

As an example, the physical evidence that artifacts were traded across large distances is fascinating, implying that local groups had interactions with many distant people; such interactions first require approach behaviors. In chapter 5, Spikins argues that along with approach behaviors comes an increase in tolerance, also called “self-domestication.” While largely beneficial, self-domestication also has a cost, in that it causes vulnerabilities such as specific emotional disorders when our needs for affiliation are not met. These unmet needs can lead to attachment to physical artifacts that possess no obvious function, but such attachment serves as a compensatory process (a modern example being teddy bears). These nonfunctional objects started to appear in the archaeological record about 45,000 years ago. In the next chapter, the parallel development of positive relationships with dogs (descended from wild wolves) suggests that dogs have undergone similar changes in attachment behaviors, becoming more tolerant and caring toward humans. For humans, forming bonds to dogs provides another way for us to address our emotional vulnerabilities.

In Part 3, Spikins lays out the argument that humanity’s evolutionary history took one of several possible alternate pathways. She supports this point by comparing the emotional and social differences between chimpanzees and bonobos, as well as between wolves and dogs. In the last chapter, Neanderthals are discussed, and proposed as one of those alternate pathways; however, among Neanderthals, their emotional and social interactions were limited to small, closely related groups and so did not extend to larger communities. The author suggests that the more limited, close-knit community relationships in Neanderthals ultimately proved less successful than the broader social and emotional relationships of our direct ancestors.

The integration of biological evidence from other species, primates, and wolves, along with the neurobiology of our emotions and the integration of the hard evidence from archaeology, makes this book a worthy companion for other books that have explored our evolutionary history. Its emphasis on the benefits and costs of positive emotions such as empathy, compassion, and tolerance stands in helpful contrast to similar books that pay more attention to aggression and testosterone.

Like many books that cover related material (such as Frans de Waal’s *Mama’s Last Hug* and Robert M. Sapolsky’s *Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst*), this volume was written without any mention of the Christian faith or even religion. Individuals looking for threads of how our faith fits into our evolutionary history will need to look elsewhere (such as in Chris Barrigar’s essay book review in the March 2024 issue of this journal).

While I found this volume an enlightening and valuable read, the book raised some issues for my Christian faith. One common motif in Christianity is that we are the crown of creation—a view which is challenged by the evolutionary story described in this book. For instance, human history is a sequence of adaptations and changes that often

appear randomly. As well, our relations with other humanoids, and the discovery that some of our genes come from Neanderthals, suggest that we are a complex branch in the tree of life, as indicated by Darwin. An evolutionary account is also consistent with flaws in our design, such as lower back problems that many of us deal with! Each of these raises a challenge to the motif that humanity is the crown of creation.

This is an excellent up-to-date review of the archaeological evidence of how human evolution developed the connections that underlie our behavior. While unfortunate in its lack of attention to influences of religion, this book makes a valuable addition to our evolutionary history. Particularly important is the integration of the hard evidence from archeological findings with the soft evidence relevant to the emergence of positive emotions, including discussion of emotions in the wider animal world. This volume provides much important material that needs to be considered when integrating faith with science.

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ON THE (DIVINE) ORIGIN OF OUR SPECIES by Darrel R. Falk. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2023. 263 pages. Paperback; \$36.00. ISBN: 9781666757019.

Did the evolution of *Homo sapiens* depend causally on divine activity? This is the daring question (!) which seasoned biologist, former president of BioLogos, and influential Christian scholar Darrel R. Falk explores in his most recent book. Arguing in favor of divine activity, Falk is careful to avoid both crudely interventionist and passively deistic frameworks. Instead, Falk seeks to honor and maintain the integrity and consistency of the created order (the regularity of its laws and processes) as well as a traditional Christian view of God’s providence in which God is personally present and active within the cosmos, intimately related to his creatures and promoting their flourishing.

Falk’s proposal focuses specifically on the unique quality of the social nature of human beings. Grounded biologically and emerging from a complex evolutionary history, which Falk narrates in fascinating detail, this unique relational nature enables human awareness of other minds (i.e., they can recognize, envision, and empathize with the consciousness, thoughts, intentions, and motivations of others) and grants them unparalleled capacities for communication and cooperation toward common goals. It also enables the kind of spiritual awareness that makes possible a relationship with the divine Spirit.

Falk continually draws his scientific narrative into creative dialogue with the Christian story, pointing out deep resonances and specific points of connection along the way. Christian scripture and tradition bear witness to a God whose fundamental nature is Love. This God lovingly and non-coercively draws and encourages his human creatures toward the qualities and dispositions of the divine

Book Reviews

Spirit (e.g., love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control). God has been doing this from the beginning, before early hominins had any conscious awareness of spiritual things. Such qualities and dispositions would have had a beneficial effect on the flourishing of human communities and the survival success of their offspring (at least amongst those individuals and communities responding to the divine initiative; Falk concedes that many would not respond to the divine). In turn, offspring formed in this way would receive encouragement from their communities to seek the divine. It is then in this nuanced sense that human evolution unfolded within the broader context of a divine-human partnership.

