

❖ **A Bird in Space : By Constantine Brancusi**



## ❖ Eulogy for Amos Tversky – By Daniel Kahneman

*Daniel Kahneman is considered by many as one of the greatest living Psychologists. He won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2002 for his work on Prospect Theory. Some of Kahneman's most influential and path breaking work was done in collaboration with his close friend and scholar Amos Tversky. Amos's life was unfortunately cut short by cancer in 1996, when he was only 58. Enclosed below is an excerpt from the Eulogy written by Kahneman for Tversky.*

**People who make a difference do not die alone. Something dies in everyone who was affected by them. Amos made a great deal of difference, and when he died, life was dimmed and diminished for many of us. There is less intelligence in the world. There is less wit. There are many questions that will never be answered with the same inimitable combination of depth and clarity. There are standards that will not be defended with the same mix of principle and good sense. Life has become poorer. There is a large Amos-shaped gap in the mosaic, and it will not be filled. It cannot be filled because Amos shaped his own place in the world; he shaped his life, and even his dying. And in shaping his life and his world, he changed the world and the life of many around him.**

Amos was the freest person I have known, and **he was able to be free because he was also one of the most disciplined.** Some of you may have tried to make Amos do something he did not want to do. I don't think that there are many with successes to recount. Unlike many of us, Amos could not be coerced or embarrassed into chores or empty rituals. In that sense he was free, and the object of envy for many of us. But the other side of freedom is the ability to find joy in what one does, and the ability to adapt creatively to the inevitable. I will say more about the joy later. The supreme test of Amos's ability to accept what cannot be changed came in the last few months. Amos loved living. Death, at a cruelly young age was imposed on him, before his children's lives had fully taken shape, before his work was done. But he managed to die as he had lived - free. He died as he intended. He wanted to work to the last, and he did. He wanted to keep his privacy, and he did. He wanted to help his family through their ordeal, and he did. He wanted to hear the voices of his friends one last time, and he found a way to do that through the letters that he read with pleasure, sadness and pride, to the end.

There are many forms of courage, and Amos had them all. The indomitable serenity of his last few months is one. The civic courage of adopting principled and unpopular positions is another, and he had that too. And then there is the heroic, almost reckless courage, and he had that too. ....

..... Amos' almost impossible achievements, as you all know, extended to the academic life. Amos derived some quiet pleasure from one aspect of his record: by a large margin, he published more articles in *Psychological Review*, the prestigious theory journal of the discipline, than anyone else in the history of that journal, which goes back more than 100 years. **He had two pieces in press in *Psychological Review* when he died.** But other aspects of the record are even more telling than this statistic. The number of gems and enduring classics sets Amos apart even more. His early work on transitivity violations, elimination by aspects, similarity, the work we did together on judgment, prospect theory and framing, the Hot Hand, the beautiful work on the disjunction effect and Argument-Based Choice, and most recently an achievement of which Amos was particularly proud: Support Theory.

How did he do it? There are many stories one could tell. Amos' lifelong habit of working alone at night while others slept surely helped, but that wouldn't quite do it. Then there was that mind - the bright beam of light that would clear out an idea from the fog of other people's words, the inventiveness that could come up with six different ways of doing anything that needed to be done. You might think that having the best mind in the field and the most efficient work style would suffice. But there was more.

**Amos had simply perfect taste in choosing problems, and he never wasted much time on anything that was not destined to matter.** He also had an unfailing compass that always kept him going forward. I can attest to that from long experience. It is not uncommon for me to write dozens of drafts of a paper, but I am never quite sure that they are actually improving, and often I wander in circles. Almost everything I wrote with Amos also went through dozens of drafts, but when you worked with Amos you just knew. There would be many drafts, and they would get steadily better.

Amos and I wrote an article in *Science* in 1974. It took us a year. We would meet at the van Leer Institute in Jerusalem for 4-6 hours a day. On a good day we would mark a net advance of a sentence or two. It was worth every minute. And I have never had so much fun. When we started work on Prospect Theory it was 1974, and in about 6 months we had been through 30- odd versions of the theory and had a paper ready for a conference. The paper had about 90% of the ideas of Prospect Theory, and quite properly did not impress anyone. We spent the better part of the following four years debugging it, trying to anticipate every objection.

