

## Religion Explained The Evolutionary Origins Of Religious Thought Pascal Boyer

Written by leading theorists and empirical researchers, this book presents new ways of addressing the old question: Why did religion first emerge and then continue to evolve in all human societies? The authors of the book—each with a different background across the social sciences and humanities—assimilate conceptual leads and empirical findings from anthropology, evolutionary biology, evolutionary sociology, neurology, primate behavioral studies, explanations of human interaction and group dynamics, and a wide range of religious scholarship to construct a deeper and more powerful explanation of the origins and subsequent evolutionary development of religions than can currently be found in what is now vast literature. While explaining religion has been a central question in many disciplines for a long time, this book draws upon a much wider array of literature to develop a robust and cross-disciplinary analysis of religion. The book remains true to its subtitle by emphasizing an array of both biological and sociocultural forms of selection dynamics that are fundamental to explaining religion as a universal institution in human societies. In addition to Darwinian selection, which can explain the biology and neurology of religion, the book outlines a set of four additional types of sociocultural natural selection that can fill out the explanation of why religion first emerged as an institutional system in human societies, and why it has continued to evolve over the last 300,000 years of societal evolution. These sociocultural forms of natural selection are labeled by the names of the early sociologists who first emphasized them, and they can be seen as a necessary supplement to the type of natural selection theorized by Charles Darwin. Explanations of religion that remain in the shadow cast by Darwin's great insights will, it is argued, remain narrow and incomplete when explaining a robust sociocultural phenomenon like religion.

*Mothers and Others* finds the key in the primatologically unique length of human childhood. Renowned anthropologist Sarah Hrdy argues that if human babies were to survive in a world of scarce resources, they would need to be cared for, not only by their mothers but also by siblings, aunts, fathers, friends—and, with any luck, grandmothers. Out of this complicated and contingent form of childrearing, Hrdy argues, came the human capacity for understanding others. In essence, mothers and others teach us who will care, and who will not.

This book provides a new perspective on the association between religious beliefs and mental health. The book is divided into five parts, the first of which traces the development of theories of organic evolution in the cultural and religious context before Charles Darwin. Part II describes the major evolutionary theories that Darwin proposed in his three books on evolution, and the religious, sociological, and scientific reactions to his theories. Part III introduces the reader to the concept of evolutionary psychiatry. It discusses how different regions of the brain evolved over time, and explains that certain brain regions evolved to protect us from danger by assessing threats of harm in the environment, including other humans. Specifically, this part describes: how psychiatric symptoms that are commonly experienced by normal individuals during their everyday lives are the product of brain mechanisms that evolved to protect us from harm; the prevalence rate of psychiatric symptoms in the U.S. general population; how religious and other beliefs influence the brain mechanisms that underlie psychiatric symptoms; and the brain regions that are involved in different psychiatric disorders. Part IV presents the findings of U.S. studies demonstrating that positive beliefs about God and life-after-death, and belief in meaning-in-life and divine forgiveness have salutary associations with mental health, whereas negative beliefs about God and life-after-death, belief in the Devil and human evil, and doubts about one's religious beliefs have pernicious associations with mental health. The last part of the book summarizes each section and recommends research on the brain mechanism underlying psychiatric symptoms, and the relationships among these brain mechanisms, religious beliefs, and mental health in the context of ETAS Theory.

"Marvelously funny and provocative."—Publishers Weekly Why do 70 percent of Americans believe in angels, while others are convinced that they were abducted by aliens? What makes people believe in improbable things when all the evidence points to the contrary? And don't almost all of us, at some time or another, engage in magical thinking? In *Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast*, evolutionary biologist Lewis Wolpert delves into the important and timely debate over the nature of belief, looking at its psychological foundations to discover just what evolutionary purpose it could serve. Wolpert takes us through all that science can tell us about the beliefs we feel are instinctive. He deftly explores different types of belief—those of children, of the religious, and of those suffering from psychiatric disorders—and he asks whether it is possible to live without belief, or whether it is a necessary component of a functioning society.

