THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

THE SOCIAL ANIMAL:

A STORY OF LOVE, CHARACTER AND ACHIEVEMENT

Washington, D.C.

Thursday, March 10, 2011

PARTICIPANTS:

Welcome:

STROBE TALBOTT
President
The Brookings Institution

Speaker:

DAVID BROOKS
Columnist
The New York Times

Moderator:

E.J. DIONNE, JR.
Senior Fellow
The Brookings Institution

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. TALBOTT: Good morning, everybody. Sorry to start a couple of minutes late, but our guest of honor had a lot of books to sign.

I realize it's a slightly melancholy note to start on, but I think it's very much in the spirit of the occasion, since we're going to have two of the outstanding newspaper columnists in America up on the podium here in a minute, to note with deep sadness the passing of David Broder yesterday. It was, of course, meaningful to all of us who live in this town. He was a great loss to this city, to this nation, and this world and, I might add, to the profession and the subprofession that David and E.J. represent so outstandingly themselves. And each of them knew David very well and might have a thought or two to say themselves.

But this is going to be a fun event. And I want to say just a couple of words about our guest of honor. If the phrases "public intellectual" and "thought leader" mean anything, they certainly apply to this guy up here in the front row. But given the subject of David's book, which I had a chance to read -- it took actually two crossings of the Atlantic, David, which you can take as a compliment, it meant I didn't skim it -- but given the subject of that book, which is called *The Social Animal*, as you all know and many of you now have it and I hope many of you have it autographed, there's a little bit of irony in the labels "public

intellectual" and "thought leader" as applied to David Brooks. And that's because the words "intellectual" and "thought," when attached to the word "leader," suggest a big brain -- which he certainly has -- and a good brain -- which he certainly has. Yet in the book David makes the case that that particular organ isn't all that it's cracked up to be, if I can put it that way, and that thinking is very often affected and even trumped by feeling and that cognition is shaped by something we all know and understand, which is emotion, as well as by a couple of factors I'd never even heard of before, which is to say "metis" and "limerence." I wouldn't be astonished if those words come up in the conversation today, so if you don't know what they mean, you will over the next hour.

Now, that's as far as I'm going to go in characterizing the book. If you want the authoritative short version, read his column in Tuesday's *New York Times* on the new humanism. But just let that be the teaser and read the book itself, because it is truly ambitious; it's dazzlingly eclectic, syncretic, and integrated. It knits together neuroscience, psychology, sociology, and of course politics. And that, I might say, makes it a book that is very close to Brookings' interdisciplinary heart and, I would say, our brain. And so do some other features, both of the author and of the book itself.

In marshaling data and analysis, David cites a number of our

scholars -- Bill Galston, Carol Graham, Belle Sawhill, Ron Haskins, the latter two being here this morning -- whom he knows, because we are very proud to have David as a member of the extended Brookings community.

He actually has some fun with that association in the book itself. Harold, his protagonist, is sufficiently, what shall I say, cognitive to join a think tank. And on page 312 of the book, there's a hint of which think tank it is. It's a place where, and I quote, "The senior fellows" -- I don't know where this next line comes from -- "former deputy secretaries of this or that engage in a Washington institution called," in capitals, "THE POWERLESS LUNCH at which previously influential people dine and have portentous conversations of no importance whatsoever."

So, with that I'm going to turn the podium over to David, and then I'm going to let my friend and colleague, E.J. Dionne, take the proceedings forward.

E.J., as you all know, is a senior fellow at Brookings who, among other things, presides over a Brookings tradition known rather prosaically as the Friday Lunch. I leave it to E.J. whether we're going to rename it, as David suggests. And, E.J., I also leave it to you on whether you're going to make that decision cognitively or emotionally.

So, please welcome David Brooks to the lectern.

MR. BROOKS: Thank you, Strobe. I hadn't realized how

close that hit to home. I was thinking of the Brookings Institution when I had my guy become a fellow and -- well, I won't go deep in that.

Let me just first start by saying -- let me just echo quickly, and I think E.J. may talk about this, too, just the debt we all owe to David Broder. He was a Chicago alum like me. He was editor of the *Maroon*. I was not editor, but he came from the school newspaper, and one of the true honors of my life is in the early part of my career I would get confused with a guy named David Brock. And then I know I felt incredibly proud when later in my career I used to get confused with David Broder. And so our names were similar enough so the names rolled off the tongue, and he was sort of the dean of our profession. And whenever I do something extremely cheesy, I think, well, would Broder really have done this? And so he set the standard for what we do.

Now, let me quickly describe how this book came about, and I'll just talk for about 25 minutes or 20 minutes just to give you a sense of it. And it came about actually from some advice I got from Robert Novak when I took my current job, which was to interview three politicians every day. And I don't always do that, but I do try to do it, and from that much contact I can tell you they're all emotional freaks of one sort or another. They have what I call logorrhea dementia, which is they talk so much they drive themselves insane.

But what they certainly have is incredible social skills. And so when you stand around most of them, they stand too close to you, they put their hands all over your faces, they rub.

Since Strobe is here, I'm reminded of a Bill Clinton story I tell. I was walking through a hotel lobby in Boston and Bill Clinton came out of the elevator and he saw me and he started praising me for a column I'd written praising him, which he thought was particularly astute. But then as people see Bill Clinton's in the lobby of the hotel, they gather around to embrace him in our conversation. He starts backing up, and after about 3 minutes he's about 80 feet away over there just talking to me, but just so he can embrace the whole crowd, and that's -- he's, of course, the dean of social skills.

And if they don't have it, they fake it. I was campaigning. I was following Mitt Romney around New Hampshire in the last election cycle, and he was with his five perfect sons -- Bip, Chip, Rip, Sip, Dip, and Lip -- and he was going into a diner and he introduced himself to each family at each table and asked what village in New Hampshire are you from, and then he would describe the home he owned in their village. And then -- so, but then he -- then -- but he goes around the whole room, and we're leaving the diner and he starts first-naming almost everybody he's just met. I thought, wow, that is skill.

And then just a couple of weeks ago I was up at NIH and I met a neuroscientist who showed me a video of a young girl with Williams Syndrome. And from the outside, Williams Syndrome looks like reverse autism, and so only interested in social interaction. And so this young girl who's 18 months was in a room with a 12-year-old, and he was juggling and knocking over stuff and she had no interest in any of the physical objects he was touching. She just wanted to look into his eyes. And she had no social fear, so she stood right up to him and just peered into his eyes, and I was thinking this is every senator I've ever covered.

And so they are these socially adept creatures, and yet when it comes to policymaking it seems to me they slip into a different mode of thought, which is very dehumanized.

And so in the course of my career I've covered a series of things we could have done better. One of them -- I was covering the Soviet Union, and actually I think before Strobe, maybe before Strobe got there. And one of the things that struck me was that we sent teams of economists with privatization plans and hard currency plans, but what the country really lacked was social trust, and we were sort of oblivious to some of those problems.

In Iraq, obviously, we sent in the military. I think our leaders were oblivious to the psychological and cultural realities of the country.

