Review on *Thinking, Fast and Slow*

Thinking, Fast and Slow is a best-seller in 2011 written by Daniel Kahneman who won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics. This book not only summarizes researches that the author conducted over decades but also gives an entirely new approach of how things actually occur and how we perceive them.

The book begins with the distinction between System 1 and System 2, two mental operations, the former referring to quick, automatic thought and the latter to effort , overt thinking. Both fast and slow thinking are used when people process information and make decisions, according to Kahneman, but they tend to avoid slow thinking whenever they can. System 2 is in fact lazy and often readily accepting system 1’s decisions. This is because it is both desirable and necessary to simplify the complex situations into categories they can easily recognize, which allows us to go through our daily lives without constant complicated thinking.

However, System 1 leads to brilliant inspirations and systematic errors as well. To illustrate, take one of Kahneman and Tversky’s experiments: An individual has been described by a neighbor as follows: “Steve is very shy and withdrawn, invariably helpful but shows very little interest in people or in the world of reality. A meek and tidy soul, he has a need for order and structure, and a passion for detail.” Is Steve more likely to be a librarian or a farmer? Most people reply quickly that he is more likely to be a librarian than a farmer. He is surely to be a librarian than a farmer. This is certainly because he resembles a librarian more than a farmer even if there are five times as many as farmers as librarians in the United States. The base rates simply do not come to mind and thus prevent an accurate answer. System 2 does not engage in this question.

In conclusion, this book succeeds in instilling an awareness of many biases that lead to errors of judgments and poor decision-making. The book makes complex research into psychology which is easy enough for the general public to understand. It is highly informative and accessible through numerous examples and experiments. Therefor highly recommend this book to all.