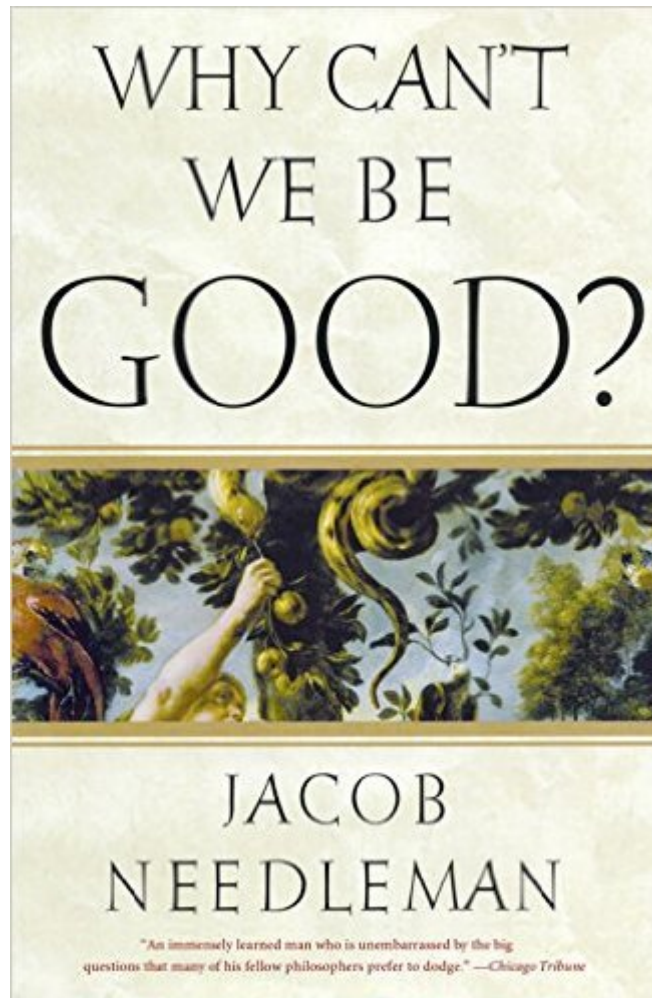


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# Why Can't We Be Good?



## Synopsis

The widely respected social philosopher embarks on his most gripping and broadly appealing work, asking the ultimate question of human nature: Why do we repeatedly violate our most deeply held values and beliefs? After nearly forty years of weighing humanity's deepest dilemmas-working in settings ranging from university and high school classrooms to corporate offices and hospitals-bestselling author, philosopher, and religious scholar Jacob Needleman presents the most urgent, deeply felt, and widely accessible work of his career. In *Why Can't We Be Good?* Needleman identifies the core problem that therapists and social philosophers fail to see. He depicts the individual human as a being who knows what is good, yet who remains mysteriously helpless to innerly adopt the ethical, moral, and religious ideas that are bequeathed to him.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

So many of us today proclaim both to ourselves and to others the ideal of real love. If we look honestly at our thoughts, emotions, and actions as we interact with others, however, we often see a huge contradiction between the ideal of loving our neighbors as ourselves and how we actually live and behave. We see how little we "listen" either to those around us or to our own inmost Self. We see that distracted and entranced by our own ideas, concepts, beliefs, assumptions, fears, conditioning, and so on, we seldom have either the wish or the ability to truly listen. At such moments we are faced with the fundamental fact of our lack of "moral power" and of our low level of being. We see that the so-called outer world of confusion, misunderstandings, conflict, and violence

in which we live is a direct manifestation of this fact. We see that we are not fulfilling the great promise of what it means to be fully conscious human beings, and that the end result is conflict and even disaster for both ourselves and the world. As a long-time professor of philosophy at San Francisco State University and the well-known author of many highly respected books including "The American Soul," "The Wisdom of Love," "Lost Christianity," and "Money and the Meaning of Life," Jacob Needleman has long been working with students of all kinds and speaking and writing about some of the greatest dilemmas of modern life, including what it means to live as a conscious, moral human being. His new book, "Why Can't We Be Good?", is perhaps his greatest work to date and one of the most important books of our times.

This wonderful book is a western philosophical inquiry into ethics. Needleman examines Greek (Plato, Socrates), Roman (Marcus Aurelius) and Hebrew Judaic (Hillel, Torah) sources and then steps outside tradition to explain what is most important in examining ethics for man and woman today. Needleman pours out his soul presenting the deepest questions of man. His excitement and desire for us to understand is present throughout the book. Not just simple ethics is discussed but the metaphysics of ethics and examples of moral mysticism, moral suffering and the ethics of thinking together. Needleman explains how thinking is an ethical act and the book includes classroom discussions and exercises, the ethical significance of thinking together and the ethics of attention. The quest for ethics involves intention, preparation, ideas, listening, struggling, silence and especially attention. Needleman uses the Greek example of working together at thinking and focuses on helping us understand the ethical Talmudic wisdom of Hillel who said "what is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor." He explains that the essential work of man is to remember the Self and as we love ourselves, love God, love our neighbor - then we are capable and able to be good. The book is not religious but rather a philosophical inquiry and for the most part steps out of tradition to discuss man's striving for morality and the ability to be good. There are some examples within the Judao-Christian tradition but only scant mention of the teachings of the East (especially Hinduism is missing). Throughout the book Needleman enriches, embellishes, enhances, amplifies and articulates in beautiful philosophic prose.

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