

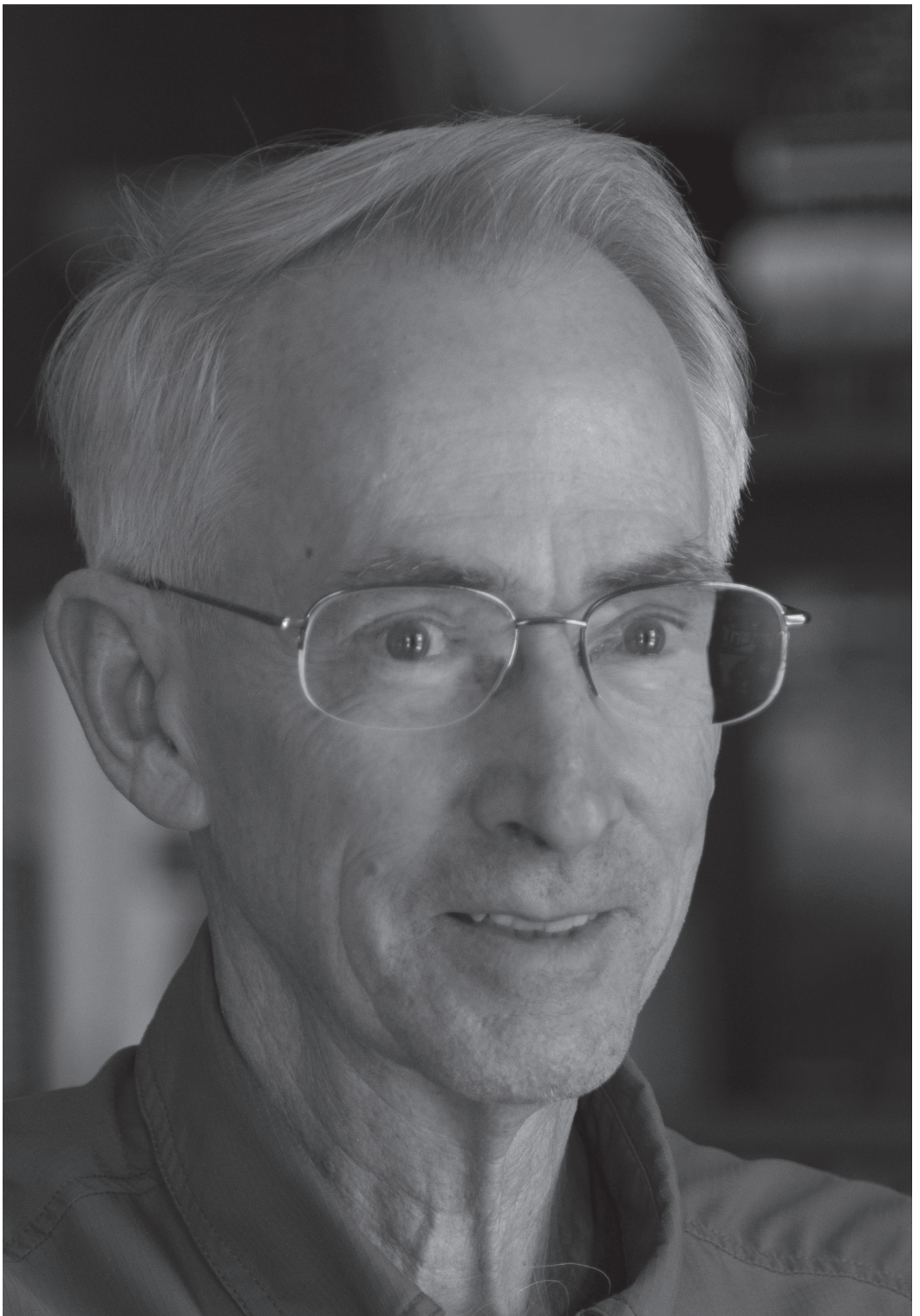


UNIVERSITATEA DIN BUCUREȘTI
DAVID SLOAN WILSON

Doctor Honoris Causa

DAVID SLOAN WILSON
DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA





Transdisciplinarity requires a theoretical framework general enough to dissolve disciplinary boundaries. That framework exists and I am proud that my body of work stands as an example.

