

blink thinking without thinking

blink thinking without thinking is a fascinating concept that delves into the subconscious decision-making processes our brains employ in split seconds. This idea, popularized by Malcolm Gladwell in his bestselling book *Blink*, explores how rapid, intuitive judgments can often be surprisingly accurate, even without our conscious awareness. Understanding the nuances of blink thinking without thinking can offer valuable insights into human cognition, decision-making, and how we can leverage these instinctive responses in various aspects of life.

What Is Blink Thinking Without Thinking?

In essence, blink thinking without thinking refers to the ability of the human brain to make quick judgments or decisions without deliberate analysis. These rapid responses are often formed within milliseconds to a few seconds and are driven by subconscious mental processes.

Malcolm Gladwell describes this phenomenon as "thin-slicing," where the brain takes a small piece of information and makes a broad judgment based on it. For example, a experienced art critic might glance at a painting and immediately grasp its quality or emotional impact, even without extensive analysis. Similarly, a seasoned firefighter could quickly assess a burning building's risk and decide on a course of action almost instantaneously.

Key Characteristics of Blink Thinking Without Thinking:

- Speed: Decisions are made almost instantaneously.
- Intuition: Relying on gut feelings or instincts rather than analytical reasoning.
- Unconscious Process: The decision-making occurs below conscious awareness.
- Experience-Based: Often shaped by prior knowledge and experiences stored in the subconscious.

The Science Behind Rapid, Unconscious Thinking

Understanding how blink thinking operates requires a look into cognitive psychology and neuroscience. Our brains are incredibly efficient, capable of processing vast amounts of information at lightning speed. When faced with a situation, the brain rapidly evaluates cues based on past experiences, pattern recognition, and emotional responses.

The Dual-Process Theory

The dual-process theory explains two systems of thinking:

- System 1: Fast, automatic, intuitive, and subconscious. This is the realm of blink thinking.
- System 2: Slow, deliberate, analytical, and conscious. This involves reasoning and careful thought.

Most of our everyday decisions are governed by System 1, which enables quick responses but can sometimes lead to biases or errors if not checked by System 2.

Neuroscience Insights

Research indicates that structures like the amygdala, responsible for emotional processing, and the basal ganglia, involved in habitual actions, play crucial roles in blink thinking. These brain regions facilitate rapid assessments based on emotional and experiential cues, enabling swift reactions in critical moments.

Advantages of Blink Thinking Without Thinking

Harnessing the power of rapid, subconscious decision-making offers several benefits:

- **Time Efficiency:** Making quick decisions when time is limited, such as in emergencies or high-stakes situations.
- **Expertise Utilization:** Experienced individuals can rely on intuition built from years of practice, leading to accurate judgments.
- **Emotional Responses:** Immediate reactions can be vital in situations requiring empathy, such as counseling or negotiations.
- **Creativity and Innovation:** Sometimes, spontaneous ideas emerge from subconscious insights, fostering creativity.

Limitations and Risks of Blink Thinking Without Thinking

Despite its advantages, relying solely on rapid, subconscious judgments can lead to errors and biases.

Common Pitfalls

1. **Biases and Stereotypes:** Unconscious prejudices can influence snap judgments unfairly.
2. **Overconfidence:** Believing one's intuition is always correct can be dangerous.
3. **Misinterpretation of Cues:** In unfamiliar situations, instinctive reactions may be misguided.
4. **Ignoring Analytical Data:** Relying only on intuition may cause overlooking critical facts or evidence.

When to Be Cautious

It's essential to recognize scenarios where blink thinking might not be appropriate:

- Complex problems requiring detailed analysis.
- Situations involving unfamiliar environments.
- Decisions with significant consequences and high stakes.
- Cases where biases could distort judgment.

Enhancing and Managing Blink Thinking

While spontaneous judgments are valuable, they can be improved and managed effectively.

Build Expertise

Experience and knowledge are crucial for accurate snap judgments. The more familiar you are with a domain, the more reliable your intuition becomes.

Develop Awareness of Biases

Recognizing common cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias or stereotyping, can help mitigate their influence on your quick decisions.

Practice Reflective Thinking

After making rapid judgments, take time to reflect. Was the decision accurate? What cues did you rely on? This reflection helps refine your intuition over time.

Balance Intuition and Analysis

Use intuition for initial assessments but verify with analytical thinking when possible, especially in critical situations.

