

## Ideas for future possible books for Farnham Humanists' book club.

As well as an online service, Waterstones now offer an "order and collect from one of our shops" service from their website with no postage cost. You can also just reserve a book that's in stock at the shop, and pay the website price. Their website prices are comparable with Amazon, and, if you use their loyalty card, you effectively get a further 3% off.

**Thinking Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman.** ("The first "popular" book by Nobel prize-winning psychologist and the man who inspired behavioural economics. It is about the conscious and unconscious mind". – John Cregan)

<http://www.waterstones.com/waterstonesweb/products/daniel+kahneman/thinking2c+fast+and+slow/8930026/>

The "New York Times" Bestseller, acclaimed by author such as Freakonomics co-author Steven D. Levitt, Black Swan author Nassim Nicholas Taleb and Nudge co-author Richard Thaler, "Thinking Fast and Slow" offers a whole new look at the way our minds work, and how we make decisions. Why is there more chance we'll believe something if it's in a bold type face? Why are judges more likely to deny parole before lunch? Why do we assume a good-looking person will be more competent? The answer lies in the two ways we make choices: fast, intuitive thinking, and slow, rational thinking. This book reveals how our minds are tripped up by error and prejudice (even when we think we are being logical), and gives you practical techniques for slower, smarter thinking. It will enable to you make better decisions at work, at home, and in everything you do.

**Poor Economics by Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo,** ("about life on less than \$1 a day from the point of view of the poor themselves." – John Cregan)

<http://www.waterstones.com/waterstonesweb/products/abhijit+banerjee/esther+duflo/poor+economics/8929907/>

This title is winner of the FT Goldman Sachs Business Book of the Year Award 2011. Why would a man in Morocco who doesn't have enough to eat buy a television? Why do the poorest people in India spend 7 percent of their food budget on sugar? Does having lots of children actually make you poorer? This eye-opening book overturns the myths about what it is like to live on very little, revealing the unexpected decisions that millions of people make every day. Looking at some of the most paradoxical aspects of life below the poverty line - why the poor need to borrow in order to save, why incentives that seem effective to us may not be for them, and why, despite being more risk-taking than high financiers, they start businesses but rarely grow them - Banerjee and Duflo offer a new understanding of the surprising way the world really works.

**Breaking the Spell (2007).** - Religion as a natural phenomenon by Daniel Dennett  
(American Philosophy Professor but its a good read despite this! – Jonathan Natrass)

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/Breaking-Spell-Religion-Natural-Phenomenon/dp/0141017775/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1352996023&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Breaking-Spell-Religion-Natural-Phenomenon/dp/0141017775/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1352996023&sr=1-1)

In "Breaking the Spell" Daniel C. Dennett explores how the great ideas of religion have enthralled us for thousands of years - and whether we could (or should) break free. What is religion and how did it evolve? Is it the product of blind evolutionary instinct or of rational choice? Is the only way to live a good life through religion? Few forces in the world are as potent as religion: it comforts people in their suffering and inspires them to both magnificent and terrible deeds. In this provocative and timely book, Daniel C. Dennett seeks to uncover the origins of religion and discusses how and why different faiths have shaped so many lives, whether religion is an addiction or a genuine human

need, and even whether it is good for our health. Arguing passionately for the need to understand this multifaceted phenomenon, "Breaking the Spell" offers a truly original - and comprehensive - explanation for faith. "Packed with a mass of intriguing detail and anecdote ...witty and clear prose". ("Observer"). "He's the "good cop" among religion's critics (Richard Dawkins is the "bad cop"), but he still makes people angry". ("New Statesman"). "Dennett writes with brio and humour". ("Telegraph"). "Elegant, sharp-minded ...clear-eyed but courteous". ("Economist").

### **The Blank Slate (2003) - Stephen Pinker**

(Interesting discussion on development of human nature, he is Professor of Psychology at MIT! – Jonathan Natrass)

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Blank-Slate-Modern-Penguin-Science/dp/014027605X>

In *The Blank Slate*, the bestselling author Steven Pinker produces his most polemical and convincing attack upon the nurture side of the nature versus nurture debate. Pinker's previous books *The Language Instinct* and *How the Mind Works* have already attracted huge praise and controversy in arguing that language and cognition are natural rather than cultural. In *The Blank Slate* he refines and extends his arguments.

The book is aimed at "people who wonder where the taboo against human nature came from", and promises to explain "the moral, emotional and political colorings of the concept of human nature in modern life". For Pinker, the belief that we are all born as "blank slates" upon which culture places its decisive imprint is not only wrong but dangerous. He persuasively argues that "the conviction that humanity could be reshaped by massive social engineering projects led to some of the greatest atrocities in history". This is all very well, but at over 500 pages it can also be daunting for the general reader, as Pinker takes on all-comers, from biologists and sociologists to a dizzying array of classical thinkers from Calvin and Hobbes to Marx and Dawkins. The sections on gender will undoubtedly inflame many feminist writers (the most persuasive of which Pinker sadly neglects to discuss), and the criticisms of modern art are flimsy, but *The Blank Slate* is an impressive and sustained broadside that cannot be ignored. --Jerry Brotton --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

### **Superfreakonomics (2010 – 3.5 - £6.99)**

(An interesting examination of human behaviour and incentives - Richard Lucas)

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/Superfreakonomics-Cooling-Patriotic-Prostitutes-Insurance/dp/0141030704/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1352816721&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Superfreakonomics-Cooling-Patriotic-Prostitutes-Insurance/dp/0141030704/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1352816721&sr=8-1)

Sequel to the international bestseller *Freakonomics*, Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner's *Superfreakonomics* is an irresistible look at the counterintuitive science of everyday life. The Freakquel is here. In *Superfreakonomics* Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner look deeper, question harder and uncover even more hidden truths about our world, from terrorism to shark attacks, cable TV to hurricanes. They ask, among other things:

What's a sure-fire way to catch a terrorist?

