



Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals

By John Gray

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The British bestseller *Straw Dogs* is an exciting, 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. John Gray argues that this belief in human difference is a dangerous illusion and explores how the world and human life look once humanism has been finally abandoned. The result is an exhilarating, sometimes disturbing book that leads the reader to question our deepest-held beliefs. Will Self, in the *New Statesman*, called *Straw Dogs* his book of the year: "I read it once, I read it twice and took notes . . . I thought it that good." "Nothing will get you thinking as much as this brilliant book" (*Sunday Telegraph*).

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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 is an exciting, 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. Gray argues that this belief in human difference is an illusion. An exhilarating, disturbing book.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Thomas Palmer:

Reading can called mind hangout, why? Because if you are reading a book mainly book entitled Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals the mind will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in every aspect that maybe mysterious for but surely can be your mind friends. Imaging every single word written in a book then become one application form conclusion and explanation in which maybe you never get just before. The Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals giving you another experience more than blown away the mind but also giving you useful information for your better life within this era. So now let us present to you the relaxing pattern here is your body and mind is going to be pleased when you are finished looking at it, like winning a game. Do you want to try this extraordinary paying spare time activity?

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Jeffrey Lambert:

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Stacy Abercrombie:

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