



Out of Eden: The Surprising Consequences of Polygamy

David P. Barash

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In this changing world of what is socially and politically "correct," polygamy is perhaps the last great taboo. Over the last thousand years, monogamy - at least in name - has been the default setting for coupledness and procreation in the Western world. And yet, throughout history, there have been inklings that "one-man, one-woman" is an uncomfortable institution for human beings. The consistently high rate of marital "cheating" by both sexes, plus the persistent interest in a variety of sexual partners - on the part of women as well as men - suggest strongly that monogamy isn't easy, and certainly isn't "natural," for either sex.

Esteemed writer and evolutionary biologist David P. Barash tackles this uncomfortable finding: that humans are actually biologically and anthropologically inclined toward polygamy. Drawing on decades of research, Barash presents a remarkable array of scientific evidence from evolutionary biology and cross-cultural studies that guide the reader through the hidden impacts of polygamy on such crucial behavior as violence, parenting, sexual preferences, adultery and efforts at monogamy itself, along with mind-bending speculation about the possible role of our polygamous predisposition when it comes to human genius, homosexuality and even monotheism. But take heart, monogamists! Although our species has long been "out of Eden," this fascinating read is ultimately reassuring that "biology is not destiny."

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