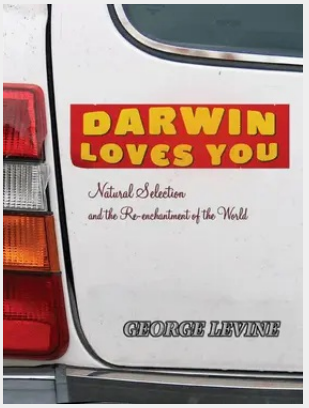
Levine

Darwin Loves You

Natural Selection and the Re-enchantment of the World

Jesus and Darwin do battle on car bumpers across America. Medallions of fish symbolizing Jesus are answered by ones of amphibians stamped "Darwin," and stickers proclaiming "Jesus Loves You" are countered by "Darwin Loves You." The bumper sticker debate might be trivial and the pronouncement that "Darwin Loves You" may seem merely ironic, but George Levine insists that the message contains an unintended truth. In fact, he argues, we can read it straight. Darwin, Levine shows, saw a world from which his theory had banished transcendence as still lovable and enchanted, and we can see it like that too--if we look at his writings and life in a new way. Although Darwin could find sublimity even in ants or worms, the word "Darwinian" has largely been taken to signify a disenchanted world driven by chance and heartless competition. Countering the pervasive view that the facts of Darwin's world must lead to a disenchanting vision of it, Levine shows that Darwin's ideas and the language of his books offer an alternative form of enchantment, a world rich with meaning and value, and more wonderful and beautiful than ever before. Without minimizing or sentimentalizing the harsh qualities of life governed by natural selection, and without deifying Darwin, Levine makes a moving case for an enchanted secularism--a commitment to the value of the natural world and the human striving to understand it.



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