We had a financial regulatory regime based on the assumptions that traders and bankers are more or less rational, self-interested creatures who won't do anything stupid en masse.

And then I've covered school rule reform most concentratedly over the last 30 years, and for much of that period, at least until recently, we've spent a lot of time reorganizing the bureaucratic boxes -- small schools, big schools, charters, vouchers -- and we've skirted around the core issue, which is the relationship between a teacher and a student. And that's because if you mention the word "love" at a congressional hearing, they look at you like you're Oprah, and we're just very uncomfortable with that kind of language.

And so the question arises why are we -- why are our politicians really good at thinking socially on the campaign trail, but why are they not so good when it actually comes to government? Why do they become basically human CBO reports, and why do we use that methodology to analyze our problems and ignore the most important things?

And so I eventually came to the conclusion that it's not just politics; it's a broader distortion in the culture that for centuries we've had views of ourselves as divided selves, that reason is divided from the emotion, and that society progresses to the extent that reason can

suppress the passions. And this has led to a view of human nature upon which many academic disciplines are built that we're rational individuals who respond in straightforward ways to incentives. It's led a way of seeing and studying the world, sometimes borrowing the methodology of physics and applying it to human behavior, and I think it's led to a great amputation where we study the things we can count and measure and then ignore all the rest. And so it's led to a distortion, a breeze in the culture so people are really good at talking about material things but bad at talking about emotions. I did some stories on college campuses a few years ago, and people were really good at talking about skills and academic accomplishments, but really bad at talking about character, the most important thing.

And so Alasdair MacIntyre, the philosopher, has this famous metaphor. He says, "We have words like 'virtue,' 'vice,' 'sin,' but we no longer have the system to understand how they fit together." And so I think there's some truth to that, and so I think there's sort of a prevailing breeze that leads us in a more shallow direction than we need to be. And you can see it famously in how we raise our kids.

If you go out to Bethesda where E.J. and I both live and you go to an elementary school at 3:00 in the afternoon, you'll see the third-graders coming out and they've got these 80-pound backpacks. If the

wind blows them over they're like beetles stuck there on the ground, because we want to weigh them down, because we want to weight them down with academic accomplishment.

And then, you know, the cars are driving up and in Bethesda it's usually Saabs and Audis and Volvos, because it's socially acceptable to have a luxury car so long as it comes from a country hostile to U.S. foreign policy in Bethesda. And so the moms are coming out, and they're highly successful career moms who've taken time off to make sure all their kids can get into Harvard. And you can tell the Bethesda moms because they actually weigh less than their own children. Sort of at the moment of conception they're doing little butt exercises, the kids are plopping out; they're flashing Mandarin flash cards at the things to get them ready; they take them over to Whole Foods on River Road, one of the socially enlightened grocery stores where the cashiers look like they're all on loan from Amnesty International and they buy the seaweed-based snacks, which we buy in my household. It's called Veggie Booty with Kale for kids who come home and say "Mom, I want a snack that will help prevent colon and rectal cancer."

And so the point is that they want to give their kids some sense of social enlightenment, but the language isn't there and it turns into Whole Foods. But the dominant pressure -- and they're sort of trapped in

a world of tiger moms, or at least what they perceive to be tiger moms, and it's a world from which -- of an arms race, where other kids they feel are doing all this studying to compete in this merit or credit system, and they find they can't unilaterally withdraw even if they're uncomfortable with it.

And so life becomes a series of achievement hoops -- SAT prep, oboe practice, soccer practice. If you look at the way kids are raised today, it's much more supervised than it was 30 or 40 years ago. There's been sort of this revolution in child care. And the kids go to high school. Walt Whitman High is our local high school where they play lacrosse. The upper middle-class kids realize they can no longer compete at football and baseball, so they've stolen lacrosse from the Indians to give them something to dominate.

And then they sort of get off into competitive colleges. They have sort of a GPA mentality -- what do I need to rise and succeed? They become the junior workaholics of America. They master the sort of facts you learn at PowerPoint presentations and then they go off and some of them become successful and they go off to have vacation homes in Aspen or Jackson Hole. And when you see them in mid-life they're kind of impressive people. They've made some money. They're often so tall and elegant and slender they don't actually have thighs, they just have one calf

on top of the other. Sort of impressive. They marry other beautiful people, and they've achieved a sort of genetic miracle, so their grandmothers all look like Gertrude Stein, but their granddaughters all look like Halle Berry. How do they do that? And then so they lead a success life and they go to things like the Aspen Institute to get some ideas.

But, again, the prevailing pressure is it makes all that kind of vague, and so they focus on career accomplishment and, off and on, health. And there's often, in these couples -- and it's true in Bethesda -- attention in the marriages, because men -- the men in the workout routines, because the men go jogging and biking and only work on muscles in the lower halves of their bodies, and the women want to wear sleeveless dresses so they do push-ups and pull-ups so they can crush rocks in their bare hands. And then when they get older maybe they haven't developed the philosophy of life, but they've succeeded in everything else and they just decided they're not going to die. And so they're about 90 years old, they're popping Cialis like breath mints, they've shrunk down, they get their personal trainers. They're like 5 feet tall, 90 pounds, covered head-to-toe in spandex, and you see them jogging and racing up mountains with a grim determined expression that makes Dick Cheney look like Jerry Lewis. And so you'll be hiking around Aspen, you'll see them zoom by you, and it's like being passed by a little

iron Raisinette as they're going up the hill.

And so this is the life I think the prevailing winds are blowing us to. But as you're studying, some of the aridity of our policy world and the distortions in our culture -- one of the things I discovered several years ago was that there's an anecdote to this great amputation, to the shallowness, I think, and the winds toward shallowness, and, oddly, it comes not from theology and not from philosophy, but it comes from the study of the mind from the neuroscience, cognitive science, psychology, social science, and behavioral economics and many other spheres. And over these past 30 years, people in these diverse spheres have had a series of parallel findings, which give us a different view and really not a new view of humanity -- brain science doesn't give us new philosophies -- but it reminds us of some of the old ones. And to me the interesting thing is it's not they're cold and mechanistic often in the way they do the research, but the implications are not cold and mechanistic at all; they're very enchanted.

And this research congregates around some key findings. The first one is that most of our thinking goes on below the level of awareness. One metaphor is that we can take in 12 million pieces of information of which we can be conscious of about 40, and all the rest is being processed unconsciously. And this leads to some distortions or

some oddities in our life. A guy at University of Buffalo found out that people named Dennis are disproportionately likely to become dentists. And people named Lawrence become lawyers, because unconsciously we gravitate toward things that sound familiar. And some friends here in the audience know my kids, and they know my daughter is named President of the United States Brooks for that reason.

And so those are oddities that are in the unconscious. But the most important things -- how you see the world, how you see yourself, how you learn, what models you have to build relationships, the foundations of character -- those are also unconscious.

The second core finding is that emotions are at the center of our thinking, that people who suffer strokes and lesions that don't allow them to experience emotion are not super smart Mr. Spocks. They are unable to make decisions, because what emotions do is they assign value to things. They tell us what we want. And if you don't have that, your decision-making landscape is flat and you actually can't come to a conclusion.

