

Sociobiology: The New Synthesis, Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition

By Edward O. Wilson



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Harvard University Press is proud to announce the re-release of the complete original version of *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*--now available in paperback for the first time. When this classic work was first published in 1975, it created a new discipline and started a tumultuous round in the age-old nature versus nurture debate. Although voted by officers and fellows of the international Animal Behavior Society the most important book on animal behavior of all time, *Sociobiology* is probably more widely known as the object of bitter attacks by social scientists and other scholars who opposed its claim that human social behavior, indeed human nature, has a biological foundation. The controversy surrounding the publication of the book reverberates to the present day.

In the introduction to this Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition, Edward O. Wilson shows how research in human genetics and neuroscience has strengthened the case for a biological understanding of human nature. Human sociobiology, now often called evolutionary psychology, has in the last quarter of a century emerged as its own field of study, drawing on theory and data from both biology and the social sciences.

For its still fresh and beautifully illustrated descriptions of animal societies, and its importance as a crucial step forward in the understanding of human beings, this anniversary edition of *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* will be welcomed by a new generation of students and scholars in all branches of learning.



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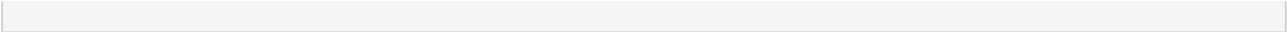
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- Sales Rank: #144027 in Books
- Published on: 2000-03-04
- Format: Deluxe Edition
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.94" h x 1.54" w x 9.72" l, 3.52 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 720 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

E.O. Wilson defines sociobiology as "the systematic study of the biological basis of all social behavior," the central theoretical problem of which is the question of how behaviors that seemingly contradict the principles of natural selection, such as altruism, can develop. *Sociobiology: A New Synthesis*, Wilson's first attempt to outline the new field of study, was first published in 1975 and called for a fairly revolutionary update to the so-called Modern Synthesis of evolutionary biology. Sociobiology as a new field of study demanded the active inclusion of sociology, the social sciences, and the humanities in evolutionary theory. Often criticized for its apparent message of "biological destiny," *Sociobiology* set the stage for such controversial works as Richard Dawkins's *The Selfish Gene* and Wilson's own *Consilience*.

Sociobiology defines such concepts as *society*, *individual*, *population*, *communication*, and *regulation*. It attempts to explain, biologically, why groups of animals behave the way they do when finding food or shelter, confronting enemies, or getting along with one another. Wilson seeks to explain how group selection, altruism, hierarchies, and sexual selection work in populations of animals, and to identify evolutionary trends and sociobiological characteristics of all animal groups, up to and including man. The insect sections of the books are particularly interesting, given Wilson's status as the world's most famous entomologist.

It is fair to say that as an ecological strategy eusociality has been overwhelmingly successful. It is useful to think of an insect colony as a diffuse organism, weighing anywhere from less than a gram to as much as a kilogram and possessing from about a hundred to a million or more tiny mouths.

It's when Wilson starts talking about human beings that the furor starts. Feminists have been among the strongest critics of the work, arguing that humans are not slaves to a biological destiny, forever locked in "primitive" behavior patterns without the ability to reason past our biochemical nature. Like *The Origin of Species*, *Sociobiology* has forced many biologists and social scientists to reassess their most cherished notions of how life works. --*Therese Littleton*

Review

It's been 25 years since E. O. Wilson wrote *Sociobiology*, naming a new science and starting it off with a bang--and a firestorm of protest. "Nurture!" and "Nature!" came the cries from every corner of the academic world, as the book became a *causus belli* for sociologists, feminists, human geneticists, and psychologists. (Mary Ellen Curtin *amazon.com*)

This book enthralls and enchants...If you have this book...you can begin getting your mind ready for the illuminations about human society. (Lewis Thomas *Harper's*)

Rarely has the world been provided with such a splendid stepping stone for an exciting future of a new science. (John Tyler Bonner *Scientific American*)

Its contents do indeed provide a new synthesis, of wide perspective and great authority...Wilson's plain uncluttered prose is a treat to read, his logic is rigorous, his arguments are lucid. (V. C. Wynne-Edwards *Nature*)

This book will stand as a landmark in the comparative study of social behavior. (*Quarterly Review of Biology*)

Sociobiology is an excellent book, full of extraordinary insights, and replete with the beauty and poetry of the animal kingdom. (*Times Literary Supplement*)

It is impossible to leave Wilson's book without having one's sense of life permanently and dramatically widened. (Fred Hapgood *The Atlantic*)

Sociobiology explores the possibility that animal social behaviour--group living, kinship, attraction and mating, reciprocity and sharing, cooperation, conflict, and cheating, to name just the most familiar--has a genetic basis and can be shaped by natural selection: genes can be shaped by natural selection: genes can code for social behaviours in the same way that they code for body parts such as hands, hooves, eyes, antlers and ears. But, in an audacious final chapter, Wilson extended the analysis to humans: biology had grabbed our kinship, cooperation, mate preferences and the rest. Some branded Wilson and his ideas fascist, others as racist or guilty of genetic determinism. They are none of these things and, two Pulitzer Prizes later, Wilson has been vindicated...Wilson's *Sociobiology* laid the foundations for a lifetime of meditations. (Mark Pagel *Times Higher Education Supplement*)

Sociobiology, a new concept, is one with extraordinary potential value for understanding and explaining human behavior. (*Practical Psychology*)

A towering theoretical achievement of exceptional elegance...Like most great books, *Sociobiology* is unpedantic, lucid, and eminently accessible. (Pierre L. van den Berghe *Contemporary Sociology*)

From the Back Cover

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Elizabeth Wiggins:

Information is provisions for people to get better life, information these days can get by anyone from everywhere. The information can be a expertise or any news even an issue. What people must be consider if those information which is inside former life are challenging to be find than now could be taking seriously which one would work to believe or which one the particular resource are convinced. If you have the unstable resource then you buy it as your main information it will have huge disadvantage for you. All of those possibilities will not happen within you if you take *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis, Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition* as your daily resource information.

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