

## Book Recommendations

*\*Ordered Alphabetically\**

Last Updated: September 1st, 2025

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### **Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People**

Author: Mahzarin R. Banaji & Anthony G. Greenwald

Pages: 272

#### Summary:

In *Blindspot*, leading psychologists Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald explore the hidden biases we all carry from a lifetime of exposure to cultural attitudes about age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, social class, sexuality, disability status, and nationality. Using their experience with the Implicit Association Test, a method that gives us a glimpse of our unconscious biases at work, Banaji and Greenwald question the extent to which our perceptions of social groups shape our judgements about people's character, abilities, and potential. Explaining the science clearly and plainly, Banaji and Greenwald guide us through the workings of the brain, how it uses common stereotypes, and how to "outsmart the machine" that relies on them. Powerful, challenging, and revealing, *Blindspot* is an invitation to understand our own minds and, in the process, be fairer to those around us.

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### **Brave The Wild River (The Untold Story of Two Women Who Mapped the Botany of The Grand Canyon)**

Author: Melissa L. Sevigny

Pages: 304

#### Summary:

In the summer of 1938, botanists Elzada Clover and Lois Jotter set off down the Colorado River, accompanied by an ambitious expedition leader, a zoologist, and two amateur boatmen. With churning waters and treacherous boulders, the Colorado was famed as the most dangerous river in the world. But for Clover and Jotter, it held a tantalizing appeal: no one had surveyed the Grand Canyon's plants, and they were determined to be first. Through vibrant letters and diaries of these two women, science journalist Melissa L. Sevigny traces their daring forty-three-day journey, during which they risked their lives to make an unprecedented botanical survey of a defining landscape in the American West.

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### **Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds & Shape Our Futures**

Author: Merlin Sheldrake

Pages: 222

Summary:

When we think of fungi, we likely think of mushrooms. But mushrooms are only fruiting bodies, analogous to apples on a tree. Most fungi live out of sight, yet make up a massively diverse kingdom of organisms that supports and sustains nearly all living systems. Fungi provide a key to understanding the planet on which we live, and the ways we think, feel, and behave. In *Entangled Life*, the brilliant young biologist Merlin Sheldrake shows us the world from a fungal point of view, providing an exhilarating change of perspective. Sheldrake's vivid exploration takes us from yeast to psychedelics, to the fungi that range for miles underground and are the largest organisms on the planet, to those that link plants together in complex networks known as the "Wood Wide Web," to those that infiltrate and manipulate insect bodies with devastating precision. Fungi throw our concepts of individuality and even intelligence into question. They are metabolic masters, earth makers, and key players in most of life's processes. They can change our minds, heal our bodies, and even help us remediate environmental disasters. By examining fungi on their own terms, Sheldrake reveals how these extraordinary organisms—and our relationships with them—are changing our understanding of how life works.

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### **Gene Machine: The Race to Decipher The Secrets of the Ribosome**

Author: Ramakrishnan

Pages: 288

Summary:

Everyone has heard of DNA. But by itself, DNA is just an inert blueprint. It is the ribosome—an enormous molecular machine made up of a million atoms—that makes DNA come to life. *Gene Machine* is an insider account of the race to discover the ribosome's structure and so its workings, a fundamental discovery to both advance our knowledge of life-threatening diseases. But this is also a frank and human story of Ramakrishnan's unlikely journey, from his first fumbling lab experiments to his fierce competition with some of the world's best scientists, an uncommon insider's account of the pursuit of high-stakes science.

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### **I Contain Multitudes: The Microbes Within Us and a Grander View of Life**

Author: Ed Yong

Pages: 368

Summary:

Joining the ranks of popular science classics like *The Botany of Desire* and *The Selfish Gene*, a groundbreaking, wondrously informative, and vastly entertaining examination of the most significant revolution in biology since Darwin—a "microbe's-eye view" of the world that reveals a marvelous, radically reconceived picture of life on earth. Every animal, whether human,

squid, or wasp, is home to millions of bacteria and other microbes. Ed Yong, whose humor is as evident as his erudition, prompts us to look at ourselves and our animal companions in a new light—less as individuals and more as the interconnected, interdependent multitudes we assuredly are. The microbes in our bodies are part of our immune systems and protect us from disease. In the deep oceans, mysterious creatures without mouths or guts depend on microbes for all their energy. Bacteria provide squid with invisibility cloaks, help beetles to bring down forests, and allow worms to cause diseases that afflict millions of people. Many people think of microbes as germs to be eradicated, but those that live with us—the microbiome—build our bodies, protect our health, shape our identities, and grant us incredible abilities. In this astonishing book, Ed Yong takes us on a grand tour through our microbial partners, and introduces us to the scientists on the front lines of discovery. It will change both our view of nature and our sense of where we belong in it.