Transdisciplinarity also requires institutions that reward rather than stifling the enterprise. I look forward to working with all of you to make the University of Bucharest such an enlightened institution and a model for other universities worldwide.

David Sloan Wilson



Laudatio Domini | **David Sloan Wilson**

***Distinși membri ai Senatului Universității din București,
Stimați colegi, invitați și onorați oaspeți,***

Senatul Universității din București, la propunerea Facultății de Administrație și Afaceri, are onoarea și bucuria de a acorda titlul de *Doctor Honoris Causa* profesorului David Sloan Wilson, una dintre cele mai inovatoare personalități ale gândirii științifice interdisciplinare contemporane.

Acest moment solemn reprezintă nu doar recunoașterea unei opere excepționale, ci și afirmarea direcției intelectuale asumate de Universitatea din București, care, prin eforturile sale de a promova gândirea inovatoare, de frontieră, interdisciplinaritatea și integrarea cunoașterii, se revendică din marea tradiție universitară occidentală a spiritului liber și creator, mereu aflat la frontiera evoluțiilor din sfera cunoașterii.

Încă de la începuturile sale, Facultatea de Administrație și Afaceri a reprezentat o materializare instituțională a acestui spirit, fiind de decenii bune un pionier în acest sens, atât în cadrul Universității din București, cât și în România. Afinitatea cu spiritul care animă opera profesorului David Sloan Wilson este, așadar, evidentă. Domnia sa este unul dintre cei mai importanți inițiatori ai unei veritabile revoluții intelectuale ce va marca deceniile ce urmează: aceea de a extinde aplicarea gândirii evoluționiste dincolo de domeniul biologiei, în toate sferele vieții sociale – în economie, educație, politici publice și guvernare comunitară.

El demonstrează că principiile selecției naturale și ale adaptării pot explica nu doar supraviețuirea speciilor, ci și coeziunea comunităților, eficiența instituțiilor și dinamica civilizației umane.

Această viziune integratoare reprezintă un pas decisiv în completarea „revoluției darwiniene” – trecerea de la înțelegerea biologiei vieții la înțelegerea biologiei sociale a cooperării. Implicațiile sale pentru științele administrative, în sens larg, sunt profunde și transformatoare. O bună parte dintre aceste direcții ating sau au implicații directe în cele trei domenii

centrale ale Facultatii de Administrație și Afaceri a Universității din București: economia, administrația publică și administrarea afacerilor.

Prin lucrări fundamentale precum *Unto Others: The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior*, *Darwin's Cathedral*, *This View of Life* și *Prosocial: Using Evolutionary Science to Build Productive, Equitable, and Collaborative Groups*, profesorul Wilson a construit un cadru teoretic de o forță explicativă și aplicativă remarcabilă.

El a arătat că evoluția nu este doar competiție, ci, în mod esențial, cooperare – o formă superioară de adaptare care permite grupurilor, instituțiilor și societăților să prospere dincolo de logica interesului individual. În viziunea sa, cooperarea nu este o excepție sau o trăsătură morală conjuncturală, ci o forță constitutivă a lumii vii și a ordinii sociale. Ea este sursa rezilienței, a inovației și a progresului colectiv.

Profesorul Wilson demonstrează că echilibrul dintre diversitate și solidaritate reprezintă condiția de durată a succesului comunităților umane: fără diversitate nu există adaptabilitate, dar fără solidaritate nu există reziliență. Prin această înțelegere, el oferă un cadru științific profund pentru explicarea modului în care instituțiile publice, organizațiile civice și economiile locale pot fi proiectate astfel încât să încurajeze colaborarea, încrederea și responsabilitatea comună.

În această lumină, știința – în sensul său cel mai nobil – devine un instrument de reconstrucție socială: nu doar un demers teoretic, ci o practică aplicată a cooperării, un ghid pentru organizarea eficientă a instituțiilor publice și pentru consolidarea guvernanței democratice. Astfel, contribuția lui David Sloan Wilson transcende frontierele disciplinare și devine un apel la refondarea comunităților umane pe baza principiilor științifice ale colaborării și interdependenței.

