urvival of the fittest or -who's really in control?

I flew long haul, recently. In case the films were boring, I raided WH Smith at Heathrow for some reading matter. In a rush of blood to the head, prompted by an unceasing working-class desire for self improvement, I bought 'The Selfish Gene by Richard Dawkins.'

This might sound boring, it may sound like flying Anoraks, it might smack of ink-stained shirt pockets and spectacles held together with elastoplast. Yes- we could be in seriously-sad-git country.

Do I care? No. Because this book contains gems which should be written in flame on the walls at Cupertino as if by the hand of God himself. Of course, not that Dawkins actually believes in God and I have to admit to a certain skepticism regarding the Almighty. Dawkins doesn't believe in God but does believe in the principle of the Selfish Gene.

I'm not going to go into detail here but the general gist is this. We are made up of cells whose function is to form different parts of the body performing different functions, all acting in concert for mutual survival. These cells are controlled by Genes, whose sole function is to survive. Unwittingly mankind and all living things animal, vegetable, amoeba even at sub-amoebic, Blind Date Fan level, act as carriers for our Genes. They kill us off when we have reproduced, having served the purpose.

So the upshot of this is that despite our brains, we are under the ultimate control of our Genes-things so small that we would miss a large colony of them living on the stuff we pick from between out toes. Things acting dispassionately, with neither altruism nor mercy, with no purpose other than to ensure the survival of their host until that host has passed on its genetic material to another generation.

Of course this begs the big question. As in THE BIG QUESTION.

Why?

-more specifically-

What For?

No God, and existence is determined by unthinking particles of matter...

Why bother?

Well, before that, back to Dawkins. Tucked away in the back of the book, as a sort of background information on consciousness, in chapter Four, is this Gem. He is talking about how brains developed and how consciousness formed. Then, he says this:

"...At the time of writing, the market leader in user friendliness is widely agreed to be the Apple Macintosh. Its success is due to a wired in suite of programs... I can testify that using Macintosh... is aqualitatively different experience from any earlier type of machine...To a remarkable extent, the virtual machine allows you to use intuition instead of looking up the manual."

This is a bit like I said in my last diatribe on the subject. I want to use the tools, I want to use my brain, not have to learn a new language. So I'll quote from the most telling sentence and I hope that Professor Dawkins does not mind:

"The Mind with its serial stream of consciousness, is a virtual machine, a user friendly, way of experiencing the brain, just as the Macintosh User Interface, is a user-friendly was of experiencing the physical computer inside its grey box".

So, here we have arguably one of the worlds great thinkers and innovators in his field, developing a totally plausible theoretical model of how we evolved, which is totally contrary to accepted thinking. Now this is thinking differently. Prof. Dawkins would resist being placed in the Einsteinian pantheon, but he's certainly not running with turkeys.

Here is my message to Jonquil, Tarquin and Ffiona, in European marketing: If you want an Anglicised or European living example of someone who can think differently for your posters, you've got it in Black & White on pages 279-280 of The Selfish Gene published by Oxford University Press ISBN 0-19-286092-5

Just in case you didn't get this, I'll shout. Ahem...If you want an Anglicised or European, LIVING example of someone who can think differently for your posters, you've got it in Black & White on pages 279-280 of The Selfish Gene by Richard Dawkins published by Oxford University Press ISBN 0-19-286092-5

Ahem... not only that, he likes Macintosh computers...

It also got me thinking about the similarities between the organic world and business. How much

of the success or failure of a Company is down to its genes. This is all very New Age-but in any large corporation, you have a whole bunch of people doing their own things under a sort of basic survival principle. They are acting to a large extent like our genes do in making us what we are. Over time, certain types are weeded out, some types mutate but the core structure stays very largely the same. They all survive because the supporting body survives.

The logical conclusion, is that the only difference between Joes Tool & Pipe Works (Battersea) Ltd. and Big Blue or Macintosh is the same 1 or 2% which separates Humanity from the Primates. That percentage, in corporate terms, may be down to the fact that the guy in Accounts at California Fuel & Power didn,t switch off the electricity to Apple and left it a day. That extra few late night hours resulted in a few extra lines of code that led to them to the Machine...

So who is really in control? If we take Dawkins theory it isn't the Brain- all that does is ensure that the robot carrying the genes, is functioning in the way best suited to ensure their survival. So it's not the CEO nor the MD   it's not even (like the old joke about the body) the a***hole in Accounts. It's all the bits, it's all these cells running round trying to survive but without the aeons of genetic programming to know what the hell to do when survival is threatened.

I'd be interested in whether anyone would like to extend this analogy beyond the basic theory.

But back to the main question, the BIG ONE

-Why? What for? Why bother?

Don't ask me, I'm no theologian, I haven't a clue...

PS A propos my last missive to you all, I reproduce below the actual text from yet another AOL freebie which dropped through my door the other week:

Quote:

WINDOWS95 will have Autostart (or go to RUN and typeD:\SETUP95

or

For Windows 3.1, click on the FILE menu of your WINDOWS PROGRAM MANAGER and select RUN.

Type D:\WIN31\SETUP, press ENTER and Click on INSTALL

or

For Apple Mac double click on the install AOL Icon on the desktop.

Were I carrying a case, I'd rest it.

Graham
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