This book takes a multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary approach to religion, religiosity and theology from their earliest beginnings to the present day. It uniquely brings together the natural sciences and theology to explore how religious practice emerged and developed through the four sections into which the book is organized: Evolutionary biology; Philosophical linguistics, psychology and neuroscience; Theology and Anthropology. The volume features an international panel of contributors who develop an innovative picture of religion as a culturally-created social institution; religiosity as a more personal and subjective anthropological element of people expressed through religion; and theology as the study of god. To survive in changing times, living systems — a good characterization of religion, religiosity and theology — all must adaptively evolve. This is a vital study of a rapidly burgeoning field. As such, it will be of great interest to scholars in religious studies and theology as well as in the psychological, sociological, and anthropological study of religion.

'... a very important book that marks a turning point in the way anthropologists think about religious ideas and practices.' Pascal Boyer, American Anthropologist

This book explores the role of ritual in social life, human evolution, and religion. It explains the functions and purpose of varied rituals across the world by arguing they are mechanisms of 'resource management', providing a descriptive tool for understanding rituals and generating predictions about ritual survival. By showing how rituals have resulted from the need to cultivate social resources necessary to sustain cooperative groups, Rossano presents a unique examination of the function of rituals and how they cultivate, mobilize, and direct psychological resources. Rossano examines rituals from a diverse range of historical contexts, including the Greco-Romans, Soviet Russians, and those in 'crisis cults'. The book shows how rituals address societal and community problems by cultivating three psychological resources – commitment to communal values, goodwill (both of humans and supernatural agents) and social support or social capital. Holding communities together in the face of threat, disaster, or apathy is one of ritual's primary functions, and the author describes how our ancestors used ritual to become the highly social, inter-dependent primate that is *Homo sapiens*. Including examples from all over the world and providing detailed descriptions of both past and current ritual practices, this is fascinating reading for students and academics in psychology,

sociology, religion, anthropology, and sociology.

Leading scholars report on current research that demonstrates the central role of cultural evolution in explaining human behavior. Over the past few decades, a growing body of research has emerged from a variety of disciplines to highlight the importance of cultural evolution in understanding human behavior. Wider application of these insights, however, has been hampered by traditional disciplinary boundaries. To remedy this, in this volume leading researchers from theoretical biology, developmental and cognitive psychology, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, religious studies, history, and economics come together to explore the central role of cultural evolution in different aspects of human endeavor. The contributors take as their guiding principle the idea that cultural evolution can provide an important integrating function across the various disciplines of the human sciences, as organic evolution does for biology. The benefits of adopting a cultural evolutionary perspective are demonstrated by contributions on social systems, technology, language, and religion. Topics covered include enforcement of norms in human groups, the neuroscience of technology, language diversity, and prosociality and religion. The contributors evaluate current research on cultural evolution and consider its broader theoretical and practical implications, synthesizing past and ongoing work and sketching a roadmap for future cross-disciplinary efforts. Contributors Quentin D. Atkinson, Andrea Baronchelli, Robert Boyd, Briggs Buchanan, Joseph Bulbulia, Morten H. Christiansen, Emma Cohen, William Croft, Michael Cysouw, Dan Dediu, Nicholas Evans, Emma Flynn, Pieter François, Simon Garrod, Armin W. Geertz, Herbert Gintis, Russell D. Gray, Simon J. Greenhill, Daniel B. M. Haun, Joseph Henrich, Daniel J. Hruschka, Marco A. Janssen, Fiona M. Jordan, Anne Kandler, James A. Kitts, Kevin N. Laland, Laurent Lehmann, Stephen C. Levinson, Elena Lieven, Sarah Mathew, Robert N. McCauley, Alex Mesoudi, Ara Norenzayan, Harriet Over, Jürgen Renn, Victoria Reyes-García, Peter J. Richerson, Stephen Shennan, Edward G. Slingerland, Dietrich Stout, Claudio Tennie, Peter Turchin, Carel van Schaik, Matthijs Van Veelen, Harvey Whitehouse, Thomas Widlok, Polly Wiessner, David Sloan Wilson