Această perspectivă științifică, profund interdisciplinară, se află în deplină rezonanță cu viziunea Universității din București, care, prin inițiative recente – inclusiv prin crearea noii Facultăți de Studii Interdisciplinare – își

reafirmă misiunea de a construi punți între domenii și de a forma o cultură academică a integrării și dialogului.

Profesorul Wilson nu este doar un teoretician de vârf, ci și un practician al științei sociale aplicate. Prin proiectele *The Evolution Institute* și *Prosocial World*, el a demonstrat cum principiile evoluționiste pot ghida crearea de comunități mai reziliente și organizații mai etice. Prin conceptul de *Core Design Principles*, inspirat de Elinor Ostrom, Wilson oferă un set de instrumente aplicate, validate științific, pentru dezvoltarea grupurilor productive, echitabile și colaborative – un veritabil manual al cooperării.

Profesorul David Sloan Wilson este, în sensul deplin al cuvântului, un intelectual al secolului XXI – un cercetător care traversează granițele disciplinelor pentru a reconstrui unitatea cunoașterii și pentru a readuce știința în serviciul societății.

Demersul profesorului Wilson de a unifica științele vieții și științele sociale reprezintă o sursă de inspirație intelectuală directă pentru comunitatea noastră universitară. Această convergență de spirit și viziune face ca distincția acordată astăzi să fie mai mult decât un gest simbolic – este o reafirmare a obiectivelor noastre comune și un început pe calea unei colaborări viitoare, pe termen lung.

Prin opera sa științifică și prin misiunea sa civică, David Sloan Wilson oferă lumii academice un nou model de gândire și acțiune: o știință evolutivă a cooperării, a instituțiilor și a transformării sociale. De aceea, acordarea titlului de *Doctor Honoris Causa* al Universității din București reprezintă nu doar o recunoaștere a contribuției sale excepționale, ci și o declarație de solidaritate intelectuală între viziunea profesorului Wilson și viziunea noastră universitară – o viziune a cunoașterii deschise, a interdisciplinarității și a responsabilității față de viitor.

În numele Facultății de Administrație și Afaceri și al întregii comunități academice a Universității din București, avem onoarea și bucuria de a-l saluta pe Profesorul David Sloan Wilson ca *Doctor Honoris Causa* al Universității din București.

*Distinguished members of the Senate of the University of Bucharest,
Esteemed colleagues, guests, and honored participants,*

The Senate of the University of Bucharest, at the initiative of the Faculty of Administration and Business, has the honor and pleasure of awarding the title of *Doctor Honoris Causa* to Professor David Sloan Wilson, one of the most innovative figures in contemporary interdisciplinary scientific thought.

This solemn moment represents not only the recognition of an exceptional body of work but also the affirmation of the intellectual direction assumed by the University of Bucharest, which, through its efforts to promote innovative, frontier thinking, interdisciplinarity, and the integration of knowledge, aligns itself with the great Western academic tradition of the free and creative spirit – one that has always stood at the frontier of knowledge.

From its very beginnings, the Faculty of Business and Administration has embodied this spirit institutionally, being for decades a pioneer in this regard, both within the University of Bucharest and in Romania at large. The affinity with the spirit that animates Professor David Sloan Wilson's work is therefore evident. He is among the most important initiators of a genuine intellectual revolution that will mark the coming decades: the expansion of evolutionary thinking beyond biology into all spheres of social life – economics, education, public policy, and community governance.

He demonstrates that the principles of natural selection and adaptation can explain not only the survival of species but also the cohesion of communities, the efficiency of institutions, and the dynamics of human civilization.

This integrative vision represents a decisive step in completing the “Darwinian revolution” –the transition from understanding the biology of life to understanding the social biology of cooperation. Its implications for the administrative sciences, broadly defined, are profound and transformative. Many of these directions intersect directly with the three

central fields of the Faculty of Administration and Business: economics, public administration, and business management.

