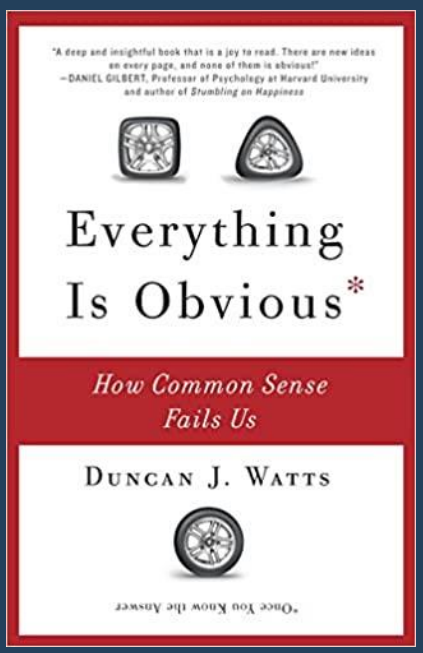

Everything Is Obvious

Tudo é Óbvio
Year of publication: 2012
Author: Duncan J. Watts
368 pages
Link for purchase: https://amzn.to/3bLZTkU

"Everything is Obvious: Once You Know the Answer" was published in 2011 and that same year the work was published by Editora Paz e Terra in Portuguese.

The author argues that it is possible to improve our present and better plan for the future if we understand how and when our common sense speaks louder and ultimately fails. This thesis is important for science, business, and politics, and of course for everyday life.

Score

8

7 Aplicability
8 Inspiration
7 Innovation
8 Impact on results
8 Structure

Main ideias of the book

- Common sense is the essence of society's intelligence, deeply rooted in us;
- Unlike mathematics and science, common sense is predominantly a practical rather than theoretical concept;
- Most people believe they have an answer to everything when it comes to people management, and that is a problem;
- Common sense is enough to make sense of the world, but not to understand its complex wholeness;
- Our choices are influenced by environmental "conditioning" and other people's choices;
- Common sense explanations that talk about societies, markets, cultures, as well as describing individuals, are flawed;
- Behavioral influencers are everywhere and can be anyone;
- Predictability depends on a view out of common sense; we must distinguish between those we can safely do and those we cannot;
- It is important to cultivate an unusual sense.

For whom is this book suitable?

Reading this book is recommended for business people, scientists, those in the business of politics, and of course, anyone who wants to open their eyes and get rid of everyday common sense deceptions.

Overview of the book

“Invisible” Rules

We all follow a multitude of rules every day without even being aware of it. Common sense is the essence necessary for coexistence between one human being and another, is invisible to our eyes and remains rooted in each other's unconscious.
It is through this human ability that we know how to act in a variety of everyday situations, such as knowing how to behave on a crowded bus, for example, but common sense is not easy to describe.
Briefly, it is the collection of experiences, observations and revelations accumulated and acquired throughout life. They are social norms, customs, and practices of each and every one.
The acquisition of this knowledge occurs when we participate in society, which is why it is not possible to be taught to machines (robots). Common sense is predominantly practical, ie it focuses on finding answers to questions rather than how to get answers.

> *Common sense sometimes works just like mythology*

Bad use of the common sense

When common sense is used to resolve issues that involve anticipating something or managing the behavior of large numbers of people, it becomes a problem, and we do it all the time.
Every day when we watch television and seek to understand the facts, without thinking we use our common sense logic to try to judge the events we see. In this way, we are reflecting on the behavior of others and not ourselves - in circumstances in which we are not inserted.
It is indeed quite a problem when we make use of common sense outside the context in which we are present.
When politicians make laws, for example, to reduce social inequality, they rely on their own common sense ideas about the reasons, causes, which make some people richer than others.
That is the question Watts addresses the misuse of our habit. This should not be generalized to everyone as it is a knowledge of the issue, not necessarily the truth.

