“Are you tokking to me?”

The Animal Turn in Humanities and Social Sciences

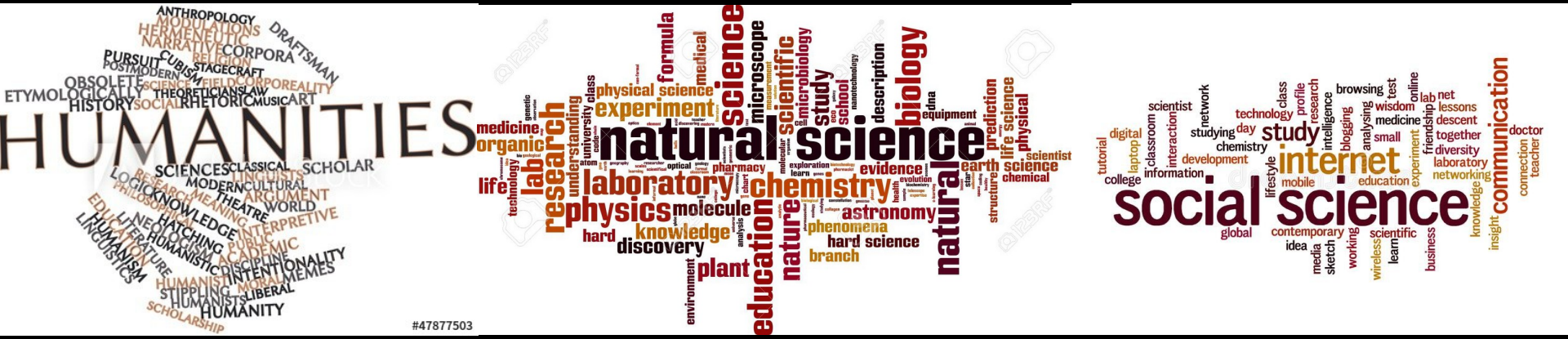




Maarten Reesink

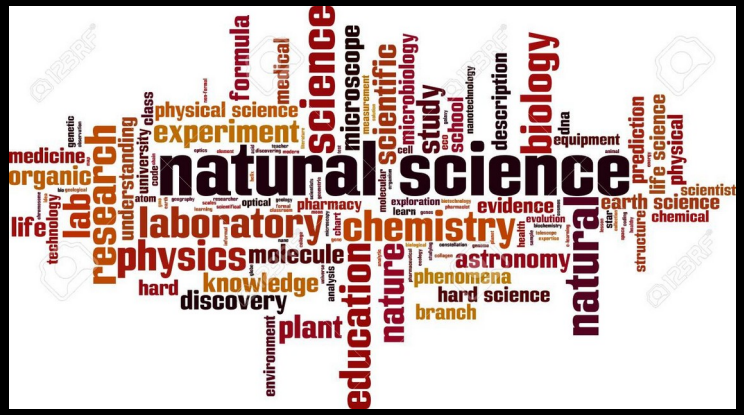
NWO SHIFT “Insights”