**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER** • The bestselling author of *Zealot* and host of *Believer* explores humanity's quest to make sense of the divine in this concise and fascinating history of our understanding of God. In *Zealot*, Reza Aslan replaced the staid, well-worn portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth with a startling new image of the man in all his contradictions. In his new book, Aslan takes on a subject even more immense: God, writ large. In layered prose and with thoughtful, accessible scholarship, Aslan narrates the history of religion as a remarkably cohesive attempt to understand the divine by giving it human traits and emotions. According to Aslan, this innate desire to humanize God is hardwired in our brains, making it a central feature of nearly every religious tradition. As Aslan writes, "Whether we are aware of it or not, and regardless of whether we're believers or not, what the vast majority of us think about when we think about God is a divine version of ourselves." But this projection is not without consequences. We bestow upon God not just all that is good in human nature—our compassion, our thirst for justice—but all that is bad in it: our greed, our bigotry, our penchant for violence. All these qualities inform our religions, cultures, and governments. More than just a history of our understanding of God, this book is an attempt to get to the root of this humanizing impulse in order to develop a more universal spirituality. Whether you believe in one God, many gods, or no god at all, *God: A Human History* will challenge the way you think about the divine and its role in our everyday lives. Praise for *God* "Timely, riveting, enlightening and necessary."—HuffPost "Tantalizing . . . Driven by [Reza] Aslan's grace and curiosity, *God* . . . helps us pan out from our troubled times, while asking us to consider a more expansive view of the divine in contemporary life."—The Seattle Times "A fascinating exploration of the interaction of our humanity and God."—Pittsburgh Post-Gazette "[Aslan's] slim, yet ambitious book [is] the story of how humans have created God with a capital G, and it's thoroughly mind-blowing."—Los Angeles Review of Books "Aslan is a born storyteller, and there is much to enjoy in this intelligent survey."—San Francisco Chronicle

Many of our questions about religion, says renowned anthropologist Pascal Boyer, are no longer mysteries. We are beginning to know how to answer questions such as "Why do people have religion?" Using findings from anthropology, cognitive science, linguistics, and evolutionary biology, *Religion Explained* shows how this aspect of human consciousness is increasingly amenable to coherent, naturalistic explanation. This brilliant and controversial book gives readers the first scientific explanation for what religious feeling is really about, what it consists of, and where it comes from.

This definitive guide explores all the faiths from around the world. Together with the five main religions of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, there is a diverse range of newer faiths to ensure a compelling and comprehensive read. From the key concepts of ancient beliefs to the ground-breaking ideas at the heart of modern faiths, religious history is chronicled in a universal timeline. This provides a global perspective on the origins and events contributing to the growth and spread of spirituality, and the position of religion in society today. Influential religious leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, Saint Paul, and Al-Ghazali, are introduced in depth and detail, alongside important quotations. Modern alternative beliefs are investigated in the wider context of their political, social, and cultural climates. Part of DK's award-winning Big Ideas series that has sold in excess of seven million copies, *The Religions Book* explains the trickiest of subjects in the most easily accessible format, using inspiring infographics and illuminating images alongside simple and straightforward text. Compelling and accessible, this is the perfect guide for students of religious study, or anyone interested in the ideas of ancient and present-day faiths and religious philosophies. Series Overview: Big Ideas Simply Explained series uses creative design and innovative graphics, along with straightforward and engaging writing, to make complex subjects easier to understand. These award-winning books provide just the information needed for students, families, or anyone interested in concise, thought-provoking refreshers on a single subject.

