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Read not to contradict and  
confute; nor to believe  
and take for granted; nor  
to find talk and discourse;  
but to weigh and consider.

— Francis Bacon

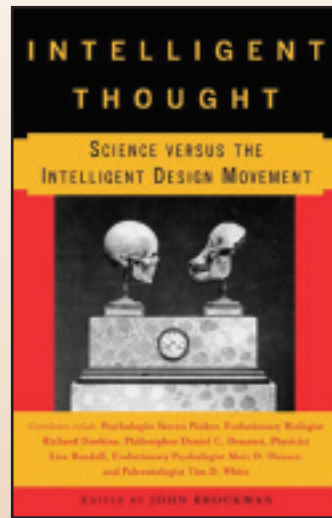
# Interview with the Author: **JOHN BROCKMAN: THE GENIUS'S GENIUS**

“Cultural impresario” is how John Brockman’s page on the Edge (<http://www.edge.org>) describes him,

and if you’re not already acquainted with his body (or bodies) of work, you might be tempted to find the moniker pretentious. What is one to make of a man whose career has encompassed the avant-garde art world, science, books, software, and the Internet; a man who coined the term “intermedia” and has consulted for clients ranging from Columbia Pictures to the Pentagon, from General Electric to the White House; a man who throws a party (as he did earlier this year) to which the likes of Brian Eno, Ian McEwan, and Richard Dawkins show up; a man who looks both bemused and supremely confident beneath his panama hat?

philosophical, artistic, and literary issues, as well as to work for the intellectual and social achievement of society”—

seemingly lofty goals which Brockman seems nevertheless to bear lightly. His chief career, if he had to pick just one, is literary agent, and he has represented such luminaries as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Jared Diamond, and Sir Martin Rees, as well as three Nobel prize winners and virtually every other famous popular scientist one could name. Indeed, he is perhaps the person most responsible for bringing science to a popular audience.



If Brockman’s success as a literary agent was initially attributable to the circles in which he circulated oh-so-deftly, the Edge has only extended his reach. The Edge is not so much the “Internet as highbrow cocktail party,” as

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*“Intellectuals are not just people who know things,  
but people who shape the thoughts of their generation.”*

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Well, first off, one might wonder why Brockman is wearing only one hat.

Back in 1988, he co-founded the non-profit Edge Foundation, Inc. to “promote inquiry into and discussion of intellectual,

it is the “Internet as Center for Advanced Studies.” Here, Brockman and the leading thinkers in a raft of scientific and social disciplines exchange ideas and build theories...and we get to watch.

*continued on p. 2*

## Intelligent Thought: Science versus the Intelligent Design Movement

by John Brockman **Vintage**

"Intellectuals are not just people who know things, but people who shape the thoughts of their generation. An intellectual is a synthesizer, a publicist, a communicator," Brockman says. "What we are witnessing is a passing of the torch from one group of thinkers, the traditional literary intellectuals, to a new group, the intellectuals of the emerging Third Culture."

Brockman has both a new book slated for spring release and another just out in paperback. The first, *Intelligent Thought: Science versus the Intelligent Design Movement*, is a collection of essays discussing the merits—or lack thereof—of "intelligent design" at a time when courts, statehouses, and family dinner tables are given over to the controversy. He has gathered an impressive list of thinkers (fresh from the Edge's roster) including the aforementioned Dennett and Dawkins, as well as Frank J. Sulloway, Stuart A. Kauffman, and Steven Pinker to discuss evolution, "much more than a foundational concept of a scientist's work," but "a thing of beauty, grandeur, and significance."

His other book, *What We Believe but Cannot Prove: Today's Leading Thinkers on Science in the Age of Certainty*, grew out of his annual custom of asking a provocative question of 100 leading thinkers, in this case soliciting micro-essays about the personal theories his respondents cannot demonstrate with certainty. The book walks an interesting line—since most of the writers are scientists, there is some trepidation and reluctance about offering beliefs that, by definition, cannot be proven. Still, Brockman's colleagues come through with flying colors, addressing everything from economic inequality to free will.

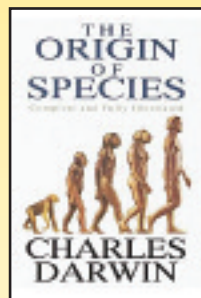
Brockman's work has been to midwife the best work of others and to get it out to the rest of us. "There is a new set of metaphors to describe ourselves, our minds, the universe, and all of the things we know in it, and it is the intellectuals with these new ideas and images—those scientists doing things and writing their own books—who drive our times," he has written. Brockman may not be a scientist himself, but he is that rare creature—a synthesizer, a salon host, and a genius's genius.

## Evolution: From Darwin to Dawkins

### The Origin of Species

by Charles Darwin **Gramercy**

What can one say about a book that has so struck and irrevocably changed our ideas about who we are and where we came from? Quite simply, this book is one of the most important and influential ever written, one of the few titles for which the description "groundbreaking" is not hyperbole. If you've never read it, you may be surprised at Darwin's writing skill. *The Origin of Species* is not only great science, it is solidly readable. Natural selection, variation, the struggle for existence, survival of the fittest: it's all here.