16 November 2026



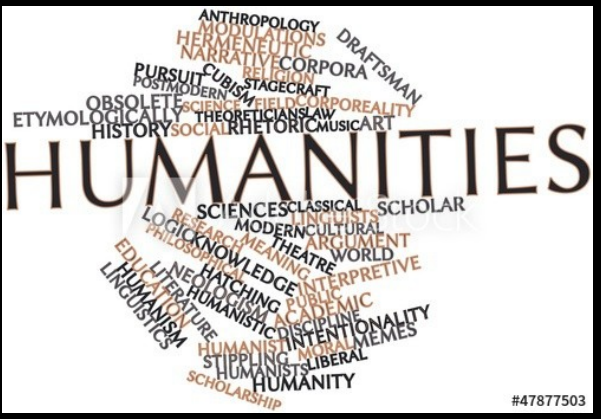
scientific
knowledge and research

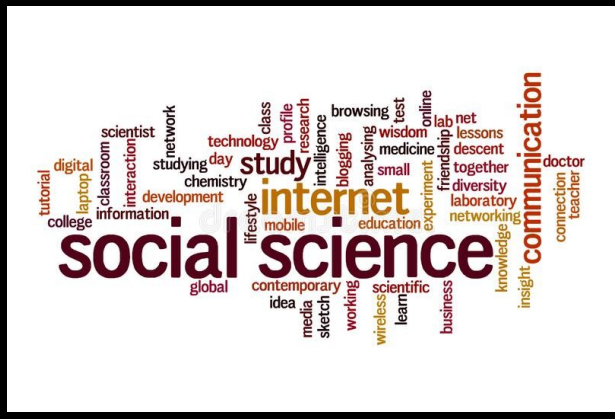
science about animals



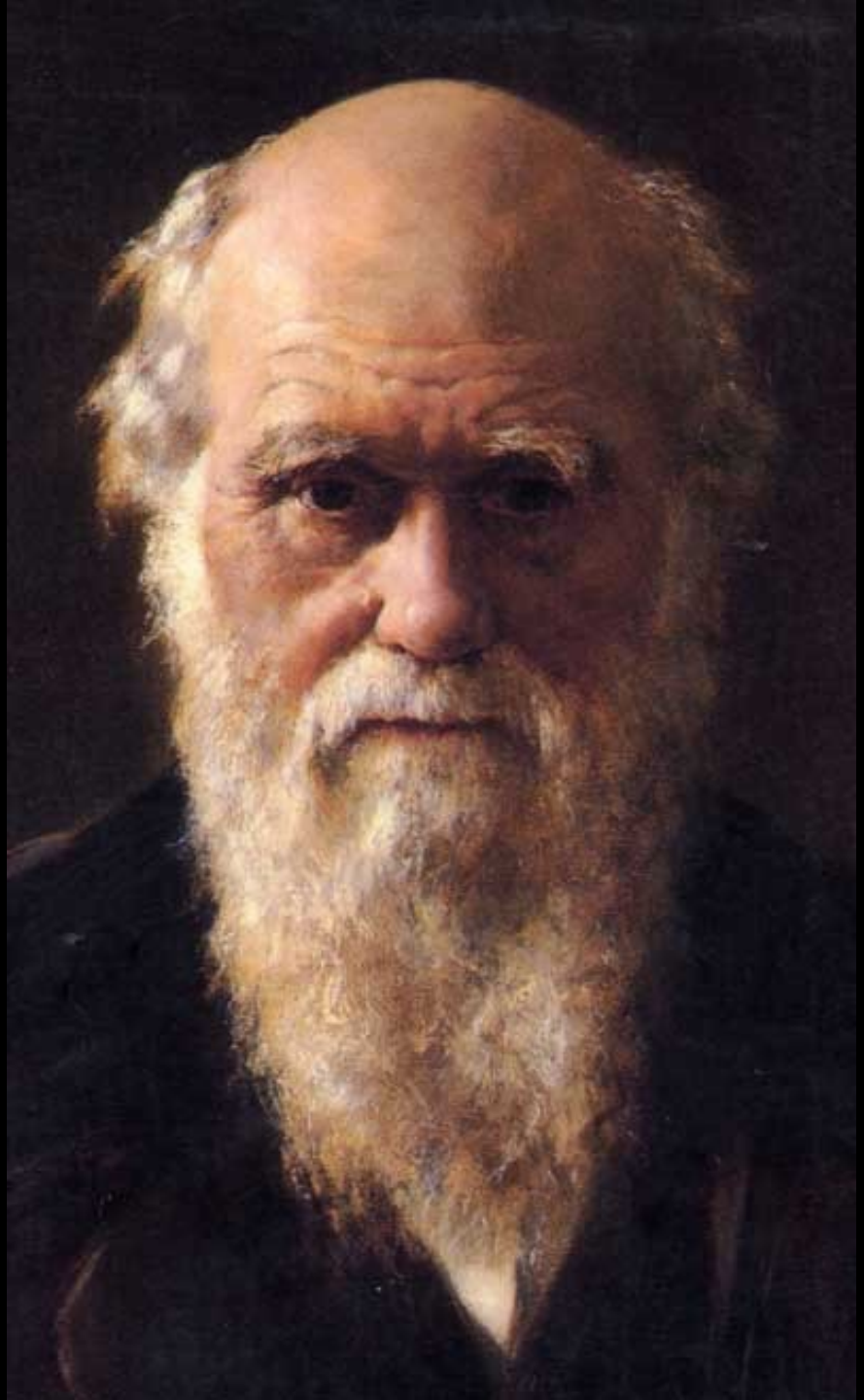
- search for ‘laws of nature’
- experiments on objects
- distance and detachment for objectivity

science about humans





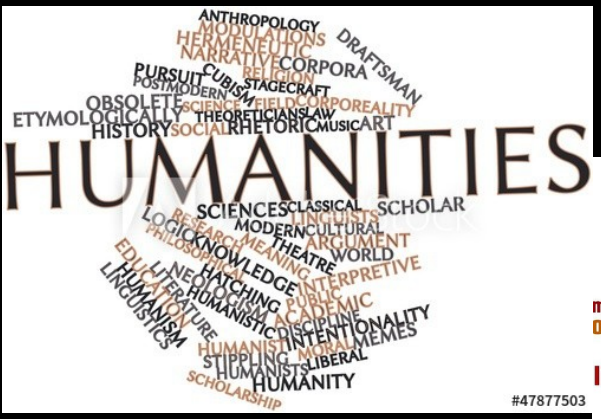
- search for correlations or uniqueness
- research with subjects
- (com)passion for interpretation

