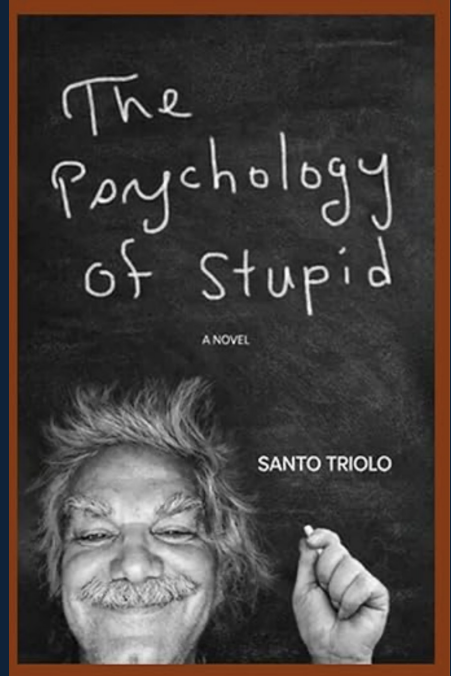


FREE SAMPLE

The Psychology of Stupid

A novel by Santo J. Triolo



Chapters 1 and 2

Intellect vs. Wisdom · Taking Humanity to the Moon

Paperback and Kindle on Amazon

CHAPTER 1

INTELLECT VS. WISDOM



Professor Joseph Stona stopped by Dean Alex Pappos' office, before his class, to say goodbye. Dean Pappos was recently diagnosed with cancer and the tumors in his body were found to be inoperable. *He was given less than 6 months to live.* Dean Pappos is a former student of Professor Stona, who has been teaching at Canton College for about 50 years. Professor Stona is also a Clinical Psychologist who is licensed in Massachusetts and maintains a small private practice *after hours*.

"Alex, I just wanted to stop by to touch base. Are you busy?" asked Professor Stona.

Dean Pappos was filling in boxes and taking books off his shelves. His desk was piled up with journal papers and personal items. "Come in, come in. I'm busy...but never too busy for you."

"Can I help? I have a little time before class."

"No need...here sit down," He cleaned off a chair with books. "This is a good time for me to take a break. I stopped chemo weeks ago, but the effects are still with me, dragging me down."

"You should get somebody to help you."

"My son will be here later today with his truck. He will be doing all the lifting."

"I wish I could do something."

"You have done plenty already. Do you remember me in your class? I'd say at least 40 years ago."

"More like 45 years. And yes, you were one of my best students."

“Me? One of your best? Not likely. I just squeezed a B out of that class. I still remember the essay question I left blank. You asked ‘What is the difference between intelligence and wisdom?’ Remember?”

“Yes, I still tend to ask that question today in my classes.”

“Well, years ago, I finally answered it. I wrote it down wanting to give it to you but never did. Would you like to read it?” Dean Pappos opened up a textbook and pulled a folded sheet of paper out from the front cover. “Here you go.” He handed it to Professor Stona.

Professor Stona put on his glasses and read it out loud. “With intelligence, you can build skyscrapers, computers, bridges, solve complex mathematical problems, and make new medications. With wisdom, you can enjoy humor, maintain a loving heart, shed away the approaching stench of old age, listen to the symphonies of life, and dance with the universe.”

Dean Pappos smiled and asked, “Well, is that good enough for an A?”

“Yes, well done!”

“A few decades too late, but at least that is one loose end I took care of.”

“May I keep this? I am thinking of writing a book and would like to include this in it. It would be great to quote you.”

“Sure, go for it, but I need to let you know something. Those words were mine, but the spirit in them came from my brother, who was 10 years younger. He was born with pain and for the first two years of his life, he was in and out of hospitals. As he got older and healthier, I wanted to make his world beautiful, without pain and suffering. What I discovered was that he made his world beautiful, for me.”

“That's a great example of the power of brotherly love, and a great way to find wisdom,” Professor Stona responded. He then looked at his watch, “Alex, I need to get to my class or I'll be late. Is there anything I can do for you? Anything?”

“No, not at this point. Just take care of yourself. The administration has been wanting to dismiss you for years. I can’t fight for you any longer and I’m afraid they aim to clean house after I’m gone.”

“You have been a great supporter. I’m sorry if my personality has caused you any trouble.”

“No trouble at all. I enjoyed the battles and I’m going to miss them.”

“Thanks.”

“No, thank you. Now get to your class before I give you a demerit.”

The Professor walked away slowly as if he did not, or was not, ready to disengage from his Dean and former Professor.

Joseph Stona is a tall man with a thin wiry frame. Unlike most senior citizens, he stands tall and walks with a brisk gait most of the time. He has thick long salt and pepper hair and an equally thick mustache that usually is extended by a broad smile communicating joy in his life. He has deep green eyes set in under his equally thick eyebrows. Even with a set of wrinkles around them, his eyes are sparkling, accenting the joyful smile.

