



The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Habits of Nature

By Rupert Sheldrake

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Rupert Sheldrake's theory of morphic resonance challenges the fundamental assumptions of modern science. An accomplished biologist, Sheldrake proposes that all natural systems, from crystals to human society, inherit a collective memory that influences their form and behavior. Rather than being ruled by fixed laws, nature is essentially habitual. *The Presence of the Past* lays out the evidence for Sheldrake's controversial theory, exploring its implications in the fields of biology, physics, psychology, and sociology. At the same time, Sheldrake delivers a stinging critique of conventional scientific thinking. In place of the mechanistic, neo-Darwinian worldview he offers a new understanding of life, matter, and mind.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Biochemist Sheldrake maintains that if a pigeon in London learns a new habit, then pigeons everywhere else will automatically show an increasing tendency to learn the same habit. He holds that invisible energy patterns or "morphogenetic fields" surround and shape all atoms, all crystals, all pigeons and all humans. In his astonishing theory, any natural system—whether insulin molecules, dandelions or societies—inherits a collective memory from all previous members of that group. Experimental evidence for Sheldrake's hypothesis is inconclusive but tantalizing. If true, it would force a radical revision of our understanding of genetics, evolution, memory, learning. Many books on the "new physics" and the paranormal have discussed Sheldrake's ideas, but his own explanation of morphic resonance is the most lucid and exciting account to date. He uses the theory here to suggest how creation myths and rituals connect past and present.
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From Library Journal

In his *A New Science of Life* (LJ 5/15/82), Sheldrake put forward the hypothesis of "formative causation" to explain evolutionary development. In this book, he focuses on "morphic resonance," one aspect of the hypothesis, and describes how morphic fields influence organisms to develop in a given way. He contends that morphic fields shape the expression of genetic characteristics and the evolution of behavior and social structures, and discusses how field theories from physics, ideas about the "collective unconscious" in the social sciences, and evolutionary theories in the life sciences may relate to one another. A book for specialists, most appropriate for academic philosophy of science collections. Laurie Tynan, Montgomery Cty.

Norristown P.L., Pa.

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Review

"So compelling that it sets the reader to underlining words and scribbling notes in the margin."
(*Washington Post*)

"Few of us recognize revolutions in the making. Anyone who wants to be able to say in the future, 'I was there,' had better read *The Presence of the Past*."
(*Nicholas Humphrey, author of The Inner Eye*)

"Bold, clear, and incisive, Sheldrake's thesis constitutes a sweeping challenge to the very fundamentals of established science. It may outrage or delight, but it will never fail to stimulate. Sheldrake has a remarkable ability to identify the weak spots of scientific orthodoxy."
(*Paul Davies, author of The Edge of Infinity*)

"Rupert Sheldrake is the most controversial scientist on Earth."
(*Robert Anton Wilson, author of Prometheus Rising and The Illuminati Papers*)

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