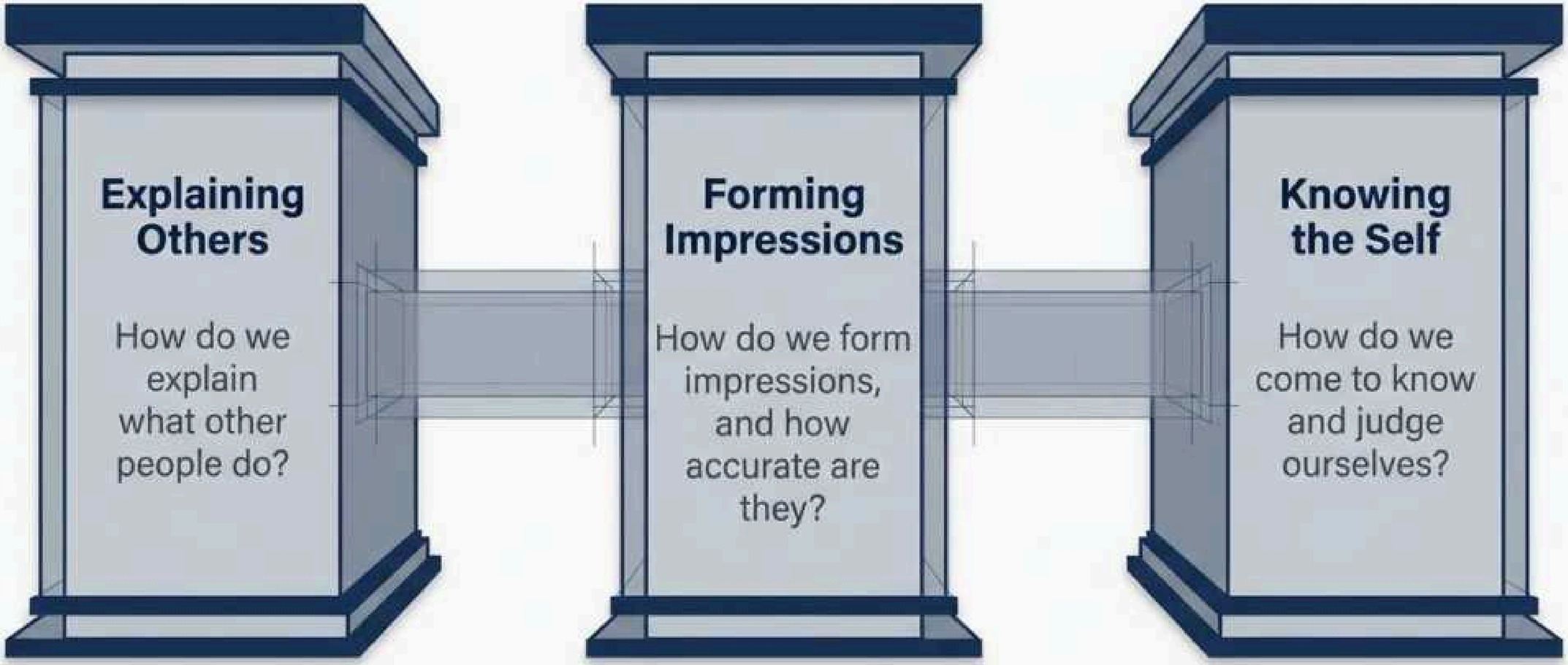
# 2.1 Three Organizing Questions of Social Cognition

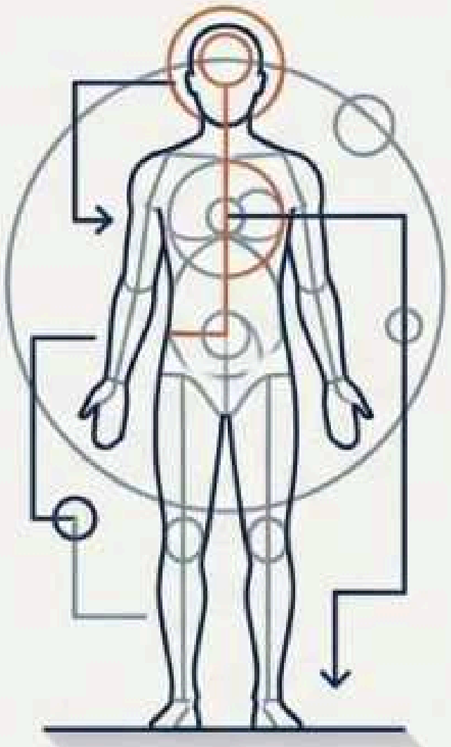
The human mind is quick, highly useful, yet **biased** in predictable ways

