

In Gods We Trust The Evolutionary Landscape Of Religion

Scott Atran

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Explore Scott Atran's insightful analysis of religion, tracing its evolutionary roots and the profound impact of belief systems on human societies. This work delves into the cognitive processes and cultural dynamics that have shaped the global phenomenon of "In Gods We Trust," offering a compelling perspective on the enduring landscape of faith and its development.

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In Gods We Trust

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 in the human condition.

In Gods We Trust

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.

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Inspired by a debate between Noam Chomsky and Jean Piaget, this work traces the development of natural history from Aristotle to Darwin, and demonstrates how the science of plants and animals has emerged from the common conceptions of folkbiology.

Cognitive Foundations of Natural History

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.

Religion Explained

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.

Big Gods

Pattini-goddess, virgin, wife and mother; folk deity of Sinhala Buddhists and Jains; and assimilated goddess of the Hindu pantheon has been worshiped in Sri Lanka and South India for fifteen hundred years or more, as she still is today. This long-awaited book is the culmination of Gananath Obeyesekere's comprehensive study of the Pattini cult and its historical, sociological, and psychoanalytical role in the culture of South Asia. A well-known anthropologist and a native of Sri Lanka, Obeyesekere displays his impeccable scholarship and a stunning range of theoretical perspectives in this work, the most detailed analysis of a single religious complex in South Asian ethnography (and possibly in all of anthropology). Since 1955 Obeyesekere has observed and participated in modern performances of the rituals of worship, healing, and propitiation in the Pattini cult, particularly the postharvest ritual known as the *gammaduva*. He presents detailed texts of the *gammaduva*, placing them in their historical and mythic traditions. Using the texts, he formulates a cultural analysis of the Buddhist pantheon and a critique of empiricist notions of South Asian historiography. Obeyesekere shows that some seemingly historical figures of South India and Sri Lanka are mythic characters and that their historical significance can best be understood by an anthropological analysis of myth rather than through a reification of myth in history. The concurrent Hindu worship of Pattini with its myths and rituals is described in detail. Obeyesekere documents the Sanskritization of Pattini, the changing physical structures of the goddess's shrines from the 1930s to the present, the assumption by Brahman priests of ritual functions formerly carried out by folk priest, and the sociocultural causes of these changes. He traces, too, the origins and diffusion of the cult throughout its entire history, as well as its survival today. Of psychological interest is the problematic status of Pattini as virgin, wife, and mother and her relationship with her god-husband Palanga and his courtesan Madevi. Obeyesekere discusses the psychodynamics of this relationship in detail and explains its role in Hindu-Buddhist socialization and family structure. Further, he uses this analysis to account for local variations in the performance and structure of the ritual. The ritual of the killing and resurrection of Pattini's husband and her role as *mater dolorosa* will interest scholars of comparative religion.

The Cult of the Goddess Pattini

Current primate research has yielded stunning results that not only threaten our underlying assumptions about the cognitive and communicative abilities of nonhuman primates, but also bring into question what it means to be human. At the forefront of this research, Sue Savage-Rumbaugh recently has achieved a scientific breakthrough of impressive proportions. Her work with Kanzi, a laboratory-reared bonobo, has led to Kanzi's acquisition of linguistic and cognitive skills similar to those of a two and a half year-old human child. *Apes, Language, and the Human Mind* skillfully combines a fascinating narrative of the Kanzi research with incisive critical analysis of the research's broader linguistic, psychological, and anthropological implications. The first part of the book provides a detailed, personal account of Kanzi's infancy, youth, and upbringing, while the second part addresses the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological issues raised by the Kanzi research. The authors discuss the challenge to the foundations of modern cognitive science presented by the Kanzi research; the methods by which we represent and evaluate the abilities of both primates and humans; and the implications which ape language research has for the study of the evolution of human language. Sure to be controversial, this exciting new volume offers a radical revision of the sciences of language and mind, and will be important reading for all those working in the fields of primatology, anthropology, linguistics, philosophy of mind, and cognitive and developmental psychology.

