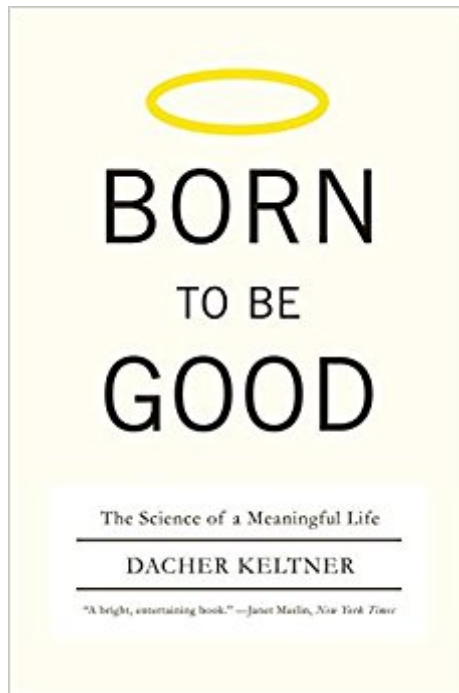




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# Born To Be Good: The Science Of A Meaningful Life



## Synopsis

• A landmark book in the science of emotions and its implications for ethics and human universals. • Library Journal, starred review In this startling study of human emotion, Dacher Keltner investigates an unanswered question of human evolution: If humans are hardwired to lead lives that are nasty, brutish, and short, why have we evolved with positive emotions like gratitude, amusement, awe, and compassion that promote ethical action and cooperative societies? Illustrated with more than fifty photographs of human emotions, Born to Be Good takes us on a journey through scientific discovery, personal narrative, and Eastern philosophy. Positive emotions, Keltner finds, lie at the core of human nature and shape our everyday behavior and they just may be the key to understanding how we can live our lives better. 60 photos

## Book Information

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company (October 5, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393337138

ISBN-13: 978-0393337136

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 34 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #63,183 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #24 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Good & Evil #247 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Mental Health > Emotions #326 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Personality

## Customer Reviews

• A bright, entertaining book . . . [that] covers broad, interesting territory. • - Janet Maslin, The New York Times • A fact-filled, fun, and enlightened peek into our minds and hearts. • - Daniel Goleman, author of Emotional Intelligence • A fresh and absolutely fascinating book. • - Michael Pollan, author of The Omnivore's Dilemma

Dacher Keltner is Professor of Psychology and the Director of the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley. He has taught social psychology for the past 21 years and is the recipient of the Distinguished Teaching Award for Letters and Sciences. His research focuses on the prosocial emotions (such as love, sympathy, and gratitude), morality, and power. Other

awards include the Western Psychological Association's award for outstanding contribution to research, the Positive Psychology Prize for excellence in research, and the Distinguished Mentoring Award at UC Berkeley. He is a fellow of the American Psychological Association, the American Psychological Society, and the Society for Personality and Social Psychology. In 2008, the Utne Reader listed Dacher as one of the 50 visionaries changing the world.

This book includes a breadth of examples from many cultures, art, and literature from the time of the Greeks to the modern period on the meaning of facial expressions and the effects of neuropeptides on the emotions that makes it easy and engaging to read. The focus is on the jen ratio (the balance of good and bad in one's life). The notes are invaluable for further reading on the smile, embarrassment, laughter, touch, and love among animals and humans, showing the common threads that link all of us.

For over 30 years now, employing the only formal education I have (NY police criminal investigator), I've worked to uncover the answer to one simple question. This book certainly offers a "clue" for which I've been searching!

I really enjoyed this book for several reasons, not the least of which is the positive slant on human emotion instead of the constant barrage of negative and cynical information we are exposed to every day. It is not light reading, however. It is a book that conveys scientific research into how evolution plays such a large part in human emotions, even down to facial expressions. It is a fascinating layman's look into the world of social psychology and the study of prosocial human emotion. Highly recommended!

It helps that I'm just nuts about this subject but Dacher covers so much of what makes us good. The science that supports it and how we can capitalize on it to make our life better.

Uplifting and full of good information. Mr. Keltner walks his talk and is making the world a better place one smile at a time.

Would highly recommend. Physically, the book was sent to me in perfect condition. Inside the pages are pure gold. It taught me a lot of interesting facts and studies on the theories of the human mind and ponders the question of morality and if we as humans are inherently good.

This book brings up a lot of interesting reasons to why we should be good and that it is natural for us to be. It is a nice, easy read, and very warm hearted. I voted 4 stars because after reading the book, it did not convince me that we were "born to be good", but rather "born good". There is no mention throughout the book of reasons why people would not be good. I happened to take the book in a more literal sense, but it still holds true. There are many situations in people's lives that does not permit them to choose the most righteous path. Perhaps those of us fortunate to be born in a first world country or to a good family has the ability and the means to be good. But those of us born elsewhere, not in the greatest of situations simply can't do that to survive. This is a nice book and is very optimistic about the world. However it does not come it from everyone's perspective.

Keltner has done a masterful job of showing us how socialization really works. We are not entirely a blank slate and not entirely not one. We have a hard-wired capacity to learn language, pretty much everyone knows this by now, but we also have a hard-wired capacity to create community solidarity, and culture. We are far more inclined to attach and bond than to fight -- within our small community, at least. Keltner nails down exactly how this manifests bio-chemically. How the rational part of our brain develops, and can only develop, through social interaction, how it produces chemical rewards when we get it right, and how incredibly adaptive to our environment this makes us. He hints at, but does not quite explore the idea that when one community dominates and exploits another (where "others" are concerned, the drive to bond competes about equally with the drive to out-survive -- another theme Kelter hints at and might have explored in more depth), the dominators may quite cleverly institute policies that disrupt community connectivity among the dominated. For example, Puritans proscriptions against hugging, kissing, dancing and singing surely enhanced the ability of controlling elites to manage somewhat demoralized masses. But the book including this kind of speculation, and many others implied by recent discoveries in attachment and brain plasticity research remains to be written. Maybe Kelter will do it

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