Applications of Blink Thinking Without Thinking

The concept has practical implications across various fields:

In Business

- Leadership: Quick decision-making during crises.
- Marketing: Spotting consumer trends based on subtle cues.
- Negotiations: Making rapid judgments about counterpart's intentions.

In Healthcare

- Emergency Medicine: Rapid assessment of patient conditions.
- Diagnostics: Recognizing patterns in symptoms based on experience.

In Sports

- Athletes rely on instinctual reactions to respond swiftly during gameplay.

In Daily Life

- Making snap judgments about safety, trustworthiness, or social cues.

Improving Your Blink Thinking Skills

Developing strong intuitive skills involves deliberate practice:

- **Gain Experience:** Engage consistently in your field or area of interest.
- **Reflect on Decisions:** Analyze past quick judgments to identify successful patterns.
- **Learn from Mistakes:** Understand errors to refine your instinctive responses.
- **Engage in Mindfulness:** Practice present-moment awareness to better recognize intuitive cues.

Conclusion

Blink thinking without thinking embodies the remarkable capacity of the human mind to make rapid, often accurate judgments based on subconscious processing. While it offers significant advantages in terms of speed and efficiency, it is not infallible. To harness its power effectively, individuals should cultivate experience, be aware of biases, and know when to rely on quick instincts versus analytical reasoning. By understanding and managing blink thinking, we can improve decision-making in personal, professional, and high-pressure situations, ultimately leading to more intuitive and effective responses.

Meta Description:

Discover the fascinating world of blink thinking without thinking—how rapid, subconscious judgments work, their benefits, limitations, and ways to enhance your intuitive decision-making skills for better outcomes.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'blink thinking without thinking' referring to?

'Blink thinking without thinking' refers to rapid, intuitive judgments made instantly and effortlessly, often based on subconscious processing rather than deliberate analysis.

How does 'blink thinking' differ from analytical thinking?

'Blink thinking' relies on quick, automatic responses developed through experience, whereas analytical thinking involves slow, deliberate reasoning and evaluation.

Can 'blink thinking' lead to errors or biases?

Yes, because it depends on subconscious cues and heuristics, 'blink thinking' can sometimes result in biases or snap judgments that may not always be accurate.

In what scenarios is 'blink thinking without thinking' most effective?

It is most effective in high-pressure situations requiring quick decisions, such as emergency responses or expert intuition in familiar contexts.

How can one improve their 'blink thinking' skills?

By gaining extensive experience, training intuition through practice, and reflecting on past decisions to understand when quick judgments are reliable.

What role does subconscious processing play in 'blink thinking'?

Subconscious processing enables rapid recognition of patterns and cues based on prior knowledge, facilitating instant judgments without conscious deliberation.

Are there risks associated with relying solely on 'blink thinking'?

Yes, over-reliance can lead to misjudgments, stereotyping, or overlooking important details, especially in unfamiliar or complex situations.

How does 'blink thinking without thinking' relate to the concept of intuition?

'Blink thinking' is closely linked to intuition, representing the subconscious, automatic insights that inform quick decisions based on experience and pattern recognition.

Additional Resources

Blink Thinking Without Thinking: Mastering Rapid Decision-Making in a Complex World

In an era defined by information overload and rapid change, the ability to make swift, accurate decisions has become more valuable than ever. This skill, often referred to as blink thinking without thinking, involves making quick judgments based on intuition, experience, and subconscious processing rather than deliberate analysis. While traditional decision-making emphasizes careful evaluation and rational thought, blink thinking without thinking taps into our innate cognitive shortcuts—allowing us to navigate complex situations efficiently and confidently. Understanding how to harness this form of rapid cognition can give you a competitive edge in personal, professional, and social contexts.

What Is Blink Thinking Without Thinking?

Blink thinking without thinking is a term popularized by Malcolm Gladwell in his book *Blink*, which describes the process of making split-second decisions that are just as accurate—if not more so—than those made through extensive analysis. This kind of thinking relies on the brain's ability to process information rapidly and subconsciously, often in a matter of seconds.

Key aspects of blink thinking include:

- Intuitive judgment: Decisions based on gut feelings, shaped by experience.
- Rapid processing: The brain's ability to analyze complex data instantly.
- Unconscious influence: Much of the thinking occurs outside of conscious awareness.
- Efficiency: Making decisions quickly without sacrificing accuracy.

The Science Behind Blink Thinking

Understanding the science behind blink thinking without thinking reveals why our brains are wired for rapid cognition:

- Dual Process Theory: The brain operates through two systems:
- System 1: Fast, automatic, intuitive.
- System 2: Slow, deliberate, analytical.

