



Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals

By John Gray

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A radical work of philosophy, which sets out to challenge our most cherished assumptions about what it means to be human. From Plato to Christianity, from the Enlightenment to Nietzsche and Marx, the Western tradition has been based on arrogant and erroneous beliefs about human beings and their place in the world. Philosophies such as liberalism and Marxism think of humankind as a species whose destiny is to transcend natural limits and conquer the Earth. Even in the present day, despite Darwin's discoveries, nearly all schools of thought take as their starting point the belief that humans are radically different from other animals. John Gray argues that this humanist belief in human difference is an illusion and explores how the world and human life look once humanism has been finally abandoned.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Humans think they are free, conscious beings, when in truth they are deluded animals, writes London University economics professor Gray (*Black Mass*) in a series of brief and intriguing mini-essays. His themes include the similarities between hypnotism and financial markets and uncomfortable truths behind drug use and its prohibition. In a chapter called Deception, Gray traces Humanism from Plato through Postmodernism. He critiques both science and religion: Science can advance human knowledge, it cannot make humanity cherish truth. Like the Christians of former times, scientists are caught up in the web of power; they struggle for survival and success; their view of the world is a patchwork of conventional beliefs. At a certain point, it can be difficult to see where Gray's allegiances lie. He tears down institutions, especially consciousness, self, free will and morality, and questions our ability to solve the problems of overpopulation and overconsumption: Only a breed of ex-humans can thrive in the world that unchecked human expansion has created. So what's left? Gray recommends a devaluation of progress, mastery, and immortality, and a return to contemplation and acceptance: Other animals do not need a purpose in life. Can we not think of the aim of life as being simply to see? This comforting question punctuates an otherwise profoundly disturbing meditation on humankind's real place in the world. (*Oct.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

In a work of thoroughgoing iconoclasm, British philosopher Gray attacks the belief that humans are different from and superior to animals. Invoking pure Darwinism, he savages every perspective from which humans appear as anything more than a genetic accident that has produced a highly destructive species (*homo sapiens*)--a species that exterminates other species at a phenomenal rate as our swelling numbers despoil the global environment. Gray explains the human refusal to confront the darker realities of our nature largely as the result of how we have consoled ourselves with the myths of Christianity and its secular offspring, humanism and utopianism. Human vanity, he complains, has even converted science (which should teach us of our insignificant place in nature) into an ideology of progress. But neither hope for progress nor confidence in human morality passes muster with Gray, who envisions a future in which the human population finally contracts as a world politics that grows ever more predatory and brutal shatters all such illusions. As a work of ruthless rigor, this provocative book will force readers to reexamine their own convictions. *Bryce Christensen*

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Review

"This powerful and brilliant book is an essential guide to the new Millennium. Straw Dogs challenges all our assumptions about what it is to be human, and convincingly shows that most of them are delusions. Who are we, and why are we here? John Gray's answers will shock most of us deeply. This is the most exhilarating book I have read since Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene*' - J.G. Ballard 'My book of the year was Straw Dogs. I read it once, I read it twice and took notes. I arranged to meet its author so I could publicise the book - I thought it that good... a devastating critique of liberal humanism, and all of it set out in easy-to-digest (although hard-to-swallow aperçus)' - Will Self, *New Statesman* 'One of the most important books published this year, and will probably prove to be one of the most important this century... nobody can hope to understand the times in which we live unless they have read Straw Dogs' - Sue Corrigan, *Mail on Sunday* 'There is unlikely to be a more provocative or more compelling book published this year than Straw Dogs... Gray is one of the most consistently interesting and unpredictable thinkers in Britain' - Jason Cowley, *Observer*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lonnie Bowers:

This Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals book is not really ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book is usually information inside this guide incredible fresh, you will get info which is getting deeper you actually read a lot of information you will get. This particular Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals without we recognize teach the one who reading through it become critical in imagining and analyzing. Don't be worry Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals can bring whenever you are and not make your handbag space or bookshelves' become full because you can have it with your lovely laptop even cellphone. This Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals having excellent arrangement in word as well as layout, so you will not truly feel uninterested in reading.

Linda Poteat:

Reading a guide can be one of a lot of pastime that everyone in the world enjoys. Do you like reading book therefore. There are a lot of reasons why people like it. First reading a book will give you a lot of new information. When you read a book you will get new information because book is one of several ways to share the information or maybe their idea. Second, reading a book will make you actually more imaginative. When you studying a book especially hype book the author will bring someone to imagine the story how the figures do it anything. Third, it is possible to share your knowledge to other folks. When you read this Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals, you may tells your family, friends in addition to soon about yours guide. Your knowledge can inspire different ones, make them reading a publication.

Christopher Hill:

Reading a book tends to be new life style in this era globalization. With reading through you can get a lot of information that can give you benefit in your life. With book everyone in this world can easily share their idea. Guides can also inspire a lot of people. A great deal of author can inspire their particular reader with their story or maybe their experience. Not only the storyplot that share in the textbooks. But also they write about the data about something that you need example of this. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your sons or daughters, there are many kinds of book that exist now. The authors on this planet always try to improve their proficiency in writing, they also doing some investigation before they write on their book. One of them is this Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals.

Debbie Yarborough:

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