



## Book Review

*The Animal Within Us: Lessons From Our Animal Ancestors* by  
Jay D. Glass. Corona del Mar, CA: Donington Press. 1998.

Reviewed by Wendy C. Hamblet

Drawing upon his broad expertise across the diverse disciplines of neurobiology, psychology and business, Jay D. Glass purports, in his book *The Animal Within Us*, to develop what he terms a “transfer equation” by which he will resolve the time-honored paradox known in philosophy as the mind-body problem, a thorny portal opened by Plato and permanently wedged ajar by Descartes. In the language of science, Glass promises to bridge the gap between the human brain—as a physiological instrument, shaped by biological, evolutionary and genetic forces—and the human mind—with thoughts, feelings and reasons that Glass insists are uniquely “human” and not shared with our animal ancestors.

Glass begins his re-investigation of the mind-body problem in human beings from the conviction that human reason composes an undeniable and self-evident “missing link” in sociobiology’s genetic-biological-evolutionary account that attempts to explain human behavior in terms of the species’ animal ancestry. Glass then proceeds, by way of a detailed survey of generalized human behavior patterns, to link every facet of human individual and cultural life to biological urges and genetic dictates

of fitness for survival, ultimately—and ironically—demonstrating precisely what, in his introduction, he proposes to overcome—sociobiology’s founding claim that animal roots underlie our deepest human feelings, desires, thoughts and convictions. In a very Nietzschean twist of the neuroscientist’s tale, even the reasons that arise to justify those “uniquely human” thoughts and feelings, urges and passions turn out to compose functions of bodily histories.

In the end, the reader is left thoroughly convinced that there is nothing “uniquely human” that does not, through the insidious forces of evolutionary process, come to us from our animal ancestors, save perhaps for the exclusive ability of human beings to reflect upon ourselves and our behaviors and invent reasons to justify the latter. Teen rebellion, gender differences, the passion for property and possessions, business acumen, love of family and tribe, and national pride are all traceable to the “biobehavioral imperatives” of territorialism, social organization into dominance hierarchies, and reproductive pressures—imperatives inherited from and shared with the animal world. Biobehavioral imperatives, explains Glass, have been

honed over millions of years of evolutionary processes and are as imperious to our brain and immutable in the species' behavior patterns as are the material components of bodily form.

Having affirmed the imperative and immutable nature of evolutionary and genetic forces on the human brain, Glass still insists that his theory is no biological fatalism. Humans still face environmental exigency with the free will we so desperately value. But Glass's assurances in this regard are less than satisfying. If the principles of survival and the genetic inheritance that serves those principles govern our desires, urges and allegiances at the deepest levels of our being (as Glass has convinced us they do), then it follows that the behaviors stemming from those deepest drives, and even the reasons that arise to justify those behaviors, are as tyrannically governed as are the biological systems they command.

Glass's account of human behavior patterns and their congruousness with those of our animal ancestors is a fascinating treatment of the origins of primitive emotions of individuals and the cultural effects of those emotional drives upon human groups. It is well suited for a popular readership seeking a general under-

standing of sociobiological causes for human actions. However the book will be found unsatisfying to a scholarly audience. It not only ultimately affirms what it promises to prove inadequate—sociobiological explanations for human behaviors—but it ultimately reinstates the dualism that returns the mind-body problem in full problematicity, because Glass's claim of the uniqueness of human being is only maintained by resurrecting the notion of "soul."

*The Animal Within Us* offers too facile explanations for the complex phenomena of the human world (for example, communism fails simply because it disappoints the biological dictates of private property and possession) and it ignores altogether the vast wealth of significant scholarship, descending from the ethological tradition of Konrad Lorenz, that cites human differences from animals, rather than our consistency with them, as the source of our deepest (and most aggressive) urges.

Wendy C. Hamblet, Ph.D., Philosophy Department, Adelphi University, Garden City, New York. 11717, USA. Email: [w.c.hamblet@earthlink.net](mailto:w.c.hamblet@earthlink.net).