



Lesson 80

The Biased Brain

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 - Our higher powers
 - Our lower powers
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 - The frequency exposure bias
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The Nature of Man is an important subject in this Movement. In 2017 it was opened up, and told us very important things about ourselves, mainly that we are not our bodies, but our bodies are the house we live in. In this lesson we are going to look at the Nature of Man again, but not through the same perspective. We are not going to be looking at our house, but instead we are going to see another way to view ourselves.

The Nature of Man

Our higher powers

In the Nature of Man, there are two sets of powers. They are the higher powers and the lower powers. “The sensitive nerves of the brain have been benumbed, and the animal appetite strengthened at the expense of the moral and intellectual faculties. These higher powers, which should control, have been growing weaker, so that eternal things have not been discerned.” *Testimonies for the Church volume 2* 485.2 “The experimental knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, transforms man into the image of God. It gives to man the mastery of himself, bringing every impulse and passion of the lower nature under the control of the higher powers of the mind.” *Christ Object Lessons* 114.2. The higher powers are to control the lower powers. According to Ellen White, the higher powers are the moral and intellectual faculties. (See Lesson 22 for more details.)

Our lower powers

One thing we learned from the studies on the Nature of Man was that part of our nature is the lower powers. Ellen G. White says: “The lower passions have their seat in the body and work through it. The words ‘flesh’ or ‘fleshly’ or ‘carnal lusts’ embrace the lower, corrupt nature...” *Adventist Home* 127.2. The lower powers can also be called the physical nature. The lower powers are the only part of our nature that is corrupt, that means that they can be bad, but they are not inherently bad. It is made up of emotions/feelings/affections, thoughts/imagination, passions, appetite, lust, and animal propensities. The lower powers are often described as being in the heart, of course they are not literally in the heart that is just a parable. They are the corrupt part of our nature, “We are commanded to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts. How shall we do it? Shall we inflict pain on the body? No; but put to death the temptation to sin. The corrupt thought is to be expelled. Every thought is to be brought into captivity to Jesus Christ” *Adventist Home* 127.2. The lower powers are supposed to be in subjection to the higher powers of our nature. That just means that our will and intellect need to be the ones in charge, not our emotions, thoughts, or appetite.

Another Perspective

The fast and slow brain

There are two other names we can give for the two parts of us. We have seen how the Nature of Man tells us that we are made of two things; higher and lower powers. There is another way we can view the Nature of Man. We operate in two ways, and we can view these two ways as a fast brain and a slow brain; sometimes called system 1 and system 2 (respectively). We don't have two brains, but the two parts of us are represented as such. The fast brain is our lower powers and the slow brain is our higher powers. This is another way to look at the Nature of Man.

The Fast Brain

What is the fast brain like?

There are two "sections" of the human brain: fast and slow. The fast brain is the part that is always "on". For example, you're doing something, minding your own business, and you hear a loud noise. Immediately, you look in the direction that the noise is coming from. That was the doing of your fast brain. The fast brain is the first to react in any situation. It kicks in your fight or flight instincts. Will you fight whatever made that loud noise or will you run away from it? It doesn't wait to come up with a logical reason for the loud noise, it just registers the fact that there was a loud noise and it could be dangerous. Without our fast brain, we would probably be dead already- by not reacting to an actual dangerous situation fast enough. But that doesn't mean that the fast brain is always the best. Sometimes, it can be a problem due to different circumstances. The fast brain is impulsive, automatic, and intuitive.

The frequency exposure bias

There are several biases that can affect how we make decisions. One is the frequency exposure bias. This bias is extremely effective. Frequency exposure bias happens when we choose something just because we are accustomed to it. For example, we might buy a certain brand just because we have heard of it a lot or because we have bought it before. Or we might choose to do something one way just because we have done it that way before. This makes us biased towards new things. The fast brain falls prey to this type of bias easily. When the fast brain is trying to make a quick decision it will often pick what is familiar. It will make decisions based on what we have done or picked before. Those decisions might not be the best choice for the particular situation, but the fast brain does not reason through things- it just makes judgments and decisions quickly. An example of frequency bias can be seen in what politicians do. Many politicians in autocratic governments and politicians in election years put their pictures everywhere- this makes the people familiar with them. In an election people will probably vote for the politician they have seen the most in ads; in autocratic governments the ads just promote the politicians. Both tactics are used to exploit frequency exposure bias. We can try to avoid frequency exposure bias by thinking before we act to make sure we aren't just picking something because we are familiar with it.

The status quo bias

Another bias that our fast thinking is based on is the status quo bias. The status quo is the current state of affairs; what has been going on for a while; the normal. This is one of the biases that our fast brain is based on. When operating on the status quo bias, you're likely to choose the default, or what is currently going on to stay how it is, rather than changing it even if the change will be better for you. An example happened in a town in Europe; the town had to be relocated for a mining project. The citizens were offered many plans for a new town, but most voted for plans similar to the old town even though the old town had an inefficient layout. They all voted this way because of the fast brain status quo bias, which makes us want things to stay as they are. There are two sub parts of the status quo: the endowment effect and loss aversion. The endowment effect is our tendency to value our possessions over someone else's even if they are the same. This is because our possessions are part of our status quo. So the endowment effect is part of the status quo- the fast brain. Loss aversion is our tendency to dislike losses more than we like gains. For example, most people would turn down a challenge to gain \$100 if they would lose \$100 if they lost the challenge. This is because we like to keep the status quo. So, another bias that our fast thinking is based on is the current state of affairs or status quo. And we embrace our status quo by loss aversion and the endowment effect; this is all fast brain thinking. To avoid the status quo bias, when we are faced with a change we should think about how it will benefit us and if there is a real reason not to want change other than keeping the status quo.

