

The Social Conquest of Earth

By Edward O. Wilson





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New York Times Bestseller

From the most celebrated heir to Darwin comes a groundbreaking book on evolution, the summa work of Edward O. Wilson's legendary career.

Sparking vigorous debate in the sciences, *The Social Conquest of Earth* upends “the famous theory that evolution naturally encourages creatures to put family first” (*Discover*). Refashioning the story of human evolution, Wilson draws on his remarkable knowledge of biology and social behavior to demonstrate that group selection, not kin selection, is the premier driving force of human evolution. In a work that James D. Watson calls “a monumental exploration of the biological origins of the human condition,” Wilson explains how our innate drive to belong to a group is both a “great blessing and a terrible curse” (*Smithsonian*). Demonstrating that the sources of morality, religion, and the creative arts are fundamentally biological in nature, the renowned Harvard University biologist presents us with the clearest explanation ever produced as to the origin of the human condition and why it resulted in our domination of the Earth’s biosphere. 90 illustrations

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Editorial Review

Review

“Wilson’s examples of insect eusociality are dazzling... There are obvious parallels with human practices like war and agriculture, but Wilson is also sensitive to the differences... This book offers a detailed reconstruction of what we know about the evolutionary histories of these two very different conquerors. Wilson’s careful and clear analysis reminds us that scientific accounts of our origins aren’t just more accurate than religious stories; they are also a lot more interesting.” (Paul Bloom - New York Times Book Review)

“A sweeping account of the human rise to domination of the biosphere, rounded out with broad reflections on art, ethics, language and religion.” (Jennifer Schuessler - New York Times)

“Biologist E. O. Wilson’s brilliant new volume, *The Social Conquest of Earth*, could more aptly be entitled ‘Biology’s Conquest of Science’. Drawing on his deep understanding of entomology and his extraordinarily broad knowledge of the natural and social sciences, Wilson makes a strong case for the synthesis of knowledge across disciplines. Understanding the biological origin of what makes us human can help us to build better theories of social and psychological interaction; in turn, understanding how other social species have evolved may help us to better understand the origin of our own. But the main reason that Wilson’s book is successful is that he also brings into biology the best of what social science has to offer.” (James H. Fowler - Nature)

“Wilson’s newest theory...could transform our understanding of human nature?and provide hope for our stewardship of the planet.... [His] new book is not limited to the discussion of evolutionary biology, but ranges provocatively through the humanities.... Its impact on the social sciences could be as great as its importance for biology, advancing human self-understanding in ways typically associated with the great philosophers.” (Howard W. French - The Atlantic)

“A sweeping argument about the biological origins of complex human culture. It is full of both virtuosity and raw, abrupt assertions that are nonetheless well-crafted and captivating... it is fascinating to see such a distinguished scientist optimistic about the future.” (Michael Gazzaniga - Wall Street Journal)

“*The Social Conquest of the Earth* has set off a scientific furor... The controversy is fueled by a larger debate about the evolution of altruism. Can true altruism even exist? Is generosity a sustainable trait? Or are living things inherently selfish, our kindness nothing but a mask? This is science with existential stakes.” (Jonah Lehrer - New Yorker)

“Religion. Sports. War. Biologist E.O. Wilson says our drive to join a group?and to fight for it?is what makes us human.” (Newsweek)

“That Wilson provides nimble, lucid responses to the three core questions, speaks volumes about his intellectual rigor. That he covers all of this heady terrain in less than 300 pages of text speaks volumes about his literary skill.” (Larry Lebowitz - Miami Herald)

“Starred review. With bracing insights into instinct, language, organized religion, the humanities, science, and social intelligence, this is a deeply felt, powerfully written, and resounding inquiry into the human condition.” (Booklist)

“An ambitious and thoroughly engaging work that’s certain to generate controversy within the walls of academia and without... Provocative, eloquent and unflinchingly forthright, Wilson remains true to form, producing a book that’s anything but dull and bound to receive plenty of attention from supporters and critics alike.” (Colin Woodard - Washington Post)

““Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?” Those famous questions, inscribed by Paul Gauguin in his giant Tahitian painting of 1897, introduce *The Social Conquest of Earth*. Their choice proclaims Edward O Wilson’s ambitions for his splendid book, in which he sums up 60 distinguished years of research into the evolution of human beings and social insects.” (Clive Cookson - Financial Times)

