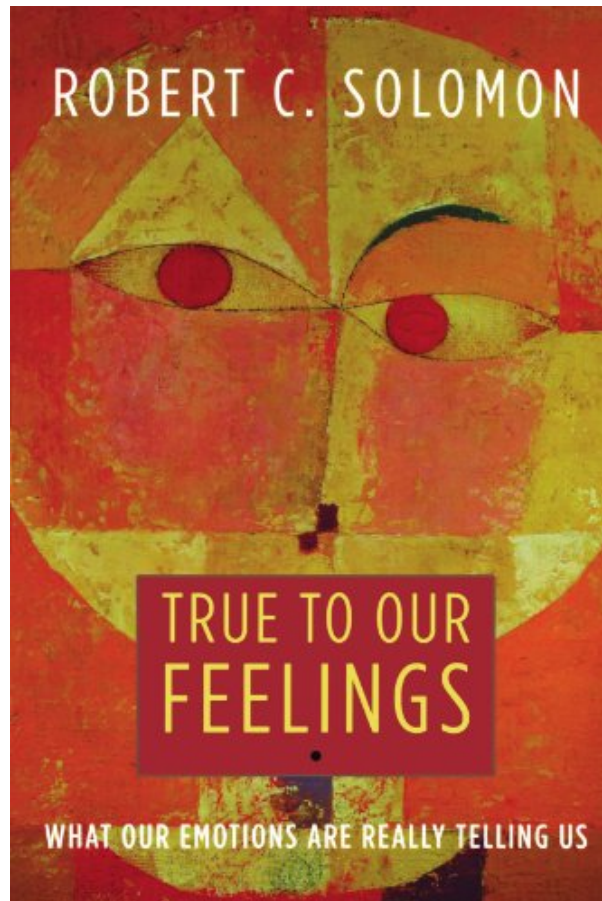
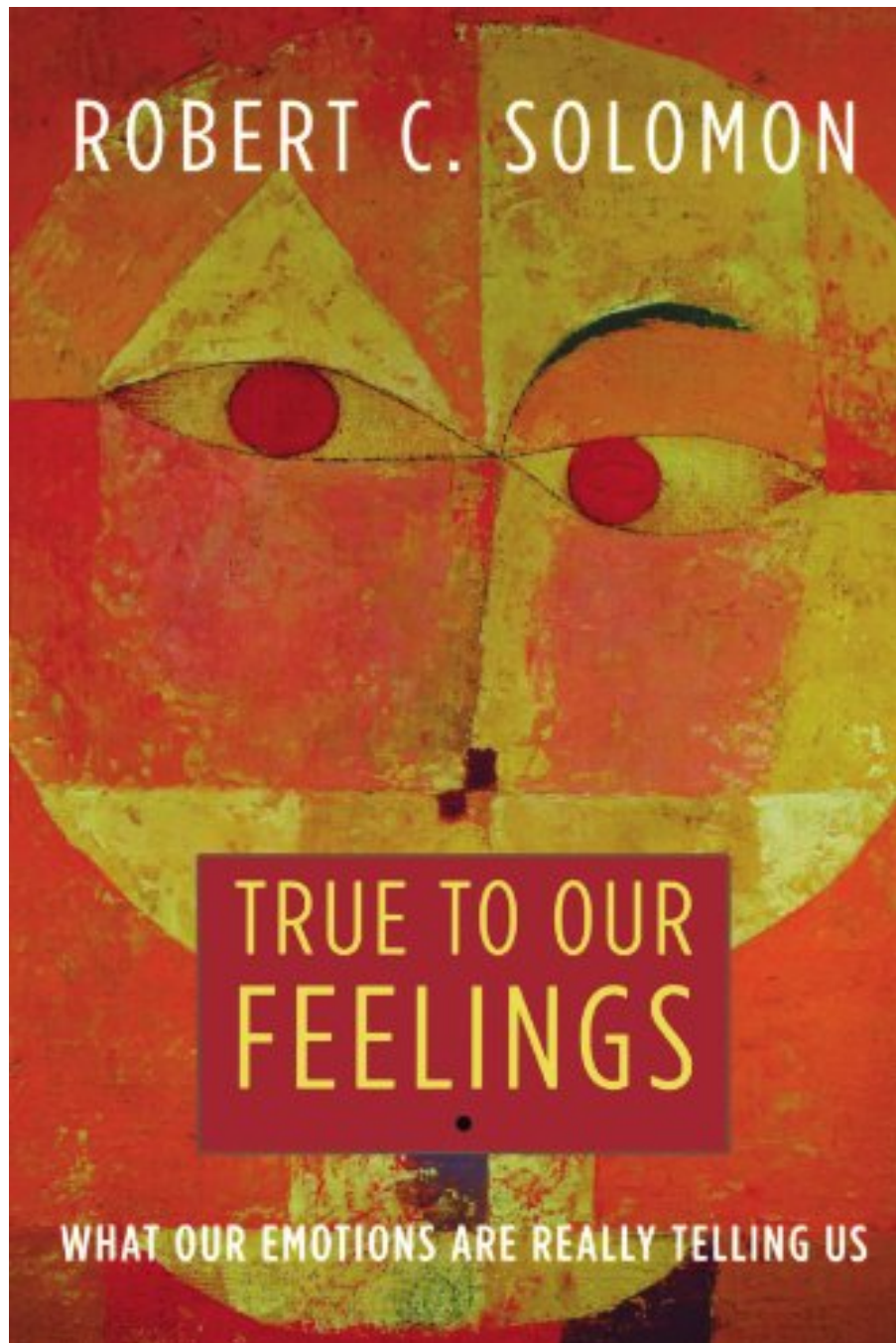


