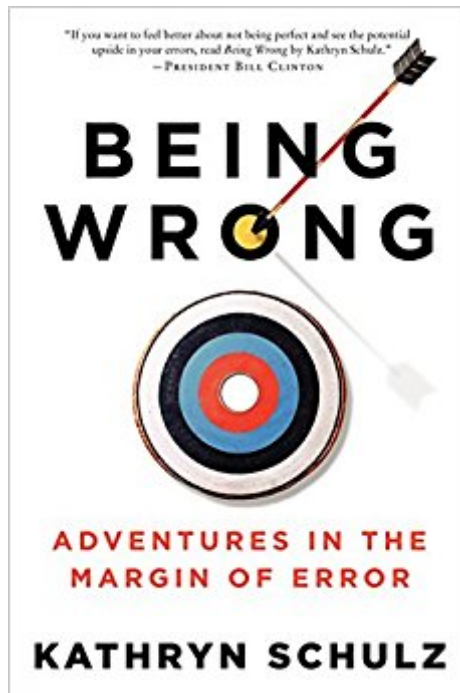




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# Being Wrong: Adventures In The Margin Of Error



## Synopsis

The bestselling history of and investigation into human error by beloved New Yorker writer Kathryn Schulz — “Both wise and clever, full of fun and surprise about a topic so central to our lives that we almost never even think about it.” — Bill McKibben, author of *Earth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet* In the tradition of *The Wisdom of Crowds* and *Predictably Irrational*, *Being Wrong* explores what it means to be in error, and why homo sapiens tend to tacitly assume (or loudly insist) that they are right about most everything. Kathryn Schulz argues that error is the fundamental human condition and should be celebrated as such. Guiding the reader through the history and psychology of error, from Socrates to Alan Greenspan, *Being Wrong* will change the way you perceive screw-ups, both of the mammoth and daily variety, forever.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. In the spirit of *Blink* and *Predictably Irrational* (but with a large helping of erudition), journalist Schulz casts a fresh and irreverent eye upon the profound meanings behind our most ordinary behaviors — in this instance, how we make mistakes, how we behave when we find we have been wrong, and how our errors change us. [I]t is ultimately wrongness, not rightness, that can teach us who we are, she asserts. Schulz writes with such lucidity and wit that her philosophical enquiry becomes a page-turner. She deftly incorporates Wittgenstein, Descartes, and Freud, along with an array of contemporary social scientists and even a spin with Shakespeare and Keats. There's heavy stuff here, but no heavy-handedness. Being wrong encompasses the cataclysmic (economic collapse) and the commonplace (leaving a laptop in front of the window before the

storm). Being wrong may lead to fun (playing with and understanding optical illusions) or futility (the Millerite expectation of the Rapture in 1844). Being wrong can be transformative, and Schultz writes, I encourage us to see error as a gift in itself, a rich and irreplaceable source of humor, art, illumination, individuality, and change. (June) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Here is a fascinating counterpoint to the notion that making a mistake somehow diminishes you as a person. We shouldn't fear error, the author says; rather, we should embrace it because it is our capacity for making mistakes that makes us who we are. ("To err is human" isn't just an empty cliché.) Schulz explores the nature of error: are big mistakes fundamentally different from small mistakes, or are they all essentially the same? How much does peer pressure, or crowd response, affect our capacity to blunder? How and why do we remember relatively insignificant mistakes for the rest of our lives, long after they have ceased to be relevant to anything? And what role does "error-blindness" or our inability to know when we are in the process of making a mistake play in our daily lives? Schulz writes in a lively style, asks lots of compelling questions, and uses plenty of examples to illustrate her points. Put this one in the same general category as Gladwell's *Blink* (2005), LeGault's *Think!* (2006), and Shore's *Blunder* (2008): user-friendly, entertaining looks at the way our minds work. --David Pitt --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Very interesting read, needed this for a literature course but I ended up learning some things about myself along the way. Schulz has an interesting viewpoint on the idea of being wrong and accepting our mistakes! Would recommend if you'd like to be more in touch with your emotions or to gift to people who need to learn how to be wrong with grace!

Absolutely enlightening! Kathryn Schultz shows us all the many ways we can err and why it o.k. Schultz borrows from ancient, Enlightenment and modern philosophers to develop a healthy relationship with accepting our own fallibility. A challenging but pleasant read. I highly recommend "Being Wrong" to everyone but especially those that find themselves in any position of leadership. Although this is not a management / leadership book, it makes a compelling case for people in positions of authority to be more open and less entrenched in their positions. If anything "Being

Wrong" has made me more humble about my own sense of righteousness.

Very monotonous book that was a pain to get through. The premise of the book is strong enough for you to keep on chugging but it seems a tad opinionated and has a slight tone of arrogance. Would I suggest the book? Yes, that it is still a perspective one should pick up and develop

If you want to get a new perspective on how beliefs and perceptions influence decisions then read this book. It is important to note that Kathryn Schultz has a stunning vocabulary. It is not often that I have to look up a word but with this book I did on several occasions. I have recommended this book to all of my friends and family. I have read parts to my wife and we both said "hmmm." I now examine why I feel someone or something else is wrong. As much as I don't want to agree with people that have opposing political views, I try to see if they are right because of this damn book. Great read and very inciteful.

"...it does feel like something to be wrong. It feels like being right". This is a profound statement, and the premise of this book. When we are wrong, we are blind to our wrongness. Schultz is a terrific writer and thinker who takes us on a ride through the permutations of wrongness, realization, denial, humiliation, and also the humor of finding out we were wrong. She argues that part of being human is the inability to be right all the time. Being absolutely accurate and seeing all possibilities and sides to a problem or issue is literally impossible. She illuminates those moments we all try to forget, when we realized our wrongness, and, in a flash, become aware of the "wrong" perception and the "right" one at the same moment. This paradoxical experience is so difficult to grasp, we usually just ignore it. Schultz sheds light on this phenomenon, and argues that tolerance, even celebration of error (our own and others') is the lifeblood of art, democracy, and human happiness. This is not just an academic exercise. I was struck by the usefulness of these ideas in my own life. We are often unaware of our own beliefs, prejudices and motivations. How much more often, then, are we mistaken about others? Can we ever really know other people? Does our inherently narrow view allow for absolute comprehension of others, or complex situations (think politics)? Do we allow for the possibilities of goodness and transformation in those we have dismissed? This book is long, and packed with first rate thinking and research. But it's also entertaining, readable and enjoyable. I read it fairly slowly, over a couple of months, because there is so much to digest.

My favorite quote from the book is as follows: "...by definition, there can't be any particular feeling

associated with simply being wrong. Indeed, the whole reason it's possible to be wrong is that, while it is happening, you are oblivious to it. ...So I should revise myself: it does feel like something to be wrong. It feels like being right."There are many books about the avoidance or reduction of error, of how to find and reduce error in ourselves. But this is the first book I've read that delves deeply into the human psychology of error and why it's an indivisible part of the way we think and feel. Later chapters delve into the role of error in society, in crime, in art, in religion, and in philosophy. The result is one of the best nonfiction books I've read in recent memory. Most nonfiction ends up getting padded to book length after it has made its point, but Schulz keeps every chapter fresh and relevant. Well documented, too; though one can tell in a few cases that she is tempted toward armchair philosophy, these are the exception. Recommended.

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