



The Origins of Order: Self-Organization and Selection in Evolution

Stuart A. Kauffman

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Stuart Kauffman here presents a brilliant new paradigm for evolutionary biology, one that extends the basic concepts of Darwinian evolution to accommodate recent findings and perspectives from the fields of biology, physics, chemistry and mathematics. The book drives to the heart of the exciting debate on the origins of life and maintenance of order in complex biological systems. It focuses on the concept of self-organization: the spontaneous emergence of order that is widely observed throughout nature. Kauffman argues that self-organization plays an important role in the Darwinian process of natural selection. Yet until now no systematic effort has been made to incorporate the concept of self-organization into evolutionary theory. The construction requirements which permit complex systems to adapt are poorly understood, as is the extent to which selection itself can yield systems able to adapt more successfully. This book explores these themes. It shows how complex systems, contrary to expectations, can spontaneously exhibit stunning degrees of order, and how this order, in turn, is essential for understanding the emergence and development of life on Earth. Topics include the new biotechnology of applied molecular evolution, with its important implications for developing new drugs and vaccines; the balance between order and chaos observed in many naturally occurring systems; new insights concerning the predictive power of statistical mechanics in biology; and other major issues. Indeed, the approaches investigated here may prove to be the new center around which biological science itself will evolve. The work is written for all those interested in the cutting edge of research in the life sciences.

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