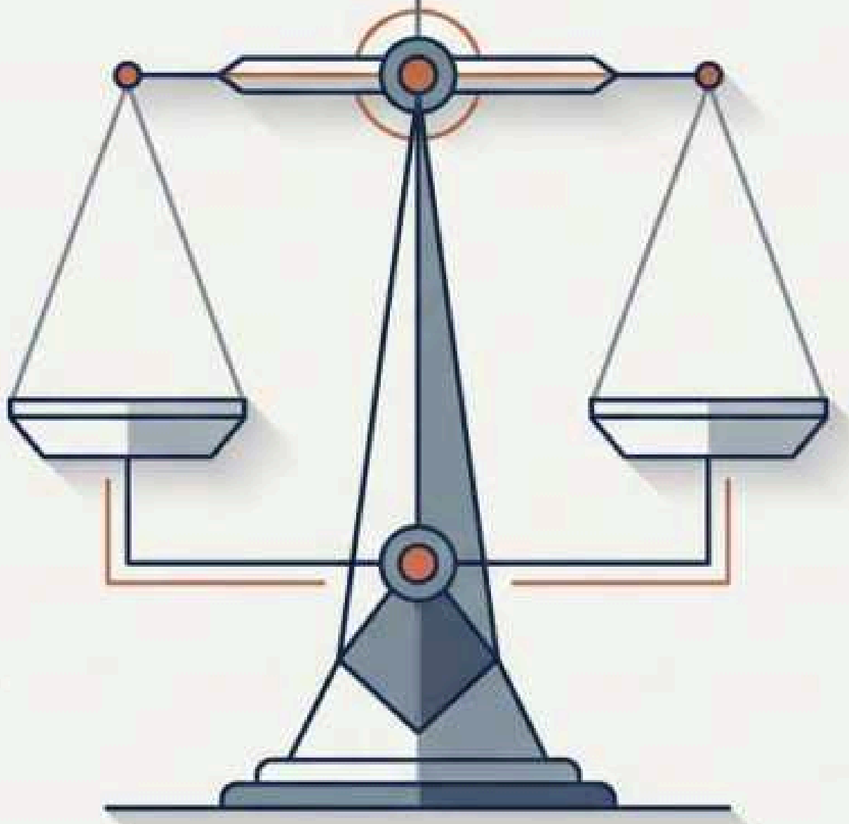


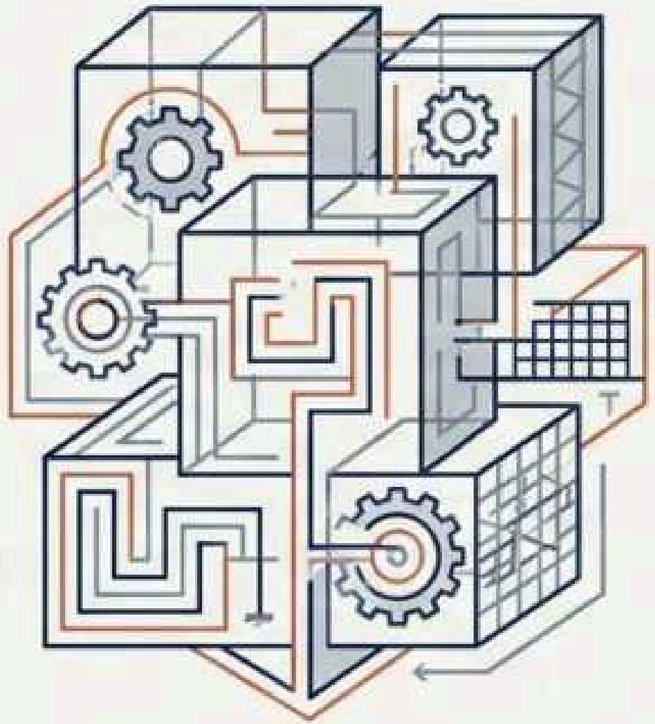

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# 2.2 The Process of Attribution

Humans act as everyday scientists, constantly seeking causes for behavior.







**Dispositional Causes**

Attributed to the person: traits, attitudes

**Situational Causes**

Attributed to the environment: pressure, luck, rules

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# 2.3 The Tilt Toward the Person

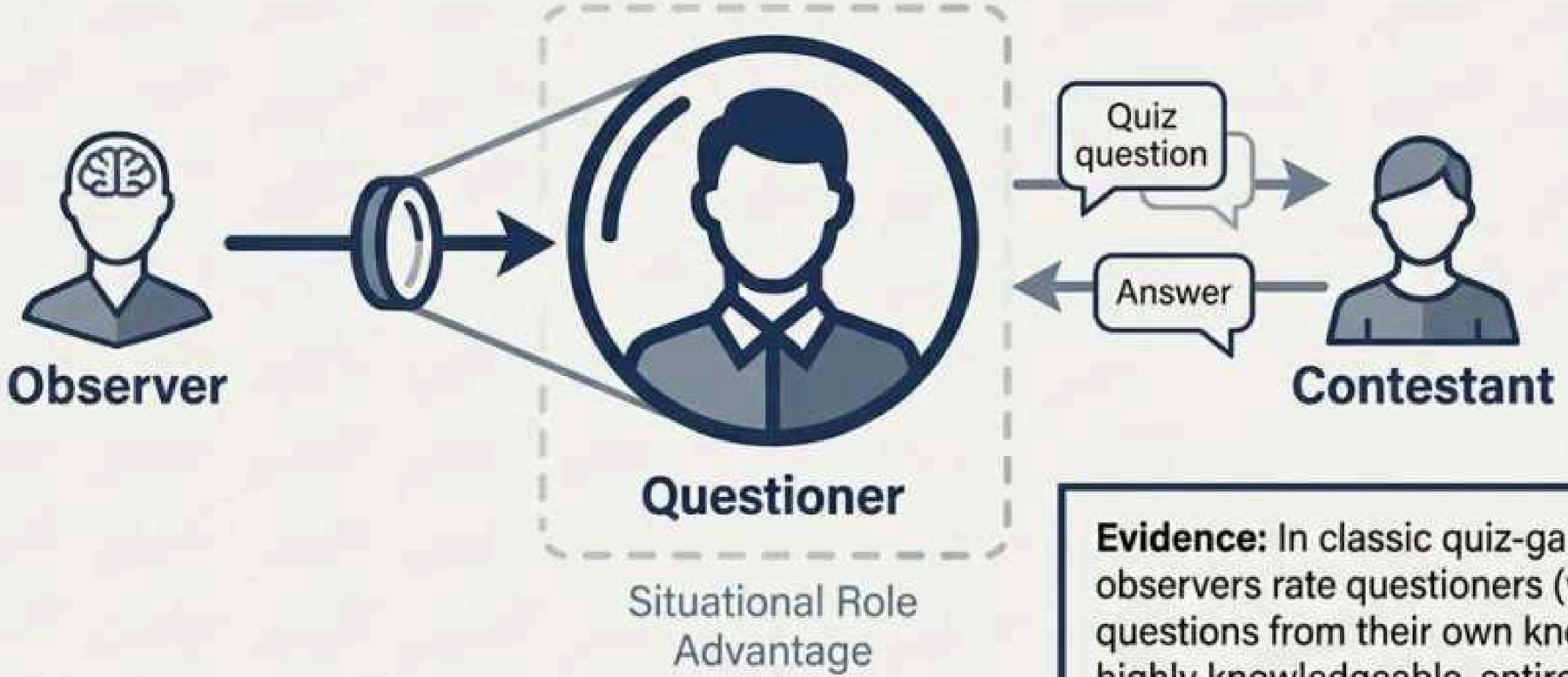



People naturally tilt toward dispositional explanations, even when situational constraints are completely explicit.

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# 2.4 The Fundamental Attribution Error

The tendency to over-index on traits and underweight the situation when explaining others' behavior.




**Evidence:** In classic quiz-game studies, observers rate questioners (who write questions from their own knowledge) as highly knowledgeable, entirely ignoring the systemic advantage built into their role.

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# 2.5 Mechanisms Behind the Attribution Error

## Perceptual



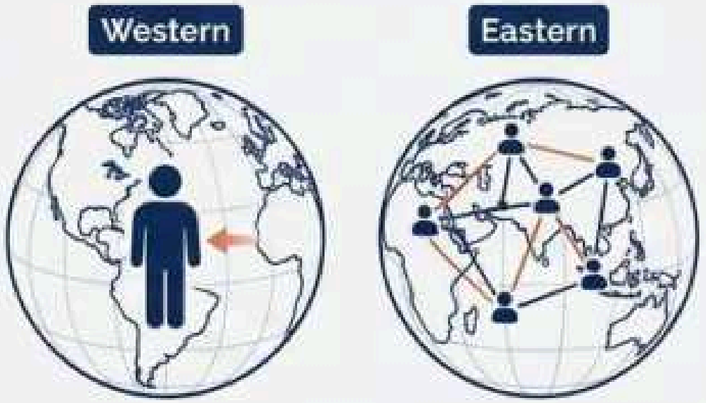
The acting person is vivid; the situational background is nearly invisible.

## Cognitive




Dispositional judgments are fast. Correcting for the situation requires high effort.