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## **She Has Her Mother's Laugh: The Powers, Perversions, and Potential of Heredity**

Author: Carl Zimmer

Pages: 672

### Summary:

Celebrated New York Times columnist and science writer Carl Zimmer presents a profoundly original perspective on what we pass along from generation to generation. Charles Darwin played a crucial part in turning heredity into a scientific question, and yet he failed spectacularly to answer it. The birth of genetics in the early 1900s seemed to do precisely that. Gradually, people translated their old notions about heredity into a language of genes. As the technology for studying genes became cheaper, millions of people ordered genetic tests to link themselves to missing parents, to distant ancestors, to ethnic identities... But, Zimmer writes, "Each of us carries an amalgam of fragments of DNA, stitched together from some of our many ancestors. Each piece has its own ancestry, traveling a different path back through human history. A particular fragment may sometimes be cause for worry, but most of our DNA influences who we are—our appearance, our height, our penchants—in inconceivably subtle ways." Heredity isn't just about genes that pass from parent to child. Heredity continues within our own bodies, as a single cell gives rise to trillions of cells that make up our bodies. We say we inherit genes from our ancestors—using a word that once referred to kingdoms and estates—but we inherit other things that matter as much or more to our lives, from microbes to technologies we use to make life more comfortable. We need a new definition of what heredity is and, through Carl Zimmer's lucid exposition and storytelling, this resounding tour de force delivers it. Weaving historical and current scientific research, his own experience with his two daughters, and the kind of original reporting expected of one of the world's best science journalists, Zimmer ultimately unpacks urgent bioethical quandaries arising from new biomedical technologies, but also long-standing presumptions about who we really are and what we can pass on to future generations.

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## **The Next Great Migration: The Beauty and Terror of Life on the Move**

Author: Sonia Shah

Pages: 400

### Summary:

Dislocated people are on the move. Wild species, too, are escaping warming seas and desiccated lands, and news media present this scrambling of the planet's migration patterns as unprecedented, tapping into fears of the spread of disease and conflict and provoking waves of anxiety across the Western world. On both sides of the Atlantic, experts issue alarmed predictions of millions of invading aliens, and anti-immigration leaders have slammed closed borders that were historically porous. But the science and history of migration in animals, plants, and humans tell a different story. Far from being a disruptive behavior to be quelled at any cost, migration is an ancient and lifesaving response to environmental change. Unhampered by barbed wire, migration allowed our ancestors to people the planet, catapulting us into the highest reaches of the Himalayan mountains and the most remote islands of the Pacific, creating and disseminating the biological, cultural, and social diversity that ecosystems and societies depend upon. In other words, migration is not the crisis—it is the solution. Conclusively tracking the history of misinformation from the eighteenth century through today's anti-immigration policies, *The Next Great Migration* makes the case for a future in which migration is not a source of fear, but of hope.

## My Future Reading List

*\*Ordered Alphabetically\**

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### **Eve: How the Female Body Drove 200 Million Years of Human Evolution**

Author: Cat Bohannon

Pages: 624

#### Summary:

How did the female body drive 200 million years of human evolution? • Why do women live longer than men? • Why are women more likely to get Alzheimer's? • Why do girls score better at every academic subject than boys until puberty, when suddenly their scores plummet? • Is sexism useful for evolution? • And why, seriously why, do women have to sweat through our sheets every night when we hit menopause? These questions are producing some truly exciting science – and in *Eve*, with boundless curiosity and sharp wit, Cat Bohannon covers the past 200 million years to explain the specific science behind the development of the female sex: “We need a kind of user's manual for the female mammal. A no-nonsense, hard-hitting, seriously researched (but readable) account of what we are. How female bodies evolved, how they work, what it really means to biologically be a woman. Something that would rewrite the story of womanhood. This book is that story. We have to put the female body in the picture. If we don't, it's not just feminism that's compromised. Modern medicine, neurobiology, paleoanthropology, even evolutionary biology all take a hit when we ignore the fact that half of us have breasts. So it's time we talk about breasts. Breasts, and blood, and fat, and vaginas, and wombs—all of it. How they came to be and how we live with them now, no matter how weird or hilarious the truth is.” *Eve* is not only a sweeping revision of human history, it's an urgent and necessary corrective for a world that has focused primarily on the male body for far too long. Picking up where *Sapiens* left off, *Eve* will completely change what you think you know about evolution and why *Homo sapiens* has become such a successful and dominant species.

