

the blank slate by steven pinker

The Blank Slate by Steven Pinker: Exploring Human Nature and the Mind

the blank slate by steven pinker is more than just a book title; it's an invitation to rethink what we believe about human nature, society, and the forces that shape our minds. Steven Pinker, a renowned cognitive psychologist and linguist, challenges one of the most enduring ideas in modern thought—that humans are born as “blank slates,” completely shaped by environment and culture, without any innate traits or predispositions. In this in-depth exploration, we'll dive into the core arguments of the book, examine its impact on psychology and philosophy, and uncover why it continues to spark debate decades after its publication.

Understanding the Core Premise of The Blank Slate by Steven Pinker

At its heart, *The Blank Slate* tackles a fundamental question: Are we born with a set of hardwired traits, or is our mind entirely malleable? Pinker argues decisively against the notion of the blank slate, a concept historically rooted in philosophical empiricism and popularized by thinkers like John Locke. He asserts that humans come equipped with innate cognitive structures shaped by evolution, which influence behavior, personality, and even morality.

This view, often called “nativism” or “evolutionary psychology,” suggests that nature and nurture work together rather than being mutually exclusive. Pinker's perspective reshapes how we understand everything from education to politics, emphasizing that ignoring biology in favor of pure environmental explanations limits our ability to solve social problems.

The Historical Context of the Blank Slate Theory

The blank slate theory grew out of Enlightenment thinking, positioning human beings as infinitely adaptable creatures molded solely by experience. This idea underpinned many social and political ideologies throughout the 20th century, particularly those emphasizing equality and social reform. Pinker meticulously traces how this belief influenced psychology, anthropology, and even literature, revealing its allure and limitations.

Why Pinker Challenges the Blank Slate

Steven Pinker's critique of the blank slate is rooted in empirical evidence from neuroscience, genetics, and behavioral studies. He highlights how identical twins raised apart often exhibit striking similarities, suggesting genetic factors play a significant role. Additionally, animal behavior research shows that many species display innate instincts and problem-solving abilities, hinting at evolved cognitive frameworks.

By debunking the blank slate, Pinker encourages a more nuanced understanding of human

nature—one that respects both our biological heritage and environmental influences.

Key Themes Explored in The Blank Slate by Steven Pinker

The Blank Slate covers a wide range of topics, but a few central themes stand out, illuminating the book's profound implications.

The Mind as a Product of Evolution

One of Pinker's central arguments is that the mind is not a passive recipient of information but an active organ shaped by natural selection. Evolution has programmed certain mental tendencies—such as language acquisition, social behaviors, and even moral instincts—that help humans survive and thrive.

This evolutionary perspective challenges the assumption that culture alone is responsible for shaping human behavior. Instead, it suggests that cultural norms often build upon these biological foundations, creating a complex interplay between inherited traits and learned experiences.

The Role of Genetics in Personality and Intelligence

Pinker also delves into the controversial territory of genetic influence on traits like intelligence and temperament. He cites studies demonstrating that genes contribute significantly to individual differences, even if environment matters too. This argument pushes back against fears that acknowledging genetics might justify inequality or discrimination.

Instead, Pinker advocates for embracing scientific findings to design better social policies and educational systems that account for innate differences without resorting to determinism.

Debunking the “Noble Savage” and Other Myths

The book critiques several romanticized views of human nature, including the “noble savage” myth—the idea that humans are inherently peaceful and corrupted only by civilization. Pinker points out that aggression, competition, and social hierarchies have roots in our evolutionary past, though culture can modulate these tendencies.

By confronting these myths, Pinker encourages readers to adopt a realistic view of humanity that neither demonizes nor idealizes our nature.

Impact of The Blank Slate by Steven Pinker on Psychology and Society

Since its release, *The Blank Slate* has sparked lively discussions across academic and public spheres. Its influence extends beyond psychology into philosophy, education, and political theory.

Shaping Modern Behavioral Science

Pinker's arguments have helped legitimize evolutionary psychology as a respected discipline. By integrating biology with social science, researchers can better understand human behavior, mental disorders, and cognitive development. This interdisciplinary approach opens new avenues for therapy, education, and policy-making.

Influencing Debates on Free Will and Morality

The book also touches on profound philosophical questions, such as the extent of free will if behavior is partly biologically determined. Pinker suggests that understanding our evolutionary predispositions doesn't negate moral responsibility but rather informs how we cultivate virtues and social norms.