"Quammen brilliantly and powerfully re-creates the 19th century naturalist's intellectual and spiritual journey."—Los Angeles Times Book Review Twenty-one years passed between Charles Darwin's epiphany that "natural selection" formed the basis of evolution and the scientist's publication of *On the Origin of Species*. Why did Darwin delay, and what happened during the course of those two decades? The human drama and scientific basis of these years constitute a

fascinating, tangled tale that elucidates the character of a cautious naturalist who initiated an intellectual revolution. Religion is universal human culture. No phenomenon is more widely shared or more intensely studied, yet there is no agreement on what religion is. Now, in *Faces in the Clouds*, anthropologist Stewart Guthrie provides a provocative definition of religion in a bold and persuasive new theory. Guthrie says religion can best be understood as systematic anthropomorphism--that is, the attribution of human characteristics to nonhuman things and events. Many writers see anthropomorphism as common or even universal in religion, but few think it is central. To Guthrie, however, it is fundamental. Religion, he writes, consists of seeing the world as humanlike. As Guthrie shows, people find a wide range of humanlike beings plausible: Gods, spirits, abominable snowmen, HAL the computer, Chiquita Banana. We find messages in random events such as earthquakes, weather, and traffic accidents. We say a fire "rages," a storm "wreaks vengeance," and waters "lie still." Guthrie says that our tendency to find human characteristics in the nonhuman world stems from a deep-seated perceptual strategy: in the face of pervasive (if mostly unconscious) uncertainty about what we see, we bet on the most meaningful interpretation we can. If we are in the woods and see a dark shape that might be a bear or a boulder, for example, it is good policy to think it is a bear. If we are mistaken, we lose little, and if we are right, we gain much. So, Guthrie writes, in scanning the world we always look for what most concerns us--livings things, and especially, human ones. Even animals watch for human attributes, as when birds avoid scarecrows. In short, we all follow the principle--better safe than sorry. Marshalling a wealth of evidence from anthropology, cognitive science, philosophy, theology, advertising, literature, art, and animal behavior, Guthrie offers a fascinating array of examples to show how this perceptual strategy pervades secular life and how it characterizes religious experience. Challenging the very foundations of religion, *Faces in the Clouds* forces us to take a new look at this fundamental element of human life.

"A dazzlingly erudite synthesis of history, philosophy, anthropology, genetics, sociology, economics, epidemiology, statistics, and more" (Frank Bruni, *The New York Times*), *Blueprint* shows why evolution has placed us on a humane path -- and how we are united by our common humanity. For too long, scientists have focused on the dark side of our biological heritage: our capacity for aggression, cruelty, prejudice, and self-interest. But natural selection has given us a suite of beneficial social features, including our capacity for love, friendship, cooperation, and learning. Beneath all of our inventions -- our tools, farms, machines, cities, nations -- we carry with us innate proclivities to make a good society. In *Blueprint*, Nicholas A. Christakis introduces the compelling idea that our genes affect not only our bodies and behaviors, but also the ways in which we make societies, ones that are surprisingly similar worldwide. With many vivid examples -- including diverse historical and contemporary cultures, communities formed in the wake of shipwrecks, commune dwellers seeking utopia, online groups thrown together by design or involving artificially intelligent bots, and even the tender and complex social arrangements of elephants and dolphins that so resemble our own -- Christakis shows that, despite a human history replete with violence, we cannot escape our social blueprint for goodness. In a world of increasing political and economic polarization, it's tempting to ignore the positive role of our evolutionary past. But by exploring the ancient roots of goodness in civilization, *Blueprint* shows that our genes have shaped societies for our welfare and that, in a feedback loop stretching back many thousands of years, societies are still shaping our genes today. A scientist integrates evolutionary biology, genetics, psychology, economics, and more to explore the development and workings of human societies. "There is no good reason why human societies should not be described and explained with the same precision and success as the rest of nature." Thus argues evolutionary psychologist Pascal Boyer in this uniquely innovative book. Integrating recent insights from evolutionary biology, genetics, psychology, economics, and other fields, Boyer offers precise models of why humans engage in social behaviors such as forming families, tribes, and nations, or creating gender roles. In fascinating, thought-provoking passages, he explores questions such as: Why is there conflict between groups? Why do people believe low-value information such as rumors? Why are there religions? What is social justice? What explains morality? Boyer provides a new picture of cultural transmission that draws on the pragmatics of human communication, the constructive nature of memory in human brains, and human motivation for group formation and cooperation. "Cool and captivating...It will change forever your understanding of society and culture."—Dan Sperber, co-author of *The Enigma of Reason* "It is highly recommended...to researchers firmly settled within one of the many single disciplines in question. Not only will they encounter a wealth of information from the humanities, the social sciences and the natural sciences, but the book will also serve as an invitation to look beyond the horizons of their own fields."—Eveline Seghers, *Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture*

