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## Born With It? Author Suggests Yes

**T**here is evidence that some universal human social behaviors and faculties are innate, and presumably shaped in part by the genes. In "The Blank Slate," Dr. Steven Pinker lists some behaviors of political consequence which he considers may fall in this category.

### Innate Social Behaviors

- ¶ Primacy of family ties, making nepotism and inheritance appealing.
- ¶ A propensity to share based on reciprocity where nonrelatives are concerned (within the family, it is free).
- ¶ A drive for dominance and a willingness to use violence to attain goals.
- ¶ Ethnocentrism and other forms of group-against-group hostility.
- ¶ Variation in intelligence (leading to inequalities) and in conscientiousness and antisocial behavior (leading to punitive constraints).
- ¶ Self-serving biases that deceive people into thinking they are freer, wiser and more honest than they are.
- ¶ A moral sense, biased toward kin and friends, and linked to ideas of purity, beauty and rank.

### Innate Abilities

- ¶ An intuitive physics, used to keep track of the "oomph" of objects as they fall, bounce or bend.
- ¶ An intuitive biology, used to understand the living world by imputing an essence to living things.
- ¶ An intuitive engineering, used to make and understand tools.
- ¶ An intuitive psychology, used to understand others by imputing to them a mind with beliefs and desires.
- ¶ A spatial sense and a dead reckoner tracking the body's motions.
- ¶ A number sense, based on ability to register small numbers of things (1, 2 and 3) exactly and to estimate larger ones.
- ¶ A sense of probability, used to estimate uncertain outcomes by tracking how common one event is in relation to another.

¶ An intuitive economics, used to exchange goods and calculate favors.

¶ A mental database and logic, used to represent ideas, associate one thing with another and devise causal explanations.

¶ Language, the gift of sharing ideas from the mental database with others.

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