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ABOUT
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[加] 基思·斯坦诺维奇 (Keith E. Stanovich) 著

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Keith E. Stanovich

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How to Think Straight About Psychology

TENTH EDITION

Keith E. Stanovich

University of Toronto

内容提要

在今天的大众媒体和图书市场上，到处充斥着关于潜能提升、心理操控、色彩星座、催眠读心等伪装成心理学的主题，更有一些伪心理学家、所谓的心理治疗师打着心理学的旗号欺世盗名，从中渔利。在浩如烟海、良莠不齐的心理学信息面前，如何拨除迷雾，去伪存真，成为一个明智的心理学信息的消费者呢？这本书将教给你科学实用的批判性思维技能，将真正的心理学研究从伪心理学中区分出来，告诉你什么才是真正的心理学。

本书英文版首版于1983年，30多年来一直被奉为心理学入门经典，在全球顶尖大学中享有盛誉，现在呈现在读者面前的是英文第10版。这本书并不同于一般的心理学导论类教材，很多内容是心理学课堂上不曾讲授的，也是许多心理学教师在教学中感到只可意会而不可言传的。作者正是从此初衷出发，以幽默生动的语言，结合一些妙趣横生、贴近生活的实例，深入浅出地介绍了可证伪性、操作主义、实证主义、安慰剂效应、相关和因果、概率推理等心理学中的基本原则。与上一版相比，第10版更新了最新的研究资料和实例以及172篇新文献。

本书不仅适合于心理学专业的学生，有助于建立心理学研究中必要的批判性思维技能与意识，而其通俗易读性也非常适合所有对心理学感兴趣的读者，它将帮助你纠正对心理学的种种误解，学会独立地评估心理学信息，用科学的精神和方法理解自己和他人的行为。此外，由于心理学与其他学科的共通性，本书也不失为一本精彩有趣的科学哲学类读物。

推荐序一

心理学是一门很容易让人误解的学科。与其他学科不同，它研究的是与人民生活紧密相关的问题。有些还正好是大家都熟悉，而且经常关心的问题。比如：什么样的人容易讨人喜欢？什么样的事情我们记忆深刻？什么样的事情让人高兴（或痛苦）？为什么男人比女人更爱聊政治时事？人为什么要自杀？意念能不能被植入梦中？等等……正因为大家关心这些问题，人们就会有自己的分析，自己的证据，得出自己相信的结论。很多时候，这些自觉的结论与心理学家的研究结论并不完全一致，比如说，我们心理学家就发现，青梅竹马的婚姻很难成立，婴儿并不是有奶便认娘，性格并不决定一个人的命运，等等……每当矛盾、怀疑、迷惑甚至气愤产生的时候，我们到底是该相信自己的直觉、经验和常识呢，还是该相信心理学的研究、证据和知识呢？

不幸的是，大多数的心理学教科书只满足告诉大家心理学的研究、发现和知识，但从不说明为什么这些研究、发现和知识是值得我们关注和信任的。这些书的作者好像都在假设每一位读者思考问题起来都像心理学家一样，相信和理解心理学的研究、发现和知识。幸运的是，基思·斯坦诺维奇教授写了这本 *How to Think Straight about Psychology*，一本“与众不同的心理学”教科书。他总结了心理学家的职业特质，让每一位读者都有机会去理解我们心理学家是如何去思考、分析和解读人类的行为和心理的。他的每一章都将一个常识的、朴素的、直觉的有关人类心理的分析和思考与一个科学的、严谨的、心理学的分析和思考相对比，以帮助读者理解心理学家的分析逻辑和研究思路。

我个人觉得，在斯坦诺维奇阐述的心理学特质中，有两点应该是区分我们心理学家和其他人（包括其他领域的科学家）与众不同的地方。

其一是我们心理学的批判性思维习惯，也就是说，心理学不相信个人的智慧，更相信科学的方法，而科学方法的本质是证伪，即对我们的经验、常识和直觉，产生怀疑、挑战 and 批评。从原则上而言，心理学家不怕犯错

误，但害怕以假乱真。心理学家也不相信那些能回答所有问题的绝对真理，但相信对所有问题应该有一个相对正确的答案。心理学家从不相信个案和例子，因为其随机性和主观性过于明显，但我们愿意相信大样本基础上的科学研究发现。我们希望听到动听的心理故事，但更愿意看到众多心理学观察的数据和总结。

其二是我们心理学的概率性思维习惯。我们和很多自然科学家思考方式不同之处就在于我们更容易相信，任何人类的行为都是概率性的表现，也就是说，它有一定的不确定性，会受到其他随机事件的影响。其实人类很多学科都是建立在概率基础之上的，比如核物理、天体物理、生物进化、病理学、所有的社会科学（经济学、社会学、政治学等）等等，它们都不可能准确预测每一个研究对象的具体活动，但都对整体的事物活动规律有很好的描述和预测。只不过我们心理学家更愿意承认而且强调我们学科的不确定性而已。

