

Self-redesigning design

In the decade since *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* appeared, I have spent thousands of hours discussing the implications of Darwinism with people in the arts, humanities and social sciences, and I never cease to be amazed at the complacency with which so many of them just assume that they can dismiss out of hand any Darwinian account of human learning or creativity. What do they think is going on in their brains, and how do they imagine that brains work their "magic"? They are sure that something wonderful is going on, no doubt, something much too complicated for them to understand, but they ignore the analysis that cuts through all this complexity and points so unmistakably in Darwin's direction: A *learning* or *innovating* brain is—by definition, really—a brain whose current design enables it to revise its own design in appropriate response to novel information. Self-redesigning design processes! Is such a thing possible? Either brains have been designed by non-miraculous means to revise their own designs by non-miraculous means, or minds are miracles. Darwinian natural selection is the only model of such processes that is known to work, and it works at many levels. People who would rightly scoff at anyone who imagined there were flying carpets or perpetual motion machines need to confront their own breezy assurance that minds are neither miraculous nor Darwinian in their origin, development, and operation. Can they describe an alternative?