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River Out of Eden Quotes

River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life by Richard Dawkins
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"The total amount of suffering per year in the natural world is beyond all decent contemplation. During the minute that it takes me to compose this sentence, thousands of animals are being eaten alive, many others are running for their lives, whimpering with fear, others are slowly being devoured from within by rasping parasites, thousands of all kinds are dying of starvation, thirst, and disease. It must be so. If there ever is a time of plenty, this very fact will automatically lead to an increase in the population until the natural state of starvation and misery is restored. In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference."
― Richard Dawkins, River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life

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tags: biology, design, disease, evolution, fear, indifference, natural-selection, purpose, science, starvation, suffering

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"DNA neither cares nor knows. DNA just is. And we dance to its music."
― Richard Dawkins, River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life

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tags: science

65 likes

"Show me a cultural relativist at 30,000 feet and I'll show you a hypocrite ... If you are flying to an international congress of anthropologists or literary critics, the reason you will probably get there - the reason you don't plummet into a ploughed field - is that a lot of Western scientifically trained engineers have got their sum right."
― Richard Dawkins, River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life

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tags: cultural-relativism

20 likes

"In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference."
― Richard Dawkins, River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life

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tags: rationality, universe

14 likes

"In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference."
― Richard Dawkins, River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life

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3 likes

"There"
― Richard Dawkins, River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life

Like

3 likes

"In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice."
― Richard Dawkins, River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life

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2 likes

"Nature is not cruel, only pitilessly indifferent. This is one of the hardest lessons for humans to learn. We cannot admit that things might be neither good nor evil, neither cruel nor kind, but simply callous—indifferent to all suffering, lacking all purpose."
― Richard Dawkins, River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life

Like

tags: cruelty, indifference, nature, suffering

2 likes

"The mere fact that it is possible to frame a question does not make it legitimate or sensible to do so. There are many things about which you can ask, "What is its tempera- ture?" or "What color is it?" but you may not ask the tempera- ture question or the color question of, say, jealousy or prayer. Similarly, you are right to ask the "Why" question of a bicy- cle's mudguards or the Kariba Dam, but at the very least you have no right to assume that the "Why" question deserves an answer when posed about a boulder, a misfortune, Mt. Everest or the universe. Questions can be simply inappropriate, how- ever heartfelt their framing."
― Richard Dawkins, River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life

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"Humans have a rather endearing tendency to assume that welfare means group welfare, that "good" means the good of society, the future well-being of the species or even of the ecosystem. God's Utility Function, as derived from a contemplation of the nuts and bolts of natural selection, turns out to be sadly at odds with such Utopian visions. To be sure, there are occasions when genes may maximize their selfish welfare at their level, by programming unselfish cooperation, or even self-sacrifice, by the organism at its level. But group welfare is always a fortuitous consequence, not a primary drive. This is the meaning of "the selfish gene."
― Richard Dawkins, River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life

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"If Nature were kind, She would at least make the minor concession of anesthetizing caterpillars before they were eaten alive from within. But Nature is neither kind nor unkind. She is neither against suffering nor for it. Nature is not interested in suffering one way or the other unless it affects the survival of DNA. It is easy to imagine a gene that, say, tranquilizes gazelles when they are about to suffer a killing bite. Would such a gene be favored by natural selection? Not unless the act of tranquilizing a gazelle improved that gene's chances of being propagated into future generations. It is hard to see why this should be so, and we may therefore guess that gazelles suffer horrible pain and fear when they are pursued to the death– as many of them eventually are."
― Richard Dawkins, River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life

Like

tags: cruelty, death, indifference, kindness, nature, suffering

1 likes

"Show me a cultural relativist at thirty thousand feet and I'll show you a hypocrite. Airplanes built according to scientific principles work. They stay aloft, and they get you to a chosen destination. Airplanes built to tribal or mythological specifications, such as the dummy planes of the cargo cults in jungle clearings or the beeswaxed wings of Icarus, don't."
― Richard Dawkins, River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life

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