Not today, however.

Today, they carry the weight of losing an important human in his life.

Today, his face is one of grief.

CHAPTER 2

TAKING HUMANITY TO THE MOON



“Welcome. This is Psychology 315... Contemporary Psychology. I am Professor Joseph Stona. Contrary to rumors, I’m not senile, and I don’t plan on being senile anytime soon. For those of you wondering how old I am, don’t let my white hair fool you. Sam Adams was born way before me. You have the syllabus online. I will not be the detective, but keep in mind this course requires Intro Psychology, Statistical Methods, and Social Psychology as prerequisites. Any questions?”

Being the old man on campus, for the last dozen years he started the class with a remark about his age.

“Okay, I would like to spend some time getting to know my class. As I call out your name, tell us a little bit about yourself and why you signed up for this class. It would be helpful to know what you expect to get out of it, too.”

He looked down at his registration sheet, putting his reading glasses in place. “Baker, Calvin.”

“Hi!”

A voice came from the back corner.

“I’m Calvin. I’m taking psychology classes to possibly major in it, but I’m also considering Sociology and Education.” Calvin grew up in Roxbury, an African American section of Boston. He went into the army right after high school, and after learning that he was not good enough to get a football scholarship, he felt lucky to get out without a scratch from his time in the Middle East and decided that at age 30 it was time to do something different.

So, college became his focus with the hope of a career in helping people. All this information was in his mind when his name was called. He opted to provide the abridged edition instead.

“Thank you. We hope we can help you decide by the end of this class,” Professor Stona responded.

“Okay, Fouler, Ralph.”

“Here. I’m taking this course because I needed an easy class from my curriculum in Electrical Engineering, you know, the heavier load of college classes. My goal is to work for the government’s Defense Department. I’m not sure how useful this class can be, but I have an open mind.”

“Very good. It’s always good to keep an open mind. I hope you’ll have a chance to exercise that in this class.” The Professor looked back down at his list. “Renee LaBarret.”

“Yes,” Renee raised her hand. “Right here.”

“Tell us about yourself.”

“My parents are physicians at Mass General. My older brother is in the diplomatic corps in Canada.”

“That’s great,” the Professor interrupted. “How about you, Renee? I would like to know about you.”

“I’m just a student. Not much. I like to study languages and different cultures, I guess.”

“That’s great. I hope this class can contribute to your study. Okay, how about Carmela Lotrio?”

There was no answer. “Carmela, are you here?”

“Yes... I... am... here,” a voice responded in broken English.

“Great. Can you tell us about yourself?”

“Yes, I’m from Sicily. My husband wants to move to Boston so I come with him. I had night school, and then my counselor wanted me to go to college. He gave me an IQ test and said I will be smart and okay for college. I like Psychology but would like to learn more about Economics. In Sicily, I study Economics.”

“Economics? Well, maybe you can teach us about Economics, and this class will help you understand Economics better.”

“Yes, thank you.”

“Okay, Daniel Milton.”

“Right here.” A hand went up. “I’m also interested in Economics and studied some in London. But Psychology is my major, and I hope to practice IO, Industrial/Organization.” He started turning to the rest of the class. “I was told this class is a must because it would be most useful in my field.”

“I hope it is for you.” Again looking down at his list, the Professor said, “Oh, Mary Murphy, you’ve decided to sign up for another one of my classes. Good to see you again. Will you share with the class about yourself and why you decided to take this class?”

“Dr. Stona is the reason why I decided to major in Psychology. I would like to do research to shape government policies.”

“Thank you, and I get the feeling you will be in government some-time in the future with a title like mayor or governor. You’ve got the smooth-talking down already.”

“I mean it,” she responded.

“I know. I should not have suggested otherwise, and thank you again. Okay, how about Marvin Nestor?”

“Here, and I’m also a Psychology major, or want to be, I think. It is my first time taking a class from you, and it was recommended that I should before graduation. Oh, about me? Not much to say. I started working fresh out of high school at a local grocery store, and there I still am, as a bagger.”

“Working and going to school, I believe, says a lot. Thank you. Kevin O’Hara?”

“Right here, Doc. Pretty much the same thing. I’m working in construction and trying to go to school. I’m from Southie and have been living there all my life. I’m taking a Psychology class because I like the subject, but I hope to work with computers and programming.”

“Thank you, Kevin. You may be pleased to know Psychologists work with computers too.”

“Yeah, Doc, I know,” Kevin responded. “Everybody works with computers. That’s why I want to learn them.”

“Smart move. I wish you well with that.”

“Thanks, Doc.”

“Okay, Juan Perez.”

“I’m here, sir.” A hand was raised from the back corner.

“There you are. Tell us about yourself.”

“Okay, I like Psychology.”

“That’s great. I would like to know you a little. Could you let us know?”