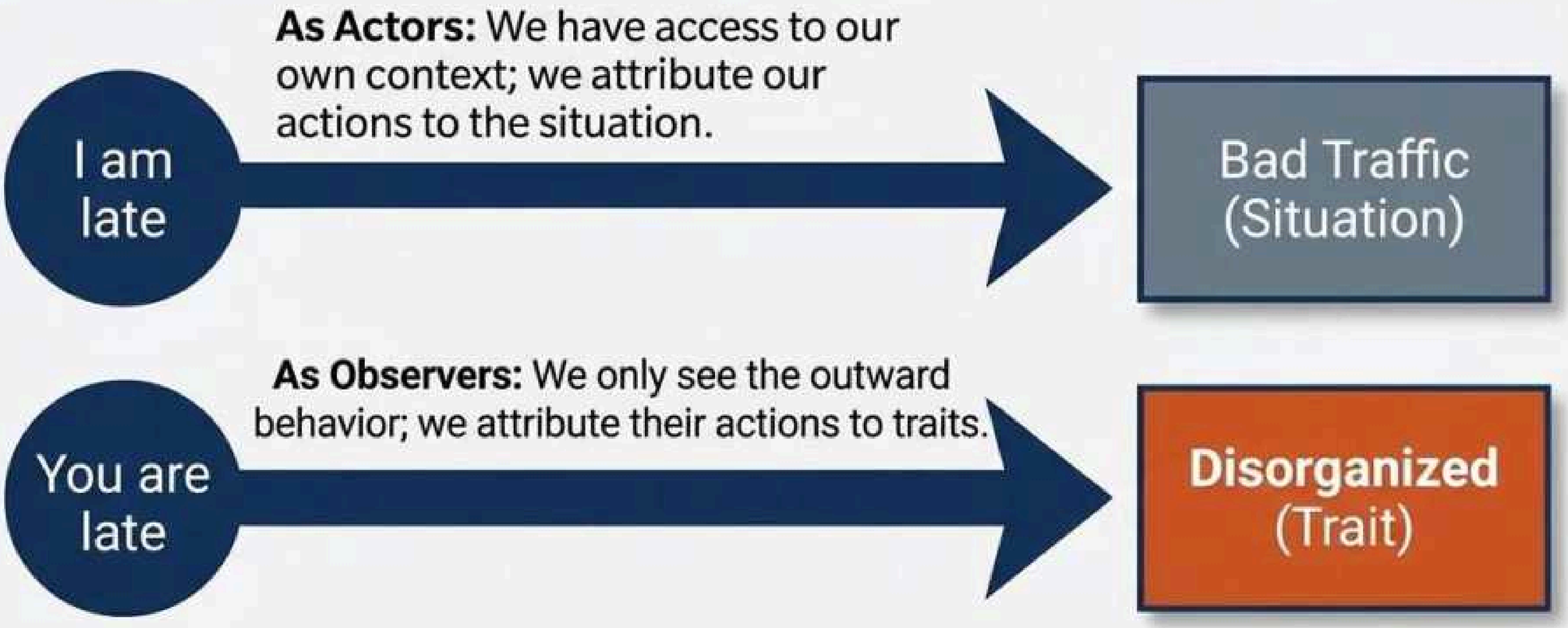
## Cultural




Media analysis reveals Western coverage heavily stresses individual character, while Eastern coverage frequently weighs relationships and environmental context.

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# 2.6 The Actor-Observer Difference




**Conclusion:** Discrepancies stem from asymmetric access to situational information.

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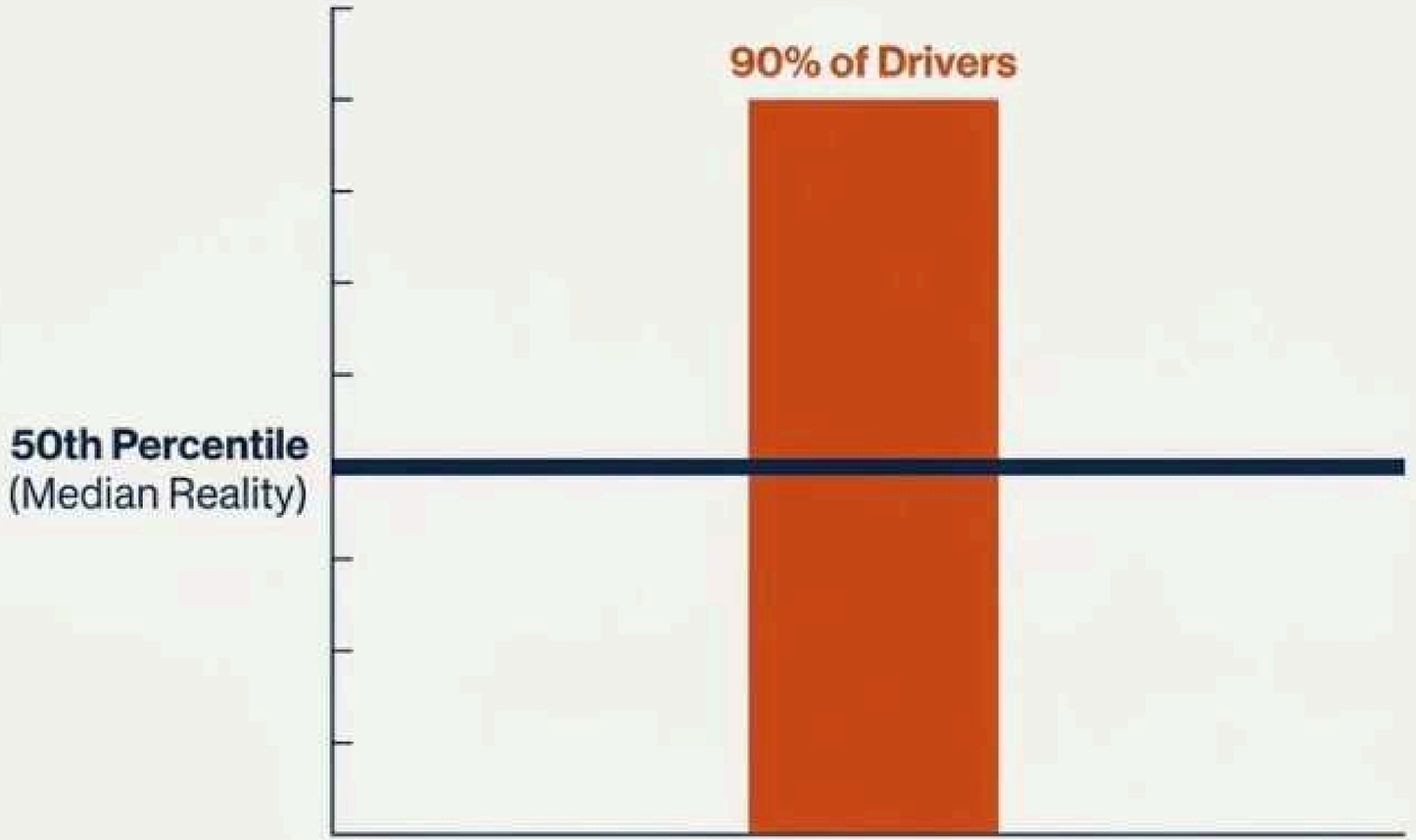
# 2.7
## Self-Serving Bias and Illusory Superiority

### Self-Serving Bias

Success is credited to personal skill; failure is blamed on external circumstances.

