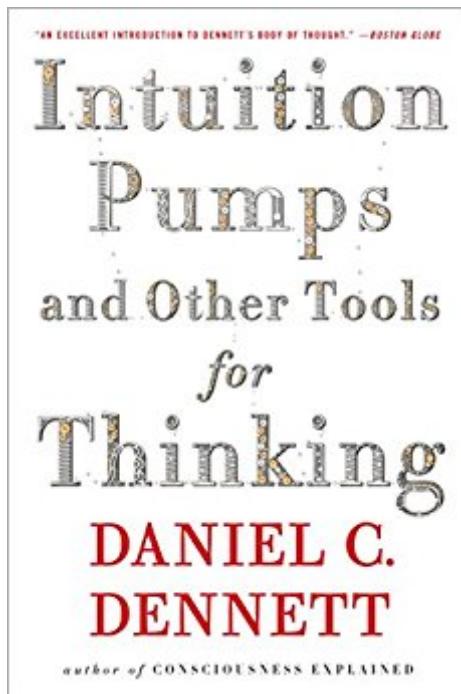


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Intuition Pumps And Other Tools For Thinking



Synopsis

Over a storied career, Daniel C. Dennett has engaged questions about science and the workings of the mind. His answers have combined rigorous argument with strong empirical grounding. And a lot of fun. *Intuition Pumps and Other Tools for Thinking* offers seventy-seven of Dennett's most successful "imagination-extenders and focus-holders" meant to guide you through some of life's most treacherous subject matter: evolution, meaning, mind, and free will. With patience and wit, Dennett deftly deploys his thinking tools to gain traction on these thorny issues while offering readers insight into how and why each tool was built. Alongside well-known favorites like Occam's Razor and *reductio ad absurdum* lie thrilling descriptions of Dennett's own creations: *Trapped in the Robot Control Room*, *Beware of the Prime Mammal*, and *The Wandering Two-Bitser*. Ranging across disciplines as diverse as psychology, biology, computer science, and physics, Dennett's tools embrace in equal measure light-heartedness and accessibility as they welcome uninitiated and seasoned readers alike. As always, his goal remains to teach you how to "think reliably and even gracefully about really hard questions." A sweeping work of intellectual seriousness that's also studded with impish delights, *Intuition Pumps* offers intrepid thinkers "in all walks of life" delicious opportunities to explore their pet ideas with new powers.

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Customer Reviews

If you have enjoyed any of Daniel Dennett's other books you will enjoy this. It is a pleasing, humorous and insightful journey into a gallery of mundane and profound thinking tools drawn from a wide-ranging set of disciplines, from literature and science to psychology and philosophy. It's worth noting that this is not really a "how to" book. Instead it's more like a survey of common as well as uncommon tools that human beings consciously and unconsciously use to both understand the world better and communicate and empathize with each other. Not surprisingly, given Dennett's profession, the bent is slightly more philosophical although the book is easy to read and appreciate. The book starts with the simplest of tools, such as making mistakes. Dennett illuminates how making mistakes is not just ok but desirable since it's perhaps the only way to hone a system of thinking into a useful device. Other parts of the book cover concepts like *reductio ad absurdum*, Occam's Razor and the wittily-named Occam's Broom which is sometimes used nefariously to sweep arguments under the rug. There's a fair amount of ground Dennett covers before he gets to the concept stated in the book's name - intuition pumps. Intuition pumps refer to anything - from thought experiments to linguistic devices - that somehow make us bypass the process of rigorous thinking and reach a revelation primarily through intuition. One of the virtues of the book is how it describes examples of both good and bad intuition pumps including sleights of hand used by politicians and pseudoscientists. I was quite impressed by Dennett's attention to even very simple tools invoked through common expressions; for instance one of the fallacies he describes is the use of the word "rather" that's routinely used to set up a false dichotomy.

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