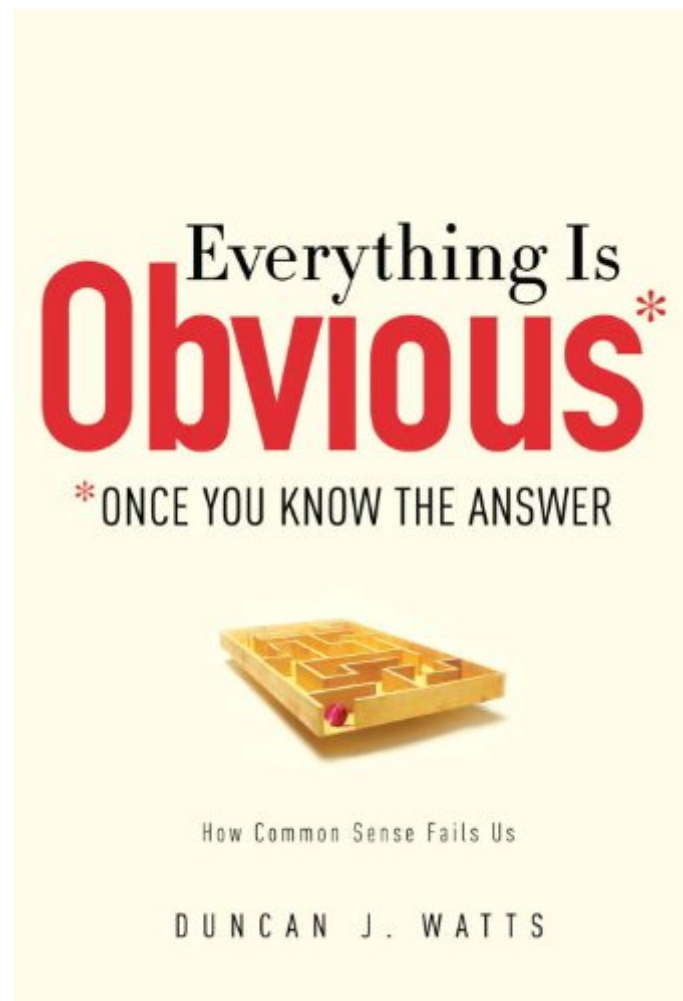




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Everything Is Obvious: *Once You Know The Answer



Synopsis

By understanding how and when common sense fails, we can improve our understanding of the present and better plan for the future. Drawing on the latest scientific research, along with a wealth of historical and contemporary examples, Watts shows how common sense reasoning and history conspire to mislead us into believing that we understand more about the world of human behavior than we do; and in turn, why attempts to predict, manage, or manipulate social and economic systems so often go awry. It seems obvious, for example, that people respond to incentives; yet policy makers and managers alike frequently fail to anticipate how people will respond to the incentives they create. Social trends often seem to be driven by certain influential people; yet marketers have been unable to identify these “influencers” in advance. And although successful products or companies always seem in retrospect to have succeeded because of their unique qualities, predicting the qualities of the next hit product or hot company is notoriously difficult even for experienced professionals. Watts’ argument has important implications in politics, business, and marketing, as well as in science and everyday life.

Book Information

File Size: 3475 KB

Print Length: 369 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 0307951790

Publisher: Crown Business (March 29, 2011)

Publication Date: March 29, 2011

Sold by: Random House LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B004DEPHGQ

Text-to-Speech: Not enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #116,167 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #22

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Whether you are rich or poor, political left or right, God-worshipping or atheist, a scientist, parent, cashier, C.E.O, customer service rep., fast food worker, this book is for EVERYONE! We all believe so strongly in our, well, beliefs, that we rarely give others the time of day or the benefit of a doubt. The author challenges us to consider-, even for a moment-the possibility that everything is not always as it seems, and that we may all be far more ALIKE than we are different.

I found the vast majority of this book interesting in its examination of what we think we know versus what we really do know. Understanding how we interpret events to have them make sense to us, and then understanding that we are assuming many things based on our point of view which is likely not relevant at all was quite interesting. The book makes you think about things perhaps more dispassionately.

Having worked for many years in agriculture, where the ideas of interdisciplinary needs are central, it is a great joy to read Duncan Watts' book. His easy transition across all areas of learning is an object lesson. His skill is that he does it with such amazing ease. He walks amongst the big questions with all the skills of a scientist who understands the needs for rigour, but accepts that the human (whether they be in policy, research or dinner table discussions) is supremely adaptable, especially when it comes to paradox, consistency, and commitment over time. I hope this becomes a widely used text for students and educators. It is rich in ideas and his footnotes and references provide a great signpost to further reading for people with all sorts of parochial interests. Read it, and I am sure you will be tempted to grab a pencil and underline more than a few well argued comments and conclusions.

Brilliant !! No doubt, after reading the book, that everything is obvious once you know what happened. In a very entertaining and educating way, Duncan makes his case about how good we are to deceive ourselves in order to make sense of things we just don't know.

This book has some great insights that are well worth digesting. Although there's nothing here that I shouldn't objectively have already known, and did "know" on some level, having it spelled out and

reinforced in this way forced me to confront it head on, and more carefully consider what I really know. A big game changer for me. And as I read a lot of non-fiction, I am always happy when a knowledgeable author tells it like it is without babying me or being unnecessarily esoteric. At a few points the author seemed to hammer on his points a little longer than necessary, but soon enough it moved on to something else that was interesting. Be aware that the index is MASSIVE - some 30% of the book - so if you're reading the Kindle edition and it seems like you've read a ton before the 50% mark even happens, it's not as long as you think.

Great stories backed up by tidal waves of references and written wonderfully. Highly recommended for those looking to step into the world of social science.

I will never think of common sense the same again. This is a thought-provoking work that deserves to be read.

Great book from a fantastic sociologist.

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