Apes, Language, and the Human Mind

An illuminating work of religious and cultural anthropology, *Talking to the Enemy* traces terrorism's root causes in human evolution and history, touching on the nature of faith, the origins of society, the limits of reason, and the power of moral values. Through rigorous fieldwork and nuanced investigation, Scott Atran reminds us that terrorists are social beings influenced by the interpersonal bonds, connections, and values familiar to us all. When individuals combine notions of the homeland, a family of friends, and a band of brothers with the zeal of belief, they are capable of amazing things, both good and bad: the ancient Jewish resistance to Rome; the revolutionary founding of America; the formation of Al-Qaeda and the resulting "fear by so many of so few." A brilliant study of the social and psychological mechanisms that lead to terrorism, *Talking to the Enemy* rejects popular misconceptions about suicide bombers, radical Islam, and the relationship between religion and war. Atran's surprising and insightful conclusions show how our tolerance of faith enables extremists to flourish and why atheism and science education have little effect, while providing a path for deradicalization. A timely and provocative work, *Talking to the Enemy* offers solutions to help us to identify terrorists today, prevent the creation of future terrorists, and ultimately make the world a safer place for everyone.

Talking to the Enemy

"This volume is intended to bring into relief the full range of violent rites represented in the Hebrew Bible many rarely, if ever, consider. It seeks to explore what acts of ritual violence might accomplish socio-politically in their particular settings and the ways in which engagement with theory from a variety of disciplines can contribute to our understanding of ritual violence as a phenomenon"--

Ritual Violence in the Hebrew Bible

'Eskimo Life' is an account of the culture and society of the indigenous peoples of Greenland at the end of the 19th century. Author Fridtjof Nansen displays deep empathy for the Eskimo people and documents their lives, beliefs, and traditions with great detail. From kayaks and winter-houses to food and dainties, readers will gain insight into the daily life and experiences of the Eskimo. While the book highlights the impact of Western influence, particularly through Christian missionaries, Nansen also challenges the notion of Western superiority and the assumption that Christianity is inherently better than native religions. This fascinating book is a must-read for anyone interested in indigenous cultures and their history.

Eskimo Life

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.

Evolving Brains, Emerging Gods

Explore a rigorous but accessible guide to contemporary approaches to the study of religion from leading voices in the field. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion* delivers an expert and insightful analysis of modern perspectives on the study of religion across the humanities and the social sciences. Presupposing no knowledge of the approaches examined in the collection, the book is ideal for undergraduate students who have yet to undertake extensive study in the humanities or social sciences. The book includes perspectives from those in fields as diverse as globalization, cognitive science, the study of emotion, law, esotericism, sex and gender, functionalism, terror, the

comparative method, modernism, and postmodernism. Many of the topics covered in the book clearly hail from religious studies, while others are grounded in other areas of academia. All of the chapters contained within are written by recognized authors who show how their chosen discipline contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon of religion. This book also includes topics like: A comprehensive exploration of multiple approaches to religious study, including anthropology, economics, literature, phenomenology, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and theology A review of various topics germane to the study of religion, including the study of the body, cognitive science, the comparative method, death and the afterlife, law, magic, music, and myth A selection of subjects touching on modern trends in extremism and violence, including chapters on terror and violence, fundamentalism, and nationalism A discussion of the influence of modernism and postmodernism in religion Ideal for undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students in humanities and social science programs taking courses on religion and myth, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion* will also earn a place in the libraries of specialists working in the fields of Religious Studies, Theology, Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Political Science, History, and Philosophy.

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion

First Published in 1999. Routledge is an imprint of Taylor & Francis, an informa company.

