



A Foot in the River: Why Our Lives Change -- and the Limits of Evolution

By Felipe Fernandez-Armesto

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We are a weird species. Like other species, we have a culture. But by comparison with other species, we are strangely unstable: human cultures self-transform, diverge, and multiply with bewildering speed. They vary, radically and rapidly, from time to time and place to place. And the way we live -- our manners, morals, habits, experiences, relationships, technology, values -- seems to be changing at an ever accelerating pace. The effects can be dislocating, baffling, sometimes terrifying. Why is this?

In *A Foot in the River*, best-selling historian Felipe Fernandez-Armesto sifts through the evidence and offers some radical answers to these very big questions about the human species and its history -- and speculates on what these answers might mean for our future. Combining insights from a huge range of disciplines, including history, biology, anthropology, archaeology, philosophy, sociology, ethology, zoology, primatology, psychology, linguistics, the cognitive sciences, and even business studies, he argues that culture is exempt from evolution. Ultimately, no environmental conditions, no genetic legacy, no predictable patterns, no scientific laws determine our behaviour. We can consequently make and remake our world in the freedom of unconstrained imaginations.

A revolutionary book which challenges scientific assumptions about culture and how and why cultural change happens, *A Foot in the River* comes to conclusions which readers may well find by turns both daunting and also potentially hugely liberating.

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A Foot in the River: Why Our Lives Change -- and the Limits of Evolution By Felipe Fernandez-Armesto **Bibliography**

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Review

"A mix of wide and deep learning and rigorous argument, beautifully written ... [a] delightful and indispensable book." --John Gray, Literary Review

"Full of important insights into change and human history ... a powerful counter blast to those contemporary thinkers who think that evolution can explain just about everything." --Paul Richardson, Church of England Newspaper

About the Author

Felipe Fernandez-Armesto is the William P. Reynolds Professor of Arts and Letters at the University of Notre Dame. His work has been recognized as pioneering across a very wide range of fields, including global history, environmental history, colonial history, maritime history, religious history, art history, the history of ideas, Mediterranean history, Spanish history, American history, the history of cartography, and the history of language. He has published numerous best-selling history books, including *Civilizations* (Macmillan, 2000), *Millennium* (Bantam, 1995), *1492: The Year Our World Began* (Bloomsbury, 2010), and *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration* (2006), also published by Oxford University Press, which was awarded the World History Association Prize.

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