

Preface

Why do we like what we like? Why do we believe in the supernatural? Where do our mathematical abilities come from? These questions form parts of the overarching question of what constitutes human nature. Any attempt to understand human nature has to take knowledge from different fields. Ultimately, as Kant famously pointed out, they converge in: What is Man?

Humans have always reflected not only on nature, but on their very own nature — such questions therefore date back to the roots of scientific research, and in their classical form can already be found in Greek philosophy, 2300 years ago. Since then, different ages have found different answers. However, there has been one theory — Darwinian theory — which has succeeded in providing satisfactory explanations for diverse, formerly disparate fields, thereby uniting them within one framework.

So even though the questions remain the same, the new and sometimes surprising answers found by evolutionary theory are very different from those of Plato or Aristotle. In this sense, Darwinian theory provides a grounding for a broad range of researchers and sheds new light on fields of enquiry as old as aesthetics and religion.

Interestingly, there are few attempts to go beyond the use of Darwinian theory as a methodological tool. Fewer still try to unite isolated breakthroughs achieved by this paradigm into one coherent picture and theory. The aim of this book is to encourage just such an enterprise.

We would like to thank our mentor Eckart Voland for inspiring and teaching us to think in a genuinely interdisciplinary way. Furthermore, we would like say thank you to all authors who added their own piece to the mosaic we had in mind with this volume. Last, but not least, we appreciate the helpfulness and encouragement of Angela Lahee.

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