### Above-Average Effect

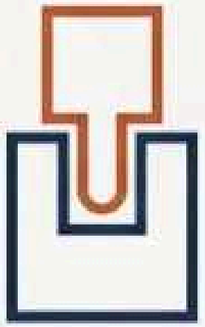
Vast majorities rate themselves above the median on desirable traits.




**Data Point:** In classic driver safety comparisons, ~90% of respondents claim to be safer than the median driver—a statistical impossibility.

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# 2.8 Cognitive Heuristics

|  |  |  |
|---|---|---|
| **Availability** | **Representativeness** | **Anchoring** |
| Judging frequency based on how easily examples come to mind | Judging probability based on resemblance to a categorical stereotype | Allowing initial quantitative values to heavily skew subsequent estimates |

Summary: These mental shortcuts are quick and often adequate, but they systematically mislead.

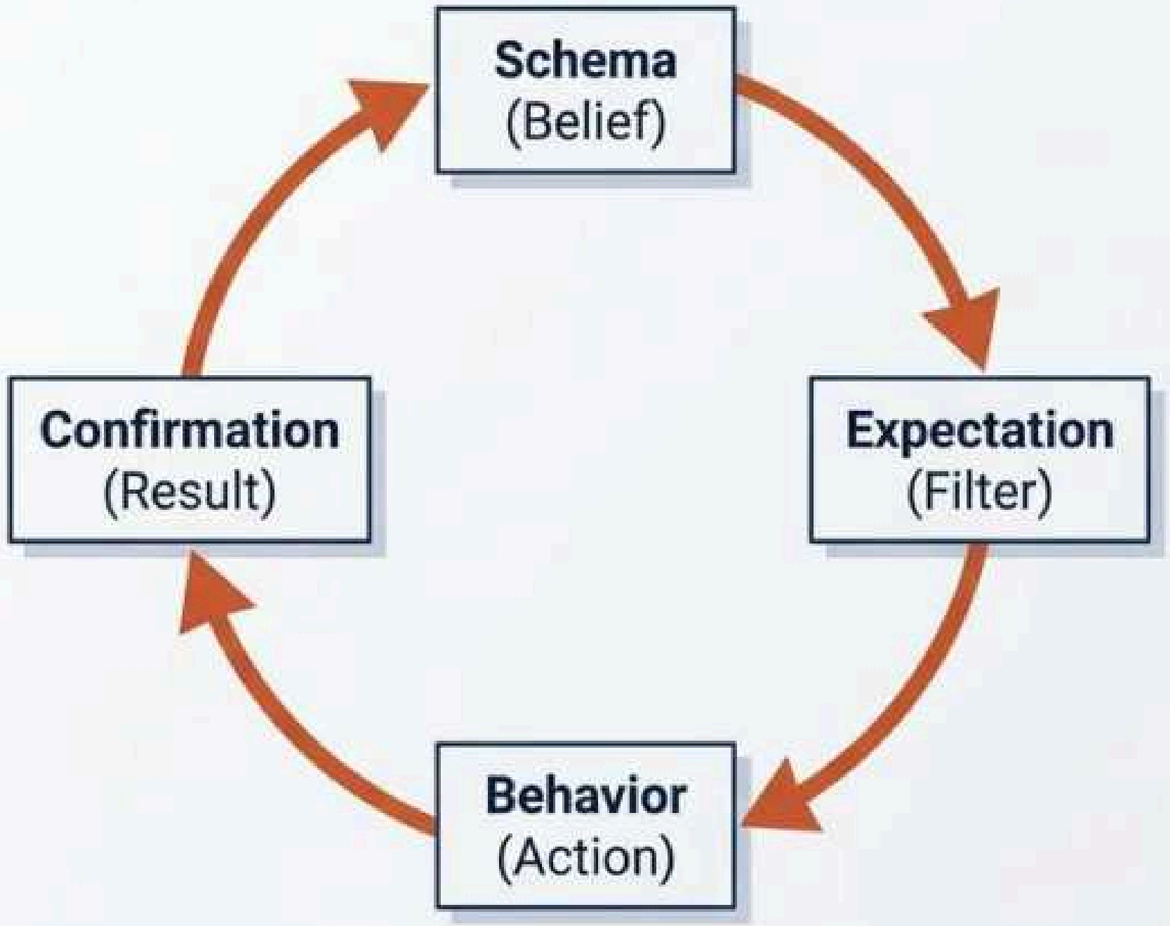
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# 2.9 Schemas and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

**Schemas**: Organized sets of beliefs that guide what we notice and remember.

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**Self-Fulfilling Prophecies**: Beliefs that cause the reality they predict.