Blink thinking predominantly involves System 1, which is responsible for quick judgments based on heuristics and prior knowledge.

- Heuristics and Biases: Our mental shortcuts—heuristics—allow quick decision-making but can sometimes lead to biases. Recognizing when heuristics are reliable is crucial.
- Neural Efficiency: Certain neural pathways are optimized for rapid processing, especially in familiar or high-stakes situations, enabling swift reactions.

When Is Blink Thinking Most Effective?

Blink thinking without thinking excels in specific contexts where speed is essential, and the environment is familiar or predictable:

- Emergency Situations: First responders making split-second decisions.
- Expert Performance: Athletes, surgeons, or pilots relying on muscle memory and experience.
- Social Interactions: Quickly assessing trustworthiness or intentions.
- Business Decisions: Recognizing opportunities or threats based on pattern recognition.

However, it's vital to recognize its limitations: over-reliance can lead to errors, especially in unfamiliar scenarios or when biases are involved.

Developing and Enhancing Your Blink Thinking Skills

While some aspects of blink thinking without thinking are innate, many can be cultivated through practice and awareness:

1. Build Experience and Domain Knowledge

The foundation of effective rapid decision-making is expertise. The more familiar you are with a subject, the more reliable your intuitive judgments become.

- Engage in deliberate practice.
- Seek diverse experiences related to your field.
- Study case studies and real-world examples.

2. Recognize Your Cognitive Biases

Being aware of common biases such as confirmation bias, stereotyping, or overconfidence helps you calibrate your intuition.

- Reflect on past decisions.
- Challenge your initial impressions when possible.
- Use checklists to reduce bias influence.

3. Improve Pattern Recognition

Expertise often involves recognizing patterns quickly—allowing for rapid judgments.

- Analyze situations to identify common features.
- Use visualization techniques.
- Study successful cases and their underlying patterns.

4. Cultivate Emotional Intelligence

Understanding your emotional responses enhances your ability to trust your instincts appropriately.

- Practice mindfulness to stay aware of your feelings.
- Develop empathy to better interpret social cues.
- Manage stress to keep decision-making clear.

5. Practice Decision-Making Under Pressure

Simulate high-stakes scenarios to condition your mind to respond swiftly and accurately.

- Participate in simulations or role-playing.
- Use time-limited exercises.
- Review outcomes to learn from successes and mistakes.

Balancing Blink Thinking with Analytical Thinking

While blink thinking without thinking offers speed and efficiency, it's not infallible. A balanced approach involves knowing when to trust your intuition and when to switch to deliberate analysis.

Strategies to balance both include:

- Initial Gut Check: Use rapid judgment as a first step.
- Pause and Reflect: When possible, take a moment to verify your instinct.
- Gather Additional Data: Seek out facts or opinions to supplement your intuition.
- Consult Others: Leverage collective wisdom for complex or high-stakes decisions.

Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

Despite its advantages, blink thinking can lead to errors if misapplied. Be mindful of these pitfalls:

- Overconfidence Bias: Believing your intuition is infallible.
- Solution: Cross-check critical decisions.
- Stereotyping: Relying on heuristics based on biases.
- Solution: Question assumptions and seek diverse perspectives.
- Familiarity Bias: Favoring familiar options even when better choices exist.
- Solution: Consider alternative options systematically.
- Emotional Interference: Allowing strong emotions to cloud judgment.
- Solution: Practice emotional regulation techniques.

Practical Applications of Blink Thinking Without Thinking

Here are some real-world scenarios where blink thinking without thinking can be leveraged effectively:

- Negotiation: Reading cues and making rapid judgments about the other party's intentions.
- Leadership: Making quick calls during crises or unexpected events.
- Personal Relationships: Instinctively sensing trustworthiness or detecting deception.
- Creative Problem Solving: Recognizing solutions that aren't immediately obvious through pattern recognition.

Final Thoughts: Mastering the Art of Rapid Cognition

Blink thinking without thinking is a powerful cognitive tool when understood and applied appropriately. It allows us to operate efficiently in a complex, fast-paced world, often making better decisions than lengthy analysis in time-pressured situations. Developing this skill involves cultivating experience, recognizing biases, and honing pattern recognition, all while maintaining a healthy awareness of its limitations.