Challenges and Criticisms

Not everyone agrees with Pinker's conclusions. Critics argue that emphasizing biology risks justifying inequality or ignoring social injustices. Others caution against overinterpreting genetic data or minimizing cultural diversity.

However, Pinker addresses these concerns by advocating for a balanced perspective that neither denies biology nor dismisses the power of social change.

Why The Blank Slate by Steven Pinker Matters Today

In an era dominated by debates about identity, equality, and social engineering, *The Blank Slate* remains a vital resource for understanding the complexities of human nature. Its lessons encourage humility—recognizing that while culture shapes us, we are not infinitely malleable—and optimism, suggesting that by understanding our innate tendencies, we can design better societies.

Tips for Applying Pinker's Insights

- **Embrace complexity:** Avoid simplistic explanations for human behavior that rely solely on environment or biology.
- **Promote evidence-based policies:** Use scientific findings about genetics and psychology to inform education, criminal justice, and healthcare.
- **Encourage open dialogue:** Discuss human nature openly, acknowledging both our shared biology and cultural diversity.
- **Be cautious with determinism:** Recognize innate traits don't dictate destiny; environment and personal choices still play crucial roles.

Expanding Your Understanding Beyond the Book

For readers intrigued by *The Blank Slate* by Steven Pinker, exploring related works can deepen insight. Books like Richard Dawkins' **The Selfish Gene**, Jonathan Haidt's **The Righteous Mind**, and works on behavioral genetics provide complementary perspectives on the evolving science of human nature.

Ultimately, *The Blank Slate* by Steven Pinker invites us to reconsider what it means to be human. It challenges cherished beliefs with scientific rigor while opening pathways to more informed and compassionate approaches to societal challenges. Whether you agree or disagree with Pinker's thesis, engaging with his ideas promises a richer understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main thesis of Steven Pinker's book 'The Blank Slate'?

The main thesis of *'The Blank Slate'* is that the human mind is not a blank slate at birth; rather, it is shaped by innate biological factors as well as environmental influences, challenging the traditional view that all human behavior is learned.

How does Steven Pinker address the nature versus nurture debate in 'The Blank Slate'?

Steven Pinker argues that both nature and nurture play crucial roles in shaping human behavior, but he emphasizes the importance of genetic and evolutionary influences, suggesting that many traits and tendencies are hardwired rather than solely learned from the environment.

What criticisms does Pinker respond to in 'The Blank Slate'?

Pinker responds to criticisms of genetic determinism, social constructivism, and the notion that acknowledging biological influences on behavior justifies inequality or discrimination. He argues for a nuanced understanding that recognizes biology without endorsing fatalism or prejudice.

How does 'The Blank Slate' relate to the field of evolutionary psychology?

'The Blank Slate' supports the principles of evolutionary psychology by explaining how evolved psychological mechanisms influence human thoughts and behaviors, highlighting that our mental faculties have been shaped by natural selection to solve problems faced by our ancestors.

What are some societal implications discussed in 'The Blank Slate'?

Pinker discusses how acknowledging innate human traits affects views on politics, education, and social policies, advocating for a realistic approach to human nature that can lead to better social outcomes rather than idealistic but impractical expectations.

Has 'The Blank Slate' influenced popular or academic discussions about human nature?

Yes, 'The Blank Slate' has significantly influenced both popular and academic discussions by challenging prevailing tabula rasa assumptions, encouraging interdisciplinary dialogue between psychology, neuroscience, and social sciences about the origins of human behavior.

Additional Resources

The Blank Slate by Steven Pinker: A Critical Examination of Human Nature

the blank slate by steven pinker stands as one of the most influential and provocative works in contemporary cognitive science and psychology. Published in 2002, this book challenges long-held assumptions about human nature, specifically the idea that the human mind is a tabula rasa — a blank slate — at birth, shaped entirely by culture and environment. Steven Pinker, a renowned cognitive psychologist and linguist, argues against this traditional view, bringing to light the role of genetics and evolution in shaping human behavior. His work has sparked widespread debate and continues to be a touchstone for discussions about nature versus nurture.