Through foundational works such as *Unto Others: The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior*, *Darwin's Cathedral*, *This View of Life*, and *Prosocial: Using Evolutionary Science to Build Productive, Equitable, and Collaborative Groups*, Professor Wilson has built a theoretical framework of remarkable explanatory and practical power.

He has shown that evolution is not only competition but, in its essence, cooperation – a higher form of adaptation that allows groups, institutions, and societies to thrive beyond the logic of individual interest. In his view, cooperation is not an exception or a temporary moral trait, but a constitutive force of living systems and social order. It is the source of resilience, innovation, and collective progress.

Professor Wilson demonstrates that the balance between diversity and solidarity is the enduring condition for the success of human communities: without diversity there is no adaptability, but without solidarity there is no resilience. Through this understanding, he provides a profound scientific framework for explaining how public institutions, civic organizations, and local economies can be designed to encourage collaboration, trust, and shared responsibility.

In this light, science – in its noblest sense – becomes an instrument of social reconstruction: not merely a theoretical endeavor but an applied practice of cooperation, a guide for the effective organization of public institutions, and for the strengthening of democratic governance. Thus, the contribution of David Sloan Wilson transcends disciplinary boundaries and becomes a call to re-build human communities on the scientific principles of collaboration and interdependence.

This profoundly interdisciplinary scientific perspective resonates fully with the vision of the University of Bucharest, which, through recent initiatives – including the establishment of the new Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies – reaffirms its mission to build bridges across fields and to foster an academic culture of integration and dialogue.


Professor Wilson is not only a leading theorist but also a practitioner of applied social science. Through his projects The Evolution Institute and Prosocial World, he has demonstrated how evolutionary principles can guide the creation of more resilient communities and more ethical organizations. Through the concept of the Core Design Principles, inspired by Elinor Ostrom, Wilson offers a set of scientifically validated, practical tools for the development of productive, equitable, and collaborative groups – a true manual of cooperation.

Professor David Sloan Wilson is, in the fullest sense of the term, an intellectual of the 21st century – a scholar who crosses disciplinary boundaries to reconstruct the unity of knowledge and to restore science to its rightful place in the service of society.

Professor Wilson's endeavor to unite the life sciences and the social sciences serves as a direct intellectual inspiration for our university community. This convergence of spirit and vision makes the distinction conferred today more than a symbolic gesture – it is a reaffirmation of our shared goals and the beginning of a long-term collaboration.

Through his scientific work and civic mission, David Sloan Wilson offers the academic world a new model of thought and action – an evolutionary science of cooperation, institutions, and social transformation. The conferral of the title *Doctor Honoris Causa* of the University of Bucharest thus represents not only the recognition of his exceptional contributions but also a declaration of intellectual convergence between Professor Wilson's vision and our own academic ethos – a vision of open knowledge, interdisciplinarity, and responsibility toward the future.

On behalf of the Faculty of Administration and Business and the entire academic community of the University of Bucharest, we have the honor and joy of welcoming Professor David Sloan Wilson as *Doctor Honoris Causa* of the University of Bucharest.

A decorative flourish consisting of a vertical line with a stylized, symmetrical scroll-like element on the left side, featuring a central dot and flowing lines that curve upwards and downwards.

Acceptance Speech for University of
Bucharest Honorary Doctorate |
David Sloan Wilson | Nov 9 2025

It is a true honor to receive this doctorate from the University of Bucharest. As the Laudatio eloquently shows, this is not just a personal honor but an opportunity to reflect upon the history of science and the role of universities in evolving the future of humankind and care of the planet earth.

I began my career at a time when Darwin's theory of evolution was fulfilling itself for the study of biology. The promise was there from the start but over a century of maturation was required before a young scientist such as myself could elect to study any property of any species through the lens of a single simple theory. It was the opposite of the old joke about scientists learning more and more about less and less until they know everything about nothing. Darwin's theory was a passport to the study of all subjects, transcending disciplinary boundaries as if they did not exist.

But only for biology, and not yet the study of humanity. That is what I call completing the Darwinian revolution, which is currently in progress and to which I am proud to have played a role.