Now, I'm a middle-aged guy who loves hanging around the Brookings Institution, so I'm not exactly comfortable talking about emotions. My wife says me writing a book about emotions is like Gandhi writing a book about gluttony. So it's -- and there's actually a great brain

scan I mention in the book, though. It's apocryphal, to be fair. But they took a bunch of middle-aged men, put them in FMRI machines, scanned their brains, had them watch a horror movie, and then had them describe their feelings toward their wives. And the brains were identical in both activities, so just sheer terror doing both. And so I know how that feels. But the elemental fact is that it is emotion, it is love that forms the brain.

There was one experiment, an Austrian experimenter, Rene Spitz, who came here to the U.S. and studied an orphanage in 1945. And in those days, at least at that place, they decided what they wanted to do to keep babies healthy was to keep them sanitized -- or sanitary. So, they fed them; they gave them great medical care; they did not handle them. And in this orphanage the mortality rate for babies by age 2 was 37 percent, and they stopped naming the babies because they were dying at such high rates. And so without that emotion, the brain really is not forming. And so that's just the importance of emotion.

And then the third insight is that we're not primarily self-contained individuals. We're social animals and we emerge out of relationships. We're not individuals who form contracts. We're relationships first, and then the individuals come out of that. And so when we see each other, there's a controversial notion called mirror neurons, which is when we see someone we reenact in our mind what we see them

doing. And we not only reenact what we see, we reenact the intentions implied by the action. So, if I see somebody pick up a glass to drink it, my mind reacts one way; if I see somebody pick up a glass to put in the dishwasher, it reacts in a different way. And that shows the level of deep interpenetration and it gives us a sense of the deep levels of communication that are perpetually happening between people through smell, through sight, through a million different channels.

One experiment done in Germany, they took a bunch of people, put gauze pads under their arms, taped gauze pads, had some people watch a horror movie, some people watch a comedy, and then they had other research subjects sniff the gauze pads and tell which movie that these people watch. And humans can tell at way above-average chance somehow just by sniffing the gauze pads. And women, by the way, are much better at this than men for some reason. So, this is a sign of the deep interpenetration.

And so this research, I think, gives us a different story of how life works. I think we're still primarily children of the French Enlightenment, thinking reason is the highest faculty, and I think this research confirms the view of the British or Scottish Enlightenment that reason is weak and our sentiments are strong and often trustworthy. And so I think it corrects a bias in the culture and should have an effect of

altering the cultural climate to teach us that we're not rational animals, we're social animals and the brain really exists for socialability.

And most germane to what happens here and what I've been thinking about, along with people like Belle and many others, is I think it affects how we see human capital. We're used to thinking -- measuring things like grades, years in schools, degrees, professional skills. But this research points to a bunch of deeper skills which are both emotional and rational and sort of make a hash out of those two categories. And so they include things like mind sight, the ability to enter another's mind and learn what that person has to tell you. So, babies come with this ability. So a baby -- a guy name Andrew Meltzoff at the University of Washington did an experiment where he spoke -- he leaned over a baby that was 43 minutes old and wagged his tongue at the baby and the baby wagged her tongue back. And babies come equipped -- even though the baby doesn't know herself or a face or what she's looking at, they come equipped to mimic and that's how they learn. They mimic what they see, and they more or less download the model's reality of Mom and Dad. And so some babies are able, because Mom is attuned to them, to establish a two-way communication and they develop what the researchers call secure attachments.

Fifty-five percent of the babies in this country have what they

call secure attachments, and they'll come in -- they have models for how to deal with people, how to deal with adults. And researchers at the University of Minnesota in one study looked at the attachment patterns -- they secure attachments at 18 months -- and found they could predict with 77 percent accuracy who was going to graduate from high school because they come into school knowing how to relate to Teacher. Some kids, about 20 percent, are what they call avoidantly attached and they have no attunement coming back at them, and so they have trouble relating to Teacher. And one of the teachers in the book I read described a kid walking into kindergarten tacking into the wind toward the teacher trying to get close, but not really knowing how to do it and ending up with his back to the teacher. Just as he wanted to reach out, he just didn't know how that would happen. And people with avoidant attachment patterns have less activation in the reward areas of their brains during social interactions. By age 70 they're going to have many, many fewer friends.

Now, nothing that happens in the first 18 months determines a life course, but they open up pathways which either can be confirmed or reversed by later orientation, but it shows the importance of this skill of learning how to relate, which happens very early in life and which is the foundation for achievement.

The second skill is equipoise, which is having the serenity

and the maturity to monitor the things that are happening unconsciously in your own mind. So, for example, we tend to be overconfidence machines. Ninety-five percent of college professors say they have above-average teaching skills. Ninety-six percent of college students have above-average leadership skills. *Time* magazine in 2000 asked Americans, “Are you in the top 1 percent of earners?” And 19 percent of Americans are in the top 1 percent of earners.

Some researchers -- Paul Schoemaker and Edward Russo -- gave tests to executives on their own industries and asked them how confident they were that they knew the answers, and people in the advertising industry said they were 90 percent confident they could have the answers right. In fact, they got 60 percent of them wrong. People in the computer industry, the most overconfident profession, thought they got 95 percent of the answers right; they got 80 percent of them wrong. This, by the way, is a gender-link trait. Men drown at twice the rate of women because men have a tremendous confidence in their swimming ability, especially after they’ve been drinking.

But some people have the skill to be sensitive to those sorts of biases. They can be open-minded in the face of ambiguity. They can check their natural weaknesses. They have the ability to adjust the strength of evidence, the strength of their conclusions, and so they build

these modesty bootstraps for themselves. Peter Drucker had a great one where he said when you make a decision, write down you decision in your reasoning, put it in an envelope and seal it for nine months, then come back. You'll see that nine months later about a third of your decisions were right, a third were wrong, a third were somewhere in the middle, but in almost all cases your reasoning will be completely irrelevant. And so that's sort of a bootstrap. And these abilities correlate slightly to I.Q., but not as strongly as you'd think, these mental character traits.

The third is what you might call "*metis*," which is a Greek word meaning the ability to scan a landscape and see patterns. So, my newspaper had a great story a couple years ago about soldiers in Iraq who could look down a street in Baghdad and tell somehow whether there was likely to be an IED down that street. And when they asked them how do you know, they would say I can't really tell you, but I feel cold. And some people have the ability to just sort of detect when something feels wrong.

I'm actually reading a great book called *The Wayfinders* about how people sailed from Indonesia to Hawaii centuries ago, people who had no compasses, and they had a guy who sat on the boat and just observed the shape of the water, the clouds, the seaweed, the sea life. And just by these close observations was able to sail across thousands of

miles of open ocean or at least hundreds of miles. And so that's a level of sensitivity to awareness.