By practicing mindfulness, expanding your knowledge base, and learning when to trust your instincts,

you can turn rapid, intuitive judgments into reliable tools. The key is balance—knowing when to rely on your gut and when to switch into analytical mode. Mastery of rapid cognition isn't about eliminating slow thinking; it's about integrating both approaches seamlessly to navigate life's challenges with confidence and agility.

Blink Thinking Without Thinking

blink thinking without thinking: Blink Malcolm Gladwell, 2007-04-03 From the #1 bestselling author of *The Bomber Mafia*, the landmark book that has revolutionized the way we understand leadership and decision making. In his breakthrough bestseller *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell redefined how we understand the world around us. Now, in *Blink*, he revolutionizes the way we understand the world within. *Blink* is a book about how we think without thinking, about choices that seem to be made in an instant--in the blink of an eye--that actually aren't as simple as they seem. Why are some people brilliant decision makers, while others are consistently inept? Why do some people follow their instincts and win, while others end up stumbling into error? How do our brains really work--in the office, in the classroom, in the kitchen, and in the bedroom? And why are the best decisions often those that are impossible to explain to others? In *Blink* we meet the psychologist who has learned to predict whether a marriage will last, based on a few minutes of observing a couple; the tennis coach who knows when a player will double-fault before the racket even makes contact with the ball; the antiquities experts who recognize a fake at a glance. Here, too, are great failures of blink: the election of Warren Harding; New Coke; and the shooting of Amadou Diallo by police. *Blink* reveals that great decision makers aren't those who process the most information or spend the most time deliberating, but those who have perfected the art of thin-slicing--filtering the very few factors that matter from an overwhelming number of variables.

blink thinking without thinking: Blink Malcolm Gladwell, 2005 How do we think without thinking, seem to make choices in an instant--in the blink of an eye--that actually aren't as simple as they seem? Why are some people brilliant decision makers, while others are consistently inept? Why do some people follow their instincts and win, while others end up stumbling into error? And why are the best decisions often those that are impossible to explain to others? Drawing on cutting-edge neuroscience and psychology, the author reveals that great decision makers aren't those who process the most information or spend the most time deliberating, but those who have perfected the art of filtering the very few factors that matter from an overwhelming number of variables.

blink thinking without thinking: Malcolm Gladwell's Blink Ant Hive Media, 2016-04-13 This is a Summary of Malcolm Gladwell's *Blink The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. In his landmark bestseller *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell redefined how we understand the world around us. Now, in *Blink*, he revolutionizes the way we understand the world within. *Blink* is a book about how we think without thinking, about choices that seem to be made in an instant-in the blink of an eye-that actually aren't as simple as they seem. Why are some people brilliant decision makers, while others are consistently inept? Why do some people follow their instincts and win, while others end up stumbling into error? How do our brains really work-in the office, in the classroom, in the kitchen, and in the bedroom? And why are the best decisions often those that are impossible to explain to others?In *Blink* we meet the psychologist who has learned to predict whether a marriage will last, based on a few minutes of observing a couple; the tennis coach who knows when a player will double-fault before the racket even makes contact with the ball; the antiquities experts who recognize a fake at a glance. Here, too, are great failures of blink: the election of Warren Harding; New Coke; and the shooting of Amadou Diallo by police. *Blink* reveals that great decision makers aren't those who process the most information or spend the most time deliberating, but those who have perfected the art of thin-slicing-filtering the very few factors that matter from an overwhelming

number of variables. Available in a variety of formats, this summary is aimed for those who want to capture the gist of the book but don't have the current time to devour all 288 pages. You get the main summary along with all of the benefits and lessons the actual book has to offer. This is a summary that is not intended to be used without reference to the original book.

blink thinking without thinking: Blink Malcolm Gladwell, 2018-05 Drawing on cutting-edge neuroscience and psychology and displaying all of the brilliance that made *The Tipping Point* a classic, *Blink* changes the way you'll understand every decision you make. Never again will you think about thinking the same way. Malcolm Gladwell redefined how we understand the world around us. Now, in *Blink*, he revolutionizes the way we understand the world within. *Blink* is a book about how we think without thinking, about choices that seem to be made in an instant - in the blink of an eye - that actually aren't as simple as they seem. Why are some people brilliant decision makers, while others are consistently inept? Why do some people follow their instincts and win, while others end up stumbling into error? How do our brains really work - in the office, in the classroom, in the kitchen, and in the bedroom? And why are the best decisions often those that are impossible to explain to others? In *Blink* we meet the psychologist who has learned to predict whether a marriage will last, based on a few minutes of observing a couple; the tennis coach who knows when a player will double-fault before the racket even makes contact with the ball; the antiquities experts who recognize a fake at a glance. Here, too, are great failures of blink: the election of Warren Harding; New Coke; and the shooting of Amadou Diallo by police. *Blink* reveals that great decision makers aren't those who process the most information or spend the most time deliberating, but those who have perfected the art of thin-slicing - filtering the very few factors that matter from an overwhelming number of variables. Drawing on cutting-edge neuroscience and psychology and displaying all of the brilliance that made *The Tipping Point* a classic, *Blink* changes the way you understand every decision you make. Never again will you think about thinking the same way.

