01

[1] We create a picture of the world using the examples that most easily come to mind.

[2] This is foolish, of course, because in reality, things don't happen more frequently just because we can imagine them more easily.

[3] Thanks to this prejudice, we travel through life with an incorrect risk map in our heads.

[4] Thus, we overestimate the risk of being the victims of a plane crash, a car accident, or a murder.

[5] And we underestimate the risk of dying from less spectacular means, such as diabetes or stomach cancer.

[6] The chances of bomb attacks are much rarer than we think, and the chances of suffering depression are much higher.

[7] We attach too much likelihood to spectacular, flashy, or loud outcomes.

[8] Anything silent or invisible we downgrade in our minds.

[9] Our brains imagine impressive outcomes more readily than ordinary ones.

02

[1] Appreciating the collective nature of knowledge can correct our false notions of how we see the world.

[2] People love heroes.

[3] Individuals are given credit for major breakthroughs.

[4] Marie Curie is treated as if she worked alone to discover radioactivity and Newton as if he discovered the laws of motion by himself.

[5] The truth is that in the real world, nobody operates alone.

[6] Scientists not only have labs with students who contribute critical ideas, but also have colleagues who are doing similar work, thinking similar thoughts, and without whom the scientist would get nowhere.

[7] And then there are other scientists who are working on different problems, sometimes in different fields, but nevertheless set the stage through their own findings and ideas.

[8] Once we start understanding that knowledge isn't all in the head, that it's shared within a community, our heroes change.

[9] Instead of focusing on the individual, we begin to focus on a larger group.

03

[1] You may be wondering why people prefer to prioritize internal disposition over external situations when seeking causes to explain behaviour.

[2] One answer is simplicity.

[3] Thinking of an internal cause for a person's behaviour is easy – the strict teacher is a stubborn person, the devoted parents just love their kids.

[4] In contrast, situational explanations can be complex.

[5] Perhaps the teacher appears stubborn because she's seen the consequences of not trying hard in generations of students and wants to develop self-discipline in them.

[6] Perhaps the parents who're boasting of the achievements of their children are anxious about their failures, and conscious of the cost of their school fees.

[7] These situational factors require knowledge, insight, and time to think through.

[8] Whereas, jumping to a dispositional attribution is far easier.

04

[1] Allowing people to influence each other reduces the precision of a group's estimate.

[2] To derive the most useful information from multiple sources of evidence, you should always try to make these sources independent of each other.

[B] This rule is part of good police procedure.

[4] When there are multiple witnesses to an event, they are not allowed to discuss it before giving their testimony.

[5] The goal is not only to prevent collusion by hostile witnesses, it is also to prevent witnesses from influencing each other.

[6] Witnesses who exchange their experiences will tend to make similar errors in their testimony, reducing the total value of the information they provide.

[7] The standard practice of open discussion gives too much weight to the opinions of those who speak early and confidently, causing others to line up behind them.

05-06

[1] David Stenbill, Monica Bigoutski, Shana Tirana.

[2] I just made up these names.

[3] If you encounter any of them within the next few minutes, you are likely to remember where you saw them.

[4] You know, and will know for a while, that these are not the names of minor celebrities.

[5] But suppose that a few days from now you are shown a long list of names, including those of some minor celebrities and "new" names of people that you have never heard of; your task will be to check every name of a celebrity on the list.

[6] There is a substantial probability that you will identify David Stenbill as a well-known person, although you will not know whether you encountered his name in the context of movies, sports, or politics.

[7] Larry Jacoby, the psychologist who first demonstrated this memory illusion in the laboratory, titled his article "Becoming Famous Overnight".

[8] How does this happen?

[9] Start by asking yourself how you know whether or not someone is famous.

[10] In some cases of truly famous people, you have a mental file with rich information about a person – think Albert Einstein, Michael Jackson, or Hillary Clinton.

[11] But you will have no file of information about David Stenbill if you encounter his name in a few days.

[12] All you will have is a sense of familiarity.