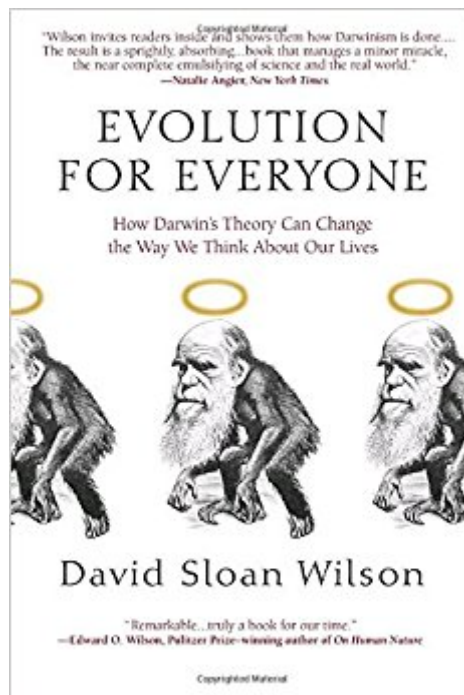




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# Evolution For Everyone: How Darwin's Theory Can Change The Way We Think About Our Lives



## Synopsis

What is the biological reason for gossip? For laughter? For the creation of art? Why do dogs have curly tails? What can microbes tell us about morality? These and many other questions are tackled by renowned evolutionist David Sloan Wilson in this witty and groundbreaking new book. With stories that entertain as much as they inform, Wilson outlines the basic principles of evolution and shows how, properly understood, they can illuminate the length and breadth of creation, from the origin of life to the nature of religion. Now everyone can move beyond the sterile debates about creationism and intelligent design to share Darwin's panoramic view of animal and human life, seamlessly connected to each other. Evolution, as Wilson explains, is not just about dinosaurs and human origins, but about why all species behave as they do—from beetles that devour their own young, to bees that function as a collective brain, to dogs that are smarter in some respects than our closest ape relatives. And basic evolutionary principles are also the foundation for humanity's capacity for symbolic thought, culture, and morality. In example after example, Wilson sheds new light on Darwin's grand theory and how it can be applied to daily life. By turns thoughtful, provocative, and daringly funny, *Evolution for Everyone* addresses some of the deepest philosophical and social issues of this or any age. In helping us come to a deeper understanding of human beings and our place in the world, it might also help us to improve that world. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Evolution is far more than just dinosaurs and fossils, Wilson says, and he

enthusiastically explains, with a clear and pleasing style, how it affects our everyday lives. This is Wilson's fourth book on evolution (Darwin's Cathedral, etc.) and is by far the most accessible account of evolution for a general audience, as well as the farthest ranging. Building on diverse examples, Wilson demonstrates that evolution is completely relevant to modern human affairs, including how we use language, create culture and define morality. The discussion is as entertaining as it is easy to follow, covering topics as seemingly unrelated as why the burying beetle commits infanticide and why so many domestic animals have floppy ears. For readers seeking a more technical presentation, Wilson offers both a complete bibliography and list of Web sites for reference. Readers who've grown weary of the usual treatment of evolution as a deadly foe to religion will find Wilson's book a cheerful antidote, breaking new ground in its sweeping breadth and offering much to think about. (Apr. 3) 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.

Evolution for Everyone is David Sloan Wilson's fifth book on the subject (including Darwin's Cathedral and The Literary Animal) and the most reader-friendly. Critics favorably compare the effort to Steven J. Levitt's and Stephen J. Dubner's runaway best seller Freakonomics. They claim that Wilson, professor of biology and anthropology at Britain's Binghamton University, does for evolution what those two authors did for economics—that is, draw interesting and unexpected connections between musty theory and its practical applications in our everyday lives. Although most of his observations are right on the mark, Wilson's desire to connect evolution and religion may strike some as overreaching or preachy. Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Religious folk pretend to know what evolution is without ever studying it. There are many books that could introduce them to the topic. One is Evolution for Everyone by David Sloan Wilson. In chapter Three, Mr. Wilson introduces three basic concepts of the law of evolution. The three are heredity, variation, and consequence. Theists might agree that children inherit from parents. They may also agree that offspring vary. If they understand that there are consequences to variation, they are half way to becoming literate in the science of evolution. Stop pretending. Buy the book. Read it.

