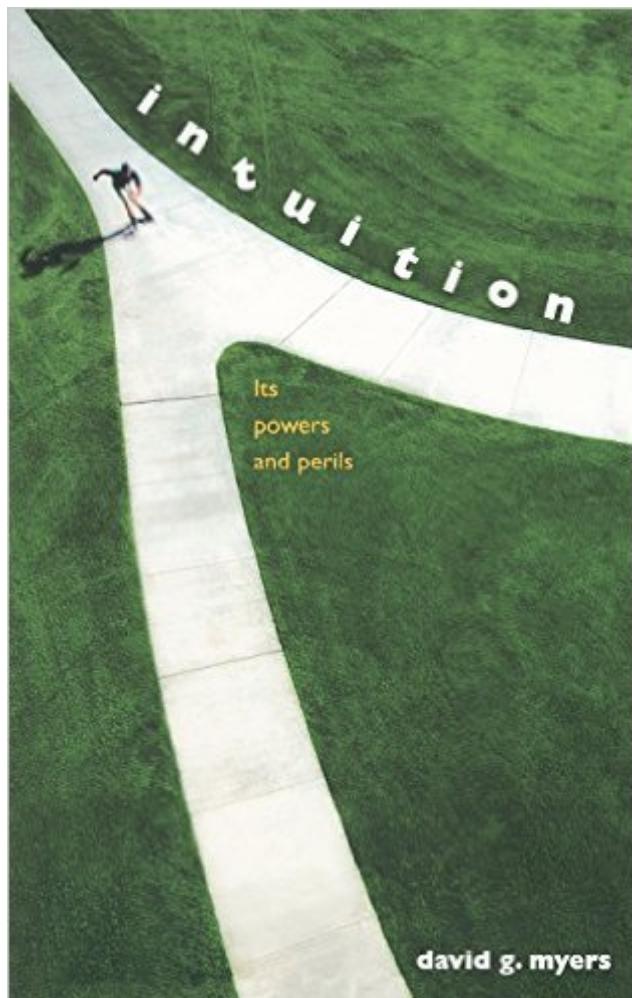


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# Intuition: Its Powers And Perils (Yale Nota Bene)



## Synopsis

How reliable is our intuition? How much should we depend on gut-level instinct rather than rational analysis? In this engaging book, David G. Myers shows us that while intuition can provide us with useful-and often amazing-insights, it can also dangerously mislead us. "Myers' book brilliantly establishes intuition as a legitimate subject of scientific inquiry."-Michael Shermer, Los Angeles Times Book Review "A lively and thorough review of the powers and pitfalls of gut instinct."-Eric Bonabeau, Harvard Business Review "[Intuition is a book] that may help you make optimal use of your intuition. . . . [It] offers scientific grounding in the subject and practical steps for becoming more intelligently intuitive."-Money Magazine's e-mail newsletter "Delightfully readable and deliberately provocative."-Publishers Weekly (front cover) "Entertaining, intelligent, and easy to read, Myers's book offers an abundance of research findings dealing with what is more aptly called the 'nonconscious' mind."-Choice "Intuition is a one-of-a-kind book by one of the best writers in psychology. Exceptionally reasonable, totally up-to-date, and responsible, the book has the potential to be a classic in the field."-Robert J. Sternberg, 2003 president, American Psychological Association

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Intuition is a hot topic. Today there are lots of trainers, coaches, consultants, and authors advocating the powers of intuition. 'Don't be too rational, trust your intuition!', they say. But how well-informed are these people about what intuition really is? To what extent can you rely on your

intuition and to what extent should you be skeptical? In this book, David Myers, a well-known writer on psychology, explains what is known about intuition. **WE KNOW MORE THAN WE KNOW WE KNOW** What is it anyway? David Myers explains that intuition is our capacity for direct knowledge, for immediate insight without observation or reason. In contrast, deliberate thinking is reasoning-like, critical, and analytic. So there are two levels of thinking: 1. **DELIBERATE THINKING**: this level of thinking is conscious and analytical. It is very valuable because it helps us to focus on what is really important and protects us from having to think about everything at once. It is as it where the mind's executive desk. 2. **INTUITION**: this unconscious level is automatic. It seems, inside our minds there are processing systems that work without us knowing it. To use a metaphor by David Myers: we effortlessly delegate most of our thinking and decisions making to the masses of cognitive workers busily at work in our mind's basement. These processes enable us, for instance, to recognize instantly, among thousands of humans, someone we have not seen in five years. We do know, but we don't know how we know. **WHAT WE KNOW, BUT DON'T KNOW WE KNOW, AFFECTS MORE THAN WE KNOW** Both ways of knowing are present within each person. Often they support each other, sometimes they lead to conflicting conclusions. One thing is important: we tend to underrate how much of our actions are guided by unconscious thinking.

In *Intuition: Its Powers and Perils*, author David Myers provides an overview of the unconscious operations of the human mind. He begins by arguing that we have two parallel systems operating in our day to day lives, the conscious/rational system and the unconscious/intuitive system. The former is slow and deliberate, the latter is fast and sometimes inaccurate. He then details many of the ways in which our intuition proves incorrect in areas like geography, personal memories, individual competence, and folk physics. Myers ends the book with a long chapter about our intuition in medicine, job interviews, risk, and gambling. Throughout the book, Myers repeats a theme popular since Tversky and Kahneman's papers in the 1970s: the human mind has predictable biases and inaccuracies on a host of logical puzzles and laboratory tests. As such, the book is basically a 249 page review article of the evidence against human rationality. While many of his examples are fascinating, there is no overall theory or mechanism given to account for this irrationality. To take one example he uses, imagine a ball dropped from a plane. Most people intuitively feel that the ball should fall straight down, rather than along the correct parabolic path to the earth. Myers takes this as evidence of a faulty folk-physics. Unfortunately, despite this fault, people have no problem catching balls falling from great heights. Is it possible that our intuition is in fact robust and accurate within the domains where it is used, and only incorrect in the unusual situations of the laboratory?

Myers only casually addresses this, but his evidence on competence developing at certain tasks and jobs indicates that this might be the case.

As a tool for prediction, scientific discovery, business management, and many other areas, intuition has been claimed by many to be essential, even superior to other more quantitative approaches to cognition. In fact, there is at the present time a fairly intense debate going on between two camps: one camp consisting of those who believe intuition to be the superior mode of cognition, and the other camp consisting of those who favor cognitive efforts that are governed by mathematical/computational algorithms. The tension between these groups probably would not have arisen if it were not for the intense interest in building thinking machines. Indeed, developments in artificial intelligence over the past few decades have shown beyond doubt that many tasks that were once thought to need "intuition" for their completion, origination, or evaluation, can now be accomplished by machines using artificial reasoning patterns. But far from being a well-defined mode of cognition, intuition has been a kind of catchphrase that is used to explain the ability to solve problems and reach goals without really knowing how. The apologists of intuition emphasize its ability to deal with issues and problems of a qualitative nature (the famous Einstein dictum that "not everything that counts can be counted"). In some extreme instances, enthusiasts of intuition think of it as a "power", the possession of which will give one distinct advantages, especially in the areas of business and finance. Indeed, there are the "intuitive" financial traders who boast of their abilities to foresee market trends that the "quants" cannot, and they do so without really quantifying just how much advantage their intuition has over more mathematical/algorithmic approaches to financial trading.

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