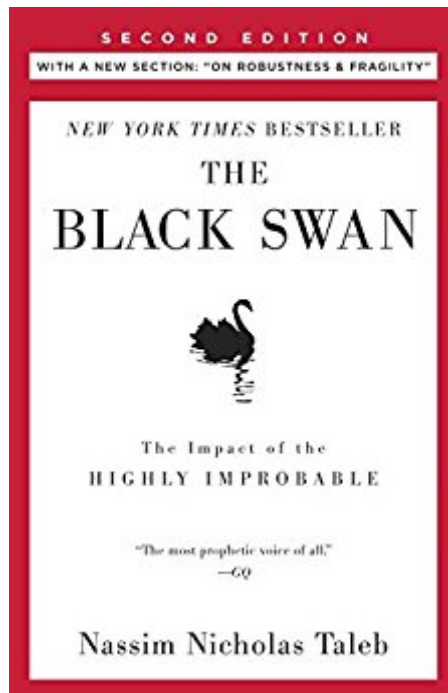# The Black Swan: Second Edition: The Impact Of The Highly Improbable Fragility" (Incerto)

Synopsis

The Black Swan is a standalone book in Nassim Nicholas Talebâ ™s landmark Incerto series, an investigation of opacity, luck, uncertainty, probability, human error, risk, and decision-making in a world we donâ ™t understand. The other books in the series are Fooled by Randomness, Antifragile, and The Bed of Procrustes.A black swan is a highly improbable event with three principal characteristics: It is unpredictable; it carries a massive impact; and, after the fact, we concoct an explanation that makes it appear less random, and more predictable, than it was. The astonishing success of Google was a black swan; so was 9/11. For Nassim Nicholas Taleb, black swans underlie almost everything about our world, from the rise of religions to events in our own personal lives.Â Why do we not acknowledge the phenomenon of black swans until after they occur? Part of the answer, according to Taleb, is that humans are hardwired to learn specifics when they should be focused on generalities. We concentrate on things we already know and time and time again fail to take into consideration what we donâ ™t know. We are, therefore, unable to truly estimate opportunities, too vulnerable to the impulse to simplify, narrate, and categorize, and not open enough to rewarding those who can imagine the â œimpossible.â •Â For years, Taleb has studied how we fool ourselves into thinking we know more than we actually do. We restrict our thinking to the irrelevant and inconsequential, while large events continue to surprise us and shape our world. In this revelatory book, Taleb explains everything we know about what we donâ ™t know, and this second edition features a new philosophical and empirical essay, â œOn Robustness and Fragility,â • which offers tools to navigate and exploit a Black Swan world.Â Elegant, startling, and universal in its applications, The Black Swan will change the way you look at the world. Taleb is a vastly entertaining writer, with wit, irreverence, and unusual stories to tell. He has a polymathic command of subjects ranging from cognitive science to business to probability theory. The Black Swan is a landmark bookâ ”itself a black swan.Â Praise for Nassim Nicholas TalebÂ â œThe most prophetic voice of all.â •â ”GQÂ Praise for The Black SwanÂ â œ[A book] that altered modern thinking.â •â ”The Times (London)Â â œA masterpiece.â •â ”Chris Anderson, editor in chief of Wired, author of The Long TailÂ â œIdiosyncratically brilliant.â •â ”Niall Ferguson, Los Angeles TimesÂ â œThe Black Swan changed my view of how the world works.â •â ”Daniel Kahneman, Nobel laureateÂ â œ[Taleb writes] in a style that owes as much to Stephen Colbert as it does to Michel de Montaigne. . . . We eagerly romp with him through the follies of confirmation bias [and] narrative fallacy.â •â ”The Wall Street JournalÂ â œHugely enjoyableâ ”compelling . . . easy to dip into.â •â ”Financial TimesÂ â œEngaging . . . The Black Swan has appealing cheek and admirable ambition.â •â ”The New York Times Book ReviewFrom the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starting with the good (chapters 15 - 17), within chapter 15 Taleb explains where the Bell curve works and where it does not. The Bell curve captures well variables that don't deviate much from the mean. Otherwise, it does not work. Taleb suggests we often fool ourselves in believing that correlation, regression coefficients, or standard deviation convey much information. This is because those coefficients are unstable (and can flip sign when possible) depending on the time selected. This is because the underlying variables are often not stationary enough for these coefficients to be stable.Chapter 16 is excellent as an introduction to Mandelbrot's fractal geometry as an alternative to Gaussian based investment theory. He supports well that these mathematical tools do capture randomness (of non-stationary variables) far better than the Normal distribution. However, he admits that Mandelbrotian models are not predictive. When looking at the same data set, he and numerous colleagues each came up with different underlying parameters to build fractal-like models. And a small difference in such parameters makes a huge difference in outcome. That's why you will not hear much of fractal geometry within the quantitative financial community. Nevertheless, this is a fascinating subject that deserves further exploration. For this purpose, I recommend

Mandelbrot's The Misbehavior of MarketsWithin Chapter 17, Taleb further elaborates on the flaws of the Normal distribution. He underlines that half of the return of the stock market over the past 50 years was associated with just 10 days with the greatest daily change.