And then I'll just -- one or two other traits. Sympathy, the ability to attune to others in a group. Groups come in very handy, because they just work much better. One of the things this book changed my mind about is suburbs and cities. My previous book -- and this is germane to what happens here at the Metropolitan project -- my previous book was a celebration of the far-flung suburbs more or less, but it turns out density really does matter, because in one experiment, for example, at the University of Michigan they took people and gave them 10 minutes face to face to solve a math problem and they could do it. They gave other groups 30 minutes to solve a math problem, but they had to communicate by e-mail, and those groups failed. Being face to face is just tremendously important to magnifying your own skills.

And so they -- another study -- take a look at patents. People who devise patents have to list all the other patents they relied on to come up with their innovation. The number of patents in these applications, which were invented by people within a 25-mile radius of their life -- is tremendously high. People in the epicenter of industries, the geographic epicenter, have much higher productivity rates than people outside. Density really matters, because some people have this ability to

communicate well face to face and thus magnify their skills.

And then I'll just -- I have zillions of others of these skills, but just two others I'll mention. One is propriety, and this is the ability to see the world in ways that maximize self-restraint. And the most famous experiment in this entire field, which most of you probably know, is the marshmallow experiment, which I've told in this room before, but just very quickly. This guy, Walter Michele, took a marshmallow, put them on a table, and took four-year-olds, put them in the room, told the four-year-olds one at a time if you eat the marshmallow now -- I'm going to leave the room, and if I come back in 10 minutes and the marshmallow's still here, you haven't eaten it, I'll give you two marshmallows. And the videos of the girls trying not to eat the marshmallows include a girl banging her head on the table. Michele was using an Oreo cookie and the little guy picks up the Oreo, eats out the middle and then carefully puts it back on the table thinking -- and that kid is now a U.S. Senator. That's my joke. But the kids who could wait 10, 12 minutes, 20 years later have much higher college completion rates; 30 years later much higher incomes. A lot of kids just popped them right in their mouth, and those kids 20 years later have much higher incarceration rates; much, much higher drug and alcohol addiction problems.

And so it's a sign that some kids live in homes where actions

lead to consequences, and they learn strategies to control their impulses. And the way they essentially do it is they see the marshmallow differently. They pretend it's a cloud. They put a frame around it. They somehow distance themselves from the marshmallow.

And I think the lesson here is there are certain ways and habits, as Aristotle understood, that we inculcate that allow us to see temptation differently, and those habits start with the simple rules of etiquette, propriety, living an ordered life. And so these are some of the traits that really span reason and emotion.

And then the final one I'll mention is one called "limerence," which is not so much a trait as a drive or a motivation. What the conscious mind hungers for is money and success and all that stuff, but the unconscious mind hungers for moments of transcendence when the skull line falls away and we're lost in a task, lost in an experience -- what a environmentalist feels lost in nature, what a believer feels lost in the love of God.

There's a scientist, Andrew Newburg at the University of Pennsylvania, who took nuns and monks in meditative states, put them in the brain machines, and basically what he saw was the parts of the brain that allow us to be aware of where our body is at all times. Those parts more or less went dark or less active. And so that's a -- what do we

hunger for, those moments of self-transcendence, which happen at work sometimes, happen with family, happen with faith and with nature, and most powerfully happen with love one for another.

And the decision to fall in love, like all decisions, is part emotional and part rational. When we make that decision of who to marry, there are certain elements that are phenomenally practical. So, people tend to marry people with complementary immune systems to themselves, which they can detect through smell. They tend to marry people with similar nose widths. I'm actually not quite sure why that is practical, but they do, because we marry people like ourselves basically. We have a bias. Similar eye width apart. We have a bias toward marrying people very similar to ourselves. We like to marry people with as high a status as we can. And so one experiment I came across, in online dating sites, women tend to marry -- like to marry taller guys, because each inch of height is equal to about $6,000 in annual income in the United States right now. But a guy who's 5-foot-6 can get as many online date offers as a guy who's 6-foot so long as he makes $172,000 a year more.

So, these are sort of rational decisions, but obviously within that there's also a lot of emotion, and there's deep emotional drives, almost addictions, that sweep over people in love.

And I start the book with a quotation, a lovely quotation from

a guy named Douglas Hofstadter, who's a great scientist at Indiana University, and his description is of what it's like -- which summarizes a lot of the research, because it shows how deeply interpenetrated we are, and it shows that ultimate drive to want to fuse with another. And Hofstadter is writing about himself. He's a scientist. He was off in Italy on a sabbatical, and he was with his wife, Carol, and their sons -- the two kids who were at that point 5 and 2. And Carol succumbed very quickly to, I think, a stroke or some brain disease, and she died when the kids were 5 and 2. And a couple months later, Douglas Hofstadter was in his bedroom, and he was just walking through the bedroom, but he had a picture of Carol on the bureau. And he happened to look at the picture as he was walking through his bedroom, and here's what he wrote in his book, which is called -- a great book called *I'm a Strange Loop*. Here's Hofstadter writing:

"I looked at her face and looked so deeply that I felt I was behind her eyes, and all at once I found myself saying, as tears flowed, that's me, that's me. And those simple words brought back many thoughts that I had had before about the fusion of our souls into one higher-level entity, about the fact that at the core of both our souls, they are identical hopes and dreams for our children, about the notion that those hopes were not separate or distinct hopes, but were just one hope. One clear thing that defined us both, that welded us into a unit, the kind of

unit I had, but dimly imagined before being married and having children. I realize that though Carol had died, that core piece of her had not died at all, but that it had lived on very determinedly in my brain."

And so the Greeks used to say, "We suffered our way to wisdom," and Hofstadter suffered his way to the wisdom that we are shared loops and that shared loops permeate from one mind to another. And I think through some of the -- in a much more shallow way, some of the policy failures of the past couple decades should cause us to suffer our way to the wisdom that the most important regions are down below in the realms of intuition, emotion, character and that we have to develop and base policy on a fuller view of human nature.

When Freud had his conception of the unconscious decades ago, it had a big effect on Pelcher. We now have a different and I think more accurate view of human nature, and it should have a similar effect on how we lead our lives and do our policy. And it emphasizes the importance of educating our emotions. It emphasizes the importance -- and that's done through literature and other things -- it emphasizes the importance of looking not only at individual traits, but at the quality of relationships between two people. And I think most germane to Brookings, I think it emphasizes the need for a second-generation set of human capital policies, that the first generation allowed us to get kids into

college and into high school.

But the second-generation set of human capital policies will help us give them the traits to actually get through these places so they can complete high school and complete college. And some of those are academic that we're comfortable talking about, but some of those enable -- it means enabling kids to build relationships in high school and college, to exercise self-control, to establish the sort of vision of themselves, the identity of themselves they need to actually learn and plan for the future -- a whole series of much deeper traits that I've tried to described here.

And so it's been for me an unexpected journey. I'm not the most emotional guy in the world, but if you want to cover where the action is and what's really important, I think this takes you in the region where the most important of realm of research and the most germane realm for those of use who try to think about policy and try to enhance social mobility.

So, thank you very much.