It's important to note that Falk's love-response narrative offers theological perspective and meaning particularly to one central feature of human evolution: the emergence of the cooperative (and relational) human mindset. It is not centrally focused on questions related to theodicy or to the evil that pervades human history. Aggression and violence within creation are assumed; what Falk finds interesting is how and why human beings can rise above evil and embrace love and virtue. This said, Falk devotes much of chapter 6 to questions related to theodicy and to human evil and suffering.

At first glance, it might be tempting to charge Falk with identifying a gap in scientific knowledge (i.e., of human consciousness, relationality, agency, and love) and then smuggling God into that gap. But Falk is not seeking to present God as a substitute for scientific explanation; rather, he offers sustained theological reflection on the findings of mainstream science (i.e., paleoanthropology, archaeology, genetics, biology, and psychology/social psychology), thus providing an additional, compatible yet also more comprehensive level of description. As he puts it, "The task of Christian scholars is to build a bridge from what science has discovered so that those findings can be placed within the context of the broader reality revealed through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus" (p. 121).

Chapter 1 puts forth a basic theoretical framework for the interdisciplinary discussion that follows, treating topics such as the nature and limits of science (including a critique of *scientism*), the philosophical coherence and rationality of theism, and the reasonableness of central Christian beliefs. Falk leans on leading biblical, historical, and philosophical scholars to discuss the soundness of "the God hypothesis" (Keith Ward), the resurrection (N.T. Wright) and divine identity of Jesus (Larry Hurtado), and the reliability of the gospels (Richard Baukham).

Chapter 2 focuses on the evolution of the genus *Homo*, from the first known appearance of hominins (fossils date to 6 million years ago) to the appearance (2.8 mya) and then predominance (1.9 mya) of *Homo*. A crucial part of this story is how a duplicated copy of what Falk calls "Gene3" (ARHGAP11a), taking place 5.2 mya, enabled larger brain sizes and increased sensitivity to the minds of others. (Falk notes that all humans and Neanderthals, but not the great apes, possessed this duplicated gene.)

Chapter 3 outlines the evolution of our species *Homo sapiens*, with particular attention given to recent studies identifying specific qualities that enabled *sapiens* to outlive and replace all other *Homo* species, namely friendliness, joint intentionality, and a cooperative mindset and behavior. Theologically, Falk notes that such beings would be increasingly equipped to interact with a divine Being whose nature is Love. He suggests a helpful analogy: just as child development is linked with an increasing awareness of the minds and needs of others, as well as an emerging capacity for spiritual awareness, so our species likely developed in parallel fashion as it evolved and matured. Falk then speculates that an emerging spiritual consciousness within early human communities (specifically of the triune God who is Love, though not necessarily known by name) would likely have had a favorable result, by encouraging (selecting) the aforementioned qualities. Given the phenomenon known as the "Baldwin effect," in which learned behavior and culture (e.g., use of tools, technology, etc.) can have evolutionary effects, Falk writes,

If the cohesiveness of a well-functioning community was tightened because members were responding more sensitively to God's presence urging them towards goodness and love, it seems reasonable that such increased cohesiveness would alter the dynamic of the evolutionary process. (p. 90)

Chapter 4 wrestles with the negative psychological implications of the emerging theory of mind amongst early *Homo sapiens*. While this enabled an empathic and cooperative mindset, it would also bring about an acute self-awareness of mortality and suffering. Contrary to Varki and Brower's suggestion that this awareness gave rise to a propensity for what they call "reality denial" (i.e., spirituality and religion), Falk offers the theological suggestion that "humans were able to thrive as they developed a full theory of mind despite becoming aware of their own mortality, ... [because] they were also becoming cognizant of the existence of the eternal" (p. 120). Neither interpretive option is simply a deduction from "the facts"; each makes inferences in light of prior philosophical presuppositions held on other grounds.

Chapter 5 further explores the cooperative mindset, likening its emergence to what we know about the domestication of animals from experimental research. Falk draws parallels between the various physical, cognitive, and psychological changes that occur in animal domestication, and similar changes that occurred in human evolution. While he admits that the parallels are not perfect, the comparison is nevertheless suggestive: "What is clear is that the *sapiens* genetic makeup has undergone a dramatic set of changes [similar to domestication] that have led to vastly improved communication skills and cooperation," as well as to decreased aggressive and destructive traits and behaviors (p. 152).

