

Ask the Master of Science



Dear Master of Science,
Is it okay for mommy and daddy to lie to the police? There are lots of strangers always...[edited for space. MoS]

-Sad Face

Dear Saddy,
Let me tell you a story about evolution that goes just like so. This might not have actually have happened, it probably did, but it will more illustrate how deception evolved and why its okay.

So, to begin with, there were these organisms that competed and cooperated for food and having babies. They all wanted super bad to pass on their genes to as much of the next generation as possible. So, first they evolved communication, using ons and offs to tell each other what was up with the food and babies. Communication became the cool thing to do, because populations that did it, did well. Then some crazy adaptator decided that he/she/pseudo-sex would tell a lie, in order to get more food/babies/not-dying-from-predators. This sitch worked great until everyone started doing it then the helpfulness wore off and it became generally unfashionable amongst populations of replicators. Cause if everyone deceives, communication becomes useless. But if you hang out with honest organisms, you should take advantage of them by lying, for the food/babies/money.

See, evolution had organisms evolve, and by evolve I mean kill each other until the strongest with the most teeth and claws won. This one organism then had the leisure time to have all sorts of adaptations and mutations that created the next species. So, because organisms lied in the past to survive, it is morally okay to lie now! Got it?

Once again evolution and science gives us the answers, without even leaving the space ship called The Armchair! We lie all the time, and that's just fine. In fact, everything I just wrote including this sentence, is a lie. And this one too.

Dear Love Master,
Why do I keep dating guys who are jerks to me?

-Lovelorn in London

Dear Lovely Limey,
Simple: cognitive dissidents. It means your brain is harboring rebels railing against the tyrannical command and control center. Your heart desires one sort of guy, yet you date the opposite. You are of two minds, like a civil war. Those little cognitive dissedents are protesting your actions by blogging and doing

installation art (for the installations you'll need to read the plaque or pamphlet in order to get it).

Solution: Let these cog-dissers out of jail and integrate them into the power structure: give them cabinet posts and blue ribbon committees. This will soften their stance as they win minor concessions and experience the trappings of a comfortable bourgeoisie lifestyle. Then watch democracy in your dating flower.

Dear Master of Science,
I'm trying to realize my dream of becoming a comedian. Is there a Science of Funny? And if so, what are its truths? It's like I'm looking for a rubber chicken in a haystack, except its harder. Help!

-Wannbe Stand-Up

Dear Wasabi Stand-up,
Let's investigate. What things are funny? What do they have in common? If we are able to answer these questions, we'll be able to hone-in on the intrinsic nature of funnicity. Hopefully we won't die of something like arsenic or radiation poisoning like so many other scientists who didn't take proper safety precautions when discovering arsenic and radiation. Goggles snug? Check. Okay, let's get our experiment on!

Farts. Boogers. Belches. Sex! All funny, right? Using Bayesian reasoning we can extrapolate that all bodily processes are funny. Check medical school bookstores, there's comedic gold in those textbooks chalk full of bodily processes. The Krebs Cycle? Ha. I never thought of that as funny before. It's counter intuitive I know, but it must be so, the logic is inescapable.

There seems to be another category of funny: Making fun of psychological problems, people missing appendages, old people, etc. More generally, comedy includes any group that, for evolutionary purposes, may need culling from the herd to keep it strong.

I tried to think of some other categories of funny, but I couldn't after thinking super hard for a few minutes.

So, the essence of funny is bi-lateral: things our body does and other people's flaws, evolutionary no-no's, (the no-no's of other people of course). Remember, knowledge is power, so use your new comedy powers only for good.

E-mail science conundrums to sciencemasterof@gmail.com
Master of Science might even read them prior to heavy editing!