Liberals and Conservatives Solve Problems Differently

March 29, 2016

Pacific Standard:

The first recorded "Eureka!" moment is widely attributed to the ancient Greek mathematician Archimedes, who supposedly solved a perplexing problem while relaxing in the bath. If the possibly apocryphal story accurately reflects his problem-solving methodology, it gives us a good clue regarding his political beliefs.

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Research teams led by Carola Salvi of Northwestern University have recently published two papers on the topic of how humans faced with problems arrive at solutions. One finds that liberals are more likely than conservatives to rely on the sudden-burst-of-insight strategy. The other provides evidence that, at least under time constraints, this method produces more correct answers than conscious, analytical thinking.

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The researchers, including Drexel University's John Kounios, describe four experiments. The first featured 38 Northwestern undergraduates, who were given 15 seconds to solve each of 120 word problems. In each case, they were given three words (such as work, fishing, and tennis) and asked to produce a fourth that can be combined with each of them (net).

Read the whole story: Pacific Standard