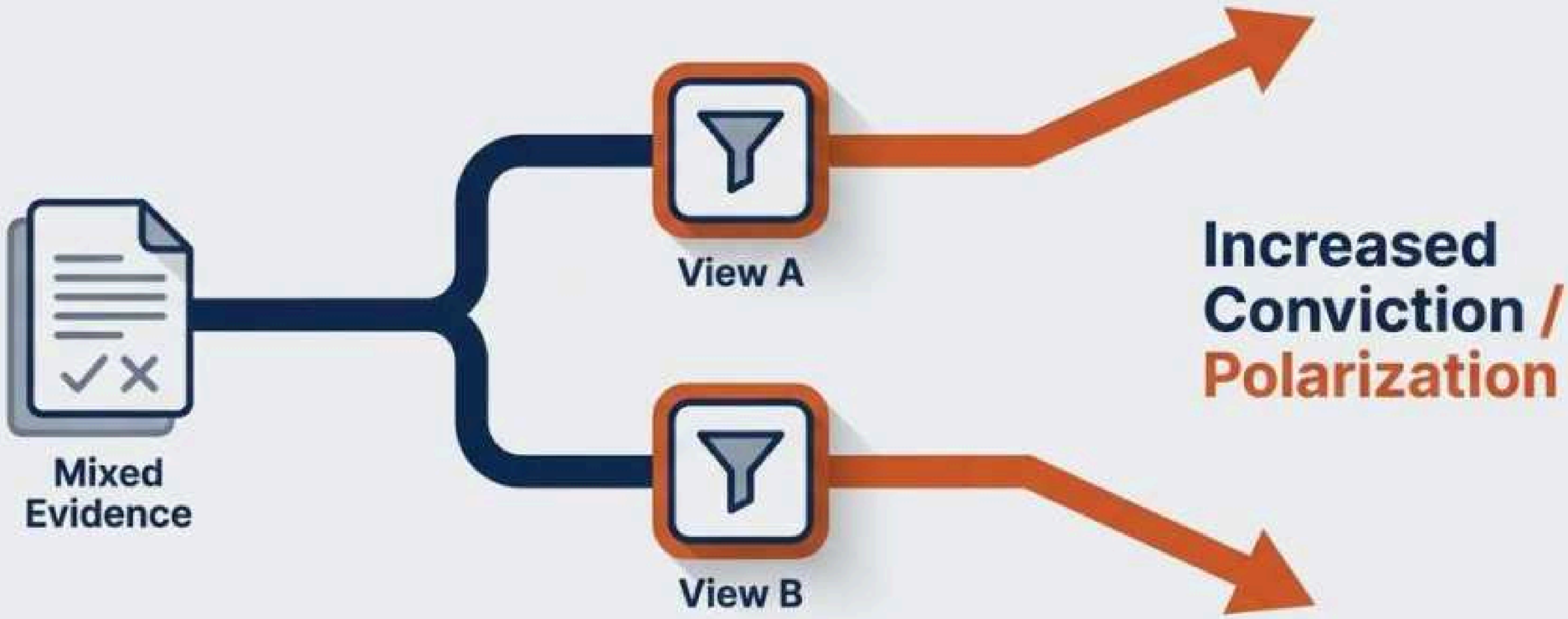

**Evidence:** Educational studies show that when teachers are told certain students will "bloom," those students often do, driven by altered expectations.

Note: Critics debate the precise size of this effect.

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# 2.10 Confirmation Bias and Polarization

**Definition:** The tendency to seek, favor, and heavily weight information that aligns with pre-existing beliefs.




**Mechanism:** When opposing groups consume the exact same mixed evidence, both groups judge their own side's evidence as stronger. Exposure to mixed data increases polarization rather than fostering consensus.

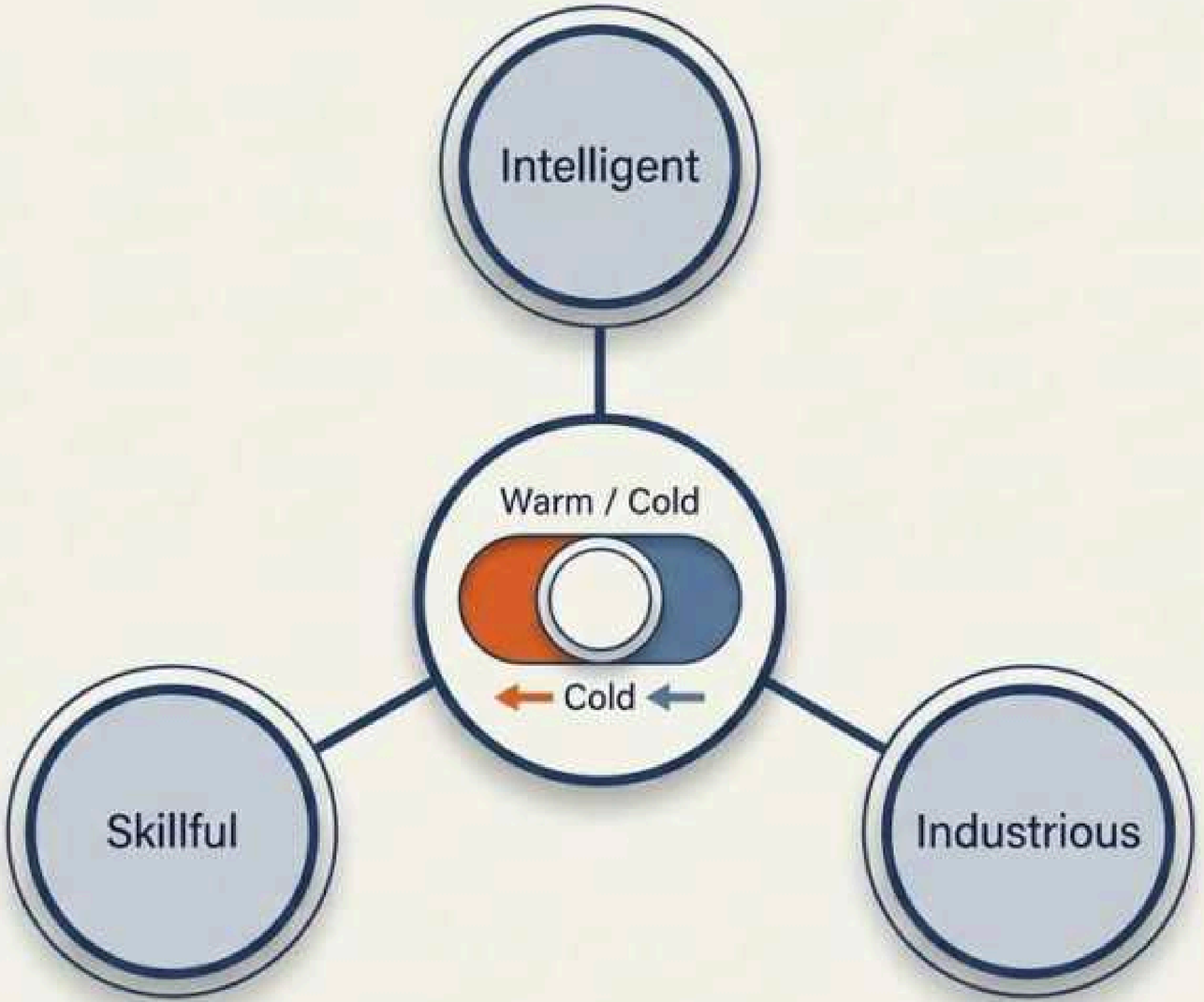
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# 2.11 Impression Formation: Central Traits

**Central Traits:**
Specific traits that act as an organizing lens for all other characteristics.

**Mechanism:**
Changing a single word entirely alters the interpretation of the surrounding traits.

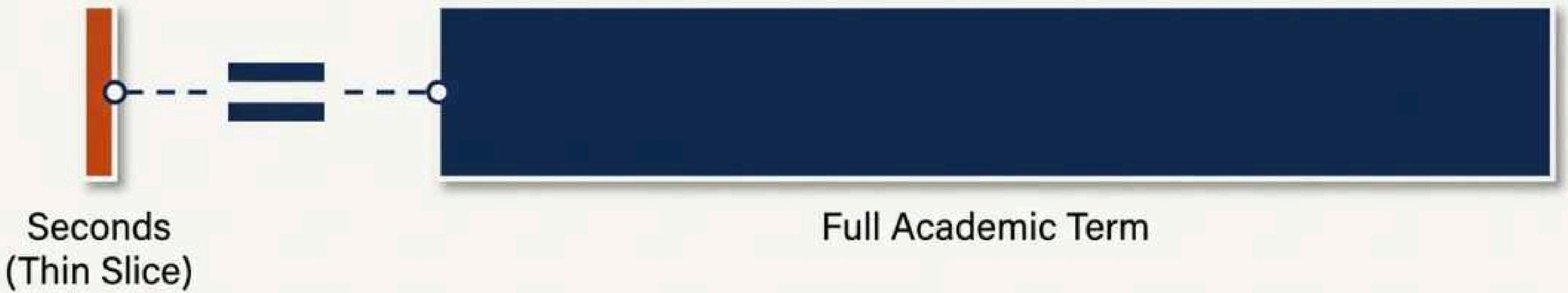
**Primary Dimensions:**
Warmth and competence remain the two foundational axes for judging others.




