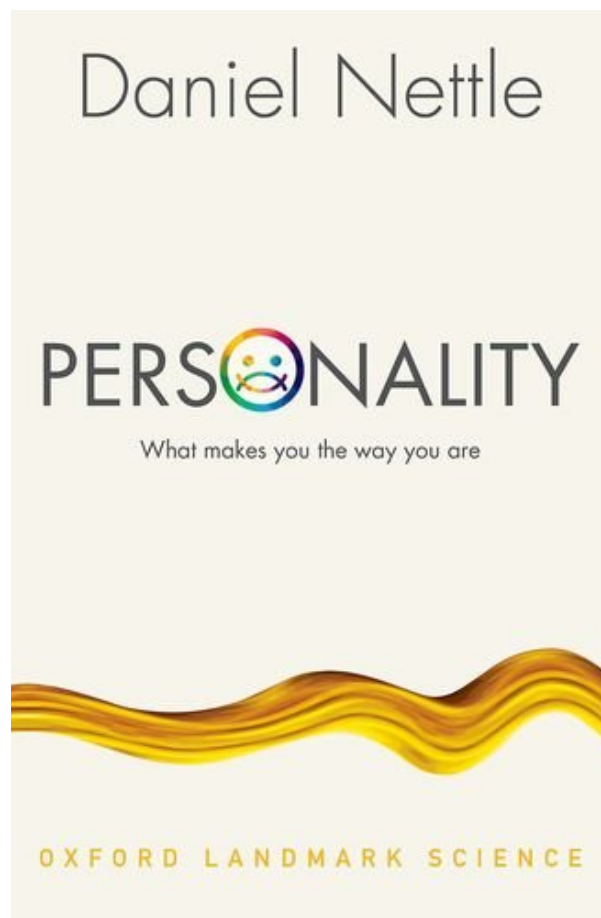


PERSONALITY: WHAT MAKES YOU THE WAY YOU ARE (OXFORD LANDMARK SCIENCE) BY DANIEL NETTLE



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Daniel Nettle

PERSONALITY

What makes you the way you are



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Review

"The author unearths a few everyday characteristics shared by people who say they are happy, including good health, a feeling of autonomy, and social correctness. To that list, one might add browsing through this thought-provoking book."--O: The Oprah Magazine, on Happiness

"Excellent survey of the subject-a lucid, intelligent, and thoughtful essay."--Lancet

About the Author

Daniel Nettle teaches psychology at the University of Newcastle. With degrees in both psychology and anthropology, he has written on many aspects of human nature and culture. His previous books include **Happiness: The Science Behind Your Smile**, **Strong Imagination: Madness, Creativity and Human Nature** and (with Suzanne Romaine) **Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages**.

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It is one of the great mysteries of human nature. Why are some people worriers, and others wanderers? Why are some people so easy-going and laid-back, while others are always looking for a fight?

Written by Daniel Nettle--author of the popular book *Happiness*--this brief volume takes the reader on an exhilarating tour of what modern science can tell us about human personality. Revealing that our personalities stem from our biological makeup, Nettle looks at the latest findings from genetics and brain science, and considers the evolutionary origins and consequences of different personalities. The heart of the book sheds light on the "big five": Extraversion, Neuroticism, Conscientious, Agreeableness, and Openness. Using a stimulating blend of true-life stories and scientific research, Nettle explains why we have something deep and consistent within us that determines the choices we make and situations we bring about. He addresses such questions as why members of the same family differ so markedly in their natures? What is the best personality to have--a bold one or a shy one, an aggressive one or a meek one? And are you stuck with your personality, or can you change it? *Life*, Nettle concludes, is partly the business of finding a niche where your personality works for you. "It is a question of choosing the right pond," he notes, "and being mindful of the dangers." There is no ideal personality to have. Every disposition brings both advantages and disadvantages.