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About the Author

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We live our lives through our emotions, writes Robert Solomon, and it is our emotions that give our lives meaning. What interests or fascinates us, who we love, what angers us, what moves us, what bores us--all of this defines us, gives us character, constitutes who we are. In *True to Our Feelings*, Solomon illuminates the rich life of the emotions--why we don't really understand them, what they really are, and how they make us human and give meaning to life. Solomon provides a guide to cutting-edge scientific research, as well as to what philosophers and psychologists have said on the subject, but he also emphasizes the personal and ethical character of our emotions. He shows that emotions are not something that happen to us, nor are they irrational in the literal sense--rather, they are judgments we make about the world, and they are strategies for living in it. Fear, anger, love, guilt, jealousy, compassion--they are all essential to our values, to living happily, healthily, and well.

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Highly Recommended

By D. S. Heersink

Background: Robert Solomon, University of Texas, Austin, philosopher in the Anglo-American method and Continental leanings, re-introduced "emotions" or "the passions" into the vocabulary of the theories of mind, particularly with his seminal (and substantially revised) "The Passions: Emotions and Meanings of Life" (1976/1993). He has since written extensively on this subject, including his evolving essays in "Not Passion's Slave: Emotions and Choice" and his superb "Love: Emotion, Myth, and Metaphor." His own "philosophy" that borrows heavily from Continental Thought is "The Joy of Philosophy" which is a true joy to read, re-introducing those topics that are most meaningful in our daily lives (not connotative/denotative, but meaningful).

As has been a theme throughout all his writings, our emotions are not a subordinate, but the dominant, feature of our mental lives. Plato and Christianity clearly depreciated the West's understanding and value of these "things" we call variously emotions, passions, feelings, etc. Not until Hume did the passions receive the attention they deserved, only to fall into obscurity again with positivism, analyticity, and ideologies. Solomon resurrected them in the 1970s, and has awakened others (e.g., de Souza, Nussbaum, Davidson, et alia) to an energized interest in these curious "things." Alas, even psychology (yes, psychology) has re-awakened itself to these "oddities" they too had marginalized.