MR. DIONNE: I have been David's friend for quite a while now, and it's amazing the things you learn if you are David's friend. For example, David explained to me that because I am called E.J., I defend agencies like EPA, FDIC, SEC, OSHA, and Presidents like FDR, LBJ, and

JFK. I thought it was because I'm a liberal, but I learned from David that it's all by subconscious mind.

MR. BROOKS: What about the NRA? You never said them.

MR. DIONNE: By the way, a woman called Consuela had to be a conservative.

I was grateful to Strobe for remembering David Broder, who I think really is the most generous colleague any of us has ever encountered. He loved talking to people, especially to voters; and in keeping with today's theme, he was the best sort of social animal. He was a giver, he was a listener, and a sharer and a friend, and we will miss him a lot.

I love David, too. I mean, we like the American Whig Party community, the writer Robert Nesbitt, a baseball, and we disagree about everything else. That's actually not true, but I have learned that Brooksian exaggeration is a central part of his writing approach, and so having read the 6,252 reviews of this book already published, the 3,221 interviews David has given, and the 439 columns he has written over the years previewing his findings, I feel I have an acute understanding of where he is coming from.

I was struggling where to begin with David on this extraordinary book, and a friend told me about a Woody Allen quote. And

Woody Allen said, "My brain is my most important organ, but look who's telling me that."

And I guess where I wanted to start with David -- I've always wanted to have David discourse on why he hates the class he is part of so much. I've always said David is a conservative Marxist, because no one has attacked the upper class with such glee. But instead I want to ask him about what it is I see, and I'm only going to ask a few questions. Just so you know how we're proceeding today, I'm going to ask a few questions. There are a couple of reviews I want to give David a chance to respond to.

Then I'm going to turn to my colleague, Belle Sawhill, because for all his disdain of reason, which I will get to in a moment, he comes up supporting the reasonable, rational policies of my colleague, Belle Sawhill. So, Belle will open the questioning, and then I want to turn it to everyone else.

And David has to leave around 10:20, because he's got to do a radio show to promote this book. He is rational -- he believes enough in rationality to believe in book promotion.

What I wanted to talk about is one tension and one disappearance in the book. The tension is over reason itself, because on the one hand I read your column, and what I see in it constantly is a defense of reason as applied to social policy. And one of the reasons you

have all these liberal fans who get mad at you is because they say at least he's evidence based and all of that. And, yet, you have written a book saying reason isn't what it's cracked up to be. How do you square this contradiction within yourself, and how are we to read the book?

MR. BROOKS: Well, I think the central fallacy of a lot of our thinking is to think that reason and emotion are separate. I think they're one thing. And so when you say reason isn't or would it be more accurate to say that consciousness is not everything, that does not mean to say you have to become hysterical.

It's to say a couple of things. It's to say that what we call your emotions are often quite reasonable, if you define "reason" as leading in your best interests. But it's also to say you have two systems, two ways of thinking. One is logical, linear, and linguistic; the other, the low level of awareness, is more associational, more pattern based. They're just -- the unconscious is not -- an emotion is not a tangled web of sexual urges that Freud thought; it's just a different way of seeing the world, of helping you make sense of the world. And so you have these two ways of analyzing the world, both of which have strengths, both of which have weaknesses. So, just because you rely sometimes on your intuition or on more accurately processes below the level of awareness does not mean you shut down this other system, which sometimes plays a very useful role in

policing what your emotions are telling you or in shaping your emotions. You can control your emotions by how you educate yourself. And so I guess I just reject the distinction that there's one thing called reason, which is intelligence, and this other thing called emotion, which is different. They're all part of the same process.

MR. DIONNE: Could you talk a little bit -- because you do write a political column and talk about politics a lot -- about the interaction of reason and emotion when people make political decisions? Because I think there's -- especially after the rise of totalitarianism there was a great fear of anything except reason to define our politics, and yet you seem to give considerable respect to the non-reason to political conclusions.

MR. BROOKS: Right, yeah. So one of the -- there are many different experiments which illustrate the effective unconscious processes. One was by a guy name Toder off at Princeton where he gave people a one-second glimpse at various races and asked them -- the two competing candidates -- just their faces for one second. He said who's going to win this race? Who strikes you as more competent? And people could predict the winner in each race with about 70 percent accuracy just with this one-second look. And other researchers took this result to Mexico, to Argentina, I think to Soviet Georgia -- former Soviet Georgia -- and showed them the same faces, and those people could produce the

exact same results. And so we have a template in our mind of what is competence.

Another experimenter took people in gubernatorial races, showed them 10-minute videos with the sound off and the sound on and asked them to predict who would win, and the people who saw the videos with the sound off did a better job.

And so that shows that there are certain templates we have of what is competence. But my basic view of politics is it's most of our judgments and most of our party affiliations are not based on a careful explication of the rival health care plans. We look at the parties and say who is like us? It's social identity. And then once we form an identify with a party, we tend to adopt its philosophy.

Now, it's not only that. There's obviously a process of study that's involved. But it's more of that than we -- you generally allow I think.

MR. DIONNE: I think he's telling us to close up shop.

MR. BROOKS: No, but I mean the way we study policy is also, you know, it also plays a key role, but it also informs us of what deep down we think is competence. So, people have mid-life political conversions, and that can be from reading Brookings papers, but it will have a deep effect on them in how they see their personal identity as well.

MR. DIONNE: So, we need to do studies of the emotional

impact of our papers as we do them.

What about power? Was the category that was in a way missing from the analysis, although it's implicit in a lot of ways, but power kind of disappeared from this view, and it was all about relationships, and at times I thought you were buying into the very Bethesda touchy-feely upper-class view of the world that you so brilliantly satire.

MR. BROOKS: That's a good point. There's not that much. The one place it comes in is there's a section on morality where I'm really summarizing the research of a school of scientists led by Jonathan Hyde and others who are moral intuitionists They think when we come with moral rules. We do not do it in a Kantean way of what are our principles and then deriving logical conclusions. Morality is more like taste or aesthetics, that we look at something and we come up with an immediate moral response. You do not have to tell a 12-year-old or a 2-year-old what fairness is. They know what fairness is.

And one of the intuitions we have -- well, we have it very powerfully in group and out group where a lot of the cruelty of the world comes from, but we also have hunger for power, for dominance, and reactions to dominance in those relationships, which have both positive effects and sometimes extremely harsh and cruel effects. So, they can look at the way the brain reacts to dominant figures, and you can see

instantaneous reactions.

So, it's in there, but, you're right, I don't tease that out too much.

MR. DIONNE: One other question before I go to reviewers' comments. By the way, why did you choose to invent Harold and Erica? The economists, as you know, of your book except they wish you had dumped Harold and Erica? Why did you -- for those of you who haven't read the book yet, the book goes back and forth between learned studies of the brain and the life story of Harold and Erica, and the description of Harold dying at the end of the book is really quite remarkable. It's almost like you wrote it on LSD. I mean, it's really -- or in a religious trance. I mean, it's a very powerful ending. Why did you choose to do it that way?

MR. BROOKS: Yeah. For three reasons. One, I don't think well in abstractions. I need to see sort of examples, and having two characters sort of live out the research gave me those examples. Second, I just thought it would be more fun. I could make fun of Aspen.

