

【11】 ①—1

In explaining any **human shortcoming**, the first tool I reach for is
(1)Hanlon's Razor: Never attribute to malice* that which is adequately explained by **stupidity**. The kind of stupidity I have in mind has **nothing to do with ignorance or low IQ**; in fact, it's often the brightest and best informed who suffer the most from it.

【11】 1—②

I once attended a lecture on biology addressed to a large general audience at a conference on technology, entertainment, and design. The lecture was also being filmed for distribution over the Internet to millions of other laypeople. The speaker was an eminent* biologist who had been invited to explain his recent breakthrough in the structure of DNA. He launched into a jargon-packed technical presentation that was ⁽²⁾geared to his fellow molecular biologists, and it was immediately apparent to everyone in the room that none of them understood a word. Apparent to everyone, that is, except the eminent biologist. When the host interrupted and asked him to explain the work more clearly, he seemed genuinely surprised and not a little annoyed. This is the kind of stupidity I am talking about.

【11】 ②—1

Call it **the Curse of Knowledge**: a difficulty in imagining what it is like for someone else not to know something that you know. The term was invented by economists to help explain why people are not as shrewd* in bargaining as they could be, in theory, when they possess information that their opposite number does not.

【11】 ②—2

A used-car dealer, **for example**, should price a lemon* at the same value as a creampuff* of the same make and model, **because** customers have **no way to tell** the (a). (In this kind of analysis, economists imagine that everyone is an amoral* profit-maximizer, so no one does anything just for honesty's sake.) **But** at least in **experimental markets**, sellers don't take full advantage of their private knowledge. They price their assets as if their customers knew as much about their quality as they do.

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The **curse of knowledge** is far more than a curiosity in economic theory. The inability to set aside something that you know but that someone else does not know is **such a pervasive affliction*** of the **human mind** that psychologists keep discovering related versions of it and giving it ₍₃₎new names.

【11】 ③—2

There is **egocentrism**, the inability of children to imagine a simple scene, such as three toy mountains on a tabletop, from another person's vantage point*. There's **hindsight* bias**, the tendency of people to think that an outcome they happen to know, such as the confirmation of a disease diagnosis* or the outcome of a war, should have been obvious to someone who had to make a prediction about it before the fact. There's **false consensus**, in which people who make a touchy* personal decision (like agreeing to help an experimenter by wearing a sandwich board* around campus with the word REPENT) assume that everyone else would make the same decision.

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There's **illusory transparency**, in which observers who privately know the backstory to a conversation and thus can tell that a speaker is being sarcastic* assume that the speaker's naïve* listeners can somehow detect the sarcasm, too. And there's **mindblindness***, **a failure to mentalize, or a lack of a theory of mind**, in which a three-year-old **who sees a toy being hidden while a second child is out of the room assumes that the other child will look for it in its actual location rather than where she last saw it.** (In a related demonstration, a child comes into the lab, opens a candy box, and is surprised to find pencils in it.

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Not only does the child think that another child entering the lab will know it contains pencils, but the child will say that he himself knew it contained pencils all along!) (b) mostly outgrow the inability to separate their own knowledge from someone else's, **but** not entirely.

(4) Even adults *slightly tilt* their guess about where a person will look for a hidden object **in the direction of** where they themselves know the object to be.

【11】 ④—1

Adults are particularly accursed* when they try to estimate other people's knowledge and skills. If a student happens to know the meaning of an uncommon word like *apogee* or *elucidate*, or the answer to a factual question like where Napoleon was born or what the brightest star in the sky is, she assumes that other students know it, too. When experimental volunteers are given a list of anagrams* to unscramble*, some of which are easier than others because the answers were shown to them beforehand, they ⁽⁵⁾rate the ones that are easier for *them* (because they'd seen the answers) to be magically easier for *everyone*.

【11】 ④—2

And when experienced cell phone users were asked how long it would take novices* to learn to use the phone, they guessed **thirteen** minutes; in fact, it took **thirty-two**. Users with **less** expertise* were (c) accurate in predicting the learning curves, though their guess, too, **fell short**: they predicted **twenty** minutes. **The better you know something, the less you remember about how hard it was to learn.**

【11】 ⑤

[A] is the single best explanation I know of **why good people write bad prose**. It **simply doesn't** occur to the writer **that her readers don't know what she knows** — **that they haven't mastered** the patois* of her guild*, **can't divine** the missing steps that seem too obvious to mention, **have no way** to visualize a scene that to her is as clear as day. And so she **doesn't bother** to explain the jargon, or **spell out** the logic, or **supply** the necessary detail.