Exploring the Core Thesis of The Blank Slate by Steven Pinker

At the heart of The Blank Slate is Pinker's rigorous critique of three widely held dogmas: the blank slate itself (the mind as a blank state), the noble savage (the idea that humans are inherently good

and corrupted by society), and the ghost in the machine (the notion of a soul or mind separate from the physical brain). Pinker systematically dismantles these concepts by synthesizing evidence from evolutionary psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, and genetics.

His central thesis posits that human beings are born with an innate biological architecture that influences cognition, emotion, and behavior. This view challenges the dominant cultural narrative that human beings are infinitely malleable and that all differences are products of social conditioning. Pinker emphasizes that acknowledging innate human traits does not imply determinism or social fatalism but rather provides a more accurate framework for understanding human nature and social problems.

The Impact of Evolutionary Psychology on Understanding Human Nature

One of the most significant contributions of *The Blank Slate* by Steven Pinker is its reliance on evolutionary psychology to explain human behavior. Pinker argues that the human brain evolved to solve adaptive problems faced by our ancestors, which means many psychological traits have evolutionary origins. This perspective helps explain universal behaviors found across societies, such as language acquisition, mate selection, and social hierarchies.

For example, Pinker points to cross-cultural studies showing similarities in facial expressions of emotions and child-rearing practices. These findings counter the blank slate theory by suggesting that certain behaviors are not solely culturally transmitted but have a biological basis. By integrating evolutionary theory, Pinker offers a nuanced understanding of how genetics and environment interact in shaping the human mind.

Critical Reception and Controversies

The release of *The Blank Slate* by Steven Pinker ignited intense debate across academic and public spheres. Supporters praise Pinker for grounding human psychology in biological reality and for challenging politically motivated ideologies that deny innate differences. His clear, accessible prose and use of empirical evidence contributed to the book's popularity and impact.

However, critics argue that Pinker's emphasis on genetic determinism risks justifying social inequalities and undermining efforts to promote social justice. Some accuse him of oversimplifying complex interactions between genes and environment or of downplaying the role of culture and learning. Others contend that evolutionary psychology itself is speculative and difficult to test experimentally.

Despite these criticisms, the book has endured as a seminal text for those interested in human nature, cognition, and the philosophy of mind. It has influenced disciplines ranging from psychology and anthropology to political science and ethics.

Features That Define The Blank Slate's Approach

Several key features distinguish *The Blank Slate* by Steven Pinker from other works on human nature:

- **Interdisciplinary Evidence:** Pinker draws from multiple scientific fields, including neuroscience, genetics, anthropology, and psychology, to build a comprehensive argument.
- **Accessible Writing Style:** The book is written for a broad audience, avoiding dense jargon while maintaining scholarly rigor.
- **Balanced Perspective:** Pinker does not dismiss the influence of culture but argues for a balanced view that incorporates biological predispositions.
- **Focus on Implications:** Beyond presenting scientific facts, Pinker discusses the societal and ethical ramifications of embracing or rejecting the blank slate theory.

Comparing The Blank Slate to Other Works on Human Nature

When placed in the context of other influential texts, *The Blank Slate* by Steven Pinker stands out for its empirical grounding and comprehensive scope. For example, works like John Locke's 17th-century treatises popularized the blank slate concept philosophically, while later behavioral psychology often emphasized environmental conditioning.

In contrast, Pinker's book integrates modern scientific discoveries to argue against the pure nurture model. Compared to Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene*, which focuses on genetic replication and evolutionary processes, Pinker's book offers a more detailed exploration of the psychological mechanisms shaped by evolution.

Moreover, *The Blank Slate*'s engagement with political and cultural debates distinguishes it from purely academic texts. Pinker actively addresses the ideological consequences of rejecting the blank slate, making the book relevant beyond the scientific community.

Pros and Cons of Pinker's Argument

- **Pros:**
 - Provides a scientifically robust challenge to outdated views of human nature.
 - Encourages a nuanced understanding of the interplay between genetics and environment.

- Promotes critical thinking about social policies and cultural assumptions.

- **Cons:**

- Risk of misinterpretation leading to biological determinism or fatalism.
- Some critics argue the evolutionary psychology framework lacks sufficient empirical falsifiability.
- Potential underestimation of cultural diversity and plasticity in human behavior.

Legacy and Influence in Contemporary Discourse

More than two decades after its publication, *The Blank Slate* by Steven Pinker remains a cornerstone in debates about human nature. It has shaped academic curricula, influenced public discourse on genetics and behavior, and contributed to policy discussions on education, criminal justice, and social welfare.