This Book: If one is already acquainted with Solomon's other writings, especially those mentioned above, the present one, "True to Our Feelings," will not offer any revelatory insights. If, however, one is new to Solomon, this book is an excellent place to begin one's inquiry into this long-ignored subject, aided by Solomon's articulate writing, keen insights, and devotion to assuring the West that life does have "meanings," those meanings locked-away as "brutish" and "inhuman" by Christianity and others, and the locus of those meanings is indeed in our emotional lives, not in our ratiocinative ones.

Using a rhetorical question Solomon posed in "The Passions," he asks the reader to recall from memory the most-meaningful memories, and demonstrates that in each and every instance those meaningful experiences and memories were achieved through our emotions. But before dumping our ratiocinative faculties for our more hedonistic emotions in order to make life all that more meaningful, Solomon insists that the very bifurcation of ratiocinative/appetitive is solely conceptual, not actual. The West's Mistake was to make the conceptual bifurcation actual, and thus deprive humans of their appetitive faculties as "sub-human." So, he's not articulating an either/or dichotomy as has been the dominant paradigm for millennia, he's conjoining them as they properly belong.

Lest one think Solomon's endeavor is another philosophical pursuit in obscurantism, I assure the reader he's anything but obscure. If any philosopher has touched "relevance" more aptly and assuredly, it's because Solomon has opened the door wide to let all them in. That said, however, it must be remembered that Solomon is a philosopher and these writings, including the present one, are philosophical in their bearing (not biological, as, for example, in evolutionary biology and psychology). The two disciplines are talking the

same talk, they're just approaching the same subject from different angles, and both, not either one, are fruitful endeavors in that they mutually-enhance each other's insights and studies.

Thus, the present book is an excellent survey of his own thoughts and how they too have evolved as knowledge of these "things" we variously call emotions, passions, and feeling retake the stage. It also complements all the research in evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology (e.g., Cosmides, Tooby, Ridley, Pinker, et alia). And, as one's esteem in these curious "things" called emotions has been restored, I heartily recommend reading his "Love: Emotion, Myth, and Metaphor" (if not all of his other works). No Theory of Mind is even half competent if it ignores the most prominent feature of all, viz., emotions.

The Stoics embraced apathethia (apathy) and the Epicureans embraced ataraxia (unperturbability) as "responses" to emotions (see, Nussbaum's "Therapy of Desire" for a great survey of these schools and their approaches to our emotional lives). Saint Paul had little positive to say about emotions, but even he embraced (in a moment of sinful weakness, perhaps) "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22), so even Christians seem to have protested against emotions too much, too. Solomon has a different approach: embrace our emotional lives, because they fill us with all our most important meanings. And if the emotions of "love" (romantic, parental, universal) don't speak to the obviousness of that observation, then Solomon won't speak to that individual, either. But don't take that appraisal too proudly (since pride is also an emotion, as are hate, anger, jealousy, etc.) If Nature has endowed the human species with such a rich armamentarium of emotions, why are religion, philosophy, and even psychology repressing the very nature of our constitutions?

Hopefully, one will understand why I recommend this book, indeed many of Solomon's books, very highly.

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Very good book

By vincent polito

This book seems to follow a lecture series that Dr. Solomon does. It's an interesting book from a philosophers perspective. Dr. Solomon refers to philosophers but also current research into emotions. The style of his writing is informal and he never talks down to his reader. Sadly, Dr. Solomon passed away. His style is engaging and informative. Although Dr. Solomon claims emotions are intelligent he does not mean in the way Daniel Goldman does in his book Emotional Intelligence. Dr. Solomon's theory is that emotions are engagements with the world. Emotions can tell you alot about yourself and how you view the world.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

intelligence in the emotions

By Philip H Goldblatt

Codifies the intuitive notion that emotions are not just feelings which we have no control over but that there is intelligence to them which can help guide and direct us to better decisions and a more rewarding life. This book helps to clarify our sometimes whimsical inclinations so that we understand them better and understand ourselves better. A very interesting and helpful book to improve our knowledge. I liked it.

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