“I am married. I have two children, a girl who is 7 years old and a boy who is 4 years old. We live with my father-in-law, and I work for him as a mechanic. I want to get a good education and to teach my children so they get ahead. I want a better life for my family. I like this class because it is a good time to have. I can still work at my shop and no need to leave work.”

“Okay, very good, Juan. And last but not least, Myra Zimmer.”

“Hello, I’m Myra. I’m in school to study Journalism. I know other students who have taken this class, and I’m fascinated by the reported content. I believe it could be very useful for my career. Thank you.”

“Thank you, Myra. It looks like we have some diverse interest in this class with students from different fields of study. That’s great. In this class, we focus on the practical application of Psychology, and I’m sure there will be something useful for everybody. What I hope to communicate most of all is how weak the application of Psychology is. By contrast, the application of many other sciences has flourished. I read recently that Charles Lindbergh, shortly after his historic flight over the Atlantic Ocean, went to Ohio to visit Orville Wright, one of the Wright brothers who invented the first mechanical plane. Fast forward to 1969, Neil Armstrong had Charles Lindbergh as his guest to watch the launching of Apollo II, the rocket that put men

on the moon and brought them back. Think about the power of application here.

Physics and engineering have come to provide an enormous set of applications to the point that, in a little over a half-century, we went from mechanized flight to a man on the moon. So now think about the application of Psychology. As you will learn, the most advancement made has been in the industry and mainly only to satisfy the bottom line, money. Why? Maybe, in this class, we can come up with the answer. And if we do, maybe we can have the applications to advance humanity to new heights.” Professor Stona scanned the class and whispered to himself, “Or maybe not.”

“Let me start with this question. Can anyone tell me why someone would buy a product just because somebody famous endorses it? Why should I buy a car because an actor says it’s cool?”

“Most people don’t,” Kevin responded.

“Then all these companies paying millions to have a celebrity endorse their product are wasting their money?”

“I’d say so,” Kevin responded. “I’d be stupid if anybody would fall for that strategy.”

“Okay, we’ve established there is stupidity here somewhere, right? Either the companies, for spending millions for nothing, or the consumers falling for that strategy.”

“So which is it?” Ralph asked.

“Well, by the end of this class we will be able to come up with the answer.”

“Hey,” Ralph returned. “If I come up with the answer before the end of this class, do I get an A?”

Calvin cut in. “The answer is easy. The consumers are the stupid ones. Companies use celebrities to lie. A famous football player who happens to be a multi-millionaire tells you he likes driving his Buick. Really? If he has a Buick, I’m sure it was given to him. Otherwise, do you see a multi-millionaire buying a Buick when he could have any luxury car he wants?”

“Good point,” Daniel chimed in. “Would anybody here not buy a luxury car if they had multi-millions?”

“I wouldn’t,” Mary responded.

“I would not either,” echoed Renee.

Ralph spoke up. “Come on. How about if your rich husband or boyfriend bought you one? What girl would refuse it?”

“What kind of remark is that?” Mary responded.

“The truth,” Ralph answered. “We’ve been talking about lies and who is suckered into them, right?”

“We’re getting off topic here,” Professor Stona remarked. “Juan, you are shaking your head. What are your thoughts?”

“I think I no need to worry about luxury cars. I cannot even able to buy a Buick. As a mechanic, I see little difference between Buick and any other luxury car.”

“Good thought to consider,” the Professor added. “If we take one step further, consider the price difference. Even if luxury cars are better, are they worth three and four times the price? If not, why do people pay that much more?”

Daniel responded, “People like the extras, heated seats, leather interior, Wi-Fi.”

“Don’t forget the good-looking chick sitting next to you as you drive,” Ralph added.

“My God, Ralph,” Renee had to contribute.

The Professor broke up the rising argument altogether. “If a mechanic reports that there is at most a small difference between a luxury car and a typical car, then what percentage of a luxury car’s price is attributed to psychology, like looking good, showing others your level of income, communicating that you belong to a higher class status, or just maybe expecting an attractive woman to show interest in you? Think about it, class. We are talking about cars, but this theme can apply to other things, like what watch you buy or what college you attend. Harvard is just down the street. The price between this school, although still expensive, and that of Harvard is enormous. Will you be getting that much more knowledge there than here?”

“Not in this class,” Mary announced.

“Thank you, Mary, for your endorsement.

“So, class, let’s go back to the original question. Pretend you are the CEO of a company and think about the reason you would spend millions on an ad with a movie star or an athlete giving an endorsement. Would you, and why or why not?

“More important, think of the psychology involved in making the choice. Also, between now and next class, let’s look at some ad techniques used in selling products or services.” Professor Stona terminated the class by adding, “You have your assignment. See you next class.”

Want to keep reading?

Chapter 3 begins with the Sticky Ego, and the class gets a lot less comfortable from there.

The full novel runs 23 chapters and 384 pages.

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