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# 2.12 Thin Slices and First Impressions

**Concept:** First impressions form incredibly fast. “Thin slices” of silent behavior (a few seconds to 30 seconds) can accurately predict long-term outcomes, such as end-of-term evaluations.




**Scientific Caveat:** While quick judgments contain valid information, they also carry bias. Accuracy is highly task-dependent.

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# 2.13 The Limitations of Deception Detection






The Data: Human ability to detect lies is poor, averaging ~54% (marginally above chance).

**Confidence vs. Accuracy**

High confidence does not correlate with high accuracy.

**Methodology**

Careful fact-checking systematically outperforms intuitive gut readings.

**Debunked Cues**

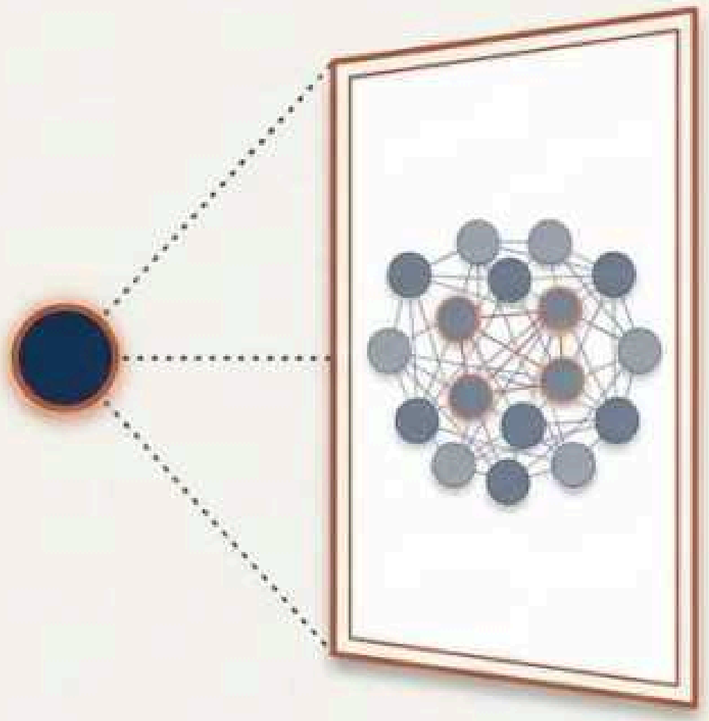
Believed physical tells (e.g., ~~looking away~~) are exceedingly weak indicators.

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# 2.14 The Self-Concept and Culture

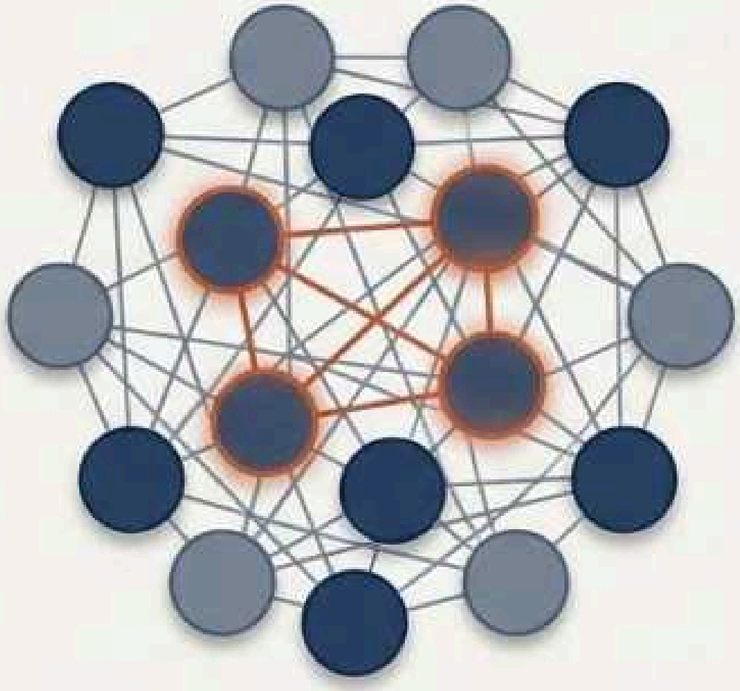
**Self-Concept:** The organized set of beliefs about who we are. **Looking-Glass Self:** The theory that self-perception is built through the imagined evaluations of others.

## Independent Self



Western paradigms emphasize autonomy and distinctness.

## Interdependent Self



Many Asian paradigms emphasize a self defined by relational context.

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# 2.15 Limits of Introspection and Self-Knowledge

## Self-Inference

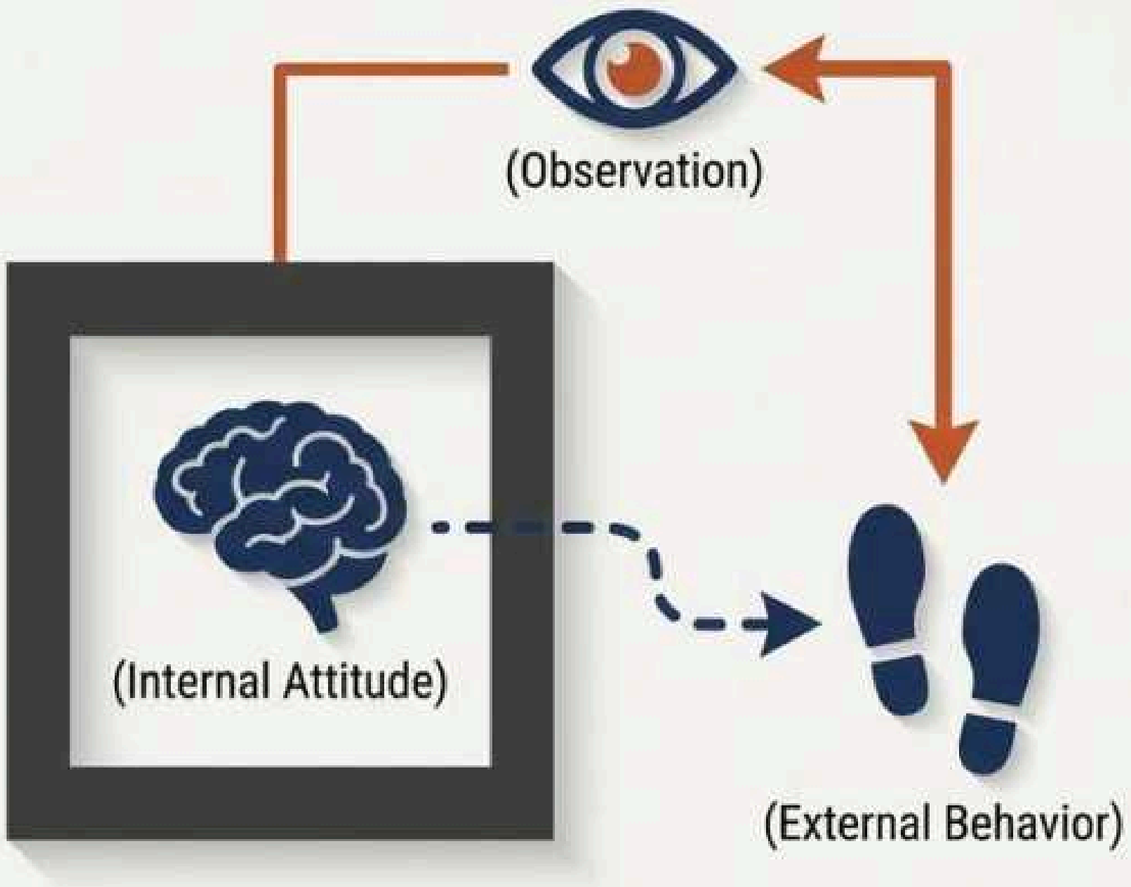
People sometimes infer their own internal attitudes by observing their external behavior, treating themselves like strangers.

