



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Luncheon Reservations

Luncheon reservations for the January 13, 2016 meeting of the Friends of American Writers are due no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 10, 2016. Please note, this deadline is firm. No reservations will be accepted following this date and time. To reserve, please contact only Lorraine Campione (773-275-5118) or Pat Adelberg (847-588-0911). Luncheon will be served at 12:00 noon in the main floor dining room of the Fortnightly Club of Chicago, 120 E. Bellevue Place tea. The cost of the tea is \$40 payable by check (preferred) in the front lobby on the day of the meeting. If you are reserving for a group, we ask that only one person make the group request to avoid confusion. Please note, if you make a reservation and find you cannot attend, you must cancel no later than 6:00 p.m. on the Sunday preceding the meeting. Reservations not cancelled must be paid for by the member. Parking is available at the parking lot at 100 E. Bellevue Place.

We would like to extend our thanks to Chef John Ferguson and his staff for providing the excellent tea service following the program at our December 2015 meeting. We are all most appreciative of your efforts.

A special thank you to John Mahady and his very talented colleague Becky Menzie for the delightful musical program they presented preceding the December tea. They had us nodding, humming along, and clamoring for more. As the song goes, "they're the tops!"

New Member

FAW welcomes new member Mary Bust (Marybust@gmail.com) from Frankfort, Illinois. We know that Mary will be a great addition to the group and that she will find her membership to be a rewarding experience.

As of December 2015, 27 new members have joined FAW. Membership Chair, Sandie Weiss, is always on the lookout for new members. If you know of anyone who would like to be part of FAW, please contact Sandie at 161 E. Chicago Ave., #35G, Chicago, IL or by email redheadsandie@yahoo.com.

Literature Awards Committee

With a submission deadline of December 10, the Literature Awards Committee had received 40 books for awards' consideration by December 9. The Committee chairs noted that all of the submissions were excellent, and coming up with the winners would be a difficult task.

Young People's Literature Awards

The chair of the Young People's Literature Awards committee, Marti Daniel, announced that the group had received about 30 books for awards' consideration. Again, there were some outstanding submissions for the group's review.

The many excellent books not in the final consideration list will be offered at the annual FAW book sale.

From New Orleans with Love

As many of you know, FAW member Carol Eshaghy recently led a drive to secure books for the KIPP McDonogh 15 Middle School in New Orleans, Louisiana where her son Sean teaches. The school's library was

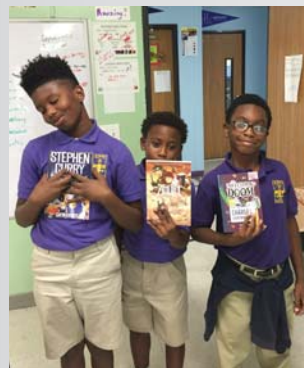
destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, and students were sharing one tiny shelf of books. Thanks to Carol's efforts and the generosity of some FAW members, the sum of \$1,750 was raised to buy new books for the library. Students were overjoyed to receive the books, as were their teachers. Carol received the following note from one of the teachers, Stephanie Berger.

Thank you, donors, for your contribution. Together, we were able to buy over 200 brand new, high-interest books for deserving students. On average, our students come to us reading three years below grade level, with many of them saying they "hate" to read. We work to change that. We all remember the first time we read something to which we connected to on a deeper level. Because of your support, more students are reading books they are excited and passionate about, which is the first step towards building a life-long love of reading in all of our students. Thank you again.

—THE KIPP McDONOGH 15
MIDDLE SCHOOL TEAM AND FAMILY

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Below, courtesy of Sean Eshaghy, is proof that this is true.

Thank you, Carol and Sean, for allowing us to be part of this program and for letting us to bring the joy of reading back to these very deserving children. 📖



▲ Happiness is...a good book. ▲ This one's for me

▲ To each his/ her own



New Year's Eve in Chicago

Chicago rang in 2016 with a big outdoor celebration called *Chi Town Rising*. The epic, first-of-its-kind New Year's Eve event, *Chi-Town Rising* featured music headliners, a visually spectacular countdown to 2016, and a major fireworks show. The celebration was televised live on NBC 5.

New York

New York held its traditional Times Square countdown and ball drop. A specially designed ball was dropped at 11:59 EST while millions of spectators looked on and cheered.