blink thinking without thinking: Summary of Blink Readtrepreneur Publishing, 2019-05-24 *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* By Malcolm Gladwell - Book Summary - Readtrepreneur (Disclaimer: This is NOT the original book, but an unofficial summary.) Have you experienced those moments when you just know something, but can never seem to explain how you came to know it? Malcolm Gladwell explores our behavior of making decisions in the blink of an eye and it is not as simple as following your gut feeling. *Blink* reveals to us why thin-slicing, as compared to having a lot of information about a subject may be the most effective method in making good judgements. (Note: This summary is wholly written and published by Readtrepreneur It is not affiliated with the original author in any way) Truly successful decision-making relies on a balance between deliberate and instinctive thinking. - Malcolm Gladwell We will look at some of the great failures and successes that resulted when using instinctive thinking and understand why some people are excellent decision-makers, while some are terrible at it. With *Blink*, we will understand the factors that matter which will help us make the best possible decisions and make good snap judgements. P.S. Truly riveting and thought-provoking, we will be one step closer to understanding our complex brains and the decision-making process The Time for Thinking is Over! Time for Action! Scroll Up Now and Click on the Buy now with 1-Click Button to Have A Copy Delivered to your Doorstep Right Away! Why Choose Us, Readtrepreneur? ☐ Highest Quality Summaries ☐ Delivers Amazing Knowledge ☐ Awesome Refresher ☐ Clear And Concise Disclaimer Once Again: This book is meant for a great companionship of the original book or to simply get the gist of the original book.

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blink thinking without thinking: Summary Dean's Library, 2019-08-24 Blink by Malcolm Gladwell: Book Summary IMPORTANT NOTE: This is a book summary of Blink by Malcolm Gladwell - this is NOT the original book. ORIGINAL BOOK DESCRIPTION: Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking by Malcolm Gladwell In his landmark bestseller The Tipping Point, Malcolm Gladwell redefined how we understand the world around us. Now, in Blink, he revolutionizes the way we understand the world within. Blink is a book about how we think without thinking, about choices that seem to be made in an instant-in the blink of an eye-that actually aren't as simple as they seem. Why are some people brilliant decision makers, while others are consistently inept? Why do some people follow their instincts and win, while others end up stumbling into error? How do our brains really work-in the office, in the classroom, in the kitchen, and in the bedroom? And why are the best decisions often those that are impossible to explain to others?In Blink we meet the psychologist who has learned to predict whether a marriage will last, based on a few minutes of observing a couple; the tennis coach who knows when a player will double-fault before the racket even makes contact with the ball; the antiquities experts who recognize a fake at a glance. Here, too, are great failures of blink the election of Warren Harding; New Coke; and the shooting of Amadou Diallo by police. Blink reveals that great decision makers aren't those who process the most information or spend the most time deliberating, but those who have perfected the art of thin-slicing-filtering the very few factors that matter from an overwhelming number of variables. **** Executive book summary of Blink by Malcolm Gladwell - Book Summary by Dean's Library

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blink thinking without thinking: Summary of Blink: the Power of Thinking Without Thinking by Malcolm Gladwell Thorough Thorough summaries, 2021-06-24 Blink examines the phenomenon of snap judgments, meaning the split-second decisions we make unconsciously. These snap judgments are important decision-making tools, but can also lead to bad choices and all manner of problems. Blink explains how we can best make use of them. DISCLAIMER: This book is a SUMMARY. It is meant to be a companion, not a replacement, to the original book.

