Psychology And Sociology Come Together

A new examination of the surprising origins of human goodness. In Born to Be Good, Dacher Keltner demonstrates that humans are not hardwired to lead lives that are nasty, brutish, and short—we are in fact born to be good. He investigates an old mystery of human evolution: why have we evolved positive emotions like gratitude, amusement, awe, and compassion that promote ethical action and are the fabric of cooperative societies? By combining stories of scientific discovery, personal narrative, and Eastern philosophy, Keltner illustrates his discussions with more than fifty photographs of human emotions. Born to Be Good is a profound study of how emotion is the key to living the good life and how the path to happiness goes through human emotions that connect people to one another. 60 photographs.

My Personal Review:

Darwin's theory of evolution says that through a process called "natural selection" those that cannot adapt to the environment eventually become extinct. Fossils around the globe confirm this. In light of this theory, one might think that the strong will always survive and overpower the weak out of existence. Genes by their nature, therefore, are selfish because all they want to do is propagate.

Since we are all made from genes, some believe that we, too, as a species are selfish by nature. As the book states, our every action is designed to maximize wealth. We help others expecting we would in turn receive help someday. We would satisfy the "pleasure centers" of our brains through sex, drug, money, self-interest, or any other means anytime we could. "Thou shalt not kill" implies that murder is in our blood and therefore the need for such a commandment in the first place. In the greater scheme of an evolutionary wilderness, acts of kindness toward others are simply aberrations or misfires in the brain.

The book disagrees.

Darwin himself observed that sympathetic communities are more likely to produce healthier offspring than cruel ones. Human history shows that compassion always pulls through in times of war. And new studies of our body's physiology show that caretaking emotions are wired within our nervous systems.
As a species, we evolved at some point to walk on two feet. In doing so, the female's birth canal narrowed. Our babies therefore have to be born small in order to pass through the smaller opening. In comparison to other animals whose newborns can walk upright the moment they're born, our babies need a long time of nursing -- at least eighteen months and continually at that all throughout the day -- before they can survive on their own. As a result, caregiving for the human species became a way of life.

Emotion has often been downplayed, restrained, indeed even belittled, in comparison to intellect. We must suppress emotion and let intellect roam free if we are to discover new things, solve life's riddles, and survive in an increasingly competitive and academic business world. Excitement, it is said, kills. Although true and essential when, say, doing a heart bypass, maneuvering a crippled jetliner into safe landing, or simply driving down the highway, we should not forget that -- as the book so plainly states -- had it not been for our emotions, we as a species might not be here today.

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Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life by Dacher Keltner - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!