### Darwin for Beginners

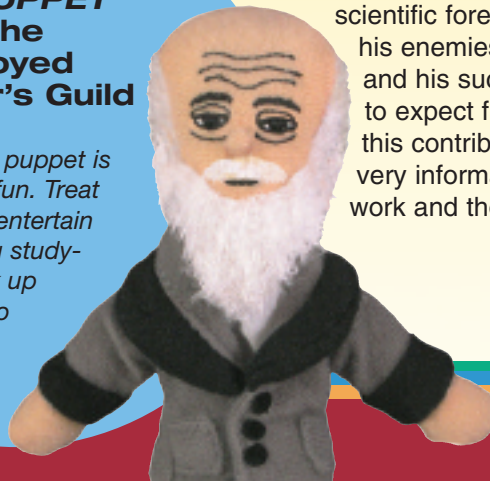
by Jonathan Miller **Pantheon**

Perhaps you're already familiar with the cartoon format and irreverent wit that constitute the "For Beginners" series. In this iteration, Miller introduces us to that hermit revolutionary, Charles Darwin. Not only do we get a rich portrait of the timid scientist who changed our ideas about what it might mean to be "human," we also meet a fascinating cast of characters: Darwin's scientific forefathers, his contemporaries, his enemies (at least, in the abstract), and his successors. As we have come to expect from the Beginners Series, this contribution is a concise, witty, and very informative introduction to Darwin's work and thought.



### DARWIN FINGER PUPPET from The Unemployed Philosopher's Guild

*This academic finger puppet is both affordable and fun. Treat yourself to one and entertain yourself during long study-sessions, and pick up a spare to give to your favorite Darwinian!*

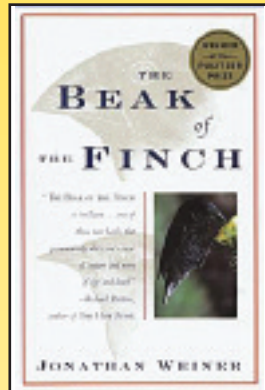


# Evolution: From Darwin to Dawkins

## Beak of the Finch

by Jonathan Weiner **Vintage**

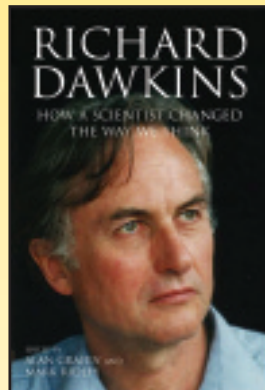
Weiner here recounts the work of Rosemary and Peter Grant, who have, for the past twenty years, studied the microevolutionary modifications that occur in finch beaks as they adapt to environmental changes. Their research site, Daphne Major, an island in the Galapagos, has a finch population that varies from four hundred to over a thousand; yet, the Grants recognize individual birds. Their study of natural selection represents a major scientific contribution, and Weiner's book animates evolution for the armchair scientist.



## Richard Dawkins: How a Scientist Changed the Way We Think

by Alan Grafen  
**Oxford University Press**

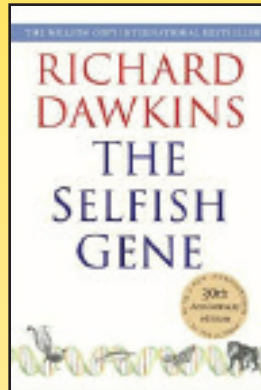
This collection of original essays by some of the world's leading thinkers recounts and celebrates Dawkins' contribution to modern thought on the science of evolution. *The Selfish Gene*, published thirty years ago, was a breakthrough book that garnered great acclaim and was followed by five more bestselling works. This volume boasts an impressive roster of scientists, philosophers, and linguists (Daniel Dennett, Steven Pinker, Matt Ridley, and James Watson among them), as well as religious thinkers (such as Simon Blackburn and the Bishop of Oxford) who explore Dawkins' religious ideas. The 20 distinguished contributors present not hagiography, but clear-eyed appraisal of Dawkins' career and enormous influence.



## The Selfish Gene

by Richard Dawkins **Oxford University Press**

This book earned Dawkins his credentials as a revolutionary biologist and placed him in the company of such greats as Darwin, Watson, and Crick. Dawkins' idea was essentially (albeit in a grossly simplified summary) to force a paradigm shift in thinking about evolution. Instead of thinking about organisms using genes to reproduce themselves, he turned it around and suggested that genes build and maintain us in order to make more genes. By employing examples from every field of biology, he succeeded in paving the way for a serious re-evaluation of evolution. The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition features a new introduction by the author, who endeavors to place his work in the context of contemporary trends.



## The Ancestor's Tale: A Pilgrimage to the Dawn of Evolution

by Richard Dawkins  
**Mariner Books**

Dawkins traces the origins of life in this widely praised book in the same way that we trace our personal family trees from parents to grandparents, and so on. Demonstrating his passion for scientific precision and his unerring nose for a good story, he takes us from our immediate human ancestors back to what he calls "concestors." Humans share these concestors with primates, as well as other mammals, vertebrates, and the microbial beings that represent the genesis of life some 4 billion years ago. This "epic pilgrimage," as he terms it, flows backward, but his thought is as progressive as it can be.