The tunnel vision bias

Something else that can affect the fast brain is tunnel vision bias. Tunnel vision bias makes you think that what you see is all there is. For example, you are in a dark alley and you see a man with a knife. Obviously, your fast brain is going to kick in and you are certain that you are going to die because this man will stab you to death. Fight or flight comes into play: either you fight this man or run like crazy. There has to be only one reason he's there- and that's to kill you. That's also tunnel vision bias. You think you see the whole picture: a man with a knife in an alley. But what you don't see is that you are in an alley behind a restaurant and that the man is wearing chef's clothes. You don't consider that maybe he's a chef getting some fresh air. Maybe he's just as surprised as you are to find someone else in the alley. Tunnel vision bias is when your fast brain thinks it has all the information and therefore may come to an incorrect conclusion. Now we don't suggest you stick around to find out if the man is actually a chef.

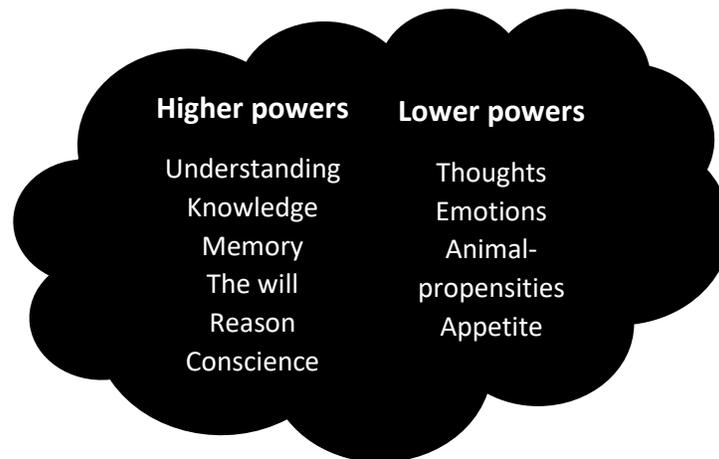
The Slow Brain

What is the slow brain like?

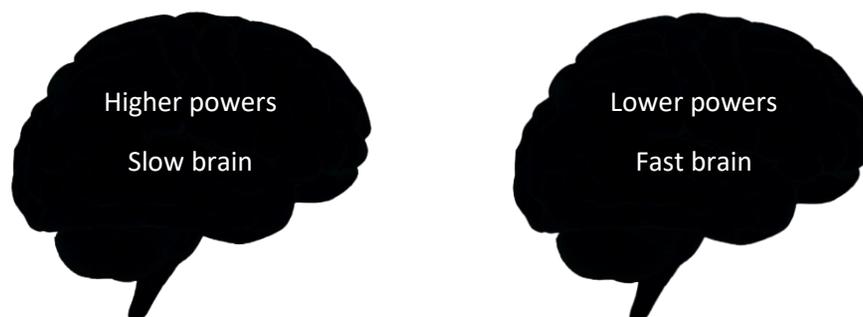
The other section of our brains is the slow brain. It is the opposite of the fast brain. When we use our slow brain we are thoughtful and deliberate: we really think about what we are doing or are going to do. We reason about things instead of just making decisions on the limited information we have (that is what the fast brain does). This section of our brain is called the slow brain because it is slow compared to the other section. The slow brain is always “off” or “sleep” and it has to be “turned on” which means you can only consciously make reasoned decisions. You can also say that the slow brain is lazy; it doesn’t want to do anything. The fast brain makes all of the decisions unless you make the slow brain think and make decisions. You need to use the slow brain when you want to be thoughtful and make correct decisions (like while studying).

In Summary:

The Nature of man tells us we have higher and lower powers



A new way to look at the nature of man is a fast and slow brain



The fast brain is the first to react in any situation

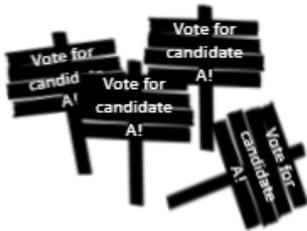


The fast brain is:

- Impulsive
- Automatic
- Intuitive

The fast brain's thinking is based on biases

The frequency bias



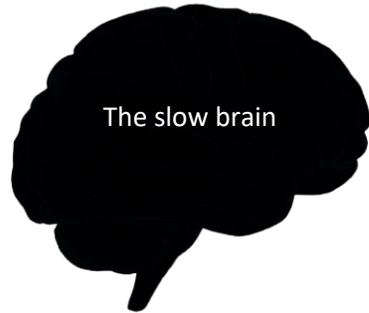
The status quo bias



The tunnel vision bias



When we use our slow brain we make reasoned decisions



The slow brain is:

Reasonable
Thoughtful
Deliberate

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