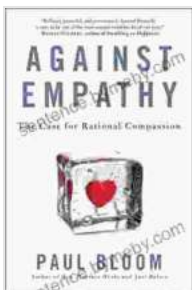


Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion

In his groundbreaking book, *Against Empathy*, Paul Bloom argues that empathy is a fundamentally flawed emotion that can lead to irrational and harmful decisions. He proposes instead a more rational approach to compassion, one that is based on reason and evidence rather than on gut instinct.



Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion

by Paul Bloom

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 1688 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
X-Ray : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 266 pages



Bloom begins by defining empathy as "the capacity to share the feelings of another person." He argues that while empathy can be a powerful force for good, it can also be a source of bias, prejudice, and even cruelty. For example, he cites the case of a woman who donated her kidney to a stranger, even though she knew that the stranger was a convicted murderer. Bloom argues that this woman's decision was based on empathy, not on reason, and that it was a fundamentally irrational and harmful act.

Bloom also argues that empathy is often selective. We tend to feel empathy for people who are similar to us, and we are less likely to feel empathy for people who are different from us. This can lead to discrimination and injustice. For example, he cites the case of a study that found that white people were more likely to feel empathy for white victims of crime than for black victims of crime. Bloom argues that this is because white people are more likely to identify with white victims, and that this empathy bias can lead to discriminatory policies.

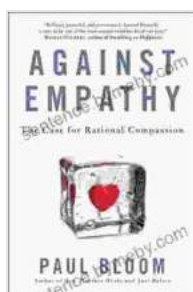
So what is the alternative to empathy? Bloom proposes a more rational approach to compassion, one that is based on reason and evidence. He calls this approach "rational compassion." Rational compassion involves understanding the suffering of others and taking steps to help them, but it does not require us to feel empathy for them. Instead, it requires us to use our reason to determine the best way to help them.

Bloom argues that rational compassion is a more effective way to help others than empathy. Empathy can lead us to make impulsive and irrational decisions, while rational compassion can help us to make more thoughtful and effective decisions. For example, he cites the case of a study that found that people who were asked to feel empathy for a starving child were more likely to donate money to a charity that would help the child than people who were asked to think about the child's suffering in a more rational way. Bloom argues that this is because empathy can lead us to feel overwhelmed and helpless, while rational compassion can help us to focus on the best way to help.

Bloom concludes by arguing that rational compassion is a more ethical approach to helping others than empathy. Empathy can lead us to make

decisions that are based on our own feelings, rather than on what is best for the other person. Rational compassion, on the other hand, requires us to consider the best interests of the other person, and to make decisions that are based on reason and evidence.

Against Empathy is a provocative and thought-provoking book that challenges our traditional understanding of compassion. Bloom argues that empathy is a fundamentally flawed emotion that can lead to irrational and harmful decisions. He proposes instead a more rational approach to compassion, one that is based on reason and evidence. Bloom's book is a must-read for anyone who is interested in the ethics of helping others.



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