition.

There are three takeaways for me.

The first is simply that arranging words in ever new ways allows people to process things differently. Providing substantial framing through the use of culturally familiar metaphors isn't simply window dressing to invoke stolid logical relations... those metaphors also allow the speaker/writer to slip into other arguments by analogy. Lakoff has obviously first worked this out in more academic ways, which would be very interesting to look at... but then, rhetorical analysis has always taken the approach of analysing metaphors and reoccurring tropes as how writing and communication are structured. And the use of rhetoric in this fashion was well documented since early orators from the beginning of human history. Only because of the age of Enlightenment have we instead thought that somehow pure thought was only relational, devoid of excess entanglements... and that understanding supersedes the actual differences in types of expression or kinds of anything... that the categories themselves are more real than the expressions... but really this can't be true since anything that is the same as anything else is simply the same thing, unable to be distinguished... from itself. By tossing out information or being reductionist, we lose part of the picture. The question of course, is always what context, which part is itself the operant part?

The second takeaway from this book is itself rhetorical, in a way. Lakoff insists that the beyond of language lies solely within the cognitive structures of our neurons... while he seems to imply that such structures are too difficult to decode (neurons fire too quickly, and are too small and numerous to keep track of) He calls quite often, mostly in the latter third of the book, for a New Enlightenment, one that at first, seeks to find the deeper structures of our minds through the use of framing... that we can get at these deeper cognitive structures through intensive rhetorical analysis, much like Chomsky's deep structure of grammar. I understand this book is not academic, so I am left understandably, a little vague as to how this would exactly work. He dismissing Noam Chomsky's Universal Grammar (UG) project as constrained by "Old Enlightenment" thinking... although he highlights UG's project structure as a model for a new field of study.

Lakoff is serious about merging discourse analysis with cognitive computation. He cites numerous thinkers like Charles Fillmore and the school of the Neural Theory of Language. With this, Lakoff is, in a way, still working within old Enlightenment aesthetics of thought. If language itself is how we process thoughts

(which I think him correct), there can be no real deeper structure to thoughts since they pick the expression that is best suited to being what it is. I am not saying that this area of study isn't worth studying -- it is -- but people can think in Math symbols, in body movements, in melodies... in other kinds of directly encoded formula instead of just language. Furthermore, tropes and metaphors are specific to groups. The study of such fields will inevitably change them. As memes come and go, so will the study itself always shadow the area of study. To codify those areas of study with academic jargon, which is also inevitable, will inevitably introduce distortion as frames used to discuss those areas themselves formulate the field of study... this is of course, start of a different discussion: the philosophy of science and justificationism, which is beyond the point of this review.

The third takeaway, which I find very invigorating is that poetry and philosophy, through this field, will be seen again as socially valid. Both of these areas have been somewhat repressed by our current capitalist frame, as neither directly contributes to producing or retaining wealth. Yet the deeper reasons for such repression may very well be that such fields of semiotic slippage are also fields which revolutionize and alter perception ever so slightly... loss of these areas of the language arts amounts to a loss of our ability to step out of much of our framing. People can't rebel against what they can't see. And people can't effectively rebel if they do not realize a way out. I don't mean to suggest that bands of poets or bands of philosophers rove downtown office buildings across first world nations to "blow people's minds". And even if they could, there isn't any reason to do that. After all, people who do want to see alternatives will eventually find them. It's just that there's a reason why much of these two areas is difficult to comprehend. The transformative power of both poetry and philosophy have been well documented throughout history even if today they are often dismissed as being irrelevant by "serious professionals". Lakoff dismisses classical philosophers as "Old Enlightenment" and perhaps they should be dismissed in that way, but the Cliff Note's version is only our socially accepted "conclusion" of what amounts to lifetime upon lifetime of work by society's best and brightest. As one who reads Enlightenment thinkers, I must say that their writing does often leave one to see how they turn around objects, create auxiliary objects and speculate the pure relations between collected bundles in an attempt to make sense of the world... In effect, you can learn from their learning... You can make better sense of the world through watching others attempt the same thing. The lesson here isn't always the content itself, but how the content is formulated... while not itself a matter of "Framing" very much a matter of the creation of context and structure, roots of framing.