In the final two chapters, Falk turns his attention more fully to theological concerns, addressing questions and challenges related to divine providence in chapter 6 (including

questions related to theodicy and to the pervasiveness of human evil and suffering throughout history) and sketching out a biblical-theological narrative of creation to eschaton in chapter 7. Falk's theological reflections in these chapters are compelling and thought provoking. A minor point of criticism is that Falk's comments on the need for an original community of goodness and harmony (see pp. 226–32) are less compelling and seem to be based more on theological assumptions (i.e., a historical creation-fall-redemption paradigm) than the kind of robust evidence supporting the rest of the book's scientific and theological claims. The Old Testament (OT) itself does not draw the inferences and conclusions that later theological thinkers made about "creation and fall." Such theologizing traces back (indirectly, via Augustine and other patristic writers) to the Apostle Paul. In turn, Paul reads the Genesis creation texts, not simply directly, but rather through the interpretive concerns, questions, and assumptions of Second Temple Writings (such as 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra, which, unlike the OT, *do* draw creative theological conclusions from the Adam and Eve story in Genesis)—writings which Paul engages selectively. This complicates attempts to align modern scientific accounts of human origins with a historical reading of the Genesis creation narratives.

Overall, Falk's proposal is fascinating and illuminating, both scientifically and theologically. His thesis is convincing and important: it is fair and balanced, engages reliable scholarship, demonstrates nuanced interdisciplinary integration, and paints a compelling and even beautiful picture of the origins and emergence of the wondrous beings God created in his image. The book is well researched and deeply learned, valuable to students in both science and theology, yet accessible to a wider, thoughtful readership. I commend it enthusiastically and hope it stimulates much reflection and discussion.

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PSYCHOLOGY

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HOW DO WE KNOW OURSELVES? Curiosities and Marvels of the Human Mind by David G. Myers. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2022. 272 pages. Hardcover; \$15.59. ISBN: 9780374601959.

David G. Myers is the author of numerous textbooks in the field of social psychology; his bibliography also includes several books which combine psychological perspectives and religious belief. Further, Myers has authored several books intended for a more general audience. *How Do We Know Ourselves?* would fall into this latter category.

Divided into three parts: Who Am I?, Who Are We?, and What in the World?, Myers's book is a compendium of forty short essay reflections on the human condition from a social psychology perspective. In Part I, chapters one through twelve introduce the reader to a vast array of psychological

insight pertaining to the self. These reflections build a repertoire of concepts which draw upon research in the discipline. Myers's introduction and use of data and findings are adeptly incorporated into the narrative, and the many examples used in this section and throughout the book illustrate the points raised succinctly and with significant effect. It is in this first section that the book's subtitle is most clearly applicable, *Curiosities and Marvels of the Human Mind*. Myers takes us on a journey of self-discovery as he engages us to consider such concepts as implicit egotism (chap. 1), blindsight and implicit memory (chap. 5), intuition (chap. 7), hindsight bias (chap. 9), and self-esteem (chap. 12), to name but a few.

In Part II, chapters thirteen through twenty-seven, the focus shifts from the psychology of the "self" to that of our relationships. The opening chapter of Part II, "The Science of Humility" (chap. 13), is cleverly book-ended with its closing chapter essay, "Narcissism: The Grandiose Self" (chap. 27). Between humility and narcissism, we are treated to reflections on psychological research concerning birth order (chap. 14), how the mind processes traumatic events (chap. 16), group polarization (chap. 18), the social facilitation phenomenon (chap. 24), and the psychology of friendships (chaps. 25 and 26). Again, to name just a few.

For the last section Part III, chapters twenty-eight through forty, Myers broadens the focus of his social psychological scope to consider a wider social context. Starting with the perennial question of "How Nature and Nurture Form Us" (chap. 28), he leads us through discussion on the fear of dying (chap. 32), immigration and intergroup contact (chap. 33), a chapter titled "How Politics Changes Politicians" (chap. 35), confirmation bias (chap. 36), and "phubbing," which was a term I had never heard before, but have certainly experienced; it means that our personal interactions are distracted by a constant need to check our smartphone devices (chap. 37). Myers concludes in the last chapter, "Do Replication Failures Discredit Psychological Science?" (chap. 40), with a defense of scientific inquiry and a word of caution to an overindulged skepticism which can lead to out-and-out cynicism.

At the point of purchasing this book to review, I allowed myself a cursory glance at some of the reviews submitted by other customers. I noticed, to my initial surprise, several comments alluding negatively to Myers's occasional inclusion and social psychological analysis of current issues in the political arena. Upon reading the book, I certainly could identify those essays which, for some, may have been a cause of irritation, but this observation highlights a critical point and speaks to the relevance of this book. The science of psychology has much to contribute to our understanding of contemporary issues in the modern world. For application to current events and in his use of contemporary real-life examples, Myers has an embarrassment of riches to draw on. The collective experience of the COVID epidemic, social media use, and indeed, the US political landscape are all grist for the mill; these are necessary social issues that warrant social scientific scrutiny. *How Do We Know*