

The NEOCORTEX is a genius; ALL BELOW IT is a moron.

After worship in the Craigville Tabernacle last Sunday, a Left (West) Coast librarian thanked me for lecturing slowly & expressively enough for the congregation to feel as well as think the words. I thanked her & added what I say to all I train to read Scripture in public-- & what here is this Thinksheet's title.

To read rapidly & monotonously is (1) disrespectful of the Holybook & therefore of the Holyone, (2) foolish (as communication approaches zero), & (3) bullying (for, unlike the lector, the congregation hasn't had prior opportunity to feel/think the lections).

Besides, as in this cartoon Snoopy's simple wisdom displays, the passage of time & the time of day (with the bodymind's biorhythms) are affecting factors: our answering the questions life throws at us is dynamic, not $2 \times 2 = 4$ static.

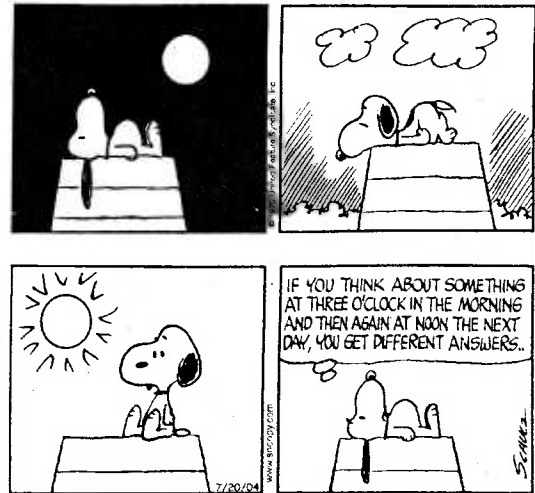
1 "Nanosecond" (Gk. "dwarf"-second; 1/billionth of a second) is a 1955 electronics neologism for the extremely high-speed electrical-current calculations; & the bio-model is the neocortex, in which billions of synapses fire rapidly, enabling us to think fast. Though only one aspect of the neocortex's "genius," speed is impressive especially in contrast to the comparatively slow pace (which I've long called "moron speed," esp. as a warning against overrating speed-reading) of the sensation-perception-feeling process involving the whole body except the neocortex.

2 Rote learning programs the memory (which uses the whole brain +)--with language paradigms, tables, charts, verbal/musical texts, routines, skills--with no essential engaging of (indeed, with intentional disconnect from) feelings. My experience of teaching languages convinces me that language-learning can be lightened if the teacher attends to feeding the feelings that motivate to the learning, the continually cultivated goal being to connect (1) those feelings with the objective language-facts & (2, in the case of teaching the biblical languages) the feelings & ideas in interpreting the biblical texts directly (rather than only indirectly, through lexica/wordbooks/commentaries). Let me illustrate with a sentence I came upon in devotional reading this morning, viz. Ps.76.1--but 1st an overall of this Ps.: (1) Thrice (1,7,12) God is identified as powerful (Heb. "El-," Arab. "Al-"); once (12) by his personal name; (2) God's power is, here, destructive (4-7: weapons destroying, warriors despoiling, the mighty rendered impotent); (3) So all should "fear" him (8,12,13: "awesome," "the Awesome One"); his "wrath" (8,11) roots in his righteousness, which insists on justice, (10) "judgment, to deliver all the lowly of the earth"; (4) God has two residences, viz. heaven (8-9) & Jerusalem (3, his "den" [as of a ferocious-threatening beast]; (5) God, not (13) "princes...kings of the earth," controls history, so (6) Shape up (12: make & pay your vows to God, "bring tribute").

Now let's see how all this is capsuled in vs.1, a distich with three Hebrew words in each line: "Known in-Judah [is] God / in-Israel [is] great his Name." NOTE: (1) These first two lines, as do those of the Lord's Prayer, end with "Name" (which I capitalize to indicate that it's an impersonal surrogate for the personal reality it points to viz., the biblical deity; & it has behind-within it the divine Presence [Shekinah]). The LP's "hallowed" is here (as in the Magnificat) "great." (2) The first two lines (in the distributive sense) end with the synonymous words "God" & "his-Name." (3) The lines represent, by the use of the Divided Kingdom's names (viz., Judah & Israel), by indirection, the unity of God's people--which the chiastic structure emphasizes (neither place-name being in the periodic position). (4) In the parallelism, "known" (the first line's first word) is implied as the first word of the second line. (5) The parallelism is synonymous ("known" [as great] & "great" [as known]) & also synthetic-additive ("known" to be "great"). (6) The Hebrew roots/words/word-

PEANUTS

by Charles M. Schulz



Elliott  Thinksheets

309 Lake Elizabeth Drive
Craigville, MA 02632
Phone/Fax 508.775.8008 \$20 per year
elliottlw1@comcast.net

Noncommercial
reproduction
permitted 7.24.04

3219

histories of "known," "God [E-]," "great," "name" further open the reader's feelings & ideas to those of this psalmist (reader-response criticism).

3 When/where books were/are rare, the opening of a book is an awesome experience of exposure: closed, you're looking at the book; open, the book is also looking--at you (& the God of the book is looking through the book at you). This (in the good sense) primitive understanding as an aspect of *lectio divina* (reading as the sacrament of converting written/printed words into prayer) & of *lectio revelata* (reading as deliberate openness to guidance, as when the lector says "Let us listen for the word of God"). When it "works," such reading is a communion with God through the interplay of the author's feelings/ideas & the reader's feelings/ideas.

4 Such expert-effective reading requires that the reader is unhurried, working at moron speed. Fast reading may deepen one's convictions, but it will also confirm one's prejudices & therefore fail of its self-examination potential. Of course one can be impractical, reading slowly enough to send all feelings up to the neocortex through the amygdala for intellectual processing, thence to be sent refined-matured down to be acted on by the entire body-person (the process I never tire of using T.S.Eliot's phrase--"the purification of the motive / in the ground of our beseeching"--to describe). One must be judicious, thus processing only the feelings that (1) are intense enough to signal thought/work to be done, (2) disturb because of perceived/believed dissonance with one's convictions, or (3) unusual enough to stir one's curiosity as to their origin/relevance.

5 One may ask what reading material is worthy or such close-&-hopeful reading? I answer, almost none: almost nothing is worth reading. The first principle of reading--the first "reading skill"--is selection. Jn.Wesley was a good reader & well-read, but he called himself "homo unius libri" (a one-book person): the Bible, for him, was so supremely worth reading that it was as though there was for him nothing else to read! The other extreme is self-identified Christians who read almost anything but the Bible.

6 Basically, this Thinksheet is about the physiology (biological functioning) of feeling/thinking/known/critiquing/reading/praying/acting. How wonderfully complex it--we!--are! Every human being is a symphony/cacophony--a whole orchestra at rehearsal & in concert--of sent-&-received sound messages activating consciousness & creating community & enabling communion. When by accident or disease one loses the sound-semantic ability (i.e., the power to make sense out of, & give sense to, sound), the person is still a human being, but the loss is so reductive as to be the elderly's most feared. And the manipulation of language for social-change effects (as, e.g., same-sex "marriage") is, for linguists, the most feared linguistic change.

ELLIOTT THINKSHEETS
309 Lake Elizabeth Drive
Craigville MA 02632