2016
HOW WE RANG IT IN AROUND THE WORLD

And Around the World

In China, the first day of the New Year falls sometime between January 21 and February 20. The Chinese Lunar Year is centuries old and embodies several myths and traditions. Traditionally, the festival honors the gods and ancestors. Chinese New Year is celebrated in countries and territories with large Chinese populations, including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mauritius, and the Philippines. Within China, regional customs and traditions concerning the celebration of the



▲ Chi Town rising

▼ Times Square, New York on New Year's Eve



Chinese New Year vary widely. On the evening preceding New Year's Day, Chinese families gather for an annual reunion dinner. It is traditional for every family to clean the house thoroughly in order to sweep away bad fortune and make way for incoming good luck. Windows and doors are decorated with red colored paper cut-outs and verses with themes of good fortune, happiness, wealth, and long life. Other activities include lighting firecrackers and giving money in red paper envelopes.



▲ Red paper cuttings for Chinese New Year

The United Kingdom welcomed the New Year with cheering, feasting, drinking, and families getting together. Custom dictates that a tall, handsome, dark-haired man has to be the first visitor of a household after midnight. He carries a loaf of bread, a bottle of whiskey, some coal, and

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salt. The family puts the coal in the fire and passes around the bread and whiskey. Crowds gather along the Thames to enjoy fireworks and Big Ben strikes out at twelve o'clock.



▲ Big Ben strikes twelve on New Year's Eve

▼ New Year's Eve on the Champs Elysees



The French New Year is known as *jour des trennes* and *jour de l'an*. At a celebration, called "Reveillon," huge parties were held. Guests got together throughout France to feast and drink champagne.

The Danes collected dishes all year and threw them at the front door on New Year's Eve. They believe the more the broken plates, the more friends one will have in the New Year.



▲ Eating twelve grapes at midnight on New Year's Eve in Spain

In Spain, as midnight strikes, it is customary to eat twelve grapes as quickly as possible—one at each strike of the clock. It is believed the grapes will bring good luck. This past New Year's Eve was no exception. Throughout Spain, handfuls of grapes were consumed at midnight.

The Germans dropped molten lead into cold water to see what shape it took. Each shape symbolizes an aspect of life: love, prosperity, fortune, and luck. Families got together for a midnight feast. According to custom, individuals left something on their plates to assure abundance in the new year.



▲ Pouring molten lead into cold water

◀ Broken plates on New Year's Eve in Denmark

Wherever you were, and however you celebrated, I hope that your new year is filled with love, health, and happiness. Wishing you all the best in 2016. 🇩🇪

The Reading Corner

Capital in the Twenty-first Century

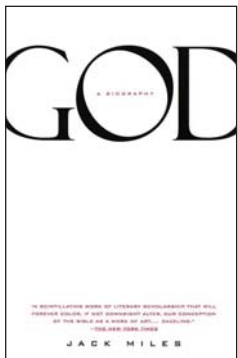
Thomas Piketty

Thinking Fast and Slow

Daniel Kahneman

Reviewed by

NORMAN BAUGHER



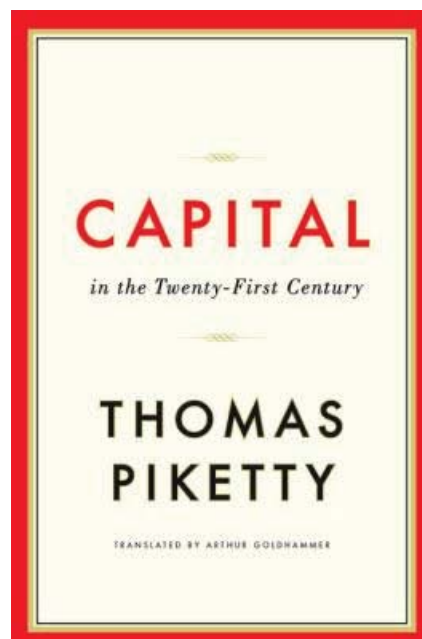
In 1995 I bought a book by Jack Miles based on three things: (1) a rave review in the *New York Times* by Phyllis Tribble, Baldwin, Professor of Sacred Literature at Union Theological Seminary; (2) a beautifully designed cover (we designers are suckers for well-designed items, and (3) an irresistible title: *God, a Biography*. While I am not affiliated with any religious organization, I tend to gravitate to non-fiction books about religions because of the great influence religion has had on every aspect of history, including the arts. This book seemed made for me, a practicing visual artist. Or so I thought.

Both the review and the text of *God* provided new insights into my reading preferences. I learned that non-fiction books with masses of exacting and detailed content can be too ponderous, too complex, or too repetitive for my taste—no matter the rewards promised by a great review. I also learned that I can derive great pleasure from reading a well-written preface, prologue, or introduction that explains the premise and from a conclusion that furthers my appreciation of the subject. Since *God*, I have read other books from which the greatest reward was not from the body of the

text, but from the front and back matter: *Capital in the Twenty-first Century* by economist Thomas Piketty and *Thinking Fast and Slow* by Psychologist Daniel Kahneman, Nobel Memorial Prize winner in Economic Sciences most recently. I read both of these books off and on, and bits at a time.