Lakoff's book can be read as a call to action against stolid ways of thinking, against conventionally tried methods of making sense. How much sense do things make now? We race our cars around polluting the planet, we spend our health and our youth to make wealth, only to spend that wealth to try to regain youth. We make tons of waste every year, from products that historically wouldn't be looked on as trash. And we bury this stuff in our own backyards. Yes it's true that Lakoff prizes being a progressive against being a conservative. But even those progressive frames are the products of the very systems that compel us to behave the way we do. I understand, one step at a time. But all the same...

Perhaps it's time for us to return to such areas, in an attempt to find our own freedom, so we won't simply be money spending-money making machines.

All in all, you can tell that Lakoff is just getting warmed up. He very obviously intended progressives and progressive strategists to take into account cognition in politics, not as a call to step out of thinking in old familiar frames. Instead, let's use the ones we have to push forward progress. After all, Lakoff did after all help find the now defunct liberal thinktank Rockridge institute. Even at the end of this book, you can tell that he will write another.

Steven Peterson says

This is one of those books that sets off conflicting emotions and thoughts. The application of knowledge of the brain sciences to political debate is absolutely fascinating, and much good information is presented. Another part of the thesis--that "progressives" or liberals use an "Enlightenment" model of discourse (emphasizing the use of logic and reason to advance their points) whereas conservatives use a more powerful approach, wedging emotion to thought. Hence, conservatives have an advantage over liberals, because their view of "human nature" is more accurate.

The book shows that Lakoff is fully able to wed the study of cognition with our knowledge of the brain. This part of his analysis is very readable and provides lots of information.

I must say, though, that the liberal versus conservative thesis is improbable. There are plenty of liberals who use emotional appeals (Teddy Kennedy when given a script could raise goose bumps); there are Republicans who are professorial and more Enlightenment oriented, speaking to logic and reason (e.g., Jack Kemp). Enlightenment thinkers were not abstract thinkers devoid of passion. The attack on Enlightenment thinking has been ongoing over a long period of time, and much of this debate is missing from Lakoff's discussion (read Derrida, for example, who engaged in a one person Postmodern assault on Enlightenment thought).

Still the book is useful by providing entree to a fascinating literature on human cognition and the brain.

Brea Grant says

this book just changed my ideas about politics. although throughout most of it, i kept thinking, "yeah, of course conservatives manipulate language," Lakoff really dug deeper into things i had never thought about.

there's not a whole lot of science in this book, but that's okay because it makes it easy for all the lib arts majors like me to read. and we understand ideas like framing concepts and reflexive thought. hurray! i feel like i know some science now.

Conor says

So Lakoff, writing in early 2008, seems to think the Democrats have a messaging problem. Prescient guy! He beats on about liberals' failure to weaponize empathy, and to claim that progressivism is American. Perhaps it is the Reaganaut decade I was born into and the imitators that followed, but this seems like too simplistic a take.

Americans seem different--not because of some demented pathogen or hideous mutation we carry within us, but because we've been "#1" for so long that, rather than change course and admit defeat as anomie and decay spread, we double down and our most self-destructive, short-sighted qualities grow concentrated and magnified. Lakoff does talk about the powerful sway of risk aversion, but rather than characterize it as something that Americans of all political persuasions might feel because of our declining grandeur and

collapsing arcs of progress, he imputes it to conservatives only.

I feel like he misses his own point.

David Rush says

Lakoff goes on throughout the book about how progressives are stuck in the old style enlightenment view (of reason), while conservatives have used a batch of Jedi Mind tricks over the past three decades to replace analytical reasoning decisions with emotions. I'd say the starting point is that people think the brain is basically like a computer that runs calculations and from those evaluations people make decisions that will best serve them. **HOWEVER** from his studies he says people are nothing like that, and any kind of rational decision has an emotional component.

Politics has its power because it is really our morals writ large ("That is why government budgets are moral documents..."). People arrive at political/moral views from an emotional starting point and these views are held with the same strength as personal morality. Plus the way the brain works means political, personal morality is tied by our own brain circuitry to emotions and narratives we live by.

