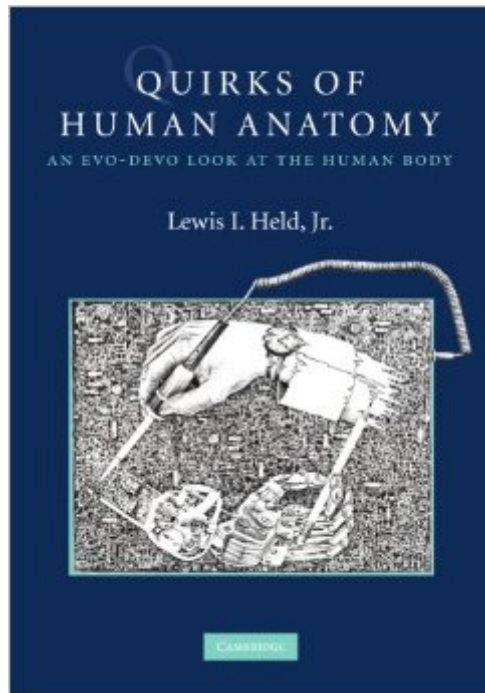


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Quirks Of Human Anatomy: An Evo-Devo Look At The Human Body



Synopsis

With the emergence of the new field of evolutionary developmental biology we are witnessing a renaissance of Darwin's insights 150 years after his Origin of Species. Thus far, the exciting findings from "evo-devo" have only been trickling into college courses and into the domain of non-specialists. With its focus on the human organism, Quirks of Human Anatomy opens the floodgates by stating the arguments of evo-devo in plain English, and by offering a cornucopia of interesting case studies and examples. Its didactic value is enhanced by 24 schematic diagrams that integrate a host of disparate observations, by its Socratic question-and-answer format, and by its unprecedented compilation of the literature. By framing the "hows" of development in terms of the "whys" of evolution, it lets readers probe the deepest questions of biology. Readers will find the book not only educational but also enjoyable, as it revels in the fun of scientific exploration.

Book Information

Paperback: 274 pages

Publisher: Cambridge University Press; 1 edition (May 29, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0521732336

ISBN-13: 978-0521732338

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 0.6 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (3 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,297,979 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #61 in [Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Basic Sciences > Embryology](#) #109 in [Books > Medical Books > Basic Sciences > Embryology](#) #301 in [Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Biology > Developmental Biology](#)

Customer Reviews

Held does an excellent job of exploring and explaining some quirks of human anatomy. Through a series of interesting and provocative questions, he examines human development and evolution in an entertaining and didactic but rigorous way. Using the coined term "bislagiatt," an acronym for "but it seemed like a good idea at the time", and an array of fascinating diagrams with detailed explanations, the author sets out to show how the current discipline of evolutionary development, or evo-devo, can address some of the most fundamental aspects of human form, growth, and development. Questions such as why some parts of our anatomy are symmetric and others are not,

why are arms different from legs, why men and women have different size and shapes, and why some of our structures seem ill-equipped for certain tasks, provide the basis for covering much of what is known about evolution, genetics, and development. "Quirks of Human Anatomy" would be quite useful as additional reading for any course on evolution or development. It also stands alone as a very worthwhile, very enjoyable scientific book.

This little book summarizes many strange aspects of human anatomy, including not only the musculo-skeletal system, organ structure and placement, and neurology, but the external soft tissue (e.g., hair). The chapters on the possibilities of evolution (why no flying elephants and 6-limbed vertebrates) and human sexual dimorphism are great. The only drawback is that the illustrations are hugely complicated, even with extensive captioning. They need to be studied a long time.

A fairly technical compendium, with references, of evolutionary left-overs in the human body. About half the book is the listing of references. Fun to read, however.

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