

# The Power of Stupidity



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## Finally, a textbook of human stupidity

by Wayne McDonald

Those with more than a passing familiarity with my writing are well aware of the depths of my love for stupid people which, as of its most recent measurement, was about 6.27 nanometers. For those readers wishing to acquire a comparable distaste of stupidity for themselves, I must recommend Giancarlo Livraghi's *The Power of Stupidity*.

This book is a summation of Mr. Livraghi's decades-long efforts at providing at least a theoretical basis for the fundamental sources of stupidity, its social manifestations, and as a guide to its prevention. Within its pages lie some of the most profound observations on a subject which, like the weather, “Everyone talks about but no one ever does anything.” Consider his Three Corollaries to Cipolla's Laws of Human Stupidity:

- 1. In each of us there is a factor of stupidity which is always larger than we suppose.*
- 2. When the stupidity of one person combines with the stupidity of others, the impact grows geometrically – i.e. by multiplication, not addition, of the individual stupidity factors.*
- 3. The combination of intelligence in different people is more difficult than the combination of stupidity.*

But why would someone devote more than a casual glance at a book devoted to this topic. Mr. Livraghi tells how, as a child, he first realized that

*«... (A) study of history, as well as the observation of daily events, led me more and more to understand that stupidity is the greatest destructive force in all the evolution of humankind. It is quite surprising that such a serious problem is so scarcely understood.»*

Could it be that Mr. Livraghi has given us a one-paragraph explanation for the seemingly boundless sea of financial chicanery with which our nation struggles to contend when he writes:

*«One of the reasons why stupidity is poorly understood is that “cunning” is often confused with intelligence. The perception is as simple as it is misleading. There are “smart” people and there are fools, who are there to be exploited – and that is supposed to be fun. The swindlers are praised for their cleverness; the victims are mocked for their gullibility.»*

The reader of this review is assured that the above Pearls of Wisdom are but a glimpse of the treasures to be found inside this brief book.

Mr. Livraghi's credentials as both a writer and a student of human stupidity are most impressive. His classic essays *The Power of Stupidity* (1996), the *Stupidity of Power* (2002), and *Three Friends of Stupidity* (2003) will one day be recognized as the very foundation on which the modern study of stupidity will have been founded. In this respect, it is more than fair to state that, one day in the future, *The Power of Stupidity* will be viewed with the same respect we now accord to Newton's *Principia*.

I urge you, gentle reader, to immediately purchase this remarkable study of human stupidity.

Wayne McDonald

A presentation of *The Power of Stupidity*  
(with open access to the full text)  
is online in the [stupidity.it](http://stupidity.it) website

Links to the three essays quoted in this review  
(and more on this subject)  
are in [gandalf.it/stupidity/](http://gandalf.it/stupidity/)