Why Gods Persist

An analysis of the cognitive consequences of diminished contact with nature examines the relationship between how people think about the natural world and how they act on it, and how these are affected by cultural differences. Surveys show that our growing concern over protecting the environment is accompanied by a diminishing sense of human contact with nature. Many people have little commonsense knowledge about nature—are unable, for example, to identify local plants and trees or describe how these plants and animals interact. Researchers report dwindling knowledge of nature even in smaller, nonindustrialized societies. In *The Native Mind and the Cultural Construction of Nature*, Scott Atran and Douglas Medin trace the cognitive consequences of this loss of knowledge. Drawing on nearly two decades of cross-cultural and developmental research, they examine the relationship between how people think about the natural world and how they act on it and how these are affected by cultural differences. These studies, which involve a series of targeted comparisons among cultural groups living in the same environment and engaged in the same activities, reveal critical universal aspects of mind as well as equally critical cultural differences. Atran and Medin find that, despite a base of universal processes, the cultural differences in understandings of nature are associated with significant differences in environmental decision making as well as intergroup conflict and stereotyping stemming from these differences. The book includes two intensive case studies, one focusing on agro-forestry among Maya Indians and Spanish speakers in Mexico and Guatemala and the other on resource conflict between Native-American and European-American fishermen in Wisconsin. *The Native Mind and the Cultural Construction of Nature* offers new perspectives on general theories of human categorization, reasoning, decision making, and cognitive development.

The Native Mind and the Cultural Construction of Nature

This unique and pioneering book critically appraises current work from both the cognitive science of religion and the evolutionary study of religion. It addresses the question: Why does the believer possess supernatural or religious beliefs in the combined context of his cognitive biases, their adaptive usefulness measured in terms of survival and reproduction, and the impact of social learning and cultural traits? The authors outlines a pluralistic approach to the study of religion that does not treat religion as an accidental by-product but an adaptation selected by natural selection. Chapters discuss the role of religious components for the evolution of cooperation and altruism, and explore the development of atheism and secular ideas, in cognitive and evolutionary terms. Topics such as the usefulness of religion, the transmission of religious beliefs, and a Darwinian approach to religion are among those addressed. Contrary to standard views, religious biases are regarded as shaped by cultural influences and not merely by natural dispositions. This monograph will particularly appeal to researchers who are looking for a scientific explanation of religion and religious beliefs but who do not stop at the level of narrow cognitive and evolutionary accounts. The work will also be of interest to students of philosophy, sociology, religious studies, theology, or anthropology who seek to explain such fascinating, complex, and unequivocal phenomena as religion and religious components.

Revising Cognitive and Evolutionary Science of Religion

Continuing Keith Ward's series on comparative religion, this book deals with religious views of human nature and destiny. The beliefs of six major traditions are presented: the view of Advaita Vedanta that there is one Supreme Self, unfolding into the illusion of individual existence; the Vaishnava belief that there is an infinite number of souls, whose destiny is to be released from material embodiment; the Buddhist view that there is no eternal Self; the Abrahamic belief that persons are essentially embodied souls; and the materialistic position that persons are complex material organisms. Indian ideas of rebirth, karma, and liberation from samsara are critically analysed and compared with semitic belief in the intermediate state of Sheol, Purgatory or Paradise, the Final Judgement and the resurrection of the body. The impact of scientific theories of cosmic and biological evolution on religious beliefs is assessed, and a form of 'soft emergent materialism' is defended, with regard to the soul. In this context, a Christian doctrine of original sin and atonement is presented, stressing the idea of soterial, as opposed to forensic, justice. Finally, a Christian view of personal immortality and the 'end of all things' is developed in conversation with Jewish and Muslim beliefs about judgement and resurrection.

Religion and Human Nature

An inspiring collection of essays, in which Albert Einstein addresses the topics that fascinated him as a scientist, philosopher, and humanitarian Divided by subject matter—"Science," "Convictions and Beliefs," "Public Affairs," etc.—these essays consider everything from the need for a "supranational" governing body to control war in the atomic age to freedom in research and education to Jewish history and Zionism to explanations of the physics and scientific thought that brought Albert Einstein world recognition. Throughout, Einstein's clear, eloquent voice presents an idealist's vision and relays complex theories to the layperson. Einstein's essays share his philosophical beliefs, scientific reasoning, and hopes for a brighter future, and show how one of the greatest minds of all time fully engaged with the changing world around him. This authorized ebook features rare photos and never-before-seen documents from the Albert Einstein Archives at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Out of My Later Years

Bringing Ritual to Mind explores the psychological foundations of religious ritual systems. Participants must recall their rituals well enough to ensure a sense of continuity across performances, and those rituals must motivate them to transmit and re-perform them. Most religious rituals the world over exploit either high performance frequency or extraordinary emotional stimulation (but not both) to enhance their recollection (literacy does not affect this). McCauley and Lawson argue that participants' cognitive representations of ritual form explain why. Reviewing a wide range of evidence, they explain religions' evolution.