MR. DIONNE: That's what I thought, too. So, an excuse to make fun of all that --

MR. BROOKS: And, third, if you take the message of the book, that information hits us in multiple levels at once. I wanted to have -- I wanted the book to hit us in multiple levels at once. And so I

understood when I started this that was the riskiest thing to do, because the book basically is a popularization of about 10 different academic fields, which is hard enough, and then to layer it on an allegory on top of it, that struck me as harder still. But my reaction was, hey, I've got a day job, I might as well take a chance on this. So, that was sort of my thinking, and it made it more fun. Some people think it makes it a lot more fun to read; some people don't. So, there's reaction to the allegory, and I distinguish between allegory and fiction. Allegory is simply supposed to represent research, whereas a fictional character is very much more idiosyncratic. And I -- when I re-read the book I think it pays off. Some people do. But the economist reviewer did not, and he's not alone.

MR. DIONNE: It's clear, you know, it's a subconscious rather than rational reaction to --

MR. BROOKS: Yeah.

MR. DIONNE: Just on the studies, the *Wall Street Journal* gave David one of the longest reviews I've ever seen. They wrote more about David even than about supply side economics. That's not true either. But one of the critiques -- I'll just read you the passage, which I know you're familiar with -- was basically that -- the core critique was there are a lot more studies in this area and that you paid attention to the ones that sort of tended to prove the points you wanted to make and particularly

on intelligence. Just a couple of sentences. "In fact, studies do measure both intelligence and economic outcomes" -- "that measure both intelligence and economic outcomes," fine. Positive relationships. "David sort of downplays intelligence in making someone rich when you consider like that I.Q. can be measured well in half an hour. These effects are surprisingly large," and so on. Just in general, when you read, what did you make of this critique of you?

MR. BROOKS: Yeah, so, a couple of things. One is, first of all, I.Q. matters to income. If you read my chapter in the book I thought there were two things he misread. Sorry I don't remember them both. I.Q. definitely matters to income. It's definitely a significant player and people with higher I.Q.s definitely have higher incomes.

And then he claims that I think I.Q. tests are invalid. I never write that, never would claim that. That's an absurdity. I.Q. makes a difference.

The question is how much difference? And so in the book I cite two studies, one that -- one from one set of researchers that said 4 percent of the difference in Job variation is related to I.Q. And then the second study I cite says 20 percent of life success is related to I.Q. And in his book he only mentions that I cited the 4 percent and says that's way too low. And he says the average is more about 2 percent.

In retrospect, I probably should have cited another study that has higher; just the median of the research is probably 20, 25 percent of job variation can be explained by I.Q. And in retrospect, I emphasize two studies: one on the low side, one on the medium side. I should have had one on the high side. And so -- but to me, this is a matter of perception. To me, the fact that only 25 percent of job performance or variance of job performance can be defined by I.Q. To me, that's lower than I thought. And so, I wrote the chapter saying it's much less important than we think.

And a lot of people, especially in that field, when I say it's loosely connected to job performance, they took that to mean I think it's zero relation to job performance. They think I am lowering it, whereas to me I think we both agree on the data, just how we phrase it. And so if you tell me that I.Q. matters 25 percent of job performance, that's surprisingly low to me. And that was the point of that. But he attacked me for saying it was zero, which I would never say and did not say.

MR. DIONNE: The other one I looked at, which is classic Brooksie, and, "When stock traders experience a series of good days, the dopamine released into their brains creates a surge of overconfidence." He says you only cited a blog post for that.

MR. BROOKS: Yeah, that's not fair either. The research was done by a guy named Andrew Lowe at MIT, who's a very significant

player in the field, and Lowe sent me about six of these studies.

I may have put a blog post in the table of contents, but there are many studies, and the Andrew Lowe stuff is -- I see it quoted all the time. And when I did the book, because I'm not in field, I tried to quote what scientists in the field quote.

And just on the I.Q. stuff, one book I highly recommend is a book by a guy at the University of Toronto named Keith. It's called *What I.Q. Tests Miss*. The author is Keith Stanovich. And that's -- a lot of the intelligence stuff that he objected to is in that book. And, again, Stanovich is a major figure in the field. I got nothing that I -- I did no research obviously. I just quoted other people. And there's ferocious differences in the field, and some people are going to be upset that I quoted one group and not another. I tried to be as cautious as possible, but I'm bound to have missed stuff.

MR. DIONNE: The other review I wanted to ask you about was Allen Wolfe's, which -- where we did -- in the *New Republic,* where he did sort of choose to sort of pick a political argument with you. If I can --

MR. BROOKS: I confess I haven't read that one.

MR. DIONNE: Oh, okay. Well, let me just read you a passage to respond to, then one last question, then Belle. He said, "The most impressive of the mechanisms that human beings" -- it's a very

positive review; all these reviews are positive, by the way. “The most impressive of the mechanisms that human beings have created to control the instability of the passions is called liberal democracy. I’m not quite so prepared as Brooks to limit the freedom it offers.” He talks about your love of nudging and -- “These days the conviction that human beings are irrational, and the public policy needs to take into account just how often we do not know what is best for us is truly trans-ideological, but the science behind it is not as conclusive as these writers maintain,” and so on.

Do you see your -- there are a lot of, sort of in the broader sense of the term, liberals who would be uncomfortable with the way you treat “reason” in this book. Could you talk about that a little bit?

MR. BROOKS: See the free-market economists, the Friedmanites, they’re also uncomfortable. I mean, there is --

MR. DIONNE: Yeah, but for the -- in the sense that there are liberals in the broad sense.

MR. BROOKS: Right, and so a lot of the book is a critique of some of the highly rational academic disciplines. Classical economics post-Knight , post-Friedman, modern philosophy, modern political scientists, game theory -- I think all that stuff is overly linear, logical, and rational. And I think the research suggests that those models of human

nature, which everybody knows are, like everyone agrees -- even the economists agree -- like 20 percent off. I think it's closer to 50 percent off to how human beings actually are. And so I think the research -- but this is a debate, and, you know, because I'm pushing against a rational model, I'm probably pushing harder than I would if I were pushing against -- if we lived in a society where we were all Oprah Winfreys, I'd push toward reason. But the point is, you can't swing between reason and emotion, from rationalism to romanticism. You have -- they're both. Both are involved in all the decisions we make.

One of the things -- I thought you were going with Alan Wolfco -- I haven't read the review yet, but he talks about the impingements on freedom, and this is a core political problem.

If you take the first three years of life very seriously, and if you think that many people in this society, many kids in this society are being raised in very disorganized and very destructive ways, then you almost call for either agencies of faith or charity or even government to go in in very paternalistic ways and interfere with these functional families. And that paternalism should make all of us uncomfortable, the state going in and basically interfering with a mother's relationship to a child. And yet I think it's better than having the kid sit in the car seat eight hours a day drinking Coca-Cola out of a baby bottle. And so that's the tension. And,

you know, I'm not sure I trust government to go into family life, but I'm not sure I want families, especially at the most disorganized level, sustaining themselves generation

MR. DIONNE: That's a perfect transition to Belle. I was going to ask you one positive question, but you can keep it in the back of your head. The flipside of the free market economists and certain rationalist liberals not liking you is I've run into a couple of religious people who've read the book who believe your smuggling theology back in by way of brain science. Keep that in the back of your head.

