



01

[1] How funny are you?

[2] While some people are natural humorists, being funny is a set of skills that can be learned.

[3] Exceptionally funny people don't depend upon their memory to keep track of everything they find funny.

[4] In the olden days, great comedians carried notebooks to write down funny thoughts or observations and scrapbooks for news clippings that struck them as funny.

[5] Today, you can do that easily with your smartphone.

[6] If you have a funny thought, record it as an audio note.

[7] If you read a funny article, save the link in your bookmarks.

[8] The world is a funny place and your existence within it is probably funnier.

[9] Accepting that fact is a blessing that gives you everything you need to see humor and craft stories on a daily basis.

[10] All you have to do is document them and then tell someone.



02

[1] If you ask a physicist how long it would take a marble to fall from the top of a ten-story building, he will likely answer the question by assuming that the marble falls in a vacuum.

[2] In reality, the building is surrounded by air, which applies friction to the falling marble and slows it down.

[3] Yet the physicist will point out that the friction on the marble is so small that its effect is negligible.

[4] Assuming the marble falls in a vacuum simplifies the problem without substantially affecting the answer.

[5] Economists make assumptions for the same reason:

[6] Assumptions can simplify the complex world and make it easier to understand.

[7] To study the effects of international trade, for example, we might assume that the world consists of only two countries and that each country produces only two goods.

[8] By doing so, we can focus our thinking on the essence of the problem.

[9] Thus, we are in a better position to understand international trade in the complex world.



03

[1] Water is the ultimate commons.

[2] Once, watercourses seemed boundless and the idea of protecting water was considered silly.

[3] But rules change.

[4] Time and again, communities have studied water systems and redefined wise use.

[5] Now Ecuador has become the first nation on Earth to put the rights of nature in its constitution.

[6] This move has proclaimed that rivers and forests are not simply property but maintain their own right to flourish.

[7] According to the constitution, a citizen might file suit on behalf of an injured watershed, recognizing that its health is crucial to the common good.

[8] More countries are acknowledging nature's rights and are expected to follow Ecuador's lead.



04

- [1] Have you heard someone say, "He has no one to blame but himself" for some problem?
- [2] In everyday life we often blame people for "creating" their own problems.
- [3] Although individual behavior can contribute to social problems, our individual experiences are often largely beyond our own control.
- [4] They are determined by society as a whole — by its historical development and its organization.
- [5] If a person sinks into debt because of overspending or credit card abuse, other people often consider the problem to be the result of the individual's personal failings.
- [6] However, thinking about it this way overlooks debt among people in low-income brackets who have no other way than debt to acquire basic necessities of life.
- [7] By contrast, at middle- and upper-income levels, overspending takes on a variety of meanings typically influenced by what people think of as essential for their well-being and associated with the so-called "good life" that is so heavily marketed.
- [8] But across income and wealth levels, larger-scale economic and social problems may affect the person's ability to pay for consumer goods and services.



05

[1] At the Leipzig Zoo in Germany, 34 zoo chimpanzees and orangutans participating in a study were each individually tested in a room, where they were put in front of two boxes.

[2] An experimenter would place an object inside one box and leave the room.

[3] Another experimenter would enter the room, move the object into the other box and exit.

[4] When the first experimenter returned and tried retrieving the object from the first box, the great ape would help the experimenter open the second box, which it knew the object had been transferred to.

[5] However, most apes in the study did not help the first experimenter open the second box if the first experimenter was still in the room to see the second experimenter move the item.

[6] The findings show the great apes understood when the first experimenter still thought the item was where he or she last left it.



06

[1] People are innately inclined to look for causes of events, to form explanations and stories.

[2] That is one reason storytelling is such a persuasive medium.

[3] Stories resonate with our experiences and provide examples of new instances.

[4] From our experiences and the stories of others we tend to form generalizations about the way people behave and things work.

[5] We attribute causes to events, and as long as these cause-and-effect pairings make sense, we use them for understanding future events.

[6] Yet these causal attributions are often mistaken.

[7] Sometimes they implicate the wrong causes, and for some things that happen, there is no single cause.

[8] Rather, there is a complex chain of events that all contribute to the result; if any one of the events would not have occurred, the result would be different.

[9] But even when there is no single causal act, that doesn't stop people from assigning one.