In an era increasingly shaped by advances in genetics and neuroscience, Pinker's arguments continue to resonate. The book encourages readers to rethink assumptions about identity, equality, and morality in light of scientific evidence, fostering a more informed and critical approach to understanding humanity.

By challenging the blank slate paradigm, Steven Pinker's work invites ongoing dialogue about what makes us human and how best to navigate the complex interplay of biology and culture in shaping our lives.

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the blank slate by steven pinker: The Blank Slate Steven Pinker, 2003-08-26 A brilliant inquiry into the origins of human nature from the author of *Rationality*, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, and *Enlightenment Now*. Sweeping, erudite, sharply argued, and fun to read..also highly persuasive. --Time Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize Updated with a new afterword One of the world's leading experts on language and the mind explores the idea of human nature and its moral, emotional, and political colorings. With characteristic wit, lucidity, and insight, Pinker argues that the dogma that the mind has no innate traits-a doctrine held by many intellectuals during the past century-denies our common humanity and our individual preferences, replaces objective analyses of social problems with feel-good slogans, and distorts our understanding of politics, violence, parenting, and the arts. Injecting calm and rationality into debates that are notorious for ax-grinding and mud-slinging, Pinker shows the importance of an honest acknowledgment of human nature

based on science and common sense.

the blank slate by steven pinker: The Blank Slate Steven Pinker, 2002 What is the truth about human nature? Are we each born a blank slate upon which experience is written? Steven Pinker here argues that our usual explanations of human behaviour - stated most clearly in the human sciences of psychology, ethics and politics - tend to deny what is now undeniable: the role of an inherited human nature. Differences in personality or achievement, whether seen among races, ethnic groups, sexes or individuals, are routinely explained away as due not to differences in innate constitution but differences in experience. This work argues otherwise.

the blank slate by steven pinker: The Blank Slate Steven Pinker, 2002-10-01 Banishes the fears that a biological understanding of human nature threatens humane values.

the blank slate by steven pinker: Study Guide Supersummary, 2019-11-06 SuperSummary, a modern alternative to SparkNotes and CliffsNotes, offers high-quality study guides for challenging works of literature. This 76-page guide for *The Blank Slate* by Steven Pinker includes detailed chapter summaries and analysis covering 20 chapters, as well as several more in-depth sections of expert-written literary analysis. Featured content includes commentary on major characters, 25 important quotes, essay topics, and key themes like *There is No Blank Slate* and *Consilience*.

the blank slate by steven pinker: *The Human Mind* Eric J. Kolb Ph.D., 2022-04-21 In, *The Human Mind: A Psychological View of Theological concepts*, I compare and contrast the scientific understanding of the human mind with the teaching of the Bible. In some cases, these two perspectives are very similar, such as in various aspects of child development. However, where positive psychology claims that the power to induce change lies within the individual, the Bible teaches that we can do nothing apart from Christ. The book begins with the concept of belief, upon which the mind develops. Both Christian Theology and scientific psychology agree that one's beliefs serve as a lens through which reality is perceived; and that humans essentially choose what they want to believe. As such, an individuals' core beliefs serve as the foundation upon which their mind develops. This book then outlines the various developmental processes of the human mind. Beginning with what is commonly referred to as the blank slate, through sensory integration and learning, humans first develop a concept of self-awareness and then a theory of mind upon which an individual's identity is anchored. These developmental processes are discussed and form the framework of our understanding of consciousness. Finally, after establishing the relationship between mind and behavior, this book closes with the contemplation of the nature and development of the mind of Jesus of Nazareth.

the blank slate by steven pinker: The Blank Slate Steven Pinker, 2005

the blank slate by steven pinker: Nature as Reason Jean Porter, 2005 This noteworthy book develops a new theory of the natural law that takes its orientation from the account of the natural law developed by Thomas Aquinas, as interpreted and supplemented in the context of scholastic theology in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Though this history might seem irrelevant to twenty-first-century life, Jean Porter shows that the scholastic approach to the natural law still has much to contribute to the contemporary discussion of Christian ethics. Aquinas and his interlocutors provide a way of thinking about the natural law that is distinctively theological while at the same time remaining open to other intellectual perspectives, including those of science. In the course of her work, Porter examines the scholastics' assumptions and beliefs about nature, Aquinas's account of happiness, and the overarching claim that reason can generate moral norms. Ultimately, Porter argues that a Thomistic theory of the natural law is well suited to provide a starting point for developing a more nuanced account of the relationship between specific beliefs and practices. While Aquinas's approach to the natural law may not provide a system of ethical norms that is both universally compelling and detailed enough to be practical, it does offer something that is arguably more valuable -- namely, a way of reflecting theologically on the phenomenon of human morality.

