

Although it did not cure his language preference, he was less agitated afterwards. So the procedure was thought to hold enough promise to be repeated a couple of weeks later.

Hopes were dashed when Denis transfused an agitated servant, Antoine Mauroy, with some calf's blood. The first two transfusions seemed to calm him. A third, insisted on by Mauroy's wife, was abandoned when the patient had a series of seizures. The next morning, Mauroy was dead, and was taken away for burial before Denis could perform an autopsy. The case came to trial, and although Denis was exonerated, Mauroy's wife was implicated in poisoning her husband. The results of her trial are lost, but a year later the French parliament prohibited transfusion of blood into humans. The English also lost heart until human-to-human transfusions were gingerly begun in the 1820s.

Tucker makes a reasonable (if circumstantial) case that one of Denis's medical opponents, Henri-Martin de la Martinière, supplied Madame Mauroy with poison to dispose of her violent husband, also putting paid to Denis's ambitions. De la Martinière was a colourful surgeon with a dark past involving pirates; he wrote vitriolic pamphlets against Denis and transfusion.

Tucker uses the competition between the French and English scientific societies as a window onto international rivalries during the scientific revolution. Claims over priority were at stake — being the first to successfully carry out a procedure mattered a great deal. In Paris, there was the additional

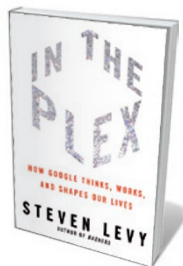
“Competition between the French and English scientific societies gives a window onto international rivalries during the scientific revolution.”

tension between the Academy of Sciences, sanctioned by King Louis XIV, and the private groups that it effectively replaced. The fact that the French and English were at war during the 1660s adds spice to the story, as do London's 1665 plague outbreak and the Great Fire in 1666, which disrupted the early meetings of the Royal Society.

Tucker seeks to expose the passions and the pain behind physiological experimentation. Her narrative reads like a novel, marred only by occasional errors of fact and lapses into sensationalism. *Blood Work* is a powerful reconstruction of what has often been relegated to a minor episode within early modern science and medicine. ■

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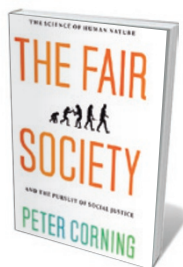
Books in brief



In The Plex: How Google Thinks, Works, and Shapes Our Lives

Steven Levy SIMON & SCHUSTER 432 pp. \$26 (2011)

Expanding beyond its early dominance of the search-engine market, Google has shifted gears many times since it began as a small start-up firm in Silicon Valley, California. Yet the company clings to its image as a creative hub. Technology writer Steven Levy gives an upbeat account of life inside the Googleplex campus, where hand-picked workers are able to devote up to 20% of their time to self-generated projects. He explores the next frontiers for the company, such as cloud computing and social networks, and examines its controversial decision to enter China.



The Fair Society: The Science of Human Nature and the Pursuit of Social Justice

Peter Corning UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS 256 pp. \$27.50 (2011)

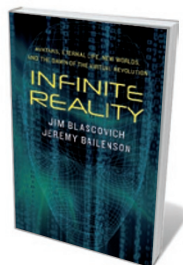
Evolution is often reduced to the survival of the fittest, yet that does not mean we should trample on others to get ahead. We have an innate sense of fairness, argues complex-systems biologist Peter Corning in his book, which draws on our evolutionary history and the science of human nature. For the benefit and well-being of all, he proposes that society should adjust its political and economic priorities toward fairness. We should adopt a new 'biosocial' contract, which promotes the principles of equality, equity and reciprocity.



The Great Sperm Whale: A Natural History of the Ocean's Most Magnificent and Mysterious Creature

Richard Ellis UNIVERSITY PRESS OF KANSAS 432 pp. \$34.95 (2011)

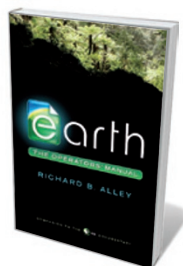
Just as the sperm whale inspired Herman Melville's 1851 book *Moby Dick*, it has long fascinated writer Richard Ellis. Here he devotes a whole volume to the giant creature, which he notes has stalked the chapters of his other books on marine life, from giant squid to tuna. Using his own elegant illustrations, Ellis discusses the sperm whale's evolution and biology, its migrations, diet and breeding. He also considers its impact on myths about sea monsters, and the whaling that has decimated its numbers over two centuries.



Infinite Reality: Avatars, Eternal Life, New Worlds, and the Dawn of the Virtual Revolution

Jim Blascovich and Jeremy Bailenson WILLIAM MORROW 304 pp. \$27.99 (2011)

Online environments are becoming ever more convincing and pervasive. Psychologists Jim Blascovich and Jeremy Bailenson ask how our brains cope with virtual reality. Describing the emerging technologies and what they say about us, the authors point out how our interactions are mostly driven by age-old impulses to search for new experiences and deeper perspectives on ourselves. They argue that in that sense, virtual reality is just an extension of humanity.



Earth: The Operators' Manual

Richard B. Alley W. W. NORTON 479 pp. \$27.95 (2011)

In a book to accompany a PBS documentary, climate scientist Richard Alley charts our expansive need for energy sources and the damage that fossil fuels are wreaking on our planet. Setting out the scientific facts clearly for the layperson rather than pushing particular solutions, he explains how we have come to be dependent on coal, oil and gas; points out the impact of greenhouse-gas emissions; and details the choices that will eventually have to be made over alternative forms of energy production.