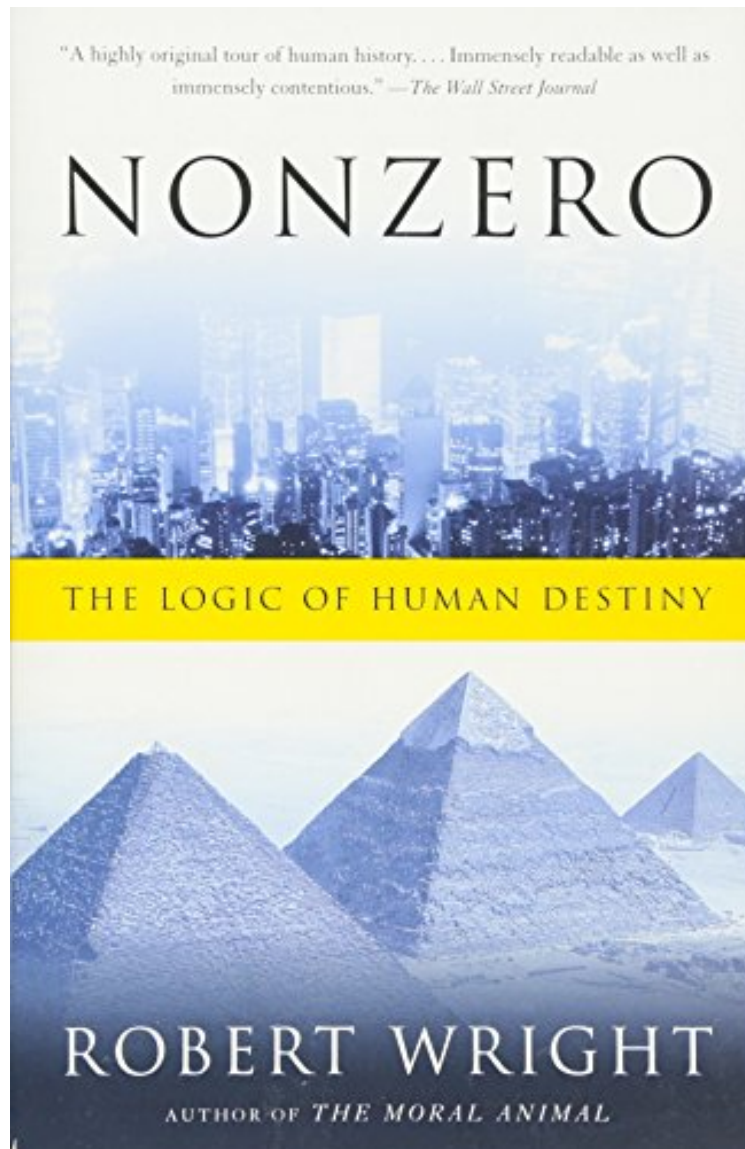


[Ebook free] Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny

Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny

Robert Wright

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Robert Wright : Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By George Stoya If you are a progressive this text should confirm your approach and tighten your logic 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating, readable look at how human societies go where they are and where they might be going. By CCPA fascinating broad look at whether (yes) and why social/cultural evolution has an overall trend and what that trend is. Very well documented, but

written in an accessible readable style. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Compelling By MO_TAG Really a great book that is very interesting. It's one of the few things that gives me hope for humanity.

In his bestselling *The Moral Animal*, Robert Wright applied the principles of evolutionary biology to the study of the human mind. Now Wright attempts something even more ambitious: explaining the direction of evolution and human history and discerning where history will lead us next. In *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny*, Wright asserts that, ever since the primordial ooze, life has followed a basic pattern. Organisms and human societies alike have grown more complex by mastering the challenges of internal cooperation. Wright's narrative ranges from fossilized bacteria to vampire bats, from stone-age villages to the World Trade Organization, uncovering such surprises as the benefits of barbarian hordes and the useful stability of feudalism. Here is history endowed with moral significance a way of looking at our biological and cultural evolution that suggests, refreshingly, that human morality has improved over time, and that our instinct to discover meaning may itself serve a higher purpose. Insightful, witty, profound, *Nonzero* offers breathtaking implications for what we believe and how we adapt to technology's ongoing transformation of the world.