## Flawed Introspection

Individuals often cannot accurately report the true causes of their actions, relying instead on post-hoc, plausible fabrications.

## Conclusion

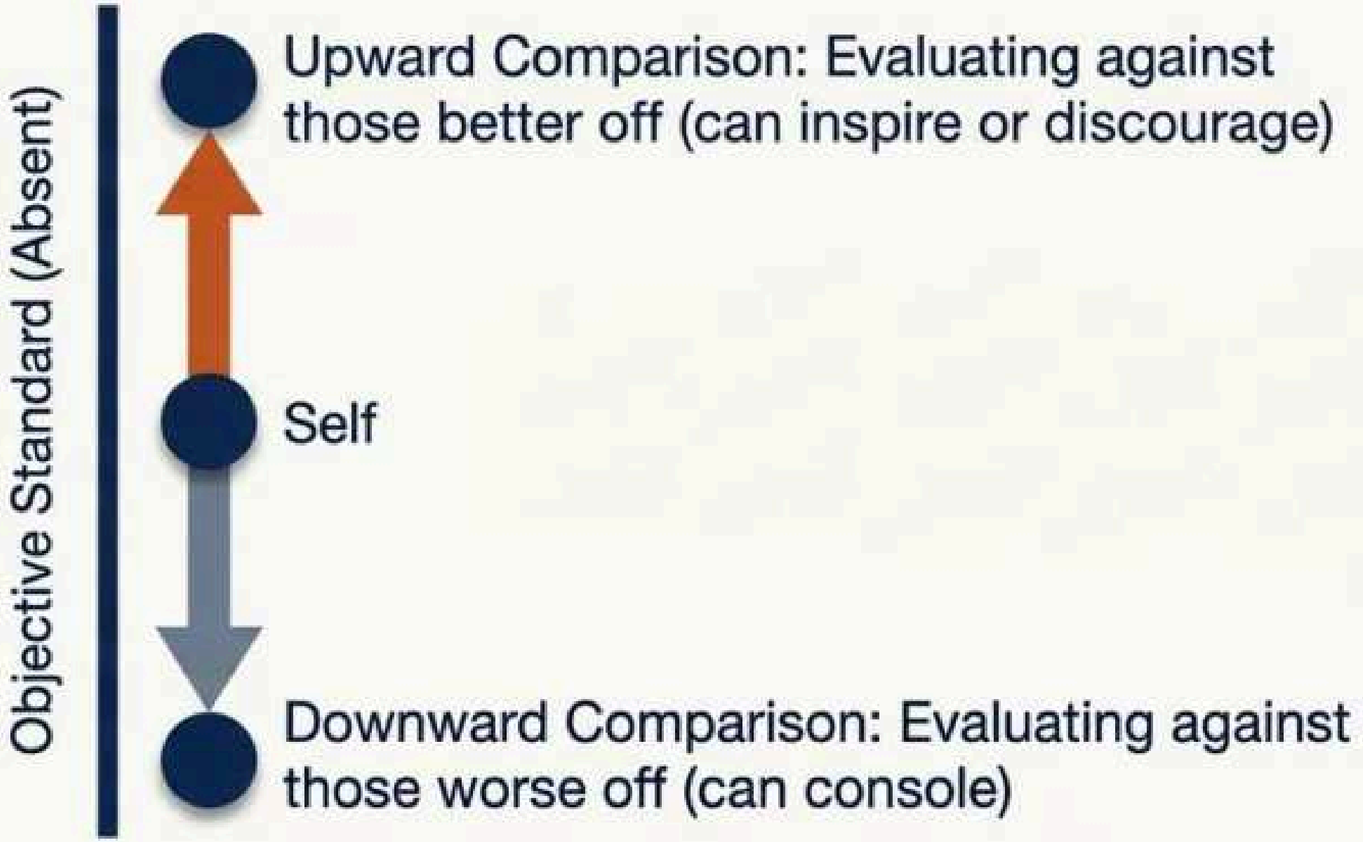
Introspection is a useful tool, but not a transparent window into the mind.




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# 2.16 Mechanics of Social Comparison

**Context:** In the absence of objective metrics, self-evaluation relies entirely on social comparison.




**Modern Application:** Heavy social media use correlates with increased upward comparison and lower mood (though the exact size and direction of effect remain debated).

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# **2.17** Self-Esteem vs. Self-Compassion



## The Pursuit of High Self-Esteem

While low self-esteem correlates with unhappiness, extensive reviews show high self-esteem does not reliably cause better performance, grades, or healthier choices.



## The Practice of Self-Compassion

A growing research consensus favors treating oneself with the same kindness offered to a friend, prioritizing resilience over chasing high self-regard.

