

HOW HEMLINES PREDICT THE ECONOMY

Explanations, Rationalizations,
and Theories on Everything



PETER FITZSIMONS

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*Always the struggle of the human soul is to break
through the barriers
of silence and distance into companionship.
Friendship, lust, love,
art, religion—we rush into them pleading,
fighting, clamoring for the
touch of spirit laid against our spirit.*

E.B. WHITE

INTRODUCTION

What follows is a collection of theories, conundrums, observations, quotations, and whatnots I have collected since forever. The theories may be described as being of the folk variety—the kind that people repeat to one another at dinner parties and at the bar, as well as the sort of things they tend to think about as they wait for traffic lights to change—mixed together with a few others that are actually taught in college but are still of the “folk” variety.

My first *Theories of Life* book came out in 1991. In my travels since then, I’ve collected a few more theories and have gotten rid of those that have not passed the test of time. I have also peppered this edition with quotes from a few famous figures that are practically theories in themselves.

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The wider theories come from pretty much everywhere. As you might appreciate with such a word-of-mouth book, it has not always been easy to identify who told me what, and what I heard where, but I have at least honored my original promise from all those years ago and have acknowledged direct contributors in the back of the book.

Some of these life theories genuinely have a scientific claim to accuracy, while the others would not deign to turn to something so hard, cold, and damned soulless as science to verify or prove their claims.

But how accurate is “accurate”? Well, I’ve heard it said that Einstein would not publish a theory unless he felt it was accurate 100 percent of the time, and Sigmund Freud was satisfied if his theories were correct 95 percent of the time.

My own cutoff point is . . . 51 percent.

I know this probably means that Einstein, Freud, and FitzSimons will not ultimately go down inextricably linked in history, but what do I care? If I can call heads or tails and be right 51 percent of the time, I’m bound to come out a winner sooner or later.

In all seriousness, though, I do claim that at least 51 percent of the theories are correct a lot more than 51 percent of the time, and it’s just possible some of them might show you some discernible tracks in the otherwise impenetrable jungle of life.

Read ’em and weep, Sigmund. You too, Albie Einstein . . .

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CHAPTER 1



RELATIONSHIP THEORIES

SIDE-OF-THE-BED THEORY

All else being equal, the dominant partner in any sexual relationship will always sleep on the side of the bed nearest to the most likely source of danger.

So if the bedroom door is closer to the left side of the bed, the dominant partner will always sleep on that left side, and the opposite if the door is on the right.

Now, if the door opens to the foot of the bed and the most likely source of danger is thus not on the flanks, then look to the windows . . .

In my own experience, this theory is almost infallible when the direction of the most likely source of danger is

as clear as whom the dominant partner is. The only exception seems to be when there are young children in the family—in which case the dominant partner ensures that the submissive partner will sleep closer to the wailers.

If the theory works for you, I take a bow. If it doesn't, re-examine your first premise—are you really the dominant partner? No, Mr. Mitty, I really didn't think so.

Another theory along these lines maintains that sexual partners always lie on the side of the bed that corresponds to the side of the car where they would normally sit when driving together, with the habitual driver on the left side of the bed and on the other side in the right-hand-driving countries. I prefer the first theory, not only because it includes a lot more sex and violence, but, more important, because I find it is correct far more often.

HAND-HOLDING

Of course, the problem with the preceding theory is that while it may give couples themselves a better clue about who is winning the war of the sexes, the rest of us will have no clue whom the dominant partner is simply by glancing at them, unless we have access to their bedrooms at midnight. But there is another way . . .

Another theory holds that for two right-handed people, the dominant partner will always be on the left side

RELATIONSHIP THEORIES

when they walk along holding hands, thus using his or her marginally more comfortable right hand to hold with.

If a woman has to choose between catching a fly ball and saving an infant's life, she will choose to save the infant's life without even considering if there are men on base.

—Dave Barry

THE BEDROOM CEILING

Women will always notice that the bedroom ceiling needs painting before their husbands do.

Housepainters—who are in the perfect position to know who thinks what should be done in couples' houses—maintain that this is absolutely gospel. It is one of the great mysteries of our time as to why this should be so, but in the housepainting fraternity it is a well-documented phenomenon.

