Heuristics

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a heuristic can be defined as “serving as an aid to learning, discovery, or problem-solving by experimental and especially trial-and-error methods”. They are said to be great ways to make quick decisions and affect the choices that are made by cognitive systems.

First, humans may attribute some of their decision-making to common-sense. The idea of common-sense is not easily defined but this is due to the fact that many choices made by humans are thought of to either be evidently right or evidently wrong. Common-sense is somewhat effective as there are many cultural and societal expectations that one learns over time. These expectations are typically what cause a person to act in a certain manner, to follow and abide by the expectations that the rest of society have already set in place.

Another example of a heuristic that could be used by a cognitive system would be for a driverless car to assume that an object that is moving quickly towards it could be something that it might hit. In this instance, it is possible for the car to meticulously calculate the speed at which that object is moving and whether or not they would collide. Although this is a possibility, this would also take time to process. The driverless car might be better off stopping completely in its tracks, assuming that it would be safer to do so than to keep going at its constant speed.

Lastly, the authority heuristic is one that is prevalent in human cognition. Many people would follow what one says just because that person happens to be an authoritative figure or is in a position of fame or power. This heuristic seems to be particularly important to note in today’s society as social media and the ability to influence others is very easily done. In a given moment, humans tend to believe what a popular or well-known figure says even if their statements were untrue. This is somewhat effective as those people who have authority most likely has some knowledge on that topic or else they would not be in that position of power.

Heuristics are effective in cognition as they allow these systems to make quick judgements. They are the short and sweet explanations that many cognitive systems use to make sense of its thinking without having to delve deep into actual reasoning.

References