Influential myth

The author mentions that "common sense sometimes works just like mythology." What does that mean? This habit gives us ready explanations of various situations in the world, freeing us from worrying about whether something we think we know to be true or is limited to our belief.
The adversity that arises is that we think we know everything when, in fact, the issue has been overshadowed by the story we reproduce. This fantasy of understanding undermines the general motivation to deal with social problems, focusing more on the treatment of other areas such as medicine, engineering, and science.
According to Watts, the key to this topic is to try to understand what is common sense that makes us think we know more than we do.
It is proven by countless experiences that an individual's choices and behaviors can be influenced. There are several factors that can affect the way we act and think that operate mainly and mainly in our unconscious.

Cited in the book is Granovetter's “riot model,” which shows a relevant observation about the limits of understanding collective behavior by using individual behavior.
In our day-to-day choices, we tend to choose from many options, the ones our friends like, for example. Watts quotes, "When we choose, say, a new restaurant to eat, it sometimes makes sense to ask others for advice."
Many (if not all) of your decisions were determined by a small group of influential and important individuals, either globally (as a famous) or individual (as your grandmother).

Accidental Influencers

Duncan compares influence to contagion that "information, and potentially influence, can spread through the crossroads of networks as an infectious disease."
From then on, the importance of an influencer is huge, not only for the people who directly influenced but also for those indirectly influenced.
The multiplier effect of an influencing person often happens accidentally, by chance, because it depends much more on the structure of the network (it may be the internet or its city, for example) than on the characteristics of individuals.
Any spark will be sufficient to cause a large forest fire when conditions are favorable.

Can we predict the future?

There are possibilities that can even be foreseen, but they need to be immersed in a simple system. It is possible to accurately predict what the weather will be like tomorrow, but it is impossible to predict which side of the coin will fall upward when it throws it up unless the kick is guided by luck.
The best we can hope for is to predict the likelihood that something will happen.
The difficulty we come face to face in thinking about the future is reflected in our persistence for explanations that account for known outcomes amidst infinite possibilities.
The author explains this statement so that when we think about the future, we want to know what is really going to happen, and to come up with a prediction, we need to consider the variety of possible future alternatives, and that's not what we usually do, We want to know what the possible future will be.
The problem with forecasting is not that we are all good or bad about it, but that we are not good at differentiating predictions that we can make safely from those that we really can't make.

Trust no one, especially yourself

The opinion of each person carries different influences from the most variable situations, so trusting yourself, always and only, to make decisions is not a good idea, because you do not own the truth and no one.
According to the author, one might think that experts have knowledge about their field, but they are as bad at making predictions as laymen, perhaps even worse.
The problem with trusting experts is that we tend to consult only one of them, rather than reconciling the opinions of many people, which is ideal for forming a new opinion.
With all the background that the book brings, it is concluded that the social world is much more complex than the physical world. Never can a science of sociology be compared to the natural sciences.
Watts quotes that we will need to pursue all approaches simultaneously, seeking to converge on an understanding of people's behavior and the functioning of the world as a whole.

What other authors say about it?

In "Factfulness" you will refute the worldviews you have had until today, looking at a two-sided situation without generalizations. After reading this, you will be more critical in analyzing world situations and conflicts, understanding that things are not always as TV presents us.

According to Dr. Robert, in his book “Influence: Science and Practice,” everyone uses to influence and is a target for it. He explains that persuasion practitioners know exactly what they want and where to go, so they use six psychological principles to achieve their goals, which are covered in his book.

Soft Skill Based Leadership is a compilation of articles by many professionals. The work points out that emotional intelligence determines our response to the experience we are living in. This response can be impulsive or controlled. To develop this skill, we need self-knowledge.

Okay, but how can I apply this in my life?

The book spells out various tools and actions that we can apply to our lives so that we are not fooled by our own thinking.

Our instincts about how life works may be depriving us of experiencing situations differently and seeing them differently as well. How about exploring other ways of being, leaving aside common sense conceptions that make you fail in your decisions?

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