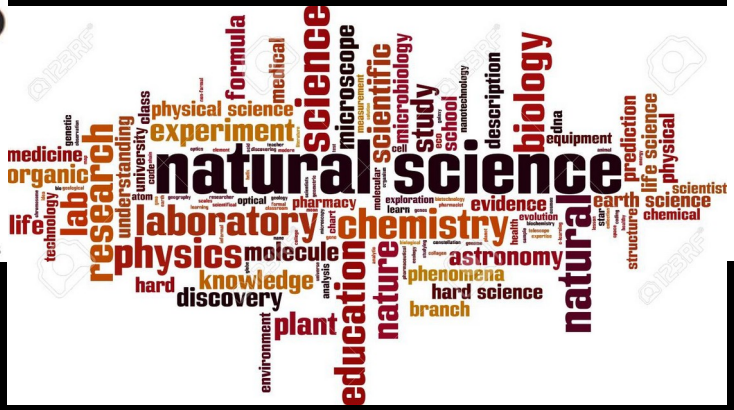


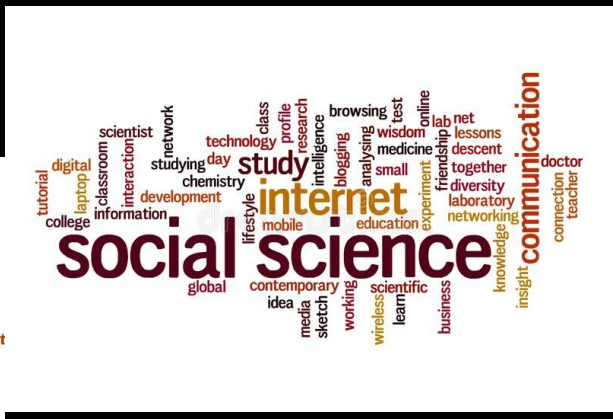


“‘Long before I went to Gombe, I learned from my dog Rusty that we were not the only creatures with personalities.
What the chimpanzees did was help me convince others.”

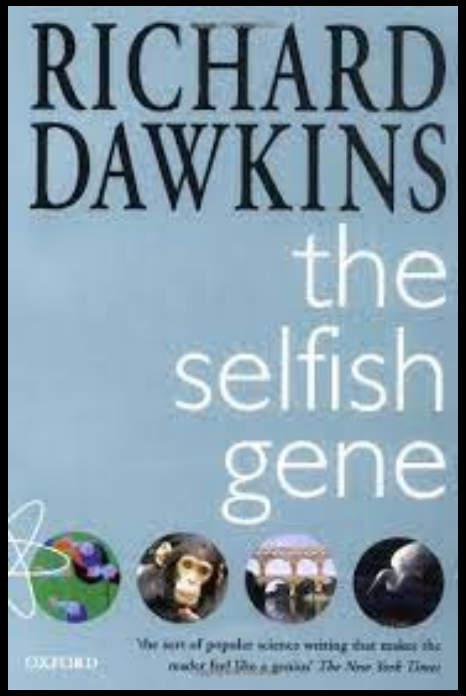
what does we miss?