Full of human wisdom as well as scientific insight, this book illuminates the pluses and minuses of personality, offering practical advice about living with the nature you were born with. It even includes a questionnaire so that you can assess yourself.

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- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 5.10" h x .70" w x 7.60" l, .50 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 304 pages

Review

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Most helpful customer reviews

68 of 71 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent, approachable update on the subject of personality

By Chris LaVesser

I've always known I'm not like my family and friends. In our circle I'm definitely the odd man out. And I've known this since I was 19 or 20 years old. So fairly early in my life I was interested in why I was different, why I didn't mind being different, and why I always struggled when I tried to just fit in. I've read Myers-Briggs and other "modern" models of personality and took interest in them. And in them I usually found some nuggets of explanatory wisdom. So I had largely stopped reading about personality.

But I casually glanced at Nettles' book one day and found myself thinking, "A new model of personality? One with widespread support and evolutionary underpinnings? Damn. I'm going to have to read it."

And I'm glad I did. First, this book fills a void. Most psychology books for a consumer audience are so watered down and trite they fail to really teach anything. They're usually worse than the drivel you find in *Cosmopolitan* or *Men's Health*. Try searching for psychology books with a more intelligent bent to them and you quickly find yourself shoulder-deep in academic, jargon-laden prose. Nettles' book is a brilliant bridge between these two worlds. *Personality: What Makes You The Way You Are* is an excellent presentation of a newer model of personality theory. It is rich in back-story, supported by summaries of various experiments, bolstered by real statistical concepts instead of dumbing it down to "the average", and keeps itself wrapped in an evolutionary biology framework. And it does all of this without getting overly academic.

For those who lean toward *Cosmopolitan* and *Men's Health*, Nettles includes a personality inventory you can self-administer, and it makes the content of the book more personally relevant. *Personality* is also a quick read (I read through it on two flights between Minneapolis and Salt Lake City). And the book is laced with humor throughout.

For those who prefer academia, *Personality* is well-referenced and has a comprehensive bibliography and set of appendices. It is solid and honest academic work; it just reads better.

About the only warning I'll make is this: Nettles is a Brit. If you get confused by British spellings, idiom, and geographical references, you may occasionally find yourself scratching your head. But all this tells me is you don't read enough Nick Hornby.

Enjoy! I believe you will.

30 of 33 people found the following review helpful.

Hard facts, humanity, and a bombshell in the tail

By Elephantschild

Daniel Nettle's writing is clear, attractive, and sometimes pleasantly humorous. He takes us through the emerging consensus on the 5 dimensional model of personality, with the genetic explanations, the neurological evidence, and some convincing speculation on the evolutionary reasons for how those dimensions, and the wide variety of scores along them, arose and continue. This is a wonderfully calm and compelling, and very human, book, for the major part of it which covers these aspects. I found, however, the

small section on the possible explanations for the non genetically determined aspects of personality oddly frustrating. Nettle examines some potential factors, then demolishes each of them in turn, leaving us with pretty much no explanation. One reason may be that he requires a valid non-genetic factor influencing personality to 'make evolutionary sense', which is a way of ensuring that any candidate factor that passes the test can, hey-presto, be explained by genetics.

The 'bombshell', and it is major, concerns parental influence on personality, but I won't give any plot spoilers here.

His final section, on how to live with your personality once you've got it, is moving, illuminating, and convincing.

A great read for anyone who's either plain curious or looking for solid ground in the sea of 'psycho-babble'.

21 of 22 people found the following review helpful.

Personality with an Evolutionary Twist

By Avid Reader

If you are a fan of evolutionary psychology, be sure to check out this great little book on personality. It has a short personality test (12 questions) that you can take before you dive into the book, which I highly recommend taking. Then you'll learn about each of the "big five" components of personality. Each component is convincingly tied to biological systems in the brain, and the author explains how both high and low scoring individuals in each of the five areas could have thrived as humans evolved.

See all 52 customer reviews...

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