



Nature: An Economic History

Geerat J. Vermeij

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From humans to hermit crabs to deep water plankton, all living things compete for locally limiting resources. This universal truth unites three bodies of thought--economics, evolution, and history--that have developed largely in mutual isolation. Here, Geerat Vermeij undertakes a groundbreaking and provocative exploration of the facts and theories of biology, economics, and geology to show how processes common to all economic systems--competition, cooperation, adaptation, and feedback--govern evolution as surely as they do the human economy, and how historical patterns in both human and nonhuman evolution follow from this principle.

Using a wealth of examples of evolutionary innovations, Vermeij argues that evolution and economics are one. Powerful consumers and producers exercise disproportionate controls on the characteristics, activities, and distribution of all life forms. Competition-driven demand by consumers, when coupled with supply-side conditions permitting economic growth, leads to adaptation and escalation among organisms. Although disruptions in production halt or reverse these processes temporarily, they amplify escalation in the long run to produce trends in all economic systems toward greater power, higher production rates, and a wider reach for economic systems and their strongest members.

Despite our unprecedented power to shape our surroundings, we humans are subject to all the economic principles and historical trends that emerged at life's origin more than 3 billion years ago. Engagingly written, brilliantly argued, and sweeping in scope, *Nature: An Economic History* shows that the human institutions most likely to preserve opportunity and adaptability are, after all, built like successful living things.

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