One of the great intellectual battles of modern times is between evolution and religion. Until now, they have been considered completely irreconcilable theories of origin and existence. David Sloan Wilson's *Darwin's Cathedral* takes the radical step of joining the two, in the process proposing an evolutionary theory of religion that shakes both evolutionary biology and social theory at their foundations. The key, argues Wilson, is to think of society as an organism, an old idea that has received new life based on recent developments in evolutionary biology. If society is an organism, can we then think of morality and religion as biologically and culturally evolved adaptations that enable human groups to function as single units rather than mere collections of individuals? Wilson brings a variety of evidence to bear on this question, from both the biological and social sciences. From Calvinism in sixteenth-century Geneva to Balinese water temples, from hunter-gatherer societies to urban America, Wilson demonstrates how religions have enabled people to achieve by collective action what they never could do alone. He also includes a chapter considering forgiveness from an evolutionary perspective and concludes by discussing how all social organizations, including science, could benefit by incorporating elements of religion. Religious believers often compare their communities to single organisms and even to insect colonies. Astoundingly, Wilson shows that they might be literally correct. Intended for any educated reader, *Darwin's Cathedral* will change forever the way we view the relations among evolution, religion, and human society.

Political, intellectual, and academic discourse in the United States has been awash in political correctness, which has itself been

berated and defended -- yet little understood. As a corrective, Nelson and Greene look at a more general process: adopting political positions to enhance one's reputation for trustworthiness both to others and to oneself. Phillip Nelson and Kenneth Greene are Professors of Economics in the Department of Economics at the State University of New York, Binghamton.

This debut book boldly seeks to argue competitively in the same intellectual field as famous atheists such as RICHARD DAWKINS, CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS, and BERTRAND RUSSELL, and to do so in the spirit and style of such famous Christian apologists as C.S. Lewis and RAVI ZACHARIAS, drawing heavily on basic science, history, physics, psychology, paleontology, anthropology, archeology, neurology, child development and even science fiction. It describes the evolution of the human brain in ancient hominids allowing humans to eventually conceive a non-physical realm (the spirit world), and as the mind evolved intellectually from primitive animism to Christology, God revealed himself gradually as the developing hominid brain became able to comprehend new ideas. For Believers, the author presents a new, intellectually satisfying way to understand and defend the Bible. For both Skeptics and Believers, a worldview is offered that is spiritually meaningful and scientifically sound.

Over the last two decades, scientific accounts of religion have received a great deal of scholarly and popular attention both because of their intrinsic interest and because they are widely seen as potentially constituting a threat to the religion they analyse. The Believing Primate aims to describe and discuss these scientific accounts as well as to assess their implications. The volume begins with essays by leading scientists in the field, describing these accounts and discussing evidence in their favour.

Philosophical and theological reflections on these accounts follow, offered by leading philosophers, theologians, and scientists. This diverse group of scholars address some fascinating underlying questions: Do scientific accounts of religion undermine the justification of religious belief? Do such accounts show religion to be an accidental by-product of our evolutionary development? And, whilst we seem naturally disposed toward religion, would we fare better or worse without it? Bringing together dissenting perspectives, this provocative collection will serve to freshly illuminate ongoing debate on these perennial questions.

Religion is one of the most powerful forces running through human history, and although often presented as a force for good, its impact is frequently violent and divisive. This provocative work brings together cutting-edge research from both evolutionary and cognitive psychology to help readers understand the psychological structure of religious morality and the origins of religious violence. Introduces a fundamentally new approach to the analysis of religion in a style accessible to the general reader Applies insights from evolutionary and cognitive psychology to both Judaism and Christianity, and their texts, to help understand the origins of religious violence Argues that religious violence is grounded in the moral psychology of religion Illustrates its controversial argument with reference to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the response to the attacks from both the terrorists and the President. Suggests strategies for beginning to counter the divisive aspects of religion Discusses the role of religion and religious criticism in the contemporary world. Argues for a position sceptical of the moral authority of religion, while also critiquing the excesses of the "new atheists" for failing to appreciate the moral contributions of religion Awarded Honourable Mention, 2010 Prose Awards