Bringing Ritual to Mind

Sam Harris dismantles the most common justification for religious faith--that a moral system cannot be based on science.

The Moral Landscape

This text is an intellectually and personally courageous exploration of one of the most contentious issues of modern times. Here, Atran argues persuasively that we need to consider terrorists' close relationships, with family and friends, as much as the causes they espouse.

Talking to the Enemy

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

Cultural Evolution

On March 13, 1697, Spanish troops from Yucatán attacked and occupied Nojpeten, the capital of the Maya people known as Itzas, the inhabitants of the last unconquered native New World kingdom. This political and ritual center--located on a small island in a lake in the tropical forests of northern Guatemala--was densely covered with temples, royal palaces, and thatched houses, and its capture represented a decisive moment in the final chapter of the Spanish conquest of the Mayas. The capture of Nojpeten climaxed more than two years of preparation by the Spaniards, after efforts by the military forces and Franciscan missionaries to negotiate a peaceful surrender with the Itzas had been rejected by the Itza ruling council and its ruler Ajaw Kan Ek'. The conquest, far from being final, initiated years of continued struggle between Yucatecan and Guatemalan Spaniards and native Maya groups for control over the surrounding forests. Despite protracted resistance from the native inhabitants, thousands of them were forced to move into mission towns, though in 1704 the Mayas staged an abortive and bloody rebellion that threatened to recapture Nojpeten from the Spaniards. The first complete account of the conquest of the Itzas to appear since 1701, this book details the layers of political intrigue and action that characterized every aspect of the conquest and its aftermath. The author critically reexamines the extensive documentation left by the Spaniards, presenting much new information on Maya political and social organization and Spanish military and diplomatic strategy. This is not only one of the most detailed studies of any Spanish conquest in the Americas but also one of the most comprehensive reconstructions of an independent Maya kingdom in the history of Maya studies. In presenting the story of the Itzas, the author also reveals much about neighboring lowland Maya groups with whom the Itzas interacted, often violently.

The Conquest of the Last Maya Kingdom

Offering a challenge to society and a different history of belief, this book discusses why and how different faiths have commanded allegiance and shaped so many lives. It argues for the need to understand this multifaceted phenomenon, and also presents a comprehensive explanation for religion.

Breaking the Spell

Recent findings in cognitive science and evolutionary psychology provide important insights to the processes which make religious beliefs and behaviors such efficient attractors in and across various cultural settings. The specific salience of religious ideas is based on the fact that they are 'counter-intuitive': they contradict our intuitive expectations of how entities normally behave. Counter-intuitive ideas are only produced by a mind capable of crossing the boundaries that separate such ontological domains as persons, living things, and solid objects. The evolution of such a mind has only taken place in the human species. How certain kinds of counter-intuitive ideas are selected for a religious use is discussed from varying angles. Cognitive considerations are thus related to the traditions of comparative religion. This publication has also been published in paperback, please click here for details.

How Religion Works

This eye-opening look at the intellectual culture of today--in which science, not literature or philosophy, takes center stage in the debate over human nature and the nature of the universe--is certain to spark fervent intellectual debate.

Third Culture

In this important and original book, eminent scholar Barbara Herenstein Smith describes, assesses, and reflects upon a set of contemporary intellectual projects involving science, religion, and human cognition. One, which Smith calls "the New Naturalism\