**What kept us at it was a phrase that Amos often used: "Let's do it right".** There was never any hurry, any thought of compromising quality for speed. We could do it because Amos said the work was important, and you could trust him when he said that. We could also do it because the process was so intensely enjoyable. But even that is not all. To understand Amos' genius - not a word I use lightly - you have to consider a phrase that he was using increasingly often in the last few years: **"Let us take what the terrain gives"**. In his growing wisdom Amos believed that Psychology is almost impossible, because there is just not all that much we can say that is both important and demonstrably true. "Let us take what the terrain gives" meant not over-reaching, not believing that setting a problem implies it can be solved.

**The unique ability Amos had - no one else I know comes close - was to find the one place where the terrain will yield (for Amos, usually gold) - and then to take it all.** This skill in taking it all is what made so many of Amos' papers not only classics, but definitive. What Amos had done did not need redoing. Whether or not to over-reach was a source of frequent, and frequently productive tension between Amos and me over nearly 30 years. I have always wanted to do more than could be done without risk of error, and have always taken pride in preferring to be approximately right rather than precisely wrong. Amos thought that if you pick the terrain properly you won't have to choose, because you can be precisely right. And time and time again he managed to be precisely right on things that mattered. Wisdom was part of his genius.

Fun was also part of Amos' genius. Solving problems was a lifelong source of intense joy for him, and the fact that he was richly rewarded for his problem solving never undermined that joy. Much of the joy was social. Almost all of Amos' work was collaborative. He enjoyed working with colleagues and students,

and he was supremely good at it. And his joy was infectious. The 12 or 13 years in which most of our work was joint were years of interpersonal and intellectual bliss. **Everything was interesting, almost everything was funny, and there was the recurrent joy of seeing an idea take shape. So many times in those years we shared the magical experience of one of us saying something which the other would understand more deeply than the speaker had done.** Contrary to the old laws of information theory, it was common for us to find that more information was received than had been sent. I have almost never had that experience with anyone else. If you have not had it, you don't know how marvelous collaboration can be...

❖ **Circle of life : Original Broadway song from Lion King**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ooPr5fBb8Ak&feature=related>

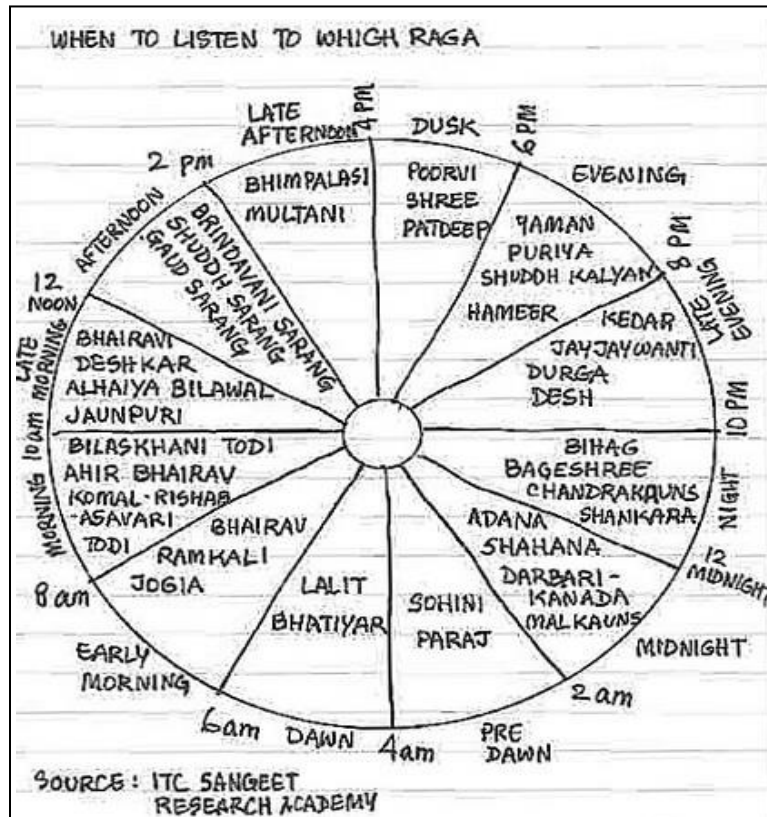


One of the best songs from one of the greatest Broadway shows ever.

The rugged vitality of African music makes this song really special.

❖ **Raga samay : Time of the day and the Indian Classical Raga**

Each Raga of Indian Classical Music is supposed to be associated with a specific period of the day. The enclosed ' Raga chakra' captures this in a pictorial way :



\*From Abhijitbhaduri.com

About 'Treasures'

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