Something else is underway, which requires a broad view of the history of European science to notice. At the beginning, to be a scientist meant emulating the amazing discoveries of Isaac Newton. Science had to be reductionistic, mechanistic, and mathematical. Applied to humanity, the great goal was to develop a "physics of social behavior" in which the macro laws of economics could be derived from the micro laws of the atomistic individual, fondly called *Homo economicus*, as if a description of an actual species. That was the cultural origin of the currently dominant economic paradigm, which for 200 years has been unable to separate itself from its roots.

Like a tide that lifts all boats, the same reductionism pervaded the rest of the human social sciences and evolutionary biology when I was a young scientist, as if everything that evolves must be explained as furthering the interests of individuals and their selfish genes.

Only in hindsight can we look back and see that the entire conception of science during the so-called Enlightenment was a de facto denial of complexity and holism. For all their power, mathematical models are highly constraining in the assumptions that they must make to remain tractable. Most experiments can vary at most two or three variables and must hold everything else constant. In short, the tools of science could only nibble around the edges of our complex and interdependent world, including the great bushy tree of biological diversity and the great bushy tree of human cultural diversity.

Against this background, words such as “revolutionary” and “paradigmatic” are not too strong to describe the advent of complex systems science and generalized Darwinism during the last 50 years. This revolution is already in progress—present tense, not future tense—but it deserves to become far better known and applied. Catalysis is called for, so that it can happen in a matter of years rather than decades or not at all. The problems that require solutions will not wait.

What role can universities play in this catalysis? First, they will need to reinvent themselves, but this will not be for the first time. They have already metamorphosed from bastions of religious dogma to bastions of scientific and scholarly inquiry. Now they need to go beyond the partitioning of knowledge that might have made sense in the 19th century but have become an impediment to scientific and scholarly inquiry today.

Universities must also reinvent the relationship between basic and applied research. In biology, field research precedes laboratory research. If you don’t understand the organism in relation to its past and present environments, you can’t even begin to understand its properties and current welfare. Applying this evolutionary mindset to humanity, the first step toward understanding a person, an organization, or a multigenerational culture is in relation to their past and present environments. Basic scientific research must be richly contextual, which also ideally suits it for practical applications. In other words, basic and

applied scientific research can go hand in hand rather than taking place sequentially.

To summarize, transdisciplinarity requires a theoretical framework general enough to dissolve disciplinary boundaries. That framework exists and I am proud that my body of work stands as an example. Transdisciplinarity also requires institutions that reward rather than stifling the enterprise. I look forward to working with all of you to make the University of Bucharest such an enlightened institution and a model for other universities worldwide.

Again, thank you for the honor that you have bestowed upon me and my life work.



Curriculum vitae | **Nov 9 2025**

President, ProSocial World
Distinguished Professor Emeritus,
Departments of Biology and Anthropology
Binghamton University
Binghamton, New York
Website: DavidSloanWilson.World
Email: David.wilson@prosocial.world

ACADEMIC CAREER

EDUCATION: B.A. **1971**, University of Rochester (High honors)

Ph.D. **1975**, Michigan State University

POSITIONS: Research Fellow, Biological Laboratories, Harvard University, **1974–1975**

Research Associate, Department of Zoology, University of Washington, **1975–1976**

Research Associate, Department of Zoology, University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa), **1975–1976**

Senior Research Officer, National Research Institute for the Mathematical Sciences (South Africa), **1976–1977**

Assistant Professor, Division of Environmental Studies, University of California, Davis, **1977–1980**

Assistant Professor, Kellogg Biological Station and Department of Zoology, Michigan State University, **1980–1982**

Associate Professor, Kellogg Biological Station and Department of Zoology, Michigan State University, **1982–1988**

Professor, Department of Biological Sciences, State University of New York, Binghamton, New York 13901, **1988–present**

Joint appointment with Department of Anthropology, **2001–present**

SUNY Distinguished Professor (highest rank within the SUNY system), **2006**

Co-founder of nonprofit organization Evolution Institute **2011**

Arne Naess Chair of Global Justice and the Environment,
University of Oslo, Norway **2015**.

