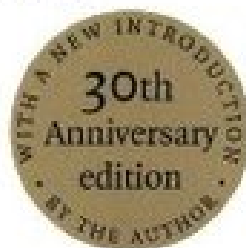

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RICHARD DAWKINS THE SELFISH GENE



By:
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What people Say:

Manny

- What some people seem to find hard to understand is that there's a part of you, in fact the most important part, that's immaterial and immortal. Your body is really no more than a temporary shell for the immortal part, and houses it for a little while until it dies.

Nathan

Didactic, patronizing, condescending and arguably neo-intellectual twaddle. I do not believe in a God, certainly not any God that's been conceived by man, but I also believe Richard Dawkins is a self-satisfied thought-Nazi who is as fundamental in his view of religion as any right-wing minister. Fundamentalists of all faiths scare me, and atheism is just as much a faith as any religion. The existence or non-existence of a God cannot be proven, nor can the existence or non-existence of a soul, an

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soul, and faith is an abstract experience with implications that are fundamentally unresponsive to study. As such, pursuits like Dawkins' often boil down to one type of faith (in "reason") vs. another type of faith (in a "God"). Many people love Dawkins. He is certainly intelligent, and writes as such, but he lacks wisdom and imagination. To me, that's the flaw in all of his work, from *The Selfish Gene* to *The God Delusion*. The idea that one human being can know enough about the nature of the universe to make the sweeping declarations Dawkins' makes is preposterous to me, and no more credible than the sweeping declarations of Jerry Falwell or Pat Robertson.

NC

Brian Hodges

Although I consider myself a Jesus-loving, god-fearing, creationist, I simply LOVE reading about evolution. I'm not sure what it is, but I find the whole concept, when explained by a lucid and accessible author, fascinating. And Dawkins is nothing if not lucid and accessible. He presents the topic and various questions and scientific controversies in a way that anybody with a willingness to pay attention can follow it. Some of the chapters were a bit more of a slog as Dawkins has to resort to sc

Although I consider myself a Jesus-loving, god-fearing, creationist, I simply LOVE reading about evolution. I'm not sure what it is, but I find the whole concept, when explained by a lucid and accessible author, fascinating. And Dawkins is nothing if not lucid and accessible. He presents the topic and various questions and scientific controversies in a way that anybody with a willingness to pay attention can follow it. Some of the chapters were a bit more of a slog as Dawkins has to resort to scary scary math and numbers to prove some of his points and set up for even more mindblowing stuff in future chapters. But most of the time, this book is chock full of insanely interesting examples and user-friendly analogies. Dawkins sure knows his way around language too. One of my favorite

lines is: "Sex: that bizarre perversion of straightforward replication."

On the science of it all, as I said, I'm a creationist, but I like to read up on the other side and at least understand, if not appreciate, what their take on the matter is. And to read Dawkins is to realize, yes, this does sound like a very solid theory. My one stumbling block to getting onto the evolution train one hundred percent is time. Perhaps my comprehension of just how long hundred million years is is faulty, but I just can't wrap my mind around how all of these ACCIDENTAL mutations, with no conscious will on the part of the group, individual or gene itself, could possibly result in the complexity of life as we see it now. There is an adage that if you gave an infinite number of monkeys an infinite number of typewriters and an infinite amount of time, they would eventually produce the complete works of Shakespeare. To believe evolution is to believe that you now have a FINITE amount of monkeys and a FINITE amount of time and yet they STILL manage to produce the complete works of Shakespeare... and they do it OVER AND OVER AND OVER again. Just doesn't seem plausible. But perhaps further reading will sway me at a later date.

EDIT 6/3/15

I can't believe this review is still getting attention after all this time! And I love the thread that has developed in the comments. I should let you all know though that as of 2008 I have been living on the side of reason and rationality. I became an atheist after a LOT of reading and contemplating of the Bible (the link to my "de-conversion" story is down in the comments as well). I try these days to, as much as possible, follow the evidence wherever it leads. Additionally Dawkins' "The Ancestor's Tale" was one of THE most beautiful books I've ever read. Check out my review if you're interested.

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Brad

Color me very impressed. I can now see why this is considered to be one of those hugely popular science books I keep hearing about and the reason why Dawkins has become so widely known and/or respected with or without his notoriety.

Indeed, the pure science bits were pretty much awesome. We, or at least I, have heard of this theory in other contexts before and none of it really comes as much surprise to see that genes, themselves, have evolved strategies that are exactly the same as Game Theory i

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Indeed, the pure science bits were pretty much awesome. We, or at least I, have heard of this theory in other contexts before and none of it really comes as much surprise to see that genes, themselves, have evolved strategies that are exactly the same as Game Theory in order to find the best possible outcome for continued replication. Hence: the selfish gene.

Enormous simple computers running through the prisoner's dilemma with each other, rival genes, and especially within whole organisms which could just be seen as gigantic living spacecraft giving the genes an evolutionary advantage of finding new and more prosperous adaptations.

Yup! That's us!

I honestly don't see the problem. I love the idea that we are just galaxies of little robots running

complicated Game Theories that eventually turn into a great cooperative machine where everyone (mostly) benefits, with plenty of complicated moves going way beyond hawks and doves and straight into the horribly complicated multi-defectors, forgivers, and other evolutionary styles that depend on the events that have gone before and the pre-knowledge (or lack of) a set end-date for the entire experiment... in other words, our deaths, whether pre-planned or simply the entire mass of genes just coming to realize that it's no longer in their best interest to keep pushing this jalopy around any longer if they're not getting anything out of it... like further replication. :)

Even when it's not precisely sex, it's still all about sex. :)

Of course, what I've just mentioned isn't the entire book, because, as a matter of fact, the book walks us through so many stages of thought, previous research, developments, mistakes, and upgraded theories and surprising conclusions based on soooooo much observable data that any of us might be rightfully confounded with the weight of it unless we were in the heart of the research, ourselves.

It's science, baby.