


Ambivalent war-lovers

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Journal Article

Ambivalent war-lovers?

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Abstract Reviews the book, "The most dangerous animal: Human nature and the origins of war" by David Livingstone Smith (2007). This book asks what it is about human nature that makes it possible for human beings to regularly slaughter their own kind. It tells the story of why all human beings have the potential to be hideously cruel and destructive to one another. Why are we our own worst enemy? The book shows us that war has been with us--in one form or another--since prehistoric times, and looking at the behavior of our close relatives, the chimpanzees, it argues that a penchant for group violence has been bred into us over millions of years of biological evolution. This book takes the reader on a journey through evolution, history, anthropology, and psychology, showing how and why the human mind has a dual nature: on the one hand, we are ferocious, dangerous animals who regularly commit terrible atrocities against our own kind; on the other hand, we have a deep aversion to killing, a horror of taking human life. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2010 APA, all rights reserved)

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