DONALD A. NORMAN

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EVERYDAY THINGS

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Preface

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CHAPTER ONE

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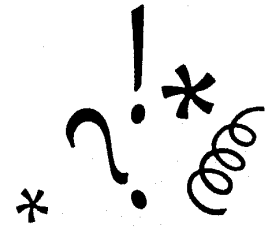

"Kenneth Olsen
still runs Digita
the annual meet
heat a cup of co
oven."[1]

You Wo

"You would need an engineering d
someone once told me, shaking his h
new digital watch. Well, I have ar
(Kenneth Olsen has two of them, an
oven.) Give me a few hours and I ca
should it take hours? I have talked w
the features of their washing machine
how to work a sewing machine or
habitually turn on the wrong stove

Why do we put up with the frust
objects that we can't figure out how
wrapped packages that seem impossi
people, with washing machines and

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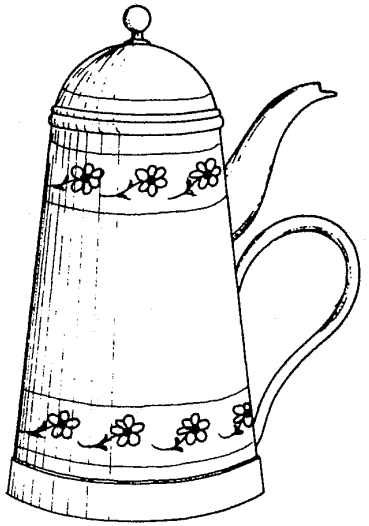

1.1 Carelman's Coffeepot for Masochists. The French artist Jacques Carelman in his series of books *Catalogue d'objets introuvables (Catalog of unfindable objects)* provides delightful examples of everyday things that are deliberately unworkable, outrageous, or otherwise ill-formed. Jacques Carelman: "Coffeepot for Masochists." Copyright © 1969–76–80 by Jacques Carelman and A. D. A. G. P. Paris. From Jacques Carelman, *Catalog of Unfindable Objects,* Balland, éditeur, Paris-France. Used by permission of the artist.

fusing to use, with audio-stereo-television-video-cassette-recorders that claim in their advertisements to do everything, but that make it almost impossible to do anything?

The human mind is exquisitely tailored to make sense of the world. Give it the slightest clue and off it goes, providing explanation, rationalization, understanding. Consider the objects—books, radios, kitchen appliances, office machines, and light switches—that make up our everyday lives. Well-designed objects are easy to interpret and understand. They contain visible clues to their operation. Poorly designed objects can be difficult and frustrating to use. They provide no clues—or sometimes false clues. They trap the user and thwart the normal process of interpretation and understanding. Alas, poor design predominates. The result is a world filled with frustration, with objects that cannot be understood, with devices that lead to error. This book is an attempt to change things.

The Frustrations of Everyday Life

If I were placed in the cockpit of a modern jet airliner, my inability to perform gracefully and smoothly would neither surprise nor bother me. But I shouldn't have trouble with doors and switches, water faucets and stoves. "Doors?" I can hear the reader saying, "you have trouble

opening doors?" Yes. I push doors t
doors that should be pushed, and wa
Moreover, I see others having the sa
bles. There are psychological princip
these things understandable and usa

Consider the door. There is not mu
open it or shut it. Suppose you are in
a corridor. You come to a door. In wh
you pull or push, on the left or the ri
in which direction? I have seen door
door poses only two essential ques
move? On which side should one wo
by the design, without any need for
out any need for trial and error.

*A friend told me of the time he go
office in a European city. The entranc
six glass swinging doors, followed i
row. That's a standard design: it h
maintain the indoor temperature of*

*My friend pushed on the side of
doors. It swung inward, and he ente
could get to the next row of doors, he
for an instant. He didn't realize it at t
to the right. So when he came to the
happened. "Hmm," he thought, "m
side of the adjacent door. Nothing.
outside again. He turned around and
Nothing. He pushed the adjacent do
entered no longer worked. He turne
inside doors again. Nothing. Concern
Just then, a group of people on the
my friend's right) passed easily thro
hurried over to follow their path.*

*How could such a thing happen
One contains the supporting pillar
ported. To open the door, you must
you push on the hinge side, nothing
aimed for beauty, not utility. No dis
visible hinges. So how can the ordi*

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