TILTED-HEAD KISSING

British, Australian, and New Zealand lovers generally kiss with their heads tilted to the right, while American and Canadian lovers tilt their heads to the left (and the French and Italians have a bet each way, twenty times a day).

I wish I could claim originality for this little earth-shaker, but I can't; it came to me from a friend who has long noted the phenomenon. But for my own part I can

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verify its truth, based on those oh-so-rare occasions I got lucky while living in Ohio in the late seventies.

Americans do kiss with their heads tilted to the left, which can be verified by watching American and Canadian movies and soap operas. The reason for this is obvious once it is stated: Most first kisses are performed in cars, and from a physical point of view it is natural that those who drive left-hand-drive vehicles should incline their heads to the left (think about it now) when they kiss somebody on their right. The reverse of course applies in those countries where the steering wheel is on the right side.

Once this pattern has been established in the habits of kissing participants, it also becomes the norm for situations outside cars. These habits then continue outside the car as a matter of course . . .

Brilliant!

No, of course it doesn't work 100 percent of the time, but we're also well above the realms of the ol' 51 percent for all that . . .

If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman.

—Margaret Thatcher

RELATIONSHIP THEORIES

THE EYES HAVE IT

This one sounds stupid, looks stupid, smells stupid, and feels stupid, and normally I would reject it as in fact being stupid. But on a whim, I checked it out and found it remarkably accurate. The theory is that men are happiest living with women whose eyes are the opposite in general color to those of their mother. If a man's mother's eyes are dark, he will marry a light-eyed woman. If she is a light-eyed woman, he will marry a dark-eyed woman.

YOU ARE GETTING SLEEPY

The reason why men get very sleepy after an orgasm, while women often perk up, is apparently this . . .

Evolution has deemed it such that, generally, the male will be endowed with the aggression necessary to hunt down the female and have his wicked way with her . . .

Of course, we humans are now more or less civilized, and aggression should have no part in the pursuit of one's sexual urges, but in the animal kingdom—whose laws we often still obey in spite of ourselves—this instinctive aggression is essential for procreation. After the sexual act is performed, the aggression of the male, which has powered him up to this point, can now become a liability for her and it is necessary to knock him out so the female can make her escape.

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*By all means marry; if you get a good wife, you'll be happy.
If you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher.*

—Socrates, Greek philosopher (469–399 B.C.)

THE JELLY-BEAN THEORY OF SEX

The author does *not* subscribe to this theory, mind you, but it is too much fun to leave out of the book. Of unknown origin (though I suspect it emerged from somewhere in Australia), the theory starts with a new couple putting a single jelly bean in a jar every time they have sex. Once married, they must continue to do so for the first year. After twelve months of wedded bliss, however, they must take *out* a jelly bean every time they have sex.

If followed faithfully, the theory has it that they will never reach the bottom of the jar because the enthusiastic frequency of that first flush of a new relationship will always be greater than the frequency for the rest of the relationship.

*One of my theories is that men love with their eyes;
women love with their ears.*

—Zsa Zsa Gabor

*If all the girls who attended the Harvard-Yale game were
laid end to end . . . I wouldn't be at all surprised . . .*

—Dorothy Parker

CHAPTER 2



CONUNDRUMS

What follows are, if I do say so myself, some of the truly great questions of our time . . .

SIMPLE QUESTIONS

Why do they put expiration dates on cartons of sour cream?

How does medicine know where to go?

How come mosquitoes sound louder in the dark?

Why is the fluff that catches in your belly button always blue?

What did Jehovah see, anyway?

PRESSING QUESTION

At pedestrian crossings and elevators, why do people frantically press the button in the manner of laboratory rats pressing levers in experiments in the hope of getting a piece of cheese? Do they really believe that the sensors are rigged so that ten presses in five seconds will program the light to change or the elevator to come sooner?

MOVIE QUERIES

In movies, why do actors who get hung up on immediately get a dial tone, when this never happens in real life?

And speaking of movies, how come in every film you ever saw, the good guy firing shots at fifty bad guys always makes his shot, while for the life of them, the fifty bad guys can't bring off more than minor flesh wounds on the good guy? The rough equivalent of this in martial arts fights in movies is that for some reason the bad guys are always kind enough to attack the good guy one at a time instead of rushing him all at once.

How is it that when villains fire bullets at Superman, the bullets bounce off, and yet when they then throw the empty gun at him . . . he ducks?