Capital, in the Twenty-first Century is a tour de force of research on the causes of global inequality. For over a decade Piketty ploughed through the economic data of major world countries to ascertain these causes. Because the economies of these countries have always been in flux, compiling and organizing recognizable patterns took prodigious effort. Mr. Piketty achieves his purpose, ably illustrating his text with easy to understand tables and diagrams. The May 2014 *Economist* summarizes the book this way:

Mr. Piketty derives a grand theory of capital and inequality. As a general rule wealth grows faster than economic output . . . Other things being equal, faster economic growth will diminish the importance of wealth in a society, whereas slower growth will increase it. . . . But there are no natural forces pushing against the steady concentration of wealth. Only a burst of rapid growth . . . or government intervention can be counted on to keep economies from returning to



the “patrimonial capitalism” that worried Karl Marx.

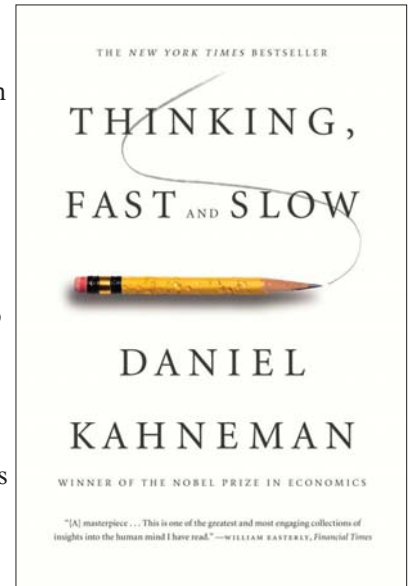
In his conclusion Piketty recommends that governments adopt a global tax on wealth to prevent soaring inequality.

I learned of *Thinking Fast and Slow* in a *New York Times* Op-ed by David Brooks. Brooks praised it highly, noting its intellectual surprises and self-help value. In Part I of the book titled Two Systems, Kahneman divides human thinking into “System 1” and “System 2”, which he calls “useful fictions” that he claims help explain the quirks of the human mind. System 1, which includes intuition, is the automatic system that enables us to draw quick conclusions. It is also the assuming system--instinctive and emotional. It operates invisibly with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control. System 1 enables us to do such things as:

- Detect that one object is more distant than another.
- Orient to the source of a sudden sound.
- Complete phrases, such as “bread and . . .”

System 2 is slower and more logical. It comes into play when attention and effort are required. System 2 enables us to do such things as:

- Focus on the voice of a particular person in a crowded and noisy room.
- Look for a woman with white hair.
- Search memory to identify a surprising sound.



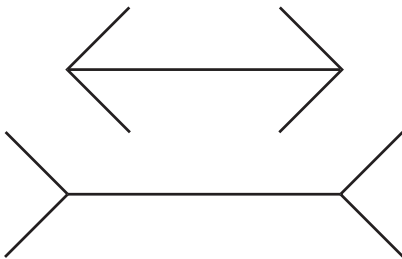
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All of these require concentration and active thinking.

The illustration below visually represent the difference between what our System 1 mind thinks it sees and what our System 2 mind can discover by measuring. It demonstrates how powerful System 1 is. Even though measuring shows the horizontal line on both figures to be the same length, our minds perceive them differently.



Just as there are visual illusions, there are also thinking or cognitive illusions.

Wikipedia explains Part II: "Heuristics and Biases" this way.

[Kahneman] uses heuristics to assert that System 1 thinking involves associating new information with existing patterns or thoughts rather than creating new patterns for each new experience. For example, a child who has only seen shapes with straight edges would experience an octagon rather than a triangle when first viewing a circle. In a legal metaphor, a judge limited to heuristic thinking would only be able to think of similar historical cases when presented with a new dispute, rather than seeing the unique aspects of that case. In addition to offering an explanation for the statistical problem, the theory also offers an explanation for human biases.

The other parts are: Overconfidence, Choices, and Two Selves.

I found the ideas in the text exciting but was grateful for the conclusion where Kahneman capsulizes the three distinctions that are detailed in the five Parts. He notes that the book begins with two systems: "Systems 1 and 2". It metamorphoses to two species: "Econs", who live in the land of theory, and "Humans", who act in the real world. It ends with two selves, the "experiencing self", which does the living, and the "remembering self" which keeps the score and makes the choices. In the Conclusion he considers some applications of the three distinctions.

His appendices are more technical than I care to explore but they look impressive. It concludes with notes and a thorough index.

These books' premises are interesting and have important and useful insights but may not be to everyone's taste. It is not necessary to read everything in them to enjoy their value, so I suggest pick, choose, and be enlightened. 