Co-founder of nonprofit organization ProSocial World
2021

GRANTS:

1974–1976 Adequacy of Body Size as a Niche Difference (NSF)

1978–1980 The evolution of communities in structured demes: a field test involving insect-mite associations (NSF)

1980–1982 Renewal

1982–1984 Renewal

1984–1987 Renewal

1986–1987 An evolutionary approach to the study of human psychology (J.S. Guggenheim Fellowship)

1989–1992 The evolution of functionally organized communities (DOE)

1989–1991 Conflict and cooperation in burying beetles (NSF with Steve Trumbo)

1989–1991 N-person games and the evolution of cooperation (NSF Doctoral dissertation improvement grant for L.A. Dugatkin)

1990–1991 The cost of phenotypic plasticity (Pocono Lakes Comparative Research Program)

1991–1992 Cooperation and conflict in burying beetles (REU supplement to BSR-8906183).

1992–1994 Invasion of an ecological niche by *Lepomis gibbosus* in lakes without *Lepomis macrochirus* (NSF)

1992–1994 Evolutionary altruism and the units of selection problem (NSF with Elliott Sober)

1995–1997 Evolution and costs of rapid growth in pumpkinseed sunfish (NSF doctoral dissertation improvement award to J. Arendt)

1997–2000 Community-level selection (NS)

1998–2000 Forgiveness from a cross-cultural and evolutionary perspective (John Templeton Foundation)

2001–2002 Annotated bibliography and critical review of altruism from an evolutionary perspective (Institute for Research on Unlimited Love)

2003–2005 Altruism, evolution, and individual experience (Institute for Research on Unlimited Love)

2006–2008 A New Field of Evolutionary Religious Studies and the Natural History of the Afterlife (John Templeton Foundation)

2008–2010 Teaching social complexity and multidisciplinary teambuilding: an experimental engineering approach (National Science Foundation)

2008–2010 Expanding evolutionary studies in American higher education (National Science Foundation CCLI Phase II grant with SUNY New Paltz).

2009–2010 Evolution of Religion: Combining top-down and bottom-up approaches (John Templeton Foundation)

2010–2012 The Role of Religion in the Governance of Common Pool Resource Groups (John Templeton Foundation)

2013–2016 Religion's Impact on Human Life: Integrating Proximate and Ultimate Perspectives (John Templeton Foundation; with Harvey Whitehouse at the University of Oxford).

2014–2016 This View of Life and the Science to Narrative Chain (John Templeton Foundation).

2015–2017 Creating a New Society for the Study of Cultural Evolution (John Templeton Foundation)

2018–2020 Using Technology to Enhance Rather Than Erode Moral Systems (Templeton World Charity Foundation)

2018–2020 Evolution, Complexity, and the Third Way of Entrepreneurship (Marion Ewing Kauffman Foundation)

2018–2020 Managed Evolution: A New Narrative for Macroeconomics (UK Economic and Social Research Council)

2019-2021 Testing Hypotheses About Meaning Systems in Real-World Settings (Templeton Religion Trust)

2022-2025 Developing a Field Approach to Cultural Evolution (John Templeton Foundation).

PROGRAMS

In addition to my personal academic career, I have invested in the creation of three programs designed to expand evolutionary thinking beyond the biological sciences. The first is EvoS (for Evolutionary Studies and pronounced as one word), the first undergraduate program to teach evolution across the curriculum, which grew into a consortium of programs with the help of NSF funding. The most recent milestone of EvoS is a 2019 edited volume published by Oxford University Press titled *Darwin's Roadmap to the Curriculum: Evolutionary Studies in Higher Education*.

The second program is the Evolution Institute, a nonprofit 501 (c) 3 organization that applies evolutionary thinking to the solution of real-world problems. Just as “nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution”, as Theodosius Dobzhansky put it in 1973, the same can be

said for all major policy topic areas such as education, economics, business, health, quality of life, and environmental sustainability. We are the only nonprofit that explicitly brings modern evolutionary science to bear upon these topics.