the blank slate by steven pinker: Master the Mystery of Human Nature D. Scott Trettennero, 2015-09-17 Life is a mystery, on planet Earth, where the billions of people live their lives day to day, most not knowing what their purpose is. We cant figure out lifes answers because some

of us don't even know the questions to ask. It can be so confusing, sometimes even a bit maddening. In *Master the Mystery of Human Nature*, author D. Scott Trettennero tackles the vast and mysterious subject of human nature and unravels its secrets to give you clarity and a depth of understanding to some of the previously unanswered questions of life. He has translated the important, yet complex work of philosophers, psychologists, scientists, and other pioneers in this field into an easy-to-understand format with ideas that can be applied to everyday life. Trettennero has taken the essential aspects of their work, simplified it, and has created a new matrix that connects the dots to better explain how and why people do what they do. *Master the Mystery of Human Nature* helps you learn about yourself, others, and how the world works because of our differences. Conflicts will take on an entirely new meaning; things that used to be a mystery, will make sense. It will help you experience a sense of calm and freedom once you see the beauty and wonder of how our human nature reflects the balance of power in Nature and the ways that duality shapes our every experience on this earth. This is a deeply thoughtful and carefully written book. It provides an unusually practical set of tools for understanding self and evaluating others. Thank you Scott Trettennero for writing a book everyone needs to read. Robert E Quinn, PhD Margaret Elliot Tracy Collegiate Professor in Business, Ross School of Business, University of Michigan Author of *Deep Change*

the blank slate by steven pinker: *Cybernetic Revelation* J.D. Casten, 2012-11-20 *Cybernetic Revelation* explores the dual philosophical histories of deconstruction and artificial intelligence, tracing the development of concepts like the logos and the notion of modeling the mind technologically from pre-history to contemporary thinkers like Slavoj Žižek, Steven Pinker, Bernard Stiegler and Daniel C. Dennett. The writing is clear and accessible throughout, yet the text probes deeply into major philosophers seen by JD Casten as conceptual engineers. Philosophers covered include: Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle, Philo, Augustine, Shakespeare, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud, Jung, Joyce, Dewey, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Adorno, Benjamin, Derrida, Chomsky, Žižek, Pinker, Dennett, Hofstadter, Stiegler + more; with special chapters on: AI's history, Complexity, Deconstructing AI, Aesthetics, Consciousness + more...

the blank slate by steven pinker: *The Scientific Sublime* Alan G. Gross, 2018-06-01 The sublime evokes our awe, our terror, and our wonder. Applied first in ancient Greece to the heights of literary expression, in the 18th-century the sublime was extended to nature and to the sciences, enterprises that viewed the natural world as a manifestation of God's goodness, power, and wisdom. In *The Scientific Sublime*, Alan Gross reveals the modern-day sublime in popular science. He shows how the great popular scientists of our time--Richard Feynman, Stephen Hawking, Steven Weinberg, Brian Greene, Lisa Randall, Rachel Carson, Stephen Jay Gould, Steven Pinker, Richard Dawkins, and E. O. Wilson--evoke the sublime in response to fundamental questions: How did the universe begin? How did life? How did language? These authors maintain a tradition initiated by Joseph Addison, Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, and Adam Smith, towering 18th-century figures who adapted the literary sublime first to nature, then to science--though with one crucial difference: religion has been replaced wholly by science. In a final chapter, Gross explores science's attack on religion, an assault that attempts to sweep permanently under the rug two questions science cannot answer: What is the meaning of life? What is the meaning of the good life?

