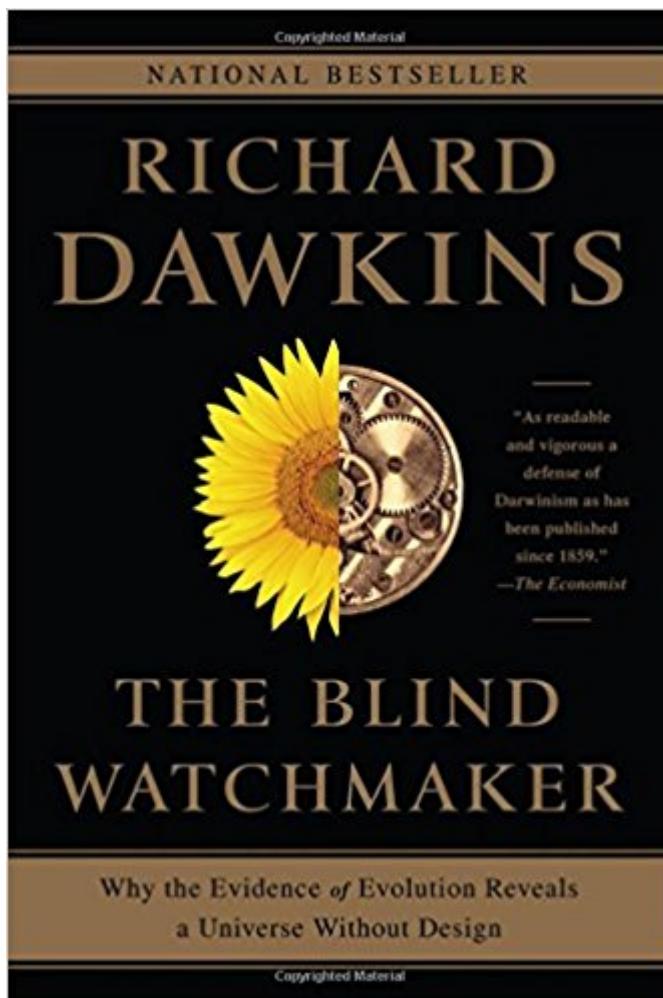


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# The Blind Watchmaker: Why The Evidence Of Evolution Reveals A Universe Without Design



## Synopsis

Richard Dawkins' classic remains the definitive argument for our modern understanding of evolution. The Blind Watchmaker is the seminal text for understanding evolution today. In the eighteenth century, theologian William Paley developed a famous metaphor for creationism: that of the skilled watchmaker. In The Blind Watchmaker, Richard Dawkins crafts an elegant riposte to show that the complex process of Darwinian natural selection is unconscious and automatic. If natural selection can be said to play the role of a watchmaker in nature, it is a blind one—working without foresight or purpose. In an eloquent, uniquely persuasive account of the theory of natural selection, Dawkins illustrates how simple organisms slowly change over time to create a world of enormous complexity, diversity, and beauty. 22 illustrations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Richard Dawkins is not a shy man. Edward Larson's research shows that most scientists today are not formally religious, but Dawkins is an in-your-face atheist in the witty British style: I want to persuade the reader, not just that the Darwinian world-view happens to be true, but that it is the only known theory that could, in principle, solve the mystery of our existence. The title of this 1986 work, Dawkins's second book, refers to the Rev. William Paley's 1802 work, *Natural Theology*, which argued that just as finding a watch would lead you to conclude that a watchmaker must exist, the complexity of living organisms proves that a Creator exists. Not so, says Dawkins: "All appearances to the contrary, the only watchmaker in nature is the blind forces of physics, albeit deployed in a very special way... it is the blind watchmaker." Dawkins is a hard-core scientist: he doesn't just tell

you what is so, he shows you how to find out for yourself. For this book, he wrote *Biomorph*, one of the first artificial life programs. You can check Dawkins's results on your own Mac or PC. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Ã¢ "As readable and vigorous a defense of Darwinism as has been published since 1859.Ã¢ - The EconomistÃ¢ "Dawkins has done more than anyone else now writing to make evolutionary biology comprehensible and acceptable to a general audience.Ã¢ - John Maynard SmithÃ¢ "A model of how to explain complicated ideas without dumbing them down or boring oneÃ¢ "s readers.Ã¢ - Steven Pinker, *The Guardian*

Very good read, Dawkins very patiently guides the reader to a decent understanding of how evolution via natural selection works. The Bio-Morph Land example does a good job of explaining complex design through accumulation of small, gradual changes. I also enjoyed the chapter on alternative theories to natural selection, and the slow and methodical dismantling of them. All in all, a must read for anyone interested in a better understanding of evolution via natural selection.

Well written book by one of the leading authorities on the subject of evolution. Not trying to preach just the logic and science of the wonderful world we live in

I picked up this book based on a recommendation from a website on Genetic Algorithms. The book convincingly presents multiple evidence-based arguments to support the theory of evolution (against creationism and intelligent design theories). Lot of interesting information here around how animals evolved to adapt to their environment in different ways in different parts of the world. Evolution has always made sense to me (but its probably because I learned about it at school and heard about Creationism as an adult) and I have never really questioned it, but this book made me appreciate the fact that random paths with a good acceptance function can often converge to good solutions.