总之，我很高兴地看到这本书在中国再版，并向心理学爱好者推荐这一本“与众不同”的心理学教科书。

彭凯平

清华大学心理学系教授、系主任
美国加州大学伯克利分校心理学系终身教授

推荐序二

这本书在出第1版时，我已经开始把它推荐给我的学生，那是三十多年前的事了。现在它已经出到第10版了，可见它深受几代老师及学生的爱戴。我乐见它以英文版的形式呈现给大陆高校学生。

这本书之所以能如此有生命力，我想主要是因为作者能把一个非常枯燥及严肃的题材讲得那么生动及易懂，引起老师和学生们在课堂上热烈的讨论及哈哈的笑声。作者用一般老百姓日常生活中常遇的实例，简单明了地将如何做好科学研究娓娓道出，并纠正了民众脑海中常存的一个对科学研究的误解：以为只要是做实地调研及用数据来呈现的研究，就是科学的。

在现今中国社会里，有那么一些企业及媒体用虚假的数据充当科学研究成果，谋取消费者的信任，从而坐收暴利。阅读本书，可以让人们认识到及分辨出什么样的研究及数据才是真正科学的及可信的。为此，我不单只推荐它给大专院校心理学系的学生作为研究方法课的教材，也强烈推荐给一般读者。由于本书的可读性很高，我想读者在读完后，能更明智地去面对外界排山倒海般涌现的各种信息。

杨中芳

中国社会科学院社会学研究所社会心理研究中心客座研究员

To Paula, who taught me how to think straight about life

Preface

New to the Tenth Edition

The tenth edition of *How to Think Straight About Psychology* has no major structural revisions because a chapter reorganization occurred in a previous edition. The content and order of the chapters remain the same. At the request of reviewers and users, this edition remains at the same length as the ninth edition. Readers and users have not wanted the book to lengthen and, indeed, it has not. I have continued to update and revise the examples that are used in the book (while keeping those that are reader favorites). Some dated examples have been replaced with more contemporary studies and issues. I have made a major effort to use contemporary citations that are relevant to the various concepts and experimental effects that are mentioned. A large number of new citations appear in this edition (172 new citations, to be exact!), so that the reader continues to have up-to-date references on all of the examples and concepts.

The goal of the book remains what it always was—to present a short introduction to the critical thinking skills that will help the student to better understand the subject matter of psychology. During the past decade and a half there has been an increased emphasis on the teaching of critical thinking in universities (Abrami et al., 2008; Sternberg, Roediger, & Halpern, 2006). Indeed, some state university systems have instituted curricular changes mandating an emphasis on critical thinking skills. At the same time, however, other educational scholars were arguing that critical thinking skills should not be isolated from specific factual content. *How to Think Straight About Psychology* combines these two trends. It is designed to provide the instructor with the opportunity to teach critical thinking within the rich content of modern psychology.

Readers are encouraged to send me comments at: keith.stanovich@utoronto.ca.

There exists a body of knowledge that is unknown to most people. This information concerns human behavior and consciousness in their various forms. It can be used to explain, predict, and control human actions. Those who have access to this knowledge use it to gain an understanding of other human beings. They have a more complete and accurate conception of what determines the behavior and thoughts of other individuals than do those who do not have this knowledge.

Surprisingly enough, this unknown body of knowledge is the discipline of psychology.

What can I possibly mean when I say that the discipline of psychology is unknown? Surely, you may be thinking, this statement was not meant to be taken literally. Bookstores contain large sections full of titles dealing with psychology. Television and radio talk shows regularly feature psychological topics. Magazine articles quote people called psychologists talking about a variety of topics. Nevertheless, there is an important sense in which the *field* of psychology is unknown.

Despite much seeming media attention, the discipline of psychology remains for the most part hidden from the public. The transfer of "psychological" knowledge that is taking place via the media is largely an illusion. Few people are aware that the majority of the books they see in the psychology sections of many bookstores are written by individuals with absolutely no standing in the psychological community. Few are aware that many of the people to whom television applies the label *psychologist* would not be considered so by the American Psychological Association or the Association for Psychological Science. Few are aware that many of the most visible psychological "experts" have contributed no information to the fund of knowledge in the discipline of psychology.

The flurry of media attention paid to "psychological" topics has done more than simply present inaccurate information. It has also obscured the very real and growing knowledge base in the field of psychology. The general public is unsure about what is and is not psychology and is unable to independently evaluate claims about human behavior. Adding to the problem is the fact that many people have a vested interest in a public that is either without evaluative skills or that believes there is no way to evaluate psychological claims. The latter view, sometimes called the "anything goes" attitude, is one of the fallacies discussed in this book, and it is particularly costly to the public. Many pseudosciences are multimillion-dollar industries that depend on the lack of public awareness that claims about human behavior can be tested. The general public is also unaware that many of the claims made by these pseudosciences (e.g., astrology, psychic surgery, speed reading, biorhythms, therapeutic touch, subliminal self-help tapes, facilitated communication, and psychic detectives) have been tested and proved false. The existence of the pseudoscience industry, which is discussed in this

book, increases the media's tendency toward sensationalistic reporting of science. This tendency is worse in psychology than in other sciences, and understanding the reasons why this is so is an important part of learning how to think straight about psychology.