But I want to turn to Belle, because there isn't a lot of policy in the book, but to the extent that there is policy in the book, it's Belle Sawhill and Ron Haskins' policy.

MR. BROOKS: I completely agree with that, by the way.

MR. DIONNE: Do you? Belle.

MS. SAWHILL: Well, I'm a big fan of David Brooks, as I think he knows and I know other people know, but I am really struggling with this book and the ideas in it. And what I'm struggling with is what are the implications for private behavior, for public policy, and for our politics. So, let me take each of those very briefly in turn, and this will, to some extent further extend what I think E.J. was asking you and what some of these reviewers have raised as well.

On private behavior, I think that there is, in all of us, a tendency to want reason to dominate emotions, not to the exclusion of not recognizing emotions, and certainly we should value them, and your book does have the merits of beginning to may be rebalance our thinking about that. But I worry about us going too far. I mean, you know, take the marshmallow story, and the children who were able to leave the marshmallow on the table were very successful later on. Now, maybe that's a trait that you call emotional and unconscious and something we haven't given enough attention to, and maybe this is a labeling or a definitional issue, but to me that is an example of cognitive self-awareness trumping the bad child within and that all of us as adults struggle with, you know, not eating too much, not exercising too little, all those kinds of things. And I think we attribute that to reason and to looking forward in a planful way and being quite conscious of it.

So, what are the implications for private behavior of your research? All of your book is kind of a description of what is. I guess what I'm pressing on here is what lessons for our own behavior or for our public behavior do we take from this?

On the public policy front, I think there is quite a -- a lot of recognition now that we need to take into account -- non-cognitive skills that we need to take into account that people don't always do; rational,

self-interested thing, that there's a lot of self-destructive out there and the whole notion of nudging people in the right direction to do what's in their own long-term interest through public policy is a good one. I mean, the whole movement from unconditional welfare to providing, let's say, the earned income tax credit is a great example of making public policy conditional on getting people to do what we'd like them to do, which is to work to the extent they're able.

On our politics, I think everybody now is concerned about how dysfunctional our politics seems to be, and a lot of that seems to be wrapped up in, you know, a lot of what you joked about at the beginning, that there is a shallowness and very emotional tilt to it, and some of that is not healthy and good it seems to me. I mean, we don't want politicians playing on our unconscious prejudices and our myopia and our desire to have more government than we're willing to pay for, and all of that. And so again I'm really wondering about the right balance between these things an whether some people will worry that your book, by getting so much credit to these sort of non-cognitive, non-reason factors in behavior will lead to better outcomes either in private lives or in public life.

MR. BROOKS: Yeah. Okay, those are all good comments. They echo something Stephen Colbert said to me last night. He thought my book vindicated his world view that he didn't have to think about stuff.

So -- and, again, I come back to this distinction that I really think the distinction between reason and emotion is a bogus distinction, that the two are intertwined intellectively, and maybe it's best to -- better to talk. I do more in the book of consciousness as the unconscious processes.

And I sort of got into this book. You mention the phrase "non-cognitive," which I read. I remember I had a moment. I was reading Jim Heckman on the importance of the first three years, and he says most of the traits are non-cognitive, and I said what's non-cognitive? Like, a chair is non-cognitive, but people are not non-cognitive. It's just different sorts of cognition. And so in the personal behavior level -- say, with the marshmallow -- I would say one of the research -- what the research does is it -- again, it directs our attention a little, it shifts our attention. So, if you have a simple decision-making model, I see the world, I analyze the world, and then I execute through willpower. And I would say in the last hundred years, we've spent a lot of time thinking about willpower. Especially the Victorians were big on that. We've spent a lot of time thinking about analysis, how do I weigh the pros and cons? But I think this research shows us that perception is actually the most important of those activities, how we perceive the world, because perceiving involves a lot of processing. It's a very deep process. And so Aristotle said if you inculcate certain habits, that will teach you to perceive the world in

different ways, in ways that are probably non-conscious, but that'll help organize all the subsequent steps. And so that's where -- and a personal thing, I think. You need etiquette, you need order to give those habits, which then become automatic ways of perceiving things in the world.

MR. DIONNE: Is that sort of like all this brain science proves that your friend, Burke, was right all along?

MR. BROOKS: I think that Aristotle comes out pretty good. David Hume comes out pretty good. Like I say, it doesn't -- people have been observing human nature for a long time. It doesn't come up with anything new. And some of the observations are phenomenally -- when -- now that we have all these scientists coming up with this stuff reconfirming what Hume or Aristotle thought just by pure observation, it's really truly impressive for the things they observed.

Then on the -- just on the dysfunctional politics, one of the, I think, lessons of this research is how little we know about ourselves and how little we know about the world. There's a great -- I think it's a George Eliot line, "Imagine playing chess where all the pieces of the chessboard had their own minds," and they were doing off what they wanted to do. And then imagine they all had multiple minds, and then imagine you as the player had multiple minds. This shows you how little you understand about the world. And so when you approach politics, you should be

extremely aware of your own shortcomings and extremely aware of the need for others to balance your own opinions.

And to me, polarization and extreme partisanship is a form of narcissism. It's no accident that Rush Limbaugh is both extremely partisan and extremely egomaniacal, because if you're that egomaniacal you think people that disagree with me are just in the way. And so I think one of the things the research should make us more aware of how little we know and, therefore, we need the process of conversation to conduct policy. And, again, to embrace non-cognitive processes or unconscious processes is not to embrace hysteria, what I said to Stephen Colbert last night. He was confusing emotion and horniness. And so the two are sort of different things.

MR. DIONNE: How did he respond?

MR. BROOKS: He -- well, he said he wanted to have sex with my book, so.

MR. BROOKS: This gentleman over here will elaborate on that point.

SPEAKER: What a lead-in. That's kind of hard to follow. But you said that a party that is a part of social identity, NoLabels.org, you've written something about them, and I think of -- they're a new organization to go at. But No Labels is not the right name for it.

MR. BROOKS: Right.

SPEAKER: It's more like Cognitive Thinking.

MR. BROOKS: Well --

SPEAKER: But could you comment on that please?

MR. BROOKS: Yeah. I do agree that -- well, I sort of got involved -- Bill Galston, who's in the back of the room, is involved in that. I got involved because I have trouble seeing how our two parties, as currently structured, help us solve issues like the fiscal situation. I have trouble seeing how they resolve global warming issues. I have trouble -- I have just frustration with the policy process. So, I think the folks in No Labels are doing good things. I object or disagree with a movement that begins with the word "No."

SPEAKER: I agree.

