

Gunnar Odhner

Darwin's incomplete Idea

Wittgenstein, language, our place in nature and our responsibility for the environment

VERNON SERIES IN PHILOSOPHY

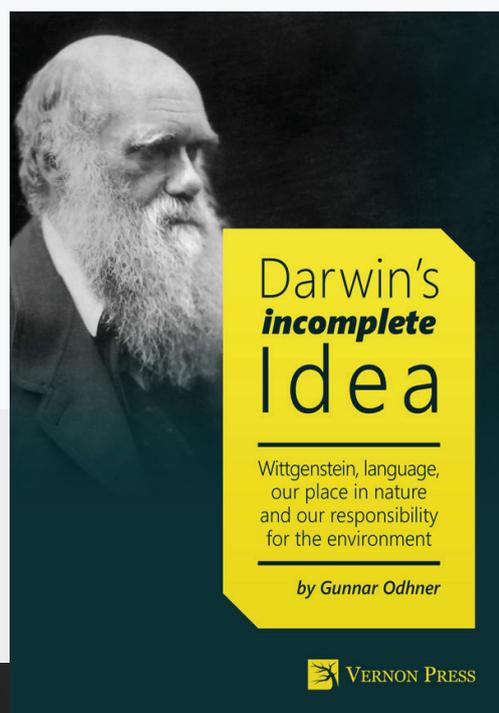
Summary

Why is progress in environmental protection slow and faltering? Is it because we misunderstand our place in nature? This book argues that it is the normative implications of Darwinism and their powerful grip on collective social consciousness that are partly responsible for the tardiness.

For all its positive explanatory power and undoubted veracity, the normative implications of Darwinist thinking for our environmental predicament are stark: If we are children of Mother Nature equipped by her with a human nature, the responsibility for the deterioration of nature is partly Hers. This book takes a different standpoint. We are indeed children of Nature, but not primarily of the green nature or animal world but of the nature of language. We can understand how through the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, who states that "Language is a graft on instinctive behavior." In our instinctive use of words we are parts of nature in a way resembling mice, frogs and giraffes. We are not as free as we think when we talk about our "free will", because language uses us when we use it, hence our double roles as victims and instigators. The main thesis of this book is that rather than merely possessing language, we are language. If accepted, this realization may point the way to a more optimistic future for environmental protection and lay the foundations for a new analytical perspective on modern social behavior.

About the author

I was born in Sweden in 1942, grew up in a small town, went one year (1959-60) to high school in Glendale, Arizona as an exchange student and became a journalist in 1968, when my wife and I moved to Canada. I worked there as a journalist at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. Back in Sweden I took an MA in teaching at the University of Gothenburg. We had two girls born in 1970 and 1975 and settled in the town of Karlstad, Sweden. Following a three-decade long career in teaching, I developed an intense interest in philosophy. In 1996 my first book in that genre was published called "The Third Possibility" and later "Nothing is Hidden" (2011) and Darwin's incomplete Idea (2013) – all in Swedish. I have also published four volumes of poetry, three novels and two autobiographies. I currently live in a small village in Varmland.



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Oct 2015 | Hardback 236x160mm | 176 Pages | ISBN: 978-1-62273-474-0

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