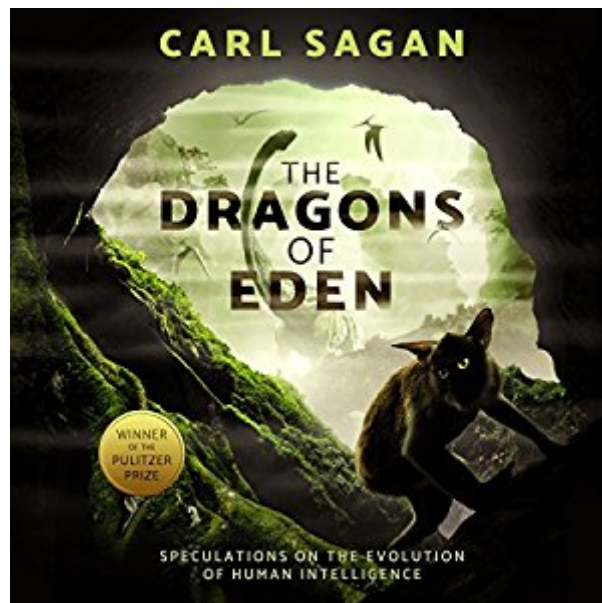




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The Dragons Of Eden: Speculations On The Evolution Of Human Intelligence



Synopsis

The Pulitzer Prize Winner Dr. Carl Sagan takes us on a great adventure, offering his vivid and startling insight into the brain of man and beast, the origin of human intelligence, the function of our most haunting legends - and their amazing links to recent discoveries.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you've ever sat back under the stars and wondered where we come from, this is the book for you. It is absolutely captivating. You may want a thesaurus and a break from time to time, but this book offers magnificent theory and insight into our psychology, our past, and our future. It was written in 1978 and very much applies today.

I have read that other books such as "The Demon Haunted World" were written when Dr. Sagan was very ill, and therefore might not have been his best works. Well this was probably written around the zenith of his career, and most definitely reflects that. Every page is pure genius. If you are interested in science, the cosmos, or a fan of any other related fields, he touches on many different topics in this book. It is an excellent companion to the Cosmos series (The old or the new with Dr. Tyson) and provides especially a fantastic extrapolation of the original link between genes, brains, and books in the original Cosmos series. (Computers being the next link in the chain). I could write more...but just go read the book!

I'm studying the evolution of the mind, for a grad course project, and found a lot of interesting

background info in this text. As was the habit in the '70s, the writer does assume his audience is well informed and so he doesn't always indicate where his evidence or research came from, which is frustrating if you want to look deeper. This text combines anthro, bio, and history in such a way as to be quite persuasive. However, if you're just looking for a synthesis it's very easy to skip the in-depth terms for the skeleton and evolution without missing the bigger picture. I gave it 5 stars because it IS an academic text, but the ease of reading is great for the lay person.

This is the most interesting way of looking at the evolution of humans. It fills the void created by the more traditional ways of looking back at our prehistory. The book sheds light on many of the unique characteristics of "human nature" as well as the probable origin of some of our common myths. Looking at evolution and marking the stages not exclusively by how we differ from our primate brothers but marking our growth by the development of specific areas of the brain takes my breath away. As exciting to read as a mystery thriller.

Having read Cosmos 5 stars and Contact 5 stars(see my reviews) by the famous astronomer/scientist Carl Sagan I had high hopes for The Dragons of Eden. I was not disappointed. Another great book. Carl tells us human brain evolution, brain anatomy and physiology are not his specialty field but he is going to tackle the subject and try to write so the layman can understand it. As usual he succeeds putting a complex subject down on paper for the less educated to be able to understand. He was a master at this. In college I had a Paleontology course and did a paper on the evolution of the horse. I enjoyed the course and it may have helped me enjoy this book more. Carl starts with a Cosmic year calendar of the universe and we see man has only been on earth since Dec 31. We see good arguments by Carl on the agreement of the Origin of the Species by Charles Darwin and useful genetic information and survival traits passed to future generations as individuals with good traits survive and reproduce while others with less desirable traits die and their genetic information is not passed on. DNA and RNA are explained as well as simple organisms to more complex organisms. Much time is spent on the higher primates, hand structure, and tool using. Also the different parts of the brain are shown and how information is transferred to different parts of the brain. Cases of people with Epilepsy, brain injuries and brain operations are shown and how memory, thought and intelligence are affected. Brain size is shown in different organisms and degrees of intelligence is shown. Fascinating stuff. Eventually Carl gets down to ET life and contacting them and the use of intelligent machines. You can tell the amount of digital computers was very small when this book was written and some of what was presented is now outdated but

Carl did say computer power and the amount of computers would increase drastically. Interesting Viking Mars spacecraft computing power is mentioned and we can see how outdated that computing power now is. Many interesting pictures from around the world as well as simple verses from great authors. A gigantic bibliography is there for you to get more information. You don't have to have a PHD in Paleontology or an MD on brain anatomy to enjoy this book. The master Carl Sagan has again wrote this book so people can understand a difficult subject. Sadly in 1996 Carl Sagan passed away. The world misses a great astronomer, scientist, writer and a great man. We never met and did not know one another. As an amateur astronomer of over 40 years I considered him my friend and had the utmost respect for him. The Dragons of Eden another great book by Carl Sagan.

5 stars

This is an extremely important to read piece of scientific literature. Sagan is poetic in his descriptions, and provides significant, well constructed, arguments towards the evolution of human intelligence and beyond. Even in modern computing the questions and concepts raised by Sagan are relevant with regards to his axiom of the progression of human evolution paired with the new foundation of computer science and AI.

The quality of the library edition is great and recommended for people who travel.

A timeless treatment of the evolution of human intelligence. If Sagan were still alive and wrote the book today he would almost certainly incorporate newer information and reach his conclusions via slightly different routes, but his overarching message would remain the same: "the mind... [is] a consequence of its anatomy and physiology and nothing more." Whether or not the reader reaches the same conclusions as Sagan is almost immaterial. Reading "Dragons of Eden" gives a powerful insight into the processes of the scientific method and into Sagan's own mind. Heady stuff!

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