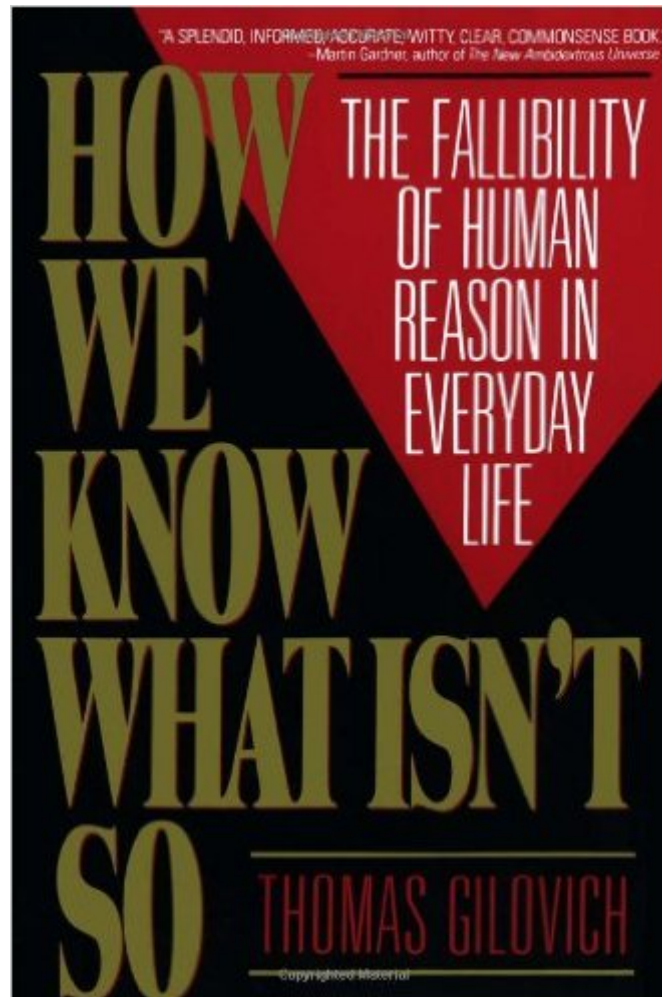


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How We Know What Isn't So: The Fallibility Of Human Reason In Everyday Life



Synopsis

Thomas Gilovich offers a wise and readable guide to the fallacy of the obvious in everyday life. When can we trust what we believe? "that "teams and players have winning streaks," that "flattery works," or that "the more people who agree, the more likely they are to be right" "and when are such beliefs suspect? Thomas Gilovich offers a guide to the fallacy of the obvious in everyday life. Illustrating his points with examples, and supporting them with the latest research findings, he documents the cognitive, social, and motivational processes that distort our thoughts, beliefs, judgments and decisions. In a rapidly changing world, the biases and stereotypes that help us process an overload of complex information inevitably distort what we would like to believe is reality. Awareness of our propensity to make these systematic errors, Gilovich argues, is the first step to more effective analysis and action.

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Customer Reviews

Mr. Gilovich says ". . . there are inherent biases in the data upon which we base our beliefs, biases that must be recognized and overcome if we are to arrive at sound judgments and valid beliefs." The cost of these biases is real and severe. This book explains why people are prone to wrong thinking, and ways they can counteract this. Here are points that Mr. Gilovich made: 1. Seeing Order in Randomness - We all have a natural tendency to see order in data, even when the data is totally random and irregular. We do this even when we have no personal reason to see order. This happens especially when we remember facts from the past. Our memory plays tricks on us by emphasizing any possible patterns, and forgetting irregularities that might refute the patterns. For

instance, basketball players often think that if they make one successful basket, then they are more likely to make the next basket - because they remember times when this has happened to them. "When you're hot, you're hot." However, objective statistical studies done on when successful baskets are made show that, if anything, the opposite is true. This natural tendency to misconstrue random events is called the "clustering illusion." Chance events often seem to us to have some order to them, but when the law of averages is applied objectively, this order disappears. This error is compounded when our active imagination tries to create theories for why there should be order. Because of this, we need to be careful when we draw conclusions based on a sequence we think we see in some data.² Looking for Confirmation - We all have a natural tendency to look for "yes" instead of "no." If we have an idea, we tend to look for evidence that will confirm our idea, not evidence that will disprove it.

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