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The Price of Altruism: George Price and the Search for the Origins of Kindness

Oren Harman

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“Enthralling.”?Frans de Waal, *The New York Times Book Review*

Survival of the fittest or survival of the nicest? Since the dawn of time man has contemplated the mystery of altruism, but it was Darwin who posed the question most starkly. From the selfless ant to the stinging bee to the man laying down his life for a stranger, evolution has yielded a goodness that in theory should never be.

Set against the sweeping tale of 150 years of scientific attempts to explain kindness, *The Price of Altruism* tells for the first time the moving story of the eccentric American genius George Price (1922–1975), as he strives to answer evolution's greatest riddle. An original and penetrating picture of twentieth century thought, it is also a deeply personal journey. From the heights of the Manhattan Project to the inspired equation that explains altruism to the depths of homelessness and despair, Price's life embodies the paradoxes of Darwin’s enigma. His tragic suicide in a squatter’s flat, among the vagabonds to whom he gave all his possessions, provides the ultimate contemplation on the possibility of genuine benevolence. 24 black-and-white illustrations

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