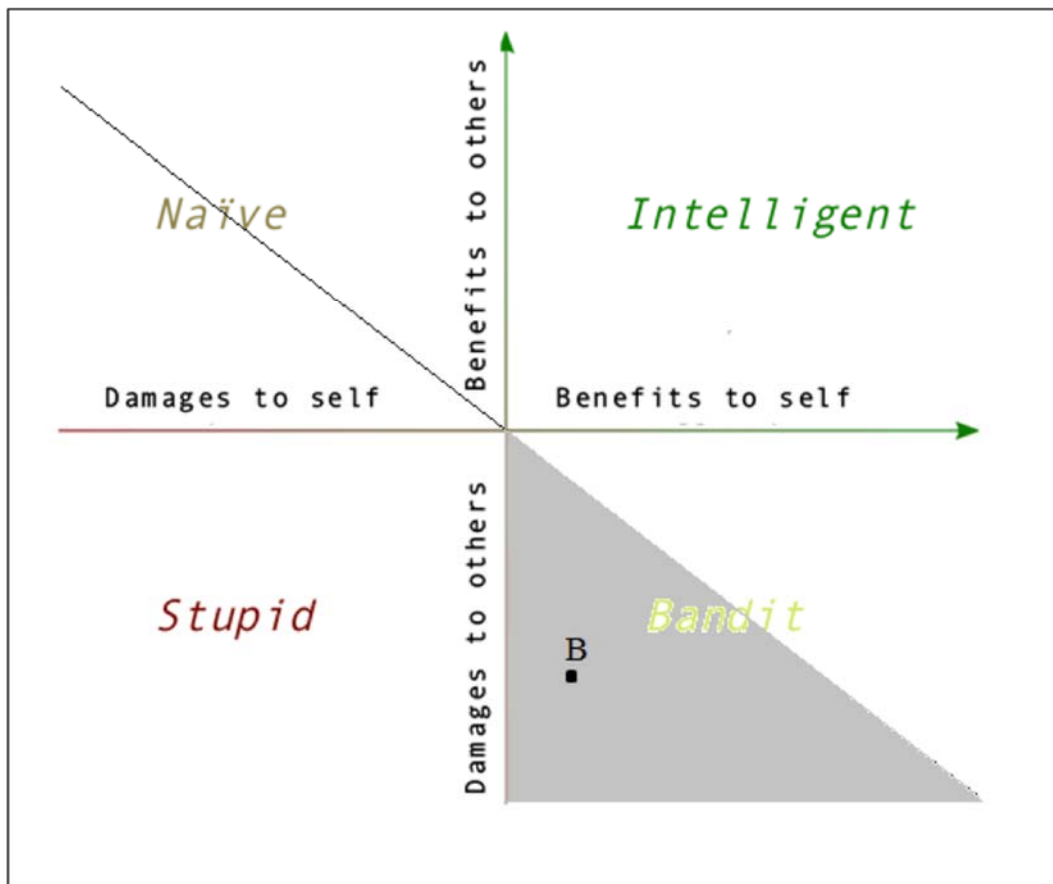


We should all be more familiar with economist [Carlo Cipolla's work on human stupidity](#). Cipolla had a very succinct definition of stupid people: those who cause harm to others without benefit to themselves.

Cipolla's Five Laws of Stupidity are:

1. **Always and inevitably, each of us underestimates the number of stupid individuals in the world.**
2. **The probability that a certain person is stupid is independent of any other characteristic of the same person.**
3. **A stupid person is one who causes harm to another person or group without at the same time obtaining a benefit for himself or even damaging himself.**
4. **Non-stupid people always underestimate the harmful potential of stupid people.**
5. **The stupid person is the most dangerous person that exists.**

Cipolla's theory leads to this four-bin categorization:



My one quibble with this model is in the upper left quadrant, which should be divided: If you understand that you are harming yourself to help others, you are generous. But if you don't, you are gullible, and are probably being victimized by a bandit.

[credit: Doug Muder, WeeklySift.com]