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# 2.18
## Spotlight Effect and Illusion of Transparency

### Spotlight Effect

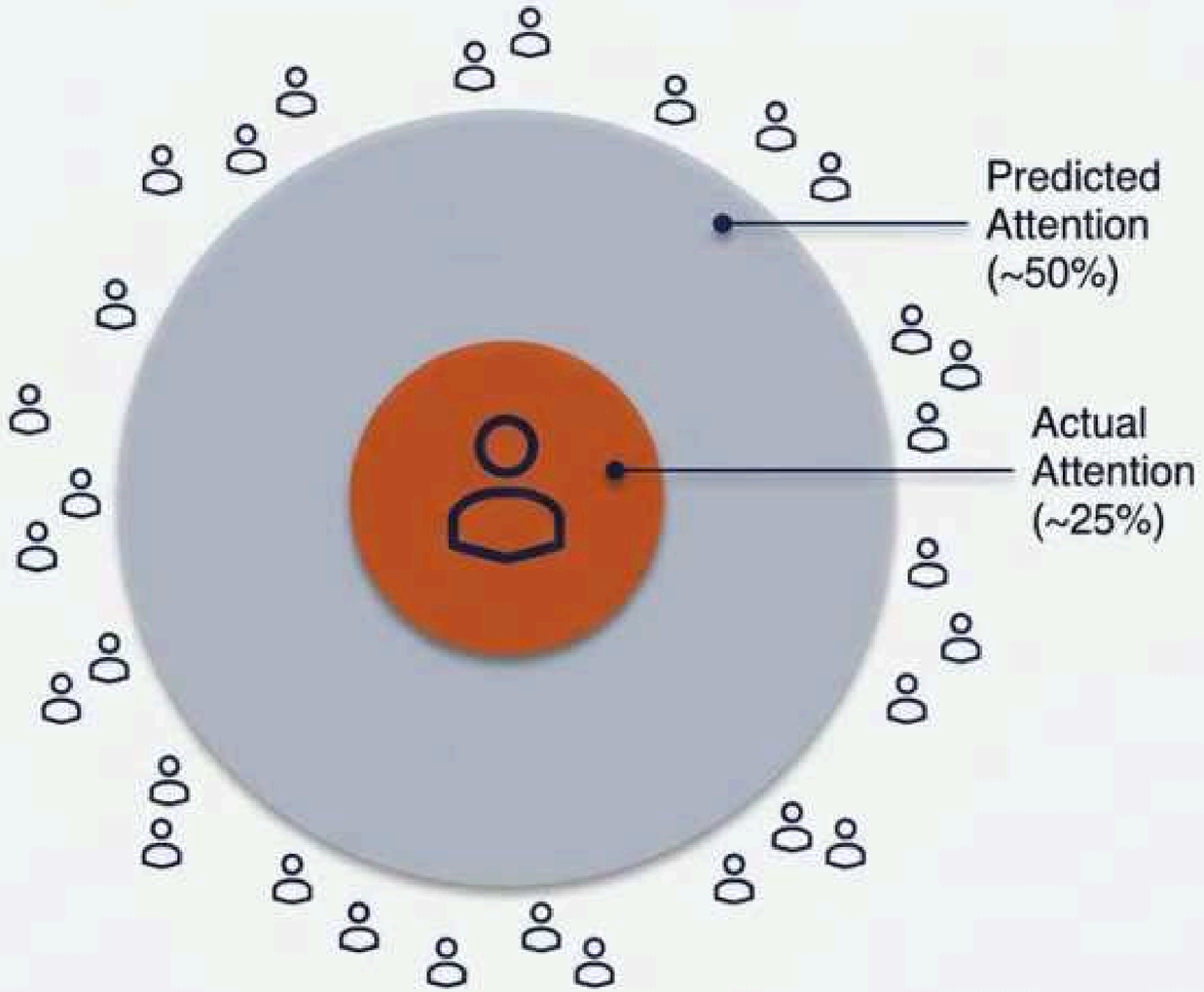
The persistent belief that others notice our appearance and behavior more than they actually do (demonstrated via classic "embarrassing T-shirt" study designs).

### Illusion of Transparency

The false belief that our internal feelings and emotional states are clearly visible to external observers.

### Takeaway

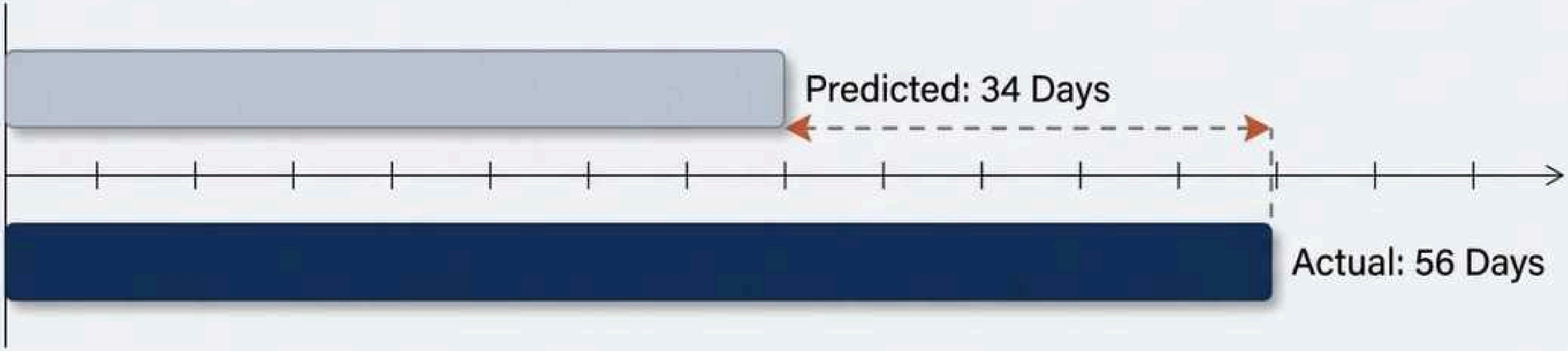
We are the center of our own universe, but not anyone else's.




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# 2.19 The Planning Fallacy

**Definition:** The systematic tendency to underestimate how long a task will take due to unchecked optimism.




## Empirical Evidence

In university thesis completion studies, actual time required vastly exceeded student predictions (56 days vs. 34 days).

## Remedy

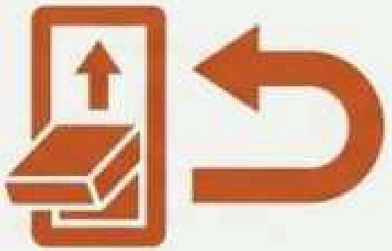
Base future estimates on historical data (how long similar projects took) rather than best-case scenarios.

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# 2.20
## Strategies for Better Judgment



### Pace
Slow down cognition when stakes are high.



### Inversion
Consider the opposite. Ask how you would interpret evidence if it pointed the other way.



### Context
Actively search for the hidden situational causes of others' behavior.



### External Input
Seek honest feedback to illuminate blind spots you cannot see through introspection alone.

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# 2.21 Application Exercise

## Application Exercise

**Task 1 (Others)**

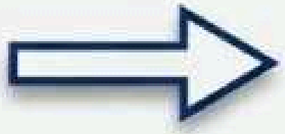
Observe an explanation of someone else's behavior based on character.



Rewrite it using only situational factors.

**Task 2 (Self)**

Observe an explanation of your own behavior based on context.



Rewrite it using only character factors.

Goal: Notice the mechanical differences between the two narratives to actively short-circuit your own attribution biases.

Next Phase: Transitioning from behavioral explanation to attitude formation and change (Lecture Three)

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