I am a professional Biologist and found this book interesting and thoughtful. I think this is a clever book, and one that leads the reader on an intellectually satisfying journey. I am a little concerned that the title may mislead some people. The author successfully makes the case that Darwinism should

be an important foundational concept for serious thinkers in the Social Sciences, Religious Studies and Economics, as well as in Biology. "Evolution for Everyone" refers to the idea that serious investigators in all areas, not just in the sciences, should understand and make use of the theory. The writing is not especially technical (kudos to the author for largely abstaining from the jargon), but the interplay between ideas and evidence is pretty complex (and interesting). Thus, it requires the reader's attention if he/she is really to get much out of the reading. When I first read the title, I expected that it would be a relatively light hearted primer on evolution for those non-scientists who have an interest in the interaction of science with the so-called "culture wars". There are many other books that better fill this latter role (including the one from the National Academy of Sciences which can be downloaded free from their website). Basically this is a fascinating work if the reader is willing to stretch his or her brain.

had to do it for a class. good otherwise though

Objective, thoughtful and pithy indeed. I first heard the author on a Podcast with Krista Trippett "On Being" and was immediately hooked by this thoughtful and respectful scientist describe his worldview that includes the writing of Teilhard de Chardin a well respected Jesuit theologian and scientist himself. It is a "relatively" easy read; yet, it does beg an open mind--seems obvious doesn't it. I am not sure it will convert any skeptics; yet, if one really ponders the book, it is written in a logical manner that is compelling, comprehensive and convincing!

As a student of David Sloan Wilson's I am clearly positively biased before opening the cover. DSW has taught a course which he bases this book on for many years. The course is excellent and the book is an excellent portrayal of the course. Evolutionary theorists tend to either be very narrow in the scope of what they perceive is important and explainable by evolution, or to go well beyond evidence into silly story telling. DSW is refreshing in that he resolutely sticks to the science, but does not allow this to make himself narrow minded. There are many forces shaping organisms including historical contingency, pleiotropy, genetics, development, cultural evolution and multilevel selection. Many evolutionists take the untenable position that one such force is more important than another. DSW instead sees all of these forces as important depending upon the context and history and ultimately just alternative theories to be empirically tested. This book's view of the evolution of religion is also refreshing. In a time when many evolutionists have taken off their evolutionist hats to become political hacks in the promotion of some lame brand of atheism, DSW instead tries to

explain what religions are, the good and the bad, how they develop and are like other groups of organisms arranged functionally. Some have critiqued DSW for being pompous. I can see why they would say this, because he talks about some of his work and accomplishments (which are considerable). However, they are somewhat missing the point. These anecdotes are mainly as examples, to give the book a human element and because they are some of the examples he knows best. The careful reader will see that he uses similar language to describe the work of others. Recommended for all. The general public will see a solid presentation of evolution and an invitation to actively engage in science or whatever their passion might be. Evolutionary biologists will see a more open view of their field and hopefully some of the child-like intrigue that originally brought them to the field. Social scientists might see a broader and more empirically based paradigm to build upon. Those already familiar with DSW work will get a more carefree and autobiographical view than his past books.

I had to read this for an intro to anthropology class and it was pretty interesting. Of course, there were some bland parts that weren't so intriguing but overall it was well written and concise and pretty interesting. It gave a lot of examples and studies. It's a good book for anyone wanting a good introduction to the topic of evolution

I really love this book! It does an excellent job of explaining both "standard" evolutionary theory and multilevel selection theory and connecting it all to issue of concern to humanity.

The author claims to explain how evolution and religion can coexist. As someone who is not religious, I felt that he was condescending in his treatment of religion, although I think that he did explain why it occurs in an evolutionary sense. The book applies evolution in interesting and different ways to many subjects, though, so I think it is worth reading.

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