“Wilson has done an impressive job of pulling all this evidence together and analyzing it. His interdisciplinary approach, his established scholarship, and his willingness to engage hot-button issues are all much in evidence in *The Social Conquest of Earth*.... His reflections on this subject are varied, original, and thought provoking?as is the rest of his book.” (Carl Coon - The Humanist)

“I just finished *The Social Conquest of Earth*, a fabulous book.” (President Bill Clinton - New York Times)

“Wilson offers a full explanation of his latest thinking on evolution. . . . The book is bound to stir controversy on these and other subjects for years to come.” (Sandra Upson and Anna Kuchment - Scientific American)

“Once again, Ed Wilson has written a book combining the qualities that have brought his previous books Pulitzer Prizes and millions of readers: a big but simple question, powerful explanations, magisterial knowledge of the sciences and humanities, and beautiful writing understandable to a wide public.” (Jared Diamond, Pulitzer-Prize-winning author of *Guns, Germs and Steel*)

“With his probing curiosity, his dazzling research, his elegant prose and his deep commitment to biodiversity, Pulitzer Prize-winning biologist (*The Ants*) and novelist (*The Anthill*) Edward O. Wilson has spent his life searching for the evolutionary paths by which humans developed and passed along the social behaviors that best promote the survival of our species. His eloquent, magisterial and compelling new book offers a kind of summing-up of his magnificent career.... While not everyone will agree with Wilson’s provocative and challenging conclusions, everyone who engages with his ideas will discover sparkling gems of wisdom uncovered by the man who is our Darwin and our Thoreau.” (Henry L. Carrigan, Jr. - BookPage.com)

“A monumental exploration of the biological origins of the Human Condition!” (James D. Watson)

“A huge, deep, thrilling work, presenting a radically new but cautiously hopeful view of human evolution, human nature, and human society. No one but E. O. Wilson could bring together such a brilliant synthesis of biology and the humanities, to shed light on the origins of language, religion, art, and all of human culture.” (Oliver Sacks)

“E. O. Wilson’s passionate curiosity?the hallmark of his remarkable career?has led him to these urgent reflections on the human condition. At the core of *The Social Conquest of Earth* is the unresolved, unresolvable tension in our species between selfishness and altruism. Wilson brilliantly analyzes the force, at once creative and destructive, of our biological inheritance and daringly advances a grand theory of the origins of human culture. This is a wonderful book for anyone interested in the intersection of science and the humanities.” (Stephen Greenblatt, author of *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*)

“Wilson is a brilliant stylist, and his account of the rise of Homo sapiens and our species’ conquest of Earth is informative, thrilling, and utterly captivating.” (Rudy M. Baum - Chemical & Engineering News)

About the Author

Edward O. Wilson is widely recognized as one of the world's preeminent biologists and naturalists. The author of more than twenty books, including *The Creation*, *The Social Conquest of Earth*, *The Meaning of Human Existence*, and *Letters to a Young Scientist*, Wilson is a professor emeritus at Harvard University. The winner of two Pulitzer Prizes, he lives in Lexington, Massachusetts.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Grace McClellan:

Spent a free time for you to be fun activity to accomplish! A lot of people spent their leisure time with their family, or their friends. Usually they undertaking activity like watching television, going to beach, or picnic from the park. They actually doing same task every week. Do you feel it? Do you need to something different to fill your free time/ holiday? Could possibly be reading a book may be option to fill your totally free time/ holiday. The first thing that you will ask may be what kinds of publication that you should read. If you want to consider look for book, may be the publication untitled *The Social Conquest of Earth* can be excellent book to read. May be it can be best activity to you.

Leonard White:

The Social Conquest of Earth can be one of your beginning books that are good idea. Many of us recommend that straight away because this reserve has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in terminology, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nonetheless delivering the information. The author giving his/her effort to get every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing *The Social Conquest of Earth* yet doesn't forget the main point, giving the reader the hottest as well as based confirm resource information that maybe you can be among it. This great information can drawn you into completely new stage of crucial thinking.

Nicol Thomas:

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