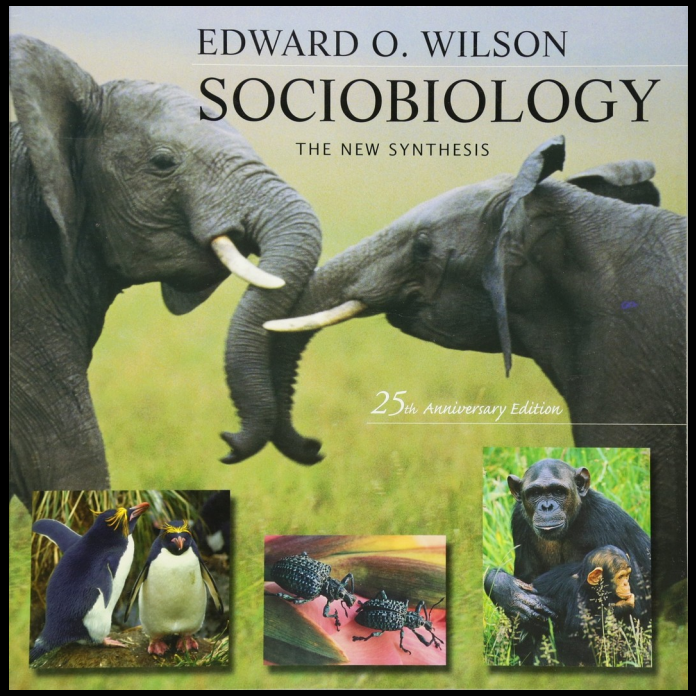


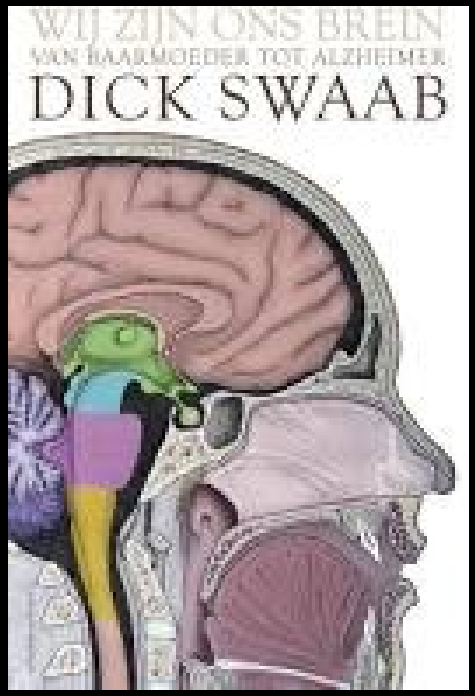




about humans

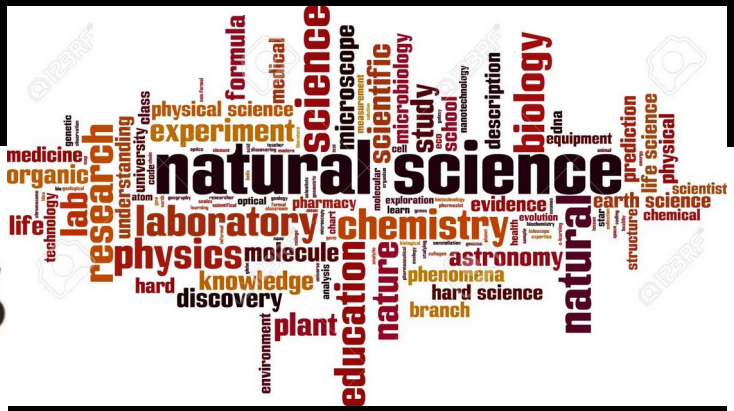

RICHARD
DAWKINS
the
selfish
gene
OXFORD

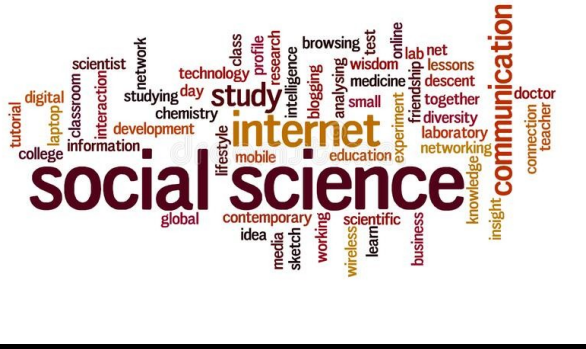

EDWARD O. WILSON
SOCIOBIOLOGY
THE NEW SYNTHESIS
25th Anniversary Edition


DICK SWAAB

what does we miss?



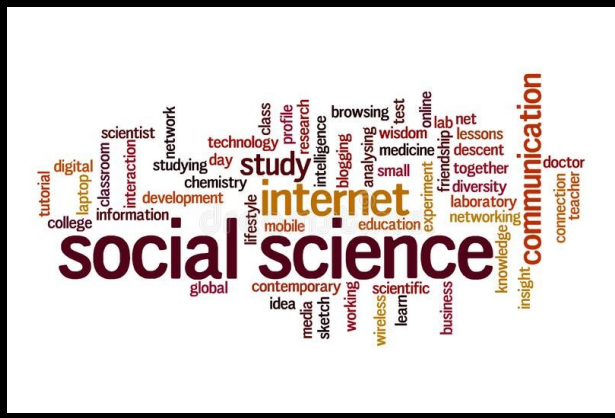




about / with / for
<u>other</u> animals

‘the animal turn’
in social sciences and humanities





science / scholarship

