You can never really know what another person is thinking. I’m often surprised by what I’m thinking. Sometimes when I’m in a brown study or a blue funk, giving off the vibe of deepness, I am offered a penny for my thoughts. If I am, in fact, thinking at all, and not daydreaming about ways to destroy those who have wronged me over the years, I’m thinking about whether to take a shower or not, if I should change my shirt, or occasionally, about the futility of all human endeavor. And frankly, I have never actually received a penny for my thoughts in my life. Sometimes I think about that as well, with some bitterness.

But there are those who are quite adept at reading lots about our thoughts: ways to elicit or predict behavior from us, that will accrue to their benefit. Gamblers can read an opponent’s body language, and determine if he has a full house or a busted flush. Psychopathic killers, although not possessing emotions themselves, are often adept at predicting what their victims want to hear – at least, that’s what the movies tell us.

Successful movie makers and television producers are adept at making entertainments that push some button within us and make us pay attention. For some reason these entertainments generally involve robots, vampires, zombies, and/or psychopathic serial killers.

Advertisers and marketers do a lot of research into what colors, sounds, images, and products persuade us to imagine we are the kind of person that would purchase the kind of goods and services they want us to buy. Successful politicians are especially skilled at telling us what we want to hear.

Lately there have been worries about America turning into a culture of narcissism. People are all about our own wants, only interested in others as means to fulfill those desires. There’s certainly anecdotal evidence of that, most recently with the whole “Balloon Boy” episode, which was apparently staged by his father so they could land a reality show television series and the money thereof. Even if he goes to prison for it, he’ll probably get a movie out of the deal, with Matt Damon.

As the world becomes ever full of Ponzi schemes, untrustworthy people, outright liars, deceivers, and con men we become ever more complicit in our own hoodwinking. We think nothing of posting details about our likes and dislikes on the web. This overt sharing is being packaged by some as a new kind of honesty. Could it also be a brand new way of saying to the world, “There are ways you can sucker me! I await eagerly the opportunity to give money to those who can help me become more like the person I claim to be in my Facebook profile.”

Who even needs to read minds these days? We’re all so transparent. That transparency has become the new murk. And that’s why, like so many others, I am no longer accepting pennies for my thoughts. From now on, you will find my thoughts exclusively on eBay. Bidding starts at $5.

I gotta go.