Nonzero, from New Republic writer Robert Wright, is a difficult and important book--well worth reading--addressing the controversial question of purpose in evolution. Using language suggesting that natural selection is a designer's tool, Wright inevitably draws the conclusion that evolution is goal-oriented (or at least moves toward inevitable ends independently of environmental or contingent variables). The underlying reason that non-zero-sum games wind up being played well is the same in biological evolution as in cultural evolution. Whether you are a bunch of genes or a bunch of memes, if you're all in the same boat you'll tend to perish unless you are conducive to productive coordination.... Genetic evolution thus tends to create smoothly integrated organisms, and cultural evolution tends to create smoothly integrated groups of organisms. Admittedly, it's as hard to think clearly about natural selection as it is to think about God, but that makes it just as important to acknowledge our biases and try to exclude them from our conclusions. It is this that makes *Nonzero* potentially unsatisfying to the scientifically literate. Time after time we've seen thinkers try to find in biological evolution a "drive toward complexity" that might explain all sorts of other phenomena from economics to spirituality. Some authors, like Teilhard de Chardin, have much to offer the careful reader who takes pains to read metaphorically. Others--legions of cranks--provide nothing but opaque diatribes culminating in often-bizarre assertions proven to nobody but the author. Wright is much closer to de Chardin along this axis; his anthropological scholarship is particularly noteworthy, and his grasp of world history is excellent. Unfortunately, he has the advocate's willingness to blind himself to disagreeable facts and to muddle over concepts whose clarity would be poisonous to his positions: try to pin him down on what he means by complexity, for example. Still, his thesis that human cultures are historically striving for cooperative, nonzero-sum situations is heartening and compelling; even though it's not supported by biology, it's not knocked down, either. If the reader can work around the undefined assumptions, Wright's charm and obvious interest in planetary survival make *Nonzero* a worthy read. If the first chapter's title--"The Ladder of Cultural Evolution"--makes you cringe, the last one--"You Call This a God?"--will make you smile. --Rob Lightner From Publishers Weekly Evolution meets game theory in this upbeat follow-up to Wright's much-praised *The Moral Animal*. Arguing against intellectual heavyweights such as Isaiah Berlin, Karl Popper and Franz Boas, Wright contends optimistically that history progresses in a predictable direction and points toward a certain end: a world of increasing human cooperation where greed and hatred have outlived their usefulness. This thesis is elaborated by way of something Wright calls "non-zero-sumness," which in game theory means a kind of win-win situation. The non-zero-sum dynamic, Wright says, is the driving force that has shaped history from the very beginnings of life, giving rise to increasing social complexity, technological innovation and, eventually, the Internet. From Polynesian chiefdoms and North America's Shoshone culture to the depths of the Mongol Empire, Wright plunders world history for evidence to show that the so-called Information Age is simply part of a long-term trend. Globalization, he points out, has been around since Assyrian traders opened for business in the second millennium B.C. Even the newfangled phenomenon of "narrowcasting" was anticipated, he claims, when the costs of print publishing dropped in the 15th century and spawned a flurry of niche-oriented publications. Occasionally, Wright's use of modish terminology can seem glib: feudal societies benefited from a "fractal" structure of nested polities, world culture has always been "fault-tolerant" and today's societies are like a "giant multicultural brain." Despite the game-theory jargon, however, this book sends an important message that, as human beings make moral progress, history, in its broadest outlines, is getting better all the time. (Feb.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Wright (*The Moral Animal*) has written an informative and insightful book that examines the sociocultural evolution of our species toward ever-greater complexity, advancing technology, and scientific information. In the footsteps of cultural evolutionists Lewis H. Morgan and Leslie A. White and indebted to the vision of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Wright stresses the general progress in cultural evolution from nomadic bands to the emerging global society. He stresses the dynamic non-zero-sum basic pattern throughout human history, observing that "the directionality of culture, of history, is an expression of our species, of human nature." Special attention is given to the

influences of war, agriculture, technology (iron implements and the printing press), and the convergence of information. Wright gives a quintessentially planetary perspective that does not consider the awesome influences of future outer-space exploration and migration on the destiny of our species. Despite its lugubrious style and the lack of illustrations, this scholarly analysis of human sociocultural development is suitable for large academic collections.-H. James Birx, Canisius Coll., Buffalo, NY Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.