MICHAEL LEWIS

The UNDOING PROJECT

A FRIENDSHIP THAT CHANGED OUR MINDS

Figure 1. Adapted from Wolfgang Köhler, Gestalt Psychology *(1947; repr., New York: Liveright, 1992), 142.*

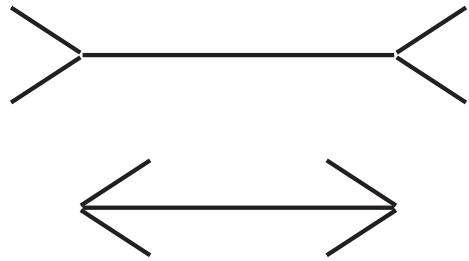

Figure 2. Müller-Lyer optical illusion.

I		*II*	
Alan	*4*	*Alan*	*4*
Ben	*4*	*Ben*	*4*
Carl	*5*	*Carl*	*4*
Dan	*4*	*Dan*	*4*
Ed	*3*	*Ed*	*4*

In many rounds of the game, will there be more results of type I or type II?

A NOTE ON SOURCES

Papers written for social science journals are not intended for public consumption. For a start, they're instinctively defensive. The readers of academic papers, in the mind's eye of their authors, are at best skeptical, and more commonly hostile. The writers of these papers aren't trying to engage their readers, much less give them pleasure. They're trying to *survive* them. As a result, I found that I was able to get a clearer, more direct, and more enjoyable understanding of the ideas in academic papers by speaking with their authors than by reading the papers themselves—though of course I read the papers, too.

The academic papers of Tversky and Kahneman are an important exception. Even as they wrote for a narrow academic audience, Danny and Amos seemed to sense a general reader waiting for them, in the future. Danny's book *Thinking, Fast and Slow* was openly directed at the general reader, and that helped this general reader in many ways. Actually, I watched Danny agonize over his book for several years, and even read early drafts of some of it. Everything Danny wrote, like everything he said, was full of interest. Still, every few months he'd be consumed with despair, and announce that he was giving up writing altogether—

before he destroyed his own reputation. To forestall his book's publication he *paid* a friend to find people who might convince him not to publish it. After its publication, when it landed on the *New York Times* bestseller list, he bumped into another friend, who later described what must be the oddest response any author has ever had to his own success. "You'll never believe what happened," said Danny incredulously. "Those people at the *New York Times* made a mistake and put my book on the bestseller list!" A few weeks later, he bumped into the same friend. "It's unbelievable what is going on," said Danny. "Because those people at the *New York Times* made that mistake and put my book on their bestseller list, they've had to keep it there!"

I would encourage anyone interested in my book to read Danny's book, too. For those whose thirst for psychology remains unquenched, I'd recommend two other books, which helped me come to grips with the field. The eight-volume *Encyclopedia of Psychology* will answer just about any question you might have about psychology, clearly and directly. The nine-volume (and counting) *A History of Psychology in Autobiography* will answer just about any question you might have about psychologists, though less directly. The first volume of this remarkable series was published in 1930, and it continues to motor along, fueled by an endlessly renewable source of energy: the need felt by psychologists to explain why they are the way they are.

At any rate, in grappling with my subject, I obviously leaned on the work of others. Here are those I leaned on:

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I never know exactly who to thank, or whether to say "whom" to thank. The problem is not a deficit of gratitude but a surplus of debt. I owe so many people that I don't know where to start. But there are people without whom this book simply would not have come to pass, and I'll focus on them.

Danny Kahneman and Barbara Tversky, for starters. When I met Danny, in late 2007, I had no ambition to write a book about him. Once I acquired that ambition, I spent roughly five years making him comfortable with it. Even then he remained, um, circumspect. "I don't think it is possible to describe the two of us without simplifying, without making us too large, and without exaggerating the differences between our characters," he once said. "That's the nature of the task, and I am curious to see how you will deal with it—though not curious enough to want to read it early." Barbara was a different story. Back in the late 1990s, by bizarre coincidence, I taught, or attempted to teach, her son Oren. As I was unaware of the existence of Amos Tversky, I was unaware that he was Amos Tversky's son. Anyway, I went to Barbara bearing a character reference from my former pupil. Barbara gave me access to Amos's papers, and her guidance. Amos's children, Oren, Tal, and Dona, offered

a view of Amos that I couldn't have gotten anywhere else. I remain deeply grateful to the Tversky family.

I came to this story as I've come to a lot of stories, as an interloper. Without Maya Bar-Hillel and Daniela Gordon, I would have been lost in Israel. In Israel, over and over again, I had the feeling that the people I was interviewing were not only more interesting than I was but also more capable of explaining what needed to be explained. That this story did not require a writer as much as it did a stenographer. I want to thank several Israelis, in particular, for allowing me to take dictation: Verred Ozer, Avishai Margalit, Varda Liberman, Reuven Gal, Ruma Falk, Ruth Bayit, Eytan and Ruth Sheshinski, Amira and Yeshu Kolodny, Gershon Ben-Shakhar, Samuel Sattath, Ditsa Pines, and Zur Shapira.

In psychology I was not much more naturally at home than I was in Israel. I needed my guides there, too. For their services in this capacity I'd like to thank Dacher Keltner, Eldar Shafir, and Michael Norton. Many former students and colleagues of Amos and Danny's were both generous with their time and full of insight. I'm especially grateful to Paul Slovic, Rich Gonzalez, Craig Fox, Dale Griffin, and Dale Miller. Steve Glickman offered a lovely guided tour of the history of psychology. And I'm not quite sure what I would have done if Miles Shore had not existed, or had not thought to interview Danny and Amos back in 1983. Miles Shore would be painful to undo.

One way to think of a book is as a series of decisions. I want to thank the people who helped me to make them in this one. Tabitha Soren, Tom Penn, Doug Stumpf, Jacob Weisberg, and Zoe Oliver-Grey read drafts of the manuscript and offered loving advice. Janet Byrne, who will one day be understood as having turned copyediting into an art form, fixed the book so that it was fit for consumption. Without the pushing and prodding of my editor, Starling Lawrence, I wouldn't have bothered to write it in the first place, and if I had, I certainly wouldn't have worked as hard at it as I wound up working. Finally, the possibility that this might be the last book that I ever give Bill Rusin to sell got my rear end in the desk chair sooner than I otherwise would have, so that he might work his magic. But not for the last time, I hope.