Are people hard-wired for altruism or selfishness?

Which cancer does chemotherapy work best for?

Why is combating global warming easier than we think?

### **Bad Science (2009)**

(Lots of populist myths skewered - Richard Lucas)

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/Bad-Science-Ben-Goldacre/dp/000728487X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1352816912&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Bad-Science-Ben-Goldacre/dp/000728487X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1352816912&sr=1-1)

Ben Goldacre's wise and witty bestseller, shortlisted for the Samuel Johnson Prize, lifts the lid on quack doctors, flaky statistics, scaremongering journalists and evil pharmaceutical corporations. Since 2003 Dr Ben Goldacre has been exposing dodgy medical data in his popular Guardian column. In this eye-opening book he takes on the MMR hoax and misleading cosmetics ads, acupuncture and homeopathy, vitamins and mankind's vexed relationship with all manner of 'toxins'. Along the way, the self-confessed 'Johnny Ball cum Witchfinder General' performs a successful detox on a Barbie doll, sees his dead cat become a certified nutritionist and probes the supposed medical qualifications of 'Dr' Gillian McKeith.

Full spleen and satire, Ben Goldacre takes us on a hilarious, invigorating and ultimately alarming journey through the bad science we are fed daily by hacks and quacks.

### **This time is different (2011 – 4 - £9.39 not amazon)**

(Financial crises through the ages - Richard Lucas)

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/This-Time-Different-Centuries-Financial/dp/0691152640/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1352817256&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.co.uk/This-Time-Different-Centuries-Financial/dp/0691152640/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1352817256&sr=1-1)

Throughout history, rich and poor countries alike have been lending, borrowing, crashing--and recovering--their way through an extraordinary range of financial crises. Each time, the experts have chimed, "this time is different"--claiming that the old rules of valuation no longer apply and that the new situation bears little similarity to past disasters. With this breakthrough study, leading economists Carmen Reinhart and Kenneth Rogoff definitively prove them wrong. Covering sixty-six countries across five continents, This Time Is Different presents a comprehensive look at the varieties of financial crises, and guides us through eight astonishing centuries of government defaults, banking panics, and inflationary spikes--from medieval currency debasements to today's subprime catastrophe. Carmen Reinhart and Kenneth Rogoff, leading economists whose work has been influential in the policy debate concerning the current financial crisis, provocatively argue that financial combustions are universal rites of passage for emerging and established market nations. The authors draw important lessons from history to show us how much--or how little--we have learned.

### **Drive (2011)**

(Examination of motivation - Richard Lucas)

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/Drive-Surprising-Truth-About-Motivates/dp/184767769X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1352817296&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Drive-Surprising-Truth-About-Motivates/dp/184767769X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1352817296&sr=1-1)

Forget everything you thought you knew about how to motivate people - at work, at school, at home. It is wrong. As Daniel H. Pink explains in his paradigm-shattering book Drive, the secret to high performance and satisfaction in today's world is the deeply human need to direct our own lives, to learn and create new things, and to do better by ourselves and the world. Along the way, he takes us to companies that are enlisting new approaches to motivation, and introduces us to the scientists and entrepreneurs who are pointing a bold way forward.

### **Journey to the east (1932– 4 - £7.99).** Hermann Hesse,

(Provocative and tie into major historic theme - Sid Clough)

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/Journey-East-Hermann-Hesse/dp/B004ASN8O8/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1352996156&sr=1-2](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Journey-East-Hermann-Hesse/dp/B004ASN8O8/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1352996156&sr=1-2)

The story is really an inconsequential element of this dissertation. The author's membership in an organization called The League has been rescinded and he is seeking reentry. A loss of faith and vision is responsible for the subtle ostracism from the League and corresponds to the loss of a

raison d'etre on the part of the erstwhile member. Coming across Leo, a member who had accompanied the League on the journey - an integral part of their lives - Hesse realizes that the journey which he had imagined terminated was going on all around him. The lack of faith had blinded his perception of it. Through a mortification of his ego, he is again accepted into the League. This mystical structure, the League, represents the spiritual community through which one gains happiness. Isolation, our common denominator, will never germinate into the fruits of a full life. One must join the brotherhood of man in their faith - not necessarily in God, or science - more appropriately, in their faith in each other. Only through involvement with others in a common vision can the solitude of a man be comforted and controlled. The vision while it is collective and, therefore, anonymous, still preserves the unique and precious design of the individual. Membership in the League will give meaning to his personal predispositions as well as comfort his isolation. This novel, written several years after *Steppenwolf*, has a market among intellectuals and college students.