The EI has developed a communication strategy called the “science to narrative chain”, which notes that science is necessary but not sufficient to solve the problems of our age. There also must be narratives capable of reaching mass audiences as a chain of material providing intermediate depth, so that anyone can learn more no matter where they start out on the chain. The EI’s online magazine *This View of Life* (TVOL) is envisioned as a link close to the science end of the chain, reaching a much larger audience than the academic literature while still taking a deep dive into the subject matter. A sister online magazine, *Evonomics.com*, is dedicated to the single subject of economics. In addition to my academic publications and books, I have written dozens of articles for TVOL and *Evonomics.com*.

The third program is *Prosocial.world*, a nonprofit that has spun off (amicably) from the Evolution Institute and represents an expansion of the programs that I started within the EI. This includes TVOL and *Prosocial*, a practical framework for working with single groups and multigroup cultural ecosystems around the world to manage their cultural evolution in the direction of prosocial goals.

BOOKS (SOLE AUTHORED BOOKS IN BOLD)

Wilson, D. S. (1980). *The Natural Selection of Populations and Communities*. Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin/Cummings.

Sober, E., & Wilson, D. S. (1998). *Unto Others: The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wilson, D. S. (2002). *Darwin’s Cathedral: Evolution, Religion and the Nature of Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gottschall, J. & Wilson, D.S., Eds. (2005). *The Literary Animal: Evolution*

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Wilson, D.S. (2007) *Evolution for Everyone: How Darwin's Theory Can Change the Way We Think About Our Lives* Delacorte Press.

Wilson, D.S. (2011) *The Neighborhood Project: Using Evolution to Improve My City, One Block At A Time*. Little, Brown.

Oakley, B., Knafo, A., Madhavan, G., and Wilson, D.S., Eds. (2011). *Pathological Altruism*. Oxford University Press.

Wilson, D.S. (2015) *Does Altruism Exist? Culture, Genes, and the Welfare of Others*. Yale University and Templeton Press.

Wilson, D. S., & Kirman, A. (2016). *Complexity and Evolution: Toward a New Synthesis for Economics*. (David Sloan Wilson & A. Kirman, Eds.). Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press.

Wilson, D. S., & Hayes, S. C. (2018). *Evolution and Contextual Behavioral Science: An Integrated Framework for Understanding, Predicting, and Influencing Behavior*. Menlo Park, CA: New Harbinger Press.

Wilson, D.S. (2019) *This View of Life: Completing the Darwinian Revolution*. Pantheon Press.

Atkins, P. W. D., Wilson, D. S., & Hayes, S. C. (2019). *Prosocial: Using evolutionary science to build productive, equitable, and collaborative groups*. New Harbinger.

Wilson, D. S., Geher, G., Gallup, A., & Head, H. (Eds.). (2019). *Darwin's Roadmap to the Curriculum: Evolutionary Studies in Higher Education*. Oxford University Press, USA: Oxford University Press USA.

Wilson, D.S. (2020) *Atlas Hugged* (novel). Redwood Press.

Wilson, D.S. (2022) *A Life Informed by Evolution: A Memoir*

ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

- Wilson, D. S. (1973). Food size selection among copepods. *Ecology*, 54, 909-914.
- Wilson, D. S. (1974). Prey capture and competition among ant-lions. *Biotropica*, 6, 187-193.
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- Wilson, D. S. (1975). A theory of group selection. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 72, 143-146.
- Wilson, D. S. (1975). The adequacy of body size as a niche difference. *American Naturalist*, 109, 769-789.
- Wilson, D. S. (1976). Evolution on the level of communities. *Science*, 192, 1358-1360.
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- Wilson, D. S. (1977). How nepotistic is the brain worm? *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 2, 421-425.
- Wilson, D. S., & Clark, A. B. (1977). Above ground predator defence in the harvester termite *Hodotermes mossambicus* (Hagen). *Journal of the entomological society of South Africa*, 40, 271-282.
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- Wilson, D. S. (1983). The effect of population structure on the evolution of mutualism: a field test involving burying beetles and their phoretic mites. *American Naturalist*, 121, 851-870.
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