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the blank slate by steven pinker: The Biological Mind Alan Jasanoff, 2018-03-13 A pioneering neuroscientist argues that we are more than our brains To many, the brain is the seat of personal identity and autonomy. But the way we talk about the brain is often rooted more in mystical conceptions of the soul than in scientific fact. This blinds us to the physical realities of mental function. We ignore bodily influences on our psychology, from chemicals in the blood to bacteria in the gut, and overlook the ways that the environment affects our behavior, via factors varying from subconscious sights and sounds to the weather. As a result, we alternately overestimate our capacity for free will or equate brains to inorganic machines like computers. But a brain is neither a soul nor an electrical network: it is a bodily organ, and it cannot be separated from its surroundings. Our selves aren't just inside our heads -- they're spread throughout our bodies and beyond. Only once we come to terms with this can we grasp the true nature of our humanity.

the blank slate by steven pinker: Embracing Complementarianism Jane Tooher, Graham Beynon, 2022-10-01 A biblical vision for the roles of men and women in the church—and how to put them into practice. It can be tempting to shy away from addressing the issue of gender roles in church because it's often controversial. But this can result in churches either being increasingly influenced by secular culture or simply sticking with the status quo when it comes to what men and women do in church. Building on the belief that complementarianism is both biblical and positive, this book focuses on what these convictions look like in practice. Moving beyond the familiar discussions around gender roles, and leaving room for variety in how readers implement these ideas, it will encourage a church culture where men and women truly partner together—embracing their privileges and responsibilities, and maximizing their gifts, in joyful service of God's kingdom.

the blank slate by steven pinker: Born Bad James Boyce, 2016-05-10 Original sin is the Western world's creation story. According to the Christian doctrine of original sin, humans are born inherently bad, and only through God's grace can they achieve salvation. In this captivating and controversial book, acclaimed historian James Boyce explores how this centuries-old concept has shaped the Western view of human nature right up to the present. Boyce traces a history of original sin from Adam and Eve, St. Augustine, and Martin Luther to Adam Smith, Sigmund Freud, and Richard Dawkins, and explores how each has contributed to shaping our conception of original sin. Boyce argues that despite the marked decline in church attendance in recent years, religious ideas of morality still very much underpin our modern secular society, regardless of our often being unaware of their origins. If today the specific doctrine has all but disappeared (even from churches), what remains is the distinctive discontent of Western people—the feelings of guilt and inadequacy associated not with doing wrong, but with being wrong. In addition to offering an innovative history of Christianity, Boyce offers new insights in to the creation of the West. Born Bad is the sweeping story of a controversial idea and the remarkable influence it still wields.

the blank slate by steven pinker: Being Me Pete Moore, 2004-02-06 ‘O brave new world, That has such people in’t!’ Shakespeare, The Tempest New scientific developments are changing the world, but whether the world of our children and grandchildren will be the hell of Huxley's Brave

New World or the sheltered paradise described by Shakespeare depends on how we choose to use these developments. That choice will frequently be driven by our appreciation of what human beings really are. In this thought-provoking book Pete Moore presents an antidote to the scientific reductionism that so frequently seeks to narrow any definition of our species by single features, such as our genes or the ability of our brains. This exploration of the nature of humanity reveals the rainbow spectrum that makes us who we are. Through discussions with individuals whose lives help us to focus on individual aspects of our make up, Moore explores the difficult issues that are facing us. This book provides a timely reminder that technology cannot be separated from its impact on real people and how their lives are changed for the better or worse. Medical developments offer tremendous opportunities for good, but if we lose sight of what it is to be human they also have the ability to be used for very dangerous, even evil purposes. We have a chance to influence this future. We should not ignore the challenge. DR PETE MOORE is a medical journalist and an official rapporteur at Windsor Castle and the House of Lords. He is the author of *Blood and Justice* (0470 848421, Hbk / 0470 84844 8 Pbk).

the blank slate by steven pinker: *The Evolutionary Limits of Liberalism* Filipe Nobre Faria, 2019-11-01 This book assesses the evolutionary sustainability of liberalism. The book's central claim is that liberal institutions ultimately weaken their social groups in the evolutionary process of inter-group competition. In this sense, institutions relying on the liberal satisfaction of preferences reveal maladaptive tendencies. Based on the model of multilevel selection, this work appraises the capacity of liberal democracy and free markets to satisfy preferences. In particular, the book re-evaluates public choice theory's classic postulate that free markets are a suitable alternative to the shortcomings of western liberal democracies regarding preference satisfaction. Yet, the book concludes that free markets are not a solution to the problems of liberal democracy because both market and democratic liberal institutions rest on the liberal satisfaction of preferences, an ethic which hurts group evolutionary fitness. This volume is of interest to political theorists, evolutionary ethicists, political economists and to general readers interested in the future of liberalism.

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