Natural Reflections

An integrative approach to human cognition that encompasses the domains of language, consciousness, action, social cognition, and theory of mind that will foster cross-disciplinary conversation among linguists, philosophers, psycholinguists, neuroscientists, cognitive anthropologists, and evolutionary psychologists. Ray Jackendoff's *Language, Consciousness, Culture* represents a breakthrough in developing an integrated theory of human cognition. It will be of interest to a broad spectrum of cognitive scientists, including linguists, philosophers, psycholinguists, neuroscientists, cognitive anthropologists, and evolutionary psychologists. Jackendoff argues that linguistics has become isolated from the other cognitive sciences at least partly because of the syntax-based architecture assumed by mainstream generative grammar. He proposes an alternative parallel architecture for the language faculty that permits a greater internal integration of the components of language and connects far more naturally to such larger issues in cognitive neuroscience as language processing, the connection of language to vision, and the evolution of language. Extending this approach beyond the language capacity, Jackendoff proposes sharper criteria for a satisfactory theory of consciousness, examines the structure of complex everyday actions, and investigates the concepts involved in an individual's grasp of society and culture. Each of these domains is used to reflect back on the question of what is unique about human language and what follows from more general properties of the mind. *Language, Consciousness, Culture* extends Jackendoff's pioneering theory of conceptual semantics to two of the most important domains of human thought: social cognition and theory of mind. Jackendoff's formal framework allows him to draw new connections among a large variety of literatures and to uncover new distinctions and generalizations not previously recognized. The breadth of the approach will foster cross-disciplinary conversation; the vision is to develop a richer understanding of human nature.

Language, Consciousness, Culture

This text explores the historical relationship of ideas, power and culture. Looking at several case studies, it analyses how the regnant ideology intertwines with power around the pivotal relationships that govern social labour.

Envisioning Power

A criticism of sociobiology by one of the world's foremost anthropologists

The Use and Abuse of Biology

Acclaimed author James Reston, Jr.'s *Warriors of God* is the rich and engaging account of the Third Crusade (1187-1192), a conflict that would shape world history for centuries and which can still be felt in the Middle East and throughout the world today. James Reston, Jr. offers a gripping narrative of the epic battle that left Jerusalem in Muslim hands until the twentieth century, bringing an objective perspective to the gallantry, greed, and religious fervor that fueled the bloody clash between Christians and Muslims. As he recounts this rousing story, Reston brings to life the two legendary figures who led their armies against each other. He offers compelling portraits of Saladin, the wise and highly cultured leader who created a united empire, and Richard the Lionheart, the romantic personification of chivalry who emerges here in his full complexity and contradictions. From its riveting scenes of blood-soaked battles to its pageant of fascinating, larger-than-life characters, *Warriors of God* is essential history, history that helps us understand today's world.

Warriors of God

"Atran explores the way terrorists think of themselves and teaches us, at last, intelligent ways to think about terrorists." —Christopher Dickey, Newsweek Middle East Editor and author of *Securing the City* Talking to the Enemy by Scott Atran is an eye-opening and important book that offers readers a startling look deep inside terror groups. Based on the author's unprecedented access to and in-depth interviews with terrorists and jihadis—including Al Qaeda, Hamas, and Taliban extremists, as well as members of other radical Islamic terror organizations—Talking to the Enemy provides fresh insight and unexpected

answers to why there are people in this world willing to kill and die for a cause. A riveting, compelling work in the tradition of *The Looming Tower* and *Terror in the Name of God*, *Talking to the Enemy* is required reading for anyone interested in making the world a safer, more secure place for everyone.

Talking to the Enemy

Spiritual practices, or awakenings, have an impact on brain, mind and personality. These changes are being scientifically predicted and proven. For example, studies show Buddhist priests and Franciscan nuns at the peak of religious feelings show a functional change in the lobes of their brain. Similar processes have been found in people with epilepsy, which Hippocrates called the sacred disease. New research is showing that not only does a person's brain activity change in particular areas while that person is experiencing religious epiphany, but such events can be created for some people, even self-professed atheists, by stimulating various parts of the brain. In this far-reaching and novel set, experts from across the nation and around the world present evolutionary, neuroscientific, and psychological approaches to explaining and exploring religion, including the newest findings and evidence that have spurred the fledgling field of neurotheology. It is not the goal of neurotheology to prove or disprove the existence of God, but to understand the biology of spiritual experiences. Such experiences seem to exist outside time and space - caused by the brain for some reason losing its perception of a boundary between physical body and outside world - and could help explain other intangible events, such as altered states of consciousness, possessions, alien visitations, near-death experiences and out-of-body events. Understanding them - as well as how and why these abilities evolved in the brain - could also help us understand how religion contributes to survival of the human race. Eminent contributors to this set help us answer questions including: How does religion better our brain function? What is the difference between a religious person and a terrorist who kills in the name of religion? Is there one site or function in the brain necessary for religious experience?