Religions and mythologies from around the world teach that God or gods created humans. Atheist, humanist, and materialist critics, meanwhile, have attempted to turn theology on its head, claiming that religion is a human invention. In this book, E. Fuller Torrey draws on cutting-edge neuroscience research to propose a startling answer to the ultimate question. *Evolving Brains, Emerging Gods* locates the origin of gods within the human brain, arguing that religious belief is a by-product of evolution. Based on an idea originally proposed by Charles Darwin, Torrey marshals evidence that the emergence of gods was an incidental consequence of several evolutionary factors. Using data ranging from ancient skulls and artifacts to brain imaging, primatology, and child development studies, this book traces how new cognitive abilities gave rise to new behaviors. For instance, autobiographical memory, the ability to project ourselves backward and forward in time, gave *Homo sapiens* a competitive advantage. However, it also led to comprehension of mortality, spurring belief in an alternative to death. Torrey details the neurobiological sequence that explains why the gods appeared when they did, connecting archaeological findings including clothing, art, farming, and urbanization to cognitive developments. This book does not dismiss belief but rather presents religious belief as an inevitable outcome of brain evolution. Providing clear and accessible explanations of evolutionary neuroscience, *Evolving Brains, Emerging Gods* will shed new light on the mechanics of our deepest mysteries.

Our elaborate market exchange system owes its existence not to our calculating brain or insatiable self-centeredness, but rather to our sophisticated and nuanced human sociality and to the inherent rationality built into our emotions. The modern economic system is helped a lot more than hindered by our innate social instincts that support our remarkable capacity for building formal and informal institutions. The book integrates the growing body of experimental evidence on human nature scattered across a variety of disciplines from experimental economics to social neuroscience into a coherent and original narrative about the extent to which market (or impersonal exchange) relations are reflective of the basic human sociality that was originally adapted to a more tribal existence. An accessible resource, this book will appeal to students of all areas of economics, including Behavioral Economics and Neuro-Economics, Microeconomics, and Political Economy.

The hidden brain is the voice in our ear when we make the most important decisions in our lives—but we're never aware of it. The hidden brain decides whom we fall in love with and whom we hate. It tells us to vote for the white candidate and convict the dark-skinned defendant, to hire the thin woman but pay her less than the man doing the same job. It can direct us to safety when disaster strikes and move us to extraordinary acts of altruism. But it can also be manipulated to turn an ordinary person into a suicide terrorist or a group of bystanders into a mob. In a series of compulsively readable narratives, Shankar Vedantam journeys through the latest discoveries in neuroscience, psychology, and behavioral science to uncover the darkest corner of our minds and its decisive impact on the choices we make as individuals and as a society. Filled with fascinating characters, dramatic storytelling, and cutting-edge science, this is an engrossing exploration of the secrets our brains keep from us—and how they are revealed. The willingness to believe in some kind of payback or karma remains nearly universal. Retribution awaits those who commit bad deeds; rewards await those who do good. Johnson explores how this belief has developed over time, and how it has shaped the course of human evolution.

This ambitious, interdisciplinary book seeks to explain the origins of religion using our knowledge of the evolution of cognition. A cognitive anthropologist and psychologist, Scott Atran argues that religion is a by-product of human evolution just as the cognitive intervention, cultural selection, and historical survival of religion is an accommodation of certain existential and moral elements that have evolved in the human condition.