This was a good book. I'm not entirely sure if I got the main point Dawkins was trying to make in making it clear that evolution shows God did not design creation, but that may be because I went long stretches without reading it and then started reading it again, so I may have forgotten about important material and points in between. Overall definitely a good read.

The cover of Richard Dawkins book states "Why the evidence of evolution reveals a universe without design." I think the task of trying to write a book that can unequivocally demonstrate that life arose without any designer input is an exceedingly difficult task. Let's face it, we know very little about the origins of life in the early days of several billion years ago. Our bulk of information dates from the Cambrian period forward. With that said, I think Dawkins did a remarkable job at this task. However, if I were someone who believed in a designer or that there was some intelligence behind life, I don't think I would necessarily come away convinced otherwise after reading this book. Keep in mind, also, that this book was written some time ago and today, in 2011, we have acquired considerable knowledge on the subject of evolution that just wasn't available then especially in the field of genetics. The reference to a blind watchmaker in the title refers to the fact that natural selection can be said to play the role of a watchmaker in nature; it is called the blind watchmaker. The reference to a watchmaker refers back to a treatise written by William Paley back in 1802. Paley reasoned that a watch which has complex inner workings must therefore have had a designer. In other words, you can tell by looking at something that it had a designer. I did notice, as some others have commented, that Dawkins has in this book resorted to great verbiage in order to prove various points - not that there is anything wrong with this approach. He does seem though to want to make sure the last nail is firmly hammered into the coffin, so to speak. A few highlights: In chapter three, he tries to prove the point of cumulative selection. He does this using computer programs he wrote to produce computer generated creatures showing how changes can over time produce more complex forms. I'm not sure how strong an argument this is considering how much more complex the development of life is than a computer program. In chapter five, the discussion turns to DNA, RNA, the histone H4 gene, and the RNA-replicase experiment among other things. In chapter seven, we learn about "co-adapted genotypes" and "arms races." In chapter nine, Dawkins devotes the entire chapter to discussing the theory of punctuated equilibrium stating flatly that the theory "lies firmly within the neo-Darwinian synthesis." In other words, it is a type of gradualist theory not in opposition to Darwin's ideas. In chapter ten, he introduces "the one true tree of life" delving into various belief systems of taxonomists and cladists. In chapter eleven, various "doomed rivals" to evolution are dissected. These include naturalists, selectionists, mutationism, Lamarckian evolution, something called molecular drive, and creationism (both instantaneous and guided evolution theories). Dawkins asserts his final conclusion to the matter stating that adaptive complexity is a property of living things that is explicable only by Darwinian selection where chance is filtered cumulatively by selection, step by step. To those interested in adding to their knowledge of the subject, this is one more book to add to your reading list.

"The Blind Watchmaker: Why the evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design", by Richard Dawkins, W.W. Norton & Company, NY. ISBN-13 978-0-3793-31570-7, PB 454 Pgs. in 8 1/4" x 5 1/2" format that includes 4 Pg. Biblio. Plus 6Pg. Index & Key. Inveiglements limited to a dozen B/W illustrations, several being elemental hypothetical computerized line graphics, others those phantasmagorical B/W illustrations similar to bleached-out cave drawings with chromosomal & genetically overtones and patronizations etc. by unnamed illustrators of great potential. Author Dawkins, FPS, is an esteemed ethnologist, & evolutionary biologist, prolific science writer, editor and authored a dozen books including the "Selfish Gene", Climbing Mount Improbable", The God Delusion", "River out of Eden", and "The Ancestor's Tale". Writing is erudite prose easily understood by in a style provoking challenging thinking by the reader: - the reader/writer interaction promotes fuller understanding of his informational-educational mission in this book not too-oft seen in science books, being significantly crisp when evolution is being discussed, a topic too often abstracted as theory compared to most theses on geology, history, and mathematics or astronomy. "The Blind Watchmaker" has been in print for nearly 20 years and remains one of the finest expositions on Darwinism to date. He provides 11 chapters, and teases the reader with some simplistic computer modeling giving us a visual insight into the realities of structural alterations that help us visualize how the long-standing standardized evolutionary branching tree of life diagrams can be more realistically explained. Throughout the book emphasis is placed on belief in the necessary concept that evolution is via the accumulation of "small changes" and the profound significance of speciation. Emphasis is given to explaining the vast majority of evolutionary changes, at the molecular genetic level, are neutral with respect to natural selection. The unscientific political policy by T.D. Lysenko, Director of Institute of Genetics in the Soviet Union, taught with venomous Mendelian intolerance, promoting Lamarckism - setting back genetic research for several decades in Russia. Candidly, I believe that anyone professing to be knowledgeable in evolution must have read "The Blind Watchmaker". To be complete, one might digest "The Selfish Genius" to smooth out wrinkles that may have been encountered.

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