So the worldviews people have are arrived at by accessing parts of the mind that house fundamental emotions that are linked to other more conceptual parts of the brain through "neural bindings". Or something like that, I got a little lost on some of it. But from a practical view it is important to remember that as we grow up we develop "primary metaphors", maybe hundreds of them. And these metaphors bring meaning and emotion to our lives, but since they are not logical they can only be accessed by binding them to narratives (stories) and frames (I think of this along the lines of how you frame a question can lead to the answer)

Framing comes before policy

If health care is framed as "health insurance" then it will be seen through an insurance frame, and the policy will fit that frame: it will be a business, with profits.....When health care is seen as a protection – on par with police and fire protection...- then it becomes part of the moral mission of government. Pg. 67.

- One can see in scripts, the link between frames and narratives. Narratives are frames that tell a story. They have semantic roles...What makes it a narrative – a story – and not just a mere frame? A narrative has a point to it, a moral. It is about how you should live your life – or how you shouldn't. It has emotional content: events that make you sad or angry or in awe Pg. 250.

All this action is similar to how habits are formed, in that the more re-enforcement there is the stronger the psychological bond is.

In addition, neural binding can create emotional experiences. In the area of the limbic system, the oldest part of the brain in terms of evolution, there are two emotional pathways with different neurotransmitters: once for positive emotions – the dopamine circuit – and one for negative emotions – the norepinephrine circuit. There are pathways in the brain linking these emotional pathways to the fore brain, where dramatic structure circuitry seems most likely to be located.

Activations of such convergent pathways are called "somatic markers" In that they neurally bind the emotions to event sequences in a narrative, apparently in the prefrontal cortex. Pg. 27-28

He has some suggestions on how progressives should use the same technique to promote their ideas. And I guess they are OK, but overall seem pretty unexciting.

To get the public to adopt progressive moral positions you have to activate progressive moral thought in them by openly – and constantly – stressing morality, not just the interests of demographic groups. Focusing on interests rather than empathy plays in to the hands of conservatives. Pg 53

Anyway, this all goes into his explanation how the conservative movement changed the metaphor of government as a helpful construction into government as something hurtful. They use language to get the brain to connect the angry emotions to disliking government and happy feelings get tied to “small government”. And this is all wrapped up in peoples own sense of the moral.

In general he paints the conservative views in a poor light and progressive ideas as the natural nature of man, and yes I know I am using metaphors to describe this book about metaphors. And that may be one of my quibbles with this book, he says even rational thinking has to access some emotion but when talking about any progressive viewpoint describes it using the same old school enlightenment reasoning that is full of facts that should convince. I guess I am trying to say he recognizes the emotional metaphor in the conservative side but minimizes the emotion in the progressive worldview. Of course I think the facts matter, but basically we are back at the beginning and losing ground again.

Another problem I had was he kept going back to conservatives using the strict daddy metaphor for government, and I just suspect it is more complicated than that. He wrote this 10 years ago so it really shows how off he was about what a conservative is, in that he assumed they believed what they said they believed.

Take the concept of character. Why do conservatives dote on it? Pg. 79.

Well recent elections have shown character has no real pull on conservative thought when “push comes to shove”

Final thoughts: Well as of today it looks like “conservatives” will pass the US budget that cuts a bunch of taxes (in my frame it cuts taxes mainly for the rich), and I am confident the resulting budget deficit will cause a horrible clamor to cut spending. And since “conservatives” will never cut defense they will slash Medicare and social security...and my pessimistic apocalyptic worldview (not sure which narrative/metaphor library I am pulling that from) make me think it will all come to a head right about the time I will be wanting to take advantage of both of those social programs.

Oh, reasoning and facts won't change anybody's mind, and with social media these frames and narratives have a faster way to burrow into our brains (this is my thinking and not in the book).

Yep, I'm screwed, we're screwed. And the narrative, or metaphor, or whatever it is, springing to mind is the scene from Aliens 2 with the frantic, and wonderful, Bill Paxton screaming **“Game Over, Man. Game Over”**

And it is all due to neural bindings in our brain, like a version of "Invasion of the Body Snatchers", except it wasn't aliens, it was just our own dumb selves. Maybe a saucer will land in D.C. and Klaatu from "the Day the Earth Stood Still" will give us an ultimatum. Narratives in my head, my noggin is just full of 'em.

