

Cambridge University Press

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Social & Behavioral Sciences
Psychology

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Stewart-Williams, Steve. **The ape that understood the universe: how the mind and culture evolve.** Cambridge, 2018. 368p bibl index ISBN 9781108425049, \$27.95; ISBN 9781108577526 ebook, contact publisher for price.

This eloquent and comprehensive book is a go-to guide to navigating comfortably and insightfully through any treacherous nature versus nurture debates about the origins of the human mind and behavior. Stewart-Williams (Univ. of Nottingham, UK) employs the design and logic of solid scientific inquiries about the evolutionary and cultural underpinnings of human psychology, carefully considering both biological and environmental hypotheses without the off-putting academic jargon. Each chapter (and even each page!) is filled with funny, controversial, and evolutionarily relevant anecdotes pertaining to sex differences in behavior and genetic contributions to intelligence, altruism, childbearing, parental investment, the fear/disgust systems, weird habits, cultural gadgets, etc. After catching the reader's interest and curiosity, these stories are systematically tested against the most up-to-date empirical findings from the literature, and followed by some theoretically grounded interpretations. This must-read book is a thought-provoking and entertaining introduction or refresher on the Darwinian forces that shaped human bodies, minds, behaviors, and societies, including adaptations and evolutionary by-products, gene/meme coevolution, and cultural group selection. It is also a timely heuristic tool to avoid the naturalistic fallacy and win arguments with some biophobic social scientists and their misleading "blank slate" view of the mind.

--J.B. Leca, *University of Lethbridge*

Summing Up: Highly recommended. All readers.