blink thinking without thinking: Blink: Inteligencia intuitiva: ¿Por qué sabemos la verdad en dos segundos? / Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking Malcolm Gladwell, 2019-10-22 En este libro revolucionario, el periodista canadiense Malcolm Gladwell nos explica cómo pensamos sin pensar, de dónde proceden las decisiones que parece que tomamos en dos segundos, pero que no son tan simples como aparentan. ¿Por qué algunas personas son

brillantes a la hora de decidir y otras son torpes una y otra vez? ¿Por qué algunos siguen su instinto y triunfan, mientras que otros acaban siempre dando un paso en falso? ¿Cuál es el funcionamiento real del cerebro en el trabajo, en clase, en la cocina o en la cama? ¿Y por qué las mejores decisiones suelen ser las más difíciles de explicar? Gladwell nos presenta a un psicólogo que ha aprendido a predecir si un matrimonio puede durar con sólo observarles unos minutos; a un entrenador de tenis que sabe cuándo un jugador hará doble falta antes incluso de que la raqueta toque la bola; a un experto en antigüedades que reconoce una falsificación de un solo vistazo. Este libro revela que quienes son buenos tomando decisiones no son aquellos que procesan más información o que dedican más tiempo a deliberar, sino aquellos que han perfeccionado el arte de hilar fino, de extraer los pocos factores que realmente importan a partir de una cantidad desmesurada de variables. Por medio de la neurología y la psicología, y exhibiendo todo el esplendor del que este autor es capaz, *Blink*: Inteligencia intuitiva cambiará tu forma de ver las decisiones que tomas. Nunca más volverás a pensar en pensar de la misma manera. ENGLISH DESCRIPTION In his landmark bestseller *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell redefined how we understand the world around us. Now, in *Blink*, he revolutionizes the way we understand the world within. *Blink* is a book about how we think without thinking, about choices that seem to be made in an instant—in the blink of an eye—that actually aren't as simple as they seem. Why are some people brilliant decision makers, while others are consistently inept? Why do some people follow their instincts and win, while others end up stumbling into error? How do our brains really work—in the office, in the classroom, in the kitchen, and in the bedroom? And why are the best decisions often those that are impossible to explain to others? In *Blink* we meet the psychologist who has learned to predict whether a marriage will last, based on a few minutes of observing a couple; the tennis coach who knows when a player will double-fault before the racket even makes contact with the ball; the antiquities experts who recognize a fake at a glance. Here, too, are great failures of blink: the election of Warren Harding; New Coke; and the shooting of Amadou Diallo by police. *Blink* reveals that great decision makers aren't those who process the most information or spend the most time deliberating, but those who have perfected the art of thin-slicing—filtering the very few factors that matter from an overwhelming number of variables.

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blink thinking without thinking: *Blink* Malcolm Gladwell, 2017-04-25 Gladwell nos presenta a un psicólogo que ha aprendido a predecir si un matrimonio puede durar con sólo observarles unos minutos; a un entrenador de tenis que sabe cuándo un jugador hará doble falta antes incluso de que la raqueta toque la bola; a un experto en antigüedades que reconoce una falsificación de un solo vistazo. Este libro revela que quienes son buenos tomando decisiones no son aquellos que procesan más información o que dedican más tiempo a deliberar, sino aquellos que han perfeccionado el arte de hilar fino, de extraer los pocos factores que realmente importan a partir de una cantidad desmesurada de variables.

blink thinking without thinking: *Thinking Without Thinking in the Victorian Novel*

Vanessa L. Ryan, 2012-06-07 In *Thinking without Thinking in the Victorian Novel*, Vanessa L. Ryan demonstrates how both the form and the experience of reading novels played an important role in ongoing debates about the nature of consciousness during the Victorian era. Revolutionary developments in science during the mid- and late nineteenth century—including the discoveries and writings of Herbert Spencer, William Carpenter, and George Henry Lewes—had a vital impact on fiction writers of the time. Wilkie Collins, George Eliot, George Meredith, and Henry James read contributions in what we now call cognitive science that asked, what is the mind? These Victorian fiction writers took a crucial step, asking how we experience our minds, how that experience relates to our behavior and questions of responsibility, how we can gain control over our mental reflexes, and finally how fiction plays a special role in understanding and training our minds. Victorian fiction writers focus not only on the question of how the mind works but also on how it seems to work and how we ought to make it work. Ryan shows how the novelistic emphasis on dynamic processes and functions—on the activity of the mind, rather than its structure or essence—can also be seen in some

of the most exciting and comprehensive scientific revisions of the understanding of thinking in the Victorian period. This book studies the way in which the mind in the nineteenth-century view is embedded not just in the body but also in behavior, in social structures, and finally in fiction.

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