SUPERSTITIONS

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Many superstitions are just instances of the logical fallacy *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, “After that, therefore because of that.” You walk under a ladder and get hit by a car. After that, because of that.

Most misfortunates have happened after you were in contact with the number 13. But in fact, misfortunes have befallen you after you have been in contact with *every* number! *All* numbers are unlucky.

But why just numbers? Why not colors? Every misfortunate that has ever befallen you has happened after you have been in contact with the color green. After that, because of that: you slipped on a banana peel because, not long before, you encountered green.

But misfortunes have also occurred, with similar frequency, after you have encountered brown, yellow, red, blue—not to mention chartreuse, mauve, amaranth, vermilion, coquelicot, gamboge, burlywood, aureolin, celadon, and glaucous. (I just searched “unusual colors” in Google.)

If that’s not enough to keep you in your bathroom all day, what will?

Another factor leading to superstitions is anthropomorphism. Superstitious people attribute intention to what in fact are random events. God (or some lesser, more evil supernatural force—or even some force for evil built into the natural order, like fate or bad luck) *wanted* to associate misfortune with a seemingly unrelated cause.

Gamblers make a similar mistake. They think the universe is somehow curved around them, is focused on them, and intends them ill; *that* is why they drew a 2 instead of an ace.