2003 Choice Outstanding Academic Title? Darwinian Politics is the first book to examine political behavior from a modern evolutionary

perspective. Here, Paul H. Rubin discusses group or social behavior, including ethnic and racial conflict; altruism and cooperation; envy; political power; and the role of religion in politics 3/4 issues that have formed the hallmark of human social behavior. Adopting a Darwinian perspective, Rubin demonstrates why certain political-moral philosophies succeed or fail in modern Western culture. He begins by showing relationships between biology and natural selection and the history of political philosophy and explains why desirable policies must treat each person as an individual. He considers the notion of group identity and conflict, observing a human propensity to form in-groups, a behavior that does not necessitate but often leads to deviancies such as racism. In discussing altruism, Rubin shows that people are willing to aid the poor if they are convinced that the recipients are not shirkers or free loaders. This explains why recent welfare reforms are widely viewed as successful. Envy, a trait that is often counterproductive in today's world, is also addressed. In comparing major moral philosophical systems, Rubin contends that utilitarianism is broadly consistent with our evolved preferences. He illustrates evolutionary premises for religious belief and for desires to regulate the behavior of others, and how in today's world such regulation may not serve any useful purpose. Ultimately, Rubin argues that humans naturally seek political freedom, and modern Western society provides more freedom than any previous one. In light of his analysis, the author extrapolates that, while there are still areas for improvements, humans have done a remarkably good job of satisfying their evolved political preferences.

If you accept evolutionary theory, can you also believe in God? Are human beings superior to other animals, or is this just a human prejudice? Does Darwin have implications for heated issues like euthanasia and animal rights? Does evolution tell us the purpose of life, or does it imply that life has no ultimate purpose? Does evolution tell us what is morally right and wrong, or does it imply that ultimately 'nothing' is right or wrong? In this fascinating and intriguing book, Steve Stewart-Williams addresses these and other fundamental philosophical questions raised by evolutionary theory and the exciting new field of evolutionary psychology. Drawing on biology, psychology and philosophy, he argues that Darwinian science supports a view of a godless universe devoid of ultimate purpose or moral structure, but that we can still live a good life and a happy life within the confines of this view.

Drawing on evidence from across the behavioural and natural sciences, this book advances a radical new hypothesis: that madness exists as a costly consequence of the evolution of a sophisticated social brain in Homo sapiens. Having explained the rationale for an evolutionary approach to psychosis, the author makes a case for psychotic illness in our living ape relatives, as well as in human ancestors. He then reviews existing evolutionary theories of psychosis, before introducing his own thesis: that the same genes causing madness are responsible for the evolution of our highly social brain. Jonathan Burns' novel Darwinian analysis of the importance of psychosis for human survival provides some meaning for this form of suffering. It also spurs us to a renewed commitment to changing our societies in a way that allows the mentally ill the opportunity of living. The Descent of Madness will be of interest to those in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, sociology and anthropology, and is also accessible to the general reader.

Examines how the belief in gods has led to cooperation and sometimes conflict between groups. The author also looks at how some cooperative societies have developed without belief in gods.

Religion has been a central part of human experience since at least the dawn of recorded history. The gods change, as do the rituals, but the underlying desire remains—a desire to belong to something larger, greater, most lasting than our mortal, finite selves. But where did that desire come from? Can we explain its emergence through evolution? Yes, says biological anthropologist Barbara J. King—and doing so not only helps us to understand the religious imagination, but also reveals fascinating links to the lives and minds of our primate cousins. *Evolving God* draws on King's own fieldwork among primates in Africa and paleoanthropology of our extinct ancestors to offer a new way of thinking about the origins of religion, one that situates it in a deep need for emotional connection with others, a need we share with apes and monkeys. Though her thesis is provocative, and she's not above thoughtful speculation, King's argument is strongly rooted in close observation and analysis. She traces an evolutionary path that connects us to other primates, who, like us, display empathy, make meanings through interaction, create social rules, and display imagination—the basic building blocks of the religious imagination. With fresh insights, she responds to recent suggestions that chimpanzees are spiritual—or even religious—beings, and that our ancient humanlike cousins carefully disposed of their dead well before the time of Neandertals. King writes with a scientist's appreciation for evidence and argument, leavened with a deep empathy and admiration for the powerful desire to belong, a desire that not only brings us together with other humans, but with our closest animal relations as well.

*Evolution, Games, and God* explores how cooperation and altruism, alongside mutation and natural selection, play a critical role in evolution, from microbes to human societies. Inheriting a tendency to cooperate and self-sacrifice on behalf of others may be as beneficial to a population's survival as the self-preserving instincts of individuals.