This book, then, is directed not at potential researchers in psychology but at a much larger group: the consumers of psychological information. The target audience is the beginning psychology student and the general reader who have encountered information on psychological issues in the general media and have wondered how to go about evaluating its validity.

This book is not a standard introductory psychology text. It does not outline a list of facts that psychological research has uncovered. Indeed, telling everyone to take an introductory psychology course at a university is probably not the ultimate solution to the inaccurate portrayal of psychology in the media. There are many laypeople with a legitimate interest in psychology who do not have the time, money, or access to a university to pursue formal study. More importantly, as a teacher of university-level psychology courses, I am forced to admit that my colleagues and I often fail to give our beginning students a true understanding of the science of psychology. The reason is that lower-level courses often do not teach the critical analytical skills that are the focus of this book. As instructors, we often become obsessed with "content"—with "covering material." Every time we stray a little from the syllabus to discuss issues such as psychology in the media, we feel a little guilty and begin to worry that we may not cover all the topics before the end of the term.

Consider the average introductory psychology textbook. Many now contain between 600 and 800 multicolumned pages and reference literally hundreds of studies in the published literature. Of course, there is nothing wrong with such books containing so much material. It simply reflects the increasing knowledge base in psychology. There are, however, some unfortunate side effects. Instructors are often so busy trying to cram their students full of dozens of theories, facts, and experiments that they fail to deal with some of the fundamental questions and misconceptions that students bring with them to the study of psychology. Rather than dealing directly with these misconceptions, the instructors (and the introductory textbook authors) often hope that if students are exposed to enough of the empirical content of psychology, they will simply *induce* the answers to their questions. In short, the instructors hope that students will recognize the implicit answers to these questions in the discussions of empirical research in several content areas. All too often this hope is frustrated. In a final review session—or in office hours at the end of the term—instructors are often shocked and discouraged by questions and comments that might have been expected on the first day of the course but not after 14 weeks: "But psychology experiments aren't real life; what can they tell us?"; "Psychology just can't be a *real* science like chemistry, can it?"; "But I heard a therapist on TV say the opposite of what our textbook said"; "I think this theory is

stupid—my brother behaves just the opposite of what it says”; “Psychology is nothing more than common sense, isn’t it?”; “Everyone knows what anxiety is—why bother defining it?” For many students, such questions are not implicitly answered merely by a consideration of the content of psychology. In this book, I deal explicitly with the confusions that underlie questions and comments such as these.

Unfortunately, research has shown that the average introductory psychology course does surprisingly little to correct some of entering students’ misconceptions about the discipline (Keith & Beins, 2008; Kowalski & Taylor, 2009; Standing & Huber, 2003; Taylor & Kowalski, 2004). This unfortunate fact provides the rationale for this book. Psychology students need explicit instruction in the critical thinking skills that will make them into independent evaluators of psychological information.

Years after students have forgotten the content of an introductory psychology course, they will still use the fundamental principles covered in this book to evaluate psychological claims. Long after Erikson’s stages of development have been forgotten, students will be using the thinking tools introduced in this text to evaluate new psychological information encountered in the media. Once acquired, these skills will serve as lifelong tools that will aid in the evaluation of knowledge claims. First, they provide the ability to conduct an initial gross assessment of plausibility. Second, these skills provide some criteria for assessing the reliability of “expert” opinion. Because the need to rely on expert opinion can never be eliminated in a complex society, the evaluation of an expert’s credibility becomes essential to knowledge acquisition. Although these critical thinking skills can be applied to any discipline or body of knowledge, they are particularly important in the area of psychology because the field is so often misrepresented in the general media.

Many psychologists are pessimistic about any effort to stem the tide of misinformation about their discipline. Although this pessimism is, unfortunately, often justified, this “consumer’s guide” to psychology was motivated by the idea that psychologists must not let this problem become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Although I have welcomed the opportunity to prepare several editions of *How to Think Straight About Psychology*, it is unfortunately true that the reasons for the book’s existence are just as applicable today as they were when I wrote the first edition. Media presentations of psychology are just as misleading as they ever were, and students in introductory psychology courses enter with as many misconceptions as they ever did. Thus, the goals of all subsequent editions have remained the same. These goals are shared by an increasing number of psychology instructors. Stanford University psychologist Roger Shepard (1983) echoed all the concerns that motivated the writing of the first edition of this text: “Although most undergraduate psychology students may not go on to scientific careers, one hopes that they acquire some facility for the critical evaluation of the incomplete,

naive, confused, or exaggerated reports of social science 'findings' to which they will continue to be exposed by the popular media....Widespread notions that human behavior and mental phenomena can be adequately understood through unaided common sense or, worse, by reference to nonempirical pseudosciences, such as astrology, present us with a continuing challenge" (p. 855).

The goal of this book is to present a short introduction to the critical thinking skills that will help students to better understand the subject matter of psychology and better understand events in the world in which they live.

Acknowledgments

Many of the individuals I have acknowledged in earlier editions continue to contribute ideas for the book. However, I must single out Richard West of James Madison University, who has been a most valuable continuing contributor to the book's evolution. A humane scholar and a true friend, his intellectual and emotional support is much appreciated.

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