If, as Socrates would have it, the only true knowledge is knowledge of one's own ignorance, then Nassim Nicholas Taleb is the world's greatest living teacher. In The Black Swan, Taleb's second book for laypeople, he gives a full treatment to concepts briefly explored in his first book "Fooled by Randomness." The Black Swan is basically a sequel to that book, but much more focused, detailed and scholarly. This is a book of serious philosophy that reads like a stand-up comedy routine. (Think Larry David...)The Black Swan is probably the strongest statement of enlightened empiricism since Ernst Mach refused to acknowledge the existence of the atom. Of course, in theory, everyone today is supposed to be an empiricist - all right-thinking intellectuals claim to base their views solely on positive scientific observation. But very few sincerely confront the implications of rigorous empiricism. Specifically, few confront "the problem of induction," illustrated here by the story of the black swan.Briefly: observing an event once does not predict it will occur again in the future. This remains true regardless of the number of observations one adds to the pile. Or, as Taleb, recapitulating David Hume, has it: the observation of even a million white swans does not justify the statement "all swans are white." There is no way to know that somewhere out there a black swan is not hiding, disproving the rule and nullifying our "knowledge" of swans. The problem of induction tells us that we cannot really learn from our experiences. It makes knowledge very problematic, if not impossible. And yet, humans do behave -almost without exception- as though they believe that experience teaches us lessons. This is forgivable; there is no better path to knowledge.

This is an entertaining and enlightening book, and fairly easy to read. It has an important message regarding how the world works; that the world is governed not by the predictable and the average, but by the random, the unknowable, the unpredictable -- big events or discoveries or unusual people that have big consequences. Change comes not uniformly but in unpredictable spurts. These are the Black Swans of the title: completedly unexpected and rare events or novel ideas or technologies that have a huge impact on the world. Indeed, Taleb argues that history itself is primarily driven by these Black Swans.It is convincing argument, entertainingly presented with plenty of sarcasm, and indeed, anger, by Taleb. For example he rails against the academic community, economists (including specific names), and Nobel Prize committee. Considerable numbers of his arguments "ring true" to me, that is my experience in life confirms that they are more accurate than

the traditional approach. Like any important work, 90% of what is in the book is not original; that does not make it less important. Taleb's contribution is in integrating the material together, and showing how these different ideas are tied to the Black Swan.The themes include: winner-take-all phenonomen, numerous effects of randomness on the world, the invalidity of the Gaussian Bell Curve to most things in world, concepts of scalablity, numerous instabilities in the world, especially the modern world where information travels so quickly, the fallacies about people's inability to predict the future.

The Black Swan: Second Edition: The Impact of the Highly Improbable: With a new section: "On Robustness and Fragility" (Incerto) The Black Swan: Second Edition: The Impact of the Highly Improbable Fragility" (Incerto) The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable (Incerto) The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable by Taleb, Nassim Nicholas (1st (first) Edition) [Hardcover(2007)] The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable, by Nassim Nicholas Taleb | Key Takeaways, Analysis & Review Key Person of Influence: The Five-Step Method to Become One of the Most Highly Valued and Highly Paid People in Your Industry Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder (Incerto) Fooled by Randomness: The Hidden Role of Chance in Life and in the Markets (Incerto) "Swan Lake" and "The Sleeping Beauty": Suites from the Ballets in Full Score (Dover Music Scores) The Trumpet of the Swan (full color) Swan: The Life and Dance of Anna Pavlova Swan Town: The Secret Journal of Susanna Shakespeare Nautor's Swan Swan Song Saint-Saens Camille The Swan from Carnival of the Animals. For Cello and Piano. by International Swan Lake Suite, Op. 20a - Study Score The Trumpet of the Swan Swan Sister: Fairy Tales Retold Wiley CPA Examination Review Impact Audios, Second Edition: Business Environment and Concepts