



# Book Key Takeaways

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# Main Idea

**Man is a machine.**

**We think we have control  
over who we are.**

**Rather, we are shaped by  
heredity, environment,  
training, and experience  
more than we like to admit.**



# Man as a machine

**Who we are comes from our genes, upbringing, and surroundings. We are a system that responds to what has been built into it.**



# Ideas come from others

**Most of what we think we originate comes from: people we meet, things we read, and experiences we have. Our minds combine them in unique ways, rarely creating from scratch.**



**We act for our own benefits**

**We act in ways that feel right to us. Even helping others feels good because it gives us a sense of pride, relief, and self-approval. There is always an inner payoff. Here, pure altruism is challenged.**



# Free will

**We make choices, but our choices depend on what we know, what we feel, and what we have seen. We cannot choose what we cannot see.**



# Character

**Character is not fixed. It is shaped by family, culture, rewards and punishments. Over time, these become *us*.**



# Judging others

**If people are shaped this way, we recognize that success and failure are not solely personal. It is much more complex than it looks. Recognizing this changes the mindset about judging.**



# Blame vs. Causes

**While this idea may not feel comfortable at first, it helps explain why people act the way they do. It shifts focus from **blame to causes.****

This approach reminds me of Sapolsky's works and take on "free will", especially his book, ***Determined.***



# So What

**If people are shaped, then environment matters. A better environment shapes better people. This makes judging someone more difficult. Asking, “What shaped them?” shifts the blame to causes.**