MR. BROOKS: And so what I try to -- I think is the right answer is a positive philosophy, which is sort of a sketch in the book, but is really at home here in this building probably more than any other spot on Earth, which derives from Alexander Hamilton fundamentally. And the shorthand version of it is there's a liberal philosophy in this country that believes in using the government to enhance equality. There's a conservative philosophy that believes in limited government to enhance freedom. But then there's a third tradition in American life that believes in

limited but energetic government to enhance social mobility. And it starts with Hamilton, it goes through the Whig Party, it goes through Abraham Lincoln, and then it sort of peters out with the exception of the Hamilton Project here. And some people I think actually in the Obama administration -- Jason Furman was here; Peter Orszag, who has left -- there are certain people -- and we could have a rightward version or a leftward version, but giving people the tools to compete.

And then the only thing -- the way this book contributes to that is saying what are the tools people need to compete? They're not only economic, though that's part of it, but they're also psychological and social.

MR. DIONNE: It's one of the things David and I share is a -- everything we agree on is explained by Whigs. It's very peculiar.

This gentleman over here, and then we have time for a couple more.

SPEAKER: It seems that the world, to a degree, needs very social animals and not social animals. It needs a Bill Clinton and the used car salesman. It needs the Philip Roth and the research scientist who will labor away by himself. But can you talk a little bit about how these issues of cognition, emotion, intelligence relate to personal fulfillment and happiness so someone who's 6-foot-6 and makes $176,000 a year may

not be so happy compared to one foot taller, a foot shorter, and $100,000 poorer.

MR. BROOKS: Right.

SPEAKER: So, talk a little bit about how it relates to actual happiness and life fulfillment.

MR. BROOKS: Right. First, being a social animal is not the same as being a party animal, so you don't have to be gregarious. I'm not a particularly gregarious guy myself, but some people have their most profound social relationships with others who have been dead for hundreds of years. They read their books or study their music or look at their paintings, and so those interpenetrations are just as powerful.

As for the happiness research, Carole Graham was here, knows it better than I, but I think the shorthand version is that the relationship between money and happiness is somewhat powerful, but the relationship between friendship and happiness is tremendously powerful, and that's the shorthand. The more connections, the better. And some studies, some of which Danny Connem and Alan Crewer did a study where they looked at the activity that -- the daily activity most conducive to happiness, and that's eating out with friends. The daily activity most harmful --

MR. DIONNE: This book is sponsored by a whole group of

restaurants.

MR. BROOKS: Yeah. Well, and this goes to the Metropolitan project, the daily activity most harmful to happiness is commuting, spending time alone in the car. And the research is very clear, and Durkhem understood this a long time ago, that the more connections you've got, the better you're going to be.

MR. DIONNE: Somebody else. Please.

SPEAKER: Hi. I was very interested in your aspect about people in research in particular being too linear. And I was just reading something about Darwin, actually, and how a lot of people used his ideas to promote things like eugenics. And I wonder -- and obviously he was somebody who had empathy for other people -- he was staunch in terms of being anti-slavery -- and how much maybe it would have improved things for his ideas later if he had tried to maybe avoid going too much the linear route and encompass some of the ideas that he had to make people more empathetic in how things could have been taken so people couldn't hijack that stuff to -- for their own negative ideas.

MR. BROOKS: Well, there seems to be a bias toward taking one set of teachings, even very important teachings, and trying to make a system which explains everything out of it. And so I -- one of the things that's happening now is that a lot of evolutionary psychologists are writing

about all sorts of things, and a lot of what they write strikes me as very persuasive, especially when it comes to mating and things that are clearly more involved in passing down the genes. But when I read what the write about shopping and politics, sometimes I think they're taking the certain things we imagine or theorize about happening in Pleistocene era societies and very simply trying to transpose it onto us. And I think there's core insights that are obviously very valuable. But simply taking what certain truths and patterns we imagine happen in the Pleistocene era and applying it to why Paris looks the way it does or New York looks the way it does or why Mozart composed the way he did, I think that's a bit of a stretch. And I don't think there's one system -- a theoretical system that we can use to explain everything. And I guess that certainly happened to Darwin's work.

MR. DIONNE: Just thinking about that Darwin question, when you think of this book, what is your biggest fear about how people will misapply it? I think it is the idea that we're not -- they'll say, oh, he thinks reason is weak; therefore, emotion is strong and, therefore, I don't need to study. And my kids already come into that with that feeling. No, I'm just kidding. They're good students. So, but, again, it's --

MR. BROOKS: We're so beholden by the distinction between reason and emotion. We think they're like two sides of a

seesaw. They are not. They're part of the same process. And -- but those categories are locked in our minds and so they'll think if reason's down emotion must be up, but that's not the way works. They're not on a seesaw. They're interpenetrated with each other, and you can educate your emotions. Some people have smart emotions, some people have dumb ones. Some people are good are using reason, some are bad. And they're just two different ways of seeing the world.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. I'm afraid -- do we have time for one more? A quick question, a quick answer. This gentleman right back there.

SPEAKER: The book sounds like it's a critique of Western enlightenment.

MR. BROOKS: French, not British.

SPEAKER: So, how does that apply to development and the spread of these very ideas -- democracy, liberalism, freedom -- which is not being replicated? So, how does that apply to globalization?

MR. BROOKS: Yeah, well, I guess I would say two quick things, then I'm afraid I have to run right after this.

One, I highly recommend a book called *Seeing Like a State* by a writer at Yale named Scott -- I'm now forgetting his first name -- James -- and it's about how certain development agencies were seeing

local societies through the prism of sort of macroeconomics and doing terrible development policies, whereas he emphasized the power of context. I'm really not doing justice to his ideas. It was from that book that I got the word "metis," actually.

And then just in terms of what we're seeing in the world today when you read about all these emotional contagions, well, then I think you -- that what happens in the Middle East doesn't surprise you how a contagion can sweep across a region and people behave and see things one way one day and then a different self is aroused another day. And so I think it prepares for that. And it prepares you for the hunger for dignity, that we do have an innate hunger and an innate desire to be recognized to it. In the book I used the Greek word "thymos, thymotic" urge. And so just to see things in those ways. At least it prepares you. I don't know if it gives you policy responses what to do in Libya, but it prepares you for events, like the sweeping democratic revolutions or even the sweeping stupidity of the financial bubble, because you see how people interpenetrate another and how emotional contagions get going.

MR. DIONNE: I just want to close by saying one of the reasons I love David is because he likes paradox and irony. For example, I went up to him this morning when he was signing books and I said I want to be relational and welcome you to Brookings. And he said, "drop dead, I

don't believe in that stuff, I only write about it. And so I didn't.

MR. BROOKS: I was kidding.

MR. DIONNE: And so I couldn't tell whether an interview with *Newsweek* -- he was being ironic. He said "Preparing to embark on his book tour, Brooks is apprehensive. I'm dreading it. I'll feel lonely." And so I just you to know you can always come back to Brookings, which people don't realize is an ashram. You can join us for a powerless lunch and we will surround you with fellowship and emotional support and love. Thank you very much. (Applause)

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

/s/Carleton J. Anderson, III

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2012