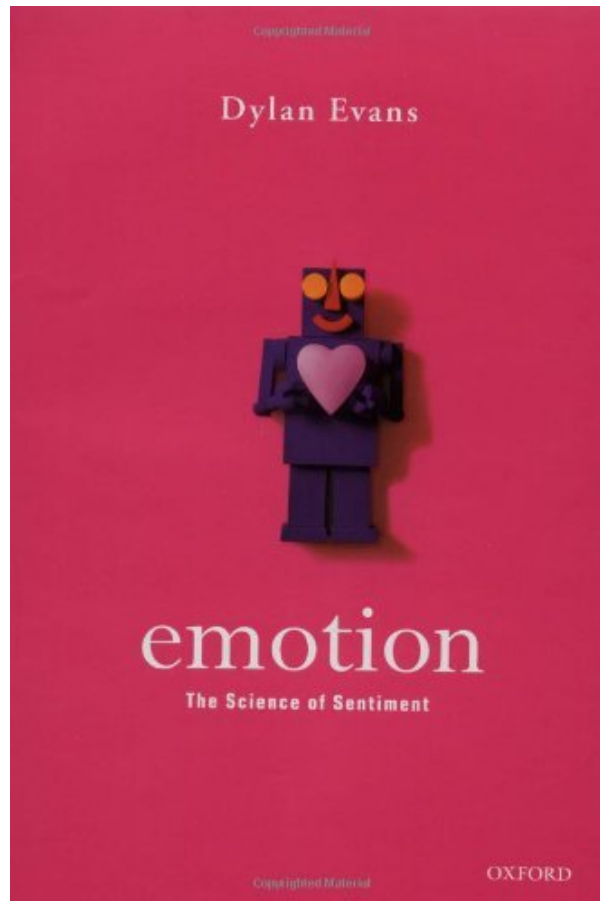


EMOTION: THE SCIENCE OF SENTIMENT BY DYLAN EVANS



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Was love invented by European poets in the middle ages, as C. S. Lewis claimed, or is it part of human nature? Will winning the lottery really make you happy? Is it possible to build robots that have feelings? These are just some of the intriguing questions explored in this new guide to the latest thinking about the emotions.

Drawing on a wide range of scientific research, from anthropology and psychology to neuroscience and artificial intelligence, *Emotion: The Science of Sentiment* takes the reader on a fascinating journey into the human heart. Illustrating his points with entertaining examples from fiction, film, and popular culture, Dylan Evans ranges from the evolution of the emotions to the nature of love and happiness to the language of feelings, offering readers the most recent thinking on real life topics that touch us all. But *Emotion* is also a book filled with surprises. Readers will discover, for instance, that the basic emotions are felt the world over--whether we live in the shadow of Times Square or in the depths of the rain forest, we all feel the emotions of disgust, joy, surprise, anger, fear, and distress. We find out that, according to research, winning the lottery does not cause a lasting increase in happiness--a short-lived euphoria is followed in almost every case with a return to our usual emotional state, if not worse. And we meet Kismet, an MIT robot that can express a wide range of emotions, from fear to happiness.

Fun to read and based on the latest scientific thinking, here is a stimulating look at our emotions.

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Amazon.com Review

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The Wisdom of Feelings

By Rob Hardy

One of the most fascinating characters of modern popular culture is Spock, the half-human, half-Vulcan alien on the original Star Trek series. Spock got the Vulcan freedom from emotion in the non-human half of his genes. It sometimes made it difficult to get along with him; he never got jokes, for instance, and was fascinated by what went on around him, but never amused. Because he had no emotions, he made all his decisions with cool rationality, and because he wasted no mental energy on emotions, had had a superhuman degree of intelligence, insight, and logic. Examining Spock's emotionless state is one of the themes in Emotion: The Science of Sentiment (Oxford University Press) by Dylan Evans, a short, witty review of the current scientific and evolutionary views on emotion. Spock could not have evolved in any environment we are familiar with. For instance, fear is a beneficial emotion, helping animals react swiftly. Animals incapable of feeling it would not last long. Emotions, contrary to the opinion held by philosophers through the centuries, are not a drain on intellect, but help it.

Most researchers would include fear, disgust, joy, distress, anger, and surprise in a list of basic emotions. Darwin himself thought that there was a universality of human emotions shared by all cultures, and that this was evidence that humans had evolved together and then the races and cultures had separated. However, this view was not generally held until fairly recently; it was supposed that just as your culture teaches you language, it also teaches you what emotions are part of your world and how to display them. Not true; experiments in the 1960's showed that a remote tribe that had never seen western media could match pictures of faces to the proper emotion, and in reverse, Americans could recognize the emotions being shown by tribal members who were asked to display fear, anger, etc. Emotions, at least some of the basic ones, are indeed universal and part of our genetic rather than cultural heritage.

All in all, Emotions have gotten a bad press, for centuries. Emotion, a valuable small primer, helps set the record straight, with amusing examples and fascinating explanations of the experiments that have helped make the role of emotions plain. The lesson is driven home repeatedly: emotions are good for us, they help (not hinder) rationality, and they are there because natural selection has used them to get us around a dangerous, unpredictable world.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Packed with Knowledge !

By Rolf Dobelli

This layman's guide to the emotions is a delightful walking tour through the gardens of philosophy, psychology and neuroscience, not to mention popular culture. Author Dylan Evans proposes the thesis that emotions are an evolutionary necessity that plays an important role in ensuring human survival. He demonstrates his thesis with anecdotes and illustrations. Though it delivers some intellectually rigorous material, this is not an intellectually rigorous book. It is more of a long, agreeable, rambling monologue. We highly recommend it to those who would read it primarily for pleasure, and secondarily suggest it as a useful overview of the evolutionary role of emotions. Its ample bibliography can guide those who are interested in exploring the subject in greater depth.

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Five Stars

By harapple

great book

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