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### **Forest Euphoria: The Abounding Queerness of Nature**

Author: Patricia Ononiwu Kaishian

Pages: 240

#### Summary:

Growing up, Patricia Ononiwu Kaishian felt most at home in the swamps and culverts near her house in the Hudson Valley. A child who frequently felt out of place, too much of one thing or not enough of another, she found acceptance in these settings, among other amphibious beings. In snakes, snails, and, above all, fungi, she saw her own developing identities as a queer, neurodivergent person reflected back at her—and in them, too, she found a personal path to a life of science. In *Forest Euphoria*, Kaishian shows us this making of a scientist and introduces readers to the queerness of all the life around us. Fungal species, we

learn, commonly encompass more than two biological sexes—and some as many as twenty-three thousand. Some intersex slugs mutually fire calcium carbonate “love darts” at each other during courtship. Glass eels are sexually undetermined until their last year of life, a mystery that scientists once dubbed “the eel question.” Nature, Kaishian shows us, is filled with the unusual, the overlooked, and the marginalized—and they have lessons for us all. Wide-ranging, richly observant, and full of surprises, *Forest Euphoria* will open your eyes and change how you look at the world.

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## **Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men**

Author: Caroline Criado-Perez

Pages: 272

### **Summary:**

Data is fundamental to the modern world. From economic development to health care to education and public policy, we rely on numbers to allocate resources and make crucial decisions. But because so much data fails to take into account gender, because it treats men as the default and women as atypical, bias and discrimination are baked into our systems. And women pay tremendous costs for this insidious bias: in time, in money, and often with their lives. Celebrated feminist advocate Caroline Criado Perez investigates this shocking root cause of gender inequality in *Invisible Women*. Examining the home, the workplace, the public square, the doctor’s office, and more, Criado Perez unearths a dangerous pattern in data and its consequences on women’s lives. Product designers use a “one-size-fits-all” approach to everything from pianos to cell phones to voice recognition software, when in fact this approach is designed to fit men. Cities prioritize men’s needs when designing public transportation, roads, and even snow removal, neglecting to consider women’s safety or unique responsibilities and travel patterns. And in medical research, women have largely been excluded from studies and textbooks, leaving them chronically misunderstood, mistreated, and misdiagnosed. Built on hundreds of studies in the United States, in the United Kingdom, and around the world, and written with energy, wit, and sparkling intelligence, this is a groundbreaking, highly readable exposé that will change the way you look at the world.

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## **The Reef: A Passionate History: The Great Barrier Reef from Captain Cook to Climate Change**

Author: Iain McCalman

Pages: 352

### **Summary:**

Stretching 1,400 miles along the Australian coast and visible from space, the Great Barrier Reef is home to three thousand individual reefs, more than nine hundred islands, and thousands of marine species, and has alternately been viewed as a deadly maze, an economic

bounty, a scientific frontier, and a precarious World Heritage site. Now the historian and explorer Iain McCalman takes us on a new adventure into the reef to reveal how our shifting perceptions of the natural world have shaped this extraordinary seascape. Showcasing the lives of twenty individuals spanning more than two centuries, *The Reef* highlights our profound desire to conquer, understand, embrace, and ultimately save the world's most complex ocean ecosystem. Opening with the story of Captain James Cook, who sailed unknowingly into the southwest entrance of this vast network of coral outcroppings, McCalman shows how Cook spent months navigating this treacherous underwater labyrinth, struggling to keep his crew alive and his ship afloat, sparring with deceptive shoals and wary native islanders. Through a series of dramatic tales from intrepid explorers, unwitting castaways, inquisitive naturalists, enchanted artists, and impassioned environmentalists who have collectively shaped our ideas about the Great Barrier Reef, McCalman demonstrates how this grand natural wonder of the world was built as much by human imagination as by the industrious, beautiful creatures of the sea. A romantic, historically significant book and a deeply personal journey into the heart of a marine environment in peril, *The Reef* powerfully captures the delicate relationship between humanity and the natural world.

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## **When Science Meets Power**

Author: Geoff Mulgan

Pages: 261

### Summary:

Science and politics have collaborated throughout human history, and science is repeatedly invoked today in political debates, from pandemic management to climate change. But the relationship between the two is muddled and muddied. Leading policy analyst Geoff Mulgan here calls attention to the growing frictions caused by the expanding authority of science, which sometimes helps politics but often challenges it. He dissects the complex history of states' use of science for conquest, glory and economic growth and shows the challenges of governing risk – from nuclear weapons to genetic modification, artificial intelligence to synthetic biology. He shows why the governance of science has become one of the biggest challenges of the twenty-first century, ever more prominent in daily politics and policy. Whereas science is ordered around what we know and what is, politics engages what we feel and what matters. How can we reconcile the two, so that crucial decisions are both well informed and legitimate? The book proposes new ways to organize democracy and government, both within nations and at a global scale, to better shape science and technology so that we can reap more of the benefits and fewer of the harms.