Where God and Science Meet [3 volumes]

This breathtaking, reverberating survey of human nature finds Kundera still attempting to work out the meaning of life without losing his acute sense of humour. It is one of those great unclassifiable masterpieces that appear once every twenty years or so. 'It will make you cleverer, maybe even a better lover. Not many novels can do that.' Nicholas Lezard, GQ

Immortality

Drawn from the cutting-edge frontiers of science, *This Explains Everything* will revolutionize your understanding of the world. What is your favorite deep, elegant, or beautiful explanation? This is the question John Brockman, publisher of Edge.org ("The world's smartest website"—The Guardian), posed to the world's most influential minds. Flowing from the horizons of physics, economics, psychology, neuroscience, and more, *This Explains Everything* presents 150 of the most surprising and brilliant theories of the way of our minds, societies, and universe work. Jared Diamond on biological electricity • Nassim Nicholas Taleb on positive stress • Steven Pinker on the deep genetic roots of human conflict • Richard Dawkins on pattern recognition • Nobel Prize-winning physicist Frank Wilczek on simplicity • Lisa Randall on the Higgs mechanism • BRIAN Eno on the limits of intuition • Richard Thaler on the power of commitment • V. S. Ramachandran on the "neural code" of consciousness • Nobel Prize winner ERIC KANDEL on the power of psychotherapy • Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi on "Lord Acton's Dictum" • Lawrence M. Krauss on the unification of electricity and magnetism • plus contributions by Martin J. Rees • Kevin Kelly • Clay Shirky • Daniel C. Dennett • Sherry Turkle • Philip Zimbardo • Lee Smolin • Rebecca Newberger Goldstein • Seth Lloyd • Stewart Brand • George Dyson • Matt Ridley

This Explains Everything

This truly comparative text takes a fundamental, biophysical approach toward animal physiology. Students majoring in zoology, biology, or premedicine will study animals ranging from simple invertebrates and protozoans to complex multicellular invertebrates and vertebrates. Emphasis on evolution shows the progressive changes, modifications, and developments of physiological systems from simple to complex animals. Comparisons show the similarities and differences in how animals function, but stress fundamentally similar adaptations in very different animals.

Comparative Animal Physiology

“Secular-minded readers seeking an alternative to The Purpose-Driven Life have an excellent starting point here.”—Publishers Weekly For readers who are serious about confronting the big issues in life—but are turned off by books which deal with them through religion, spirituality, or psychobabble, this is an honest, intelligent discussion by a philosopher that doesn't hide from the difficulties or make undeliverable promises. It aims to help the reader understand the overlooked issues behind the obvious questions, and shows how philosophy does not so much answer them as help provide us with the resources to answer them for ourselves. “Useful and provocative.”—The Wall Street Journal “Looking for a clear guide to what contemporary philosophy has to say about the meaning of life? Bagginis takes us through all the plausible answers, weaving together Kierkegaard, John Stuart Mill, Monty Python, and Funkadelic in an entertaining but always carefully reasoned discussion.”—Peter Singer, author of How Are We To Live “The question of the meaning of life has long been a byword for pretentious rambling. It takes some nerve to tackle it in a brisk and no-nonsense fashion.”—New Statesman

What's It All About?

Portraits of American Neo-Nazis and Klansmen

The Racist Mind

To one nineteenth-century scholar, their fierce, ridged brows were evidence of a "moral darkness" that set them irrevocably apart from human beings. Some commentators accused them of cannibalism. Yet by the 1970s the Neandertals were being hailed as "the first flower people" and praised for their apparent compassion and religious piety. The story of how scientists could come to such divergent conclusions about a set of bones unearthed in Germany in 1856 unfolds with irresistible detail in this enthralling book. Even as *The Neandertals* assesses the identity, kinship, and character of our possible ancestors, it casts a wry eye on the modern *Homo sapiens* who have embraced or disavowed them and illuminates the peculiar way in which even science is shaped by human needs and biases.

The Neandertals