Churchward's *The Origin and Evolution of Religion*, first published in 1924, explores the history and development of different religions worldwide, from the religious cults of magic and fetishism to contemporary religions such as Christianity and Islam. This text is ideal for students of theology.

Religious capacity is a highly elaborate, neurocognitive human trait that has a solid evolutionary foundation. This book uses a multidisciplinary approach to describe millions of years of biological innovations that eventually give rise to the modern trait and its varied expression in humanity's many religions. The authors present a scientific model and a central thesis that the brain organs, networks, and capacities that allowed humans to survive physically also gave our species the ability to create theologies, find sustenance in religious practice, and use religion to support the social group. Yet, the trait of religious capacity remains non-obligatory, like reading and mathematics. The individual can choose not to use it. The approach relies on research findings in nine disciplines, including the work of countless neuroscientists, paleoneurologists, archaeologists, cognitive scientists, and psychologists. This is a cutting-edge examination of the evolutionary origins of humanity's interaction with the supernatural. It will be of keen interest to academics working in Religious Studies, Neuroscience, Cognitive Science, Anthropology, Evolutionary Biology, and Psychology.

This book presents a detailed argument to support the view that religion as a cultural practice cannot be properly explained without knowledge of the evolved cognitive mechanisms by which humans process information. This publication has also been published in paperback, please click here for details.

Offers a fresh and detailed take on the evolution of religious behavior from a biobehavioral perspective, promoting a new understanding that may help build bridges across the religious divide.

Religion Explained The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought Basic Books

In his acclaimed book *God After Darwin*, John Haught argued that religious belief is wholly compatible with evolutionary biology. Now, in *Deeper Than Darwin*, he advances his argument further by saying that religious belief is even more revealing about life than Darwinism. Haught looks hard at the question of how, after Darwin, religions may plausibly claim to be bearers of truth and not just of meaning and adaptive consolation. While he assumes the fundamental correctness of evolutionary biology, he firmly rejects the non-scientific belief that evolutionary biology amounts to an adequate explanation of living phenomena. Even though Darwinism is illuminating, Haught argues, it by no means tells us everything we need to know about life, even in principle. To find

the deepest, though certainly not the clearest, understandings of life and the universe, we may still profitably consult the religions of the world. *Deeper Than Darwin* takes up where *God After Darwin* left off, arguing that Darwin's vision is important and essentially correct but that we can still dig deeper in our understanding of what is going on in the life-story.

This book presents a consecutive story on the evolution of religions. It starts with an analysis of evolution in biology and ends with a discussion of what a proper theory of religious evolution should look like. It discusses such questions as whether it is humankind or religion that evolves, how religions evolve, and what adaptation of religions means. Topics examined include inheritance and heredity, religio-speciation, hybridization, ontogenetics and epigenetics, phylogenetics, and systematics. Calling attention to unsolved problems and relating the evolutionary subject matter to appropriate material, the book integrates and interprets existing data. Based on the belief that an unequivocal stand is more likely to produce constructive criticism than evasion of an issue, the book chooses that interpretation of a controversial matter which seems most consistent with the emerging picture of the evolutionary process. "Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution," the evolutionary biologist and co-founder of the so-called New Synthesis in Evolutionary Biology, Theodosius Dobzhansky (1900-1975), wrote in his famous essay of 1973, opposing creationism in American society. Today, Dobzhansky's statement is not only fully accepted in biology, but has become the scientific paradigm in disciplines such as psychology, archaeology and the study of religions. Yet in spite of this growing interest in evolutionary processes in religion and culture, the term "evolution" and the capability of an evolutionary account have to date still not been properly understood by scholars of the Humanities. This book closes that gap.

This ambitious book probes our biological past to discover the kinds of lives that human beings have imagined were worth living. Bellah's theory goes deep into cultural and genetic evolution to identify a range of capacities (communal dancing, storytelling, theorizing) whose emergence made religious development possible in the first millennium BCE.

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