

The Evolution Of Everything Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Evolution Of Everything compares creationist to evolutionist thinking, showing how the process of evolution we know from biology underlies and permeates the entire world, including society, morality, religion, culture, economics, money, innovation and even the internet.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Whether you're religious or not, chances are, you have at one point struggled with making sense of how the human species as we know it today came into being. Religious people usually point to God, Jehova or Allah, in the case of ancient Greece even to several gods, like Zeus, Hades and Poseidon. Agnostics and atheists always refer to Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution.

Matt Ridley stopped asking "Who's right?" and instead accepted both approaches as different doctrines, which shape how we see all kinds of aspects of the world. Not just religion and science, but things like culture, society, morality, business, markets, money and even the internet.

These 3 lessons from The Evolution Of Everything will show you how:

1. Evolutionist and creationist thinking are two opposing views, and creationist thinking dominates the Western world.
2. Culture, economics and technology all progress through evolution.
3. Money changed from evolutionist to creationist subject, and the same might happen with the internet.

Ready to get your gears spinning about one of the most controversial topics in history? Let's see the arguments!

Lesson 1: In the battle of evolutionist vs. creationist, creationism dominates most of the Western world.

Before we get started, we'd do well to define what evolutionist and creationist even means.

Evolution in its original sense meant “unfolding” and therefore was used to describe how things would gradually change when there was no specific plan. You'd just let things take their course and see what happens. Creation, on the other hand, always suggests an active element of planning and designing – something is calculated and then executed.

Throughout history, creationist thinking has come to shape much of our worldview, especially in the Western world. Ancient Egyptians devoted their lives to gods like Ra, Seth and Anubis, so did the Greeks. Later the Catholic and Protestant church would reduce their religion to just one God, but their destiny still wasn't theirs to decide. Friedrich Nietzsche said societies depended on strong leaders to flourish and Karl Marx suggested that only a planned economy could thrive.

All of these approaches argue that we need someone at the top to organize us, in order for progress to happen. Matt Ridley not only argues that this is false, but that the opposing view of evolutionism goes back to long before Darwin ever investigated animals on the Galápagos Islands.

In fact, over 400 years BC, two Greek philosophers, Leucippus and Democritus (inspiration to the famous Epicurus) already theorized that the world was made up of atoms – small, indivisible parts – which changed and transformed at random, and were therefore not part of any grand scheme.

Lesson 2: In culture, economics and technology, progress is based on evolution.

What started in ancient Greece as a theory to make sense of the world, turned into a never-ending series of questions, such as “If God designed both humans and the earth, who designed God?”

To add oil to the fire, Darwin came up with his theory of evolution, which says that multi-cellular organisms have developed from single-cell organisms, to increase their chances of survival, and that all sub-sequent changes are also based on a “survival of the fittest” process of natural selection. By the late 1970s, Richard Dawkins even suggested that genes themselves are at the core of this process, simply using animal and human bodies as vessels to ensure their survival (which is backed by the fact that many of our genes serve no useful purpose – they seem to be just tagging along).

Regarding the history of biology, evolutionist thinking has been widely accepted as the norm in the Western world, but is still a very controversial topic around the globe.

What's much more interesting, and much more hidden, is how **an evolutionary process takes place in things like culture, economics and technology too.**

Languages are made from small building blocks (words), all using the same elements (the alphabet), which are then combined (sentences & phrases), and only the most used ones survive. Markets progress on their own by testing products and services people offer and eliminating (by not rewarding them with money) the ones that don't serve human needs. Technology is an iterative process too, based on trial and error, prototypes and experiments, only the best of which eventually make it into everyone's hands (like the smartphone in yours right now).

Lesson 3: The concept of money changed from evolutionist to creationist, and the same could happen to the internet.

With that, an important question to ask is this: **Where in our world do we conform to a creationist way of thinking, when really an evolutionary process is what drives progress?**

Take money, for example. Dating back to as early as ancient Egypt, where gold bars were traded in exchange for goods, and when coins started being minted in India, China and Greece independent of one another, there was no central system to regulate money, like we have today with federal banks – but it still worked!

In Sweden in the 19th century, several banks printed their own currencies, competing with each other for the use of their banknotes, without putting any one bank out of business and Canada did not have a central bank until 1935, which helped them survive the Great Depression unscathed.

So somewhere along the lines, the evolutionist thinking was taken out of money, which leaves us stuck with the slow, fragile and crisis-prone system we have today (2007, anyone?). We depend on a few individuals to create all of the world's money and distribute it, and it clearly has slowed down progress.

Thanks to the internet, there's hope though. With loyalty programs for airplane miles, digital payments like PayPal or mobile credit and virtual currencies like Bitcoin, it seems we're slowly back on track. Let's hope the internet stays evolutionist, then. Some governments, like China's, are already trying to convert it to a creationist medium, in which an elite few decide what you can and can't access – and that's surely no sign of progress.

The Evolution Of Everything Review

Many interesting take-aways to be learned from *The Evolution Of Everything*, the most important one being: keep your eyes open for what's creationist, and what's evolutionist. More often than not, we're blind to the obvious, evolutionary process going on underneath, and it hurts our ability to make progress. This'll help.

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- What kind of systems are inevitably evolutionary
- How neither morality, nor religion are God-given, but have evolved with society
- Why buying your son a car toy isn't forming him into a stereotypical culture type
- What makes Montessori schools successful
- Why Apple didn't need Steve Jobs to be innovative

Who would I recommend The Evolution Of Everything summary to?

The 23 year old devout Christian, who loves to talk and argument about the origins of his religion, the 32 year old agnostic, who doesn't like church, but believes in the competence of her government, and anyone who had fun in biology class.