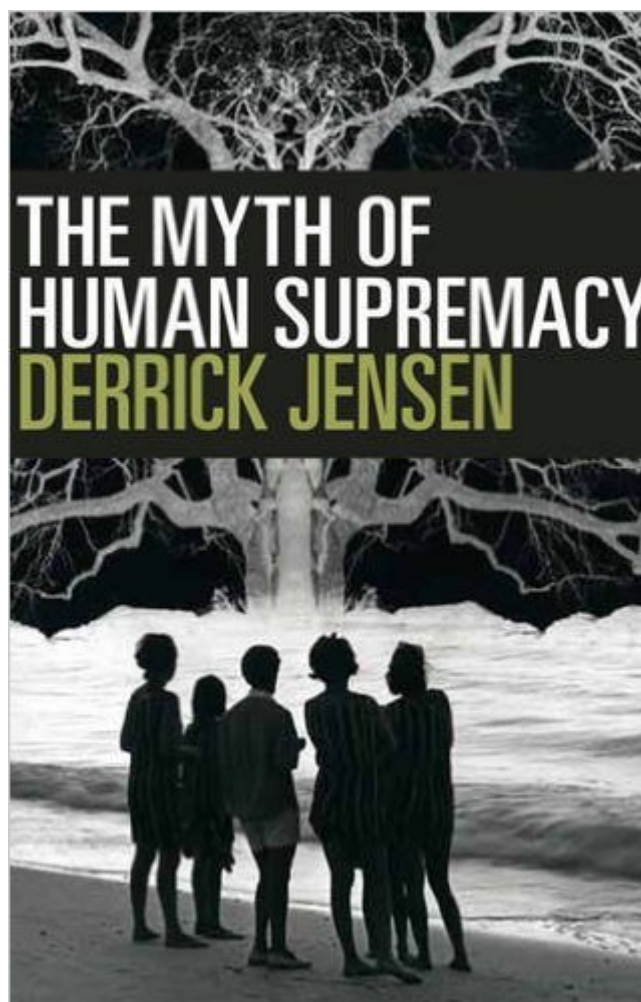


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The Myth Of Human Supremacy



Synopsis

In this impassioned polemic, radical environmental philosopher Derrick Jensen debunks the near-universal belief in a hierarchy of nature and the superiority of humans. Vast and underappreciated complexities of nonhuman life are explored in detail—from the cultures of pigs and prairie dogs, to the creative use of tools by elephants and fish, to the acumen of caterpillars and fungi. The paralysis of the scientific establishment on moral and ethical issues is confronted and a radical new framework for assessing the intelligence and sentience of nonhuman life is put forth. Jensen attacks mainstream environmental journalism, which too often limits discussions to how ecological changes affect humans or the economy—with little or no regard for nonhuman life. With his signature compassionate logic, he argues that when we separate ourselves from the rest of nature, we in fact orient ourselves against nature, taking an unjust and, in the long run, impossible position. Jensen expresses profound disdain for the human industrial complex and its ecological excesses, contending that it is based on the systematic exploitation of the earth. Page by page, Jensen, who has been called the philosopher-poet of the environmental movement, demonstrates his deep appreciation of the natural world in all its intimacy, and sounds an urgent call for its liberation from human domination.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In Derrick's style, the book jumps from philosophy to neurobiology, from direct experience of relationship with non-humans to discussions of ethnocentrism. Although some have difficulty with this style, it's elegant to me; in short strokes, he paints a picture larger than the sum of its

parts. Human supremacy is a fragile system. To be maintained, it must silence the near-daily experiences and messages from the more-than-human that demonstrate intelligence, morality, complexity, and other characteristics that, under western science, are reserved only for humans. Even in someone like me, who was raised with anti-racist, feminist, anti-empire politics and brought up living alongside a wide variety of non-humans, human supremacy is ingrained. It's built into the foundations of our culture. I've often been told that one of the most important tasks for non-indigenous people is to decolonize our hearts and mind. This book contributes to that process by helping the reader understand and deconstruct human supremacy step-by-step. For example, in Chapter 20, "Self-Awareness," Jensen deconstructs the idea that self-knowledge is the realm of humans (and perhaps a few other mammals and cetaceans) alone: "Many human supremacists love to talk about the 'mirror test' of self-awareness, in which you put a mirror in front of some nonhuman to see if the nonhuman recognizes itself, in which case it is declared to be self-aware (though not as self-aware as us, of course!). Very few nonhumans pass this particular test, which is I'm sure one reason the test is so beloved by so many human supremacists. I'm sure it's also a reason this test is sometimes called the 'gold standard' of indicating whether some creature is self-aware.

When an unlucky person has been swept away by the brainwashing of a wacko cult, concerned friends or family members sometimes seek the assistance of a skilled deprogrammer to exorcise the demons. It's a painful process. The scrambled soul is blasted with a fire-hose of strong rational arguments, hour after hour, hammering away at the many contradictions in the cult's beliefs. Ideally, the shining power of truth blasts away the illusions, and opens the door to healing. I was reminded of this while reading Derrick Jensen's book, *The Myth of Human Supremacy*. In his story, the wacko cult consists of human supremacists, zombies who have been indoctrinated to believe that humans are the miraculous conclusion of the long evolutionary journey. Humans are the one and only species that is sentient, self-aware, intelligent, and able to make tools and communicate. The cult of human supremacy has grown rapidly, and now includes a large portion of humankind. The zombie mobs are mindlessly destroying the living planet that everything depends on for survival. Jensen puts a spotlight on the demon: "Unquestioned beliefs are the real authorities of any culture. We are bombarded with supremacist ideas from early childhood. They define our understanding of normality, and encourage us to live like there's no tomorrow. Only humans matter, a living planet does not. By definition, human supremacy is about hierarchy: the white male God, white kings, white men, white women, minorities, mammals, birds, plants, insects,

bacteria, etc. Most of the community of life is inferior to you, resources for you to exploit or destroy. The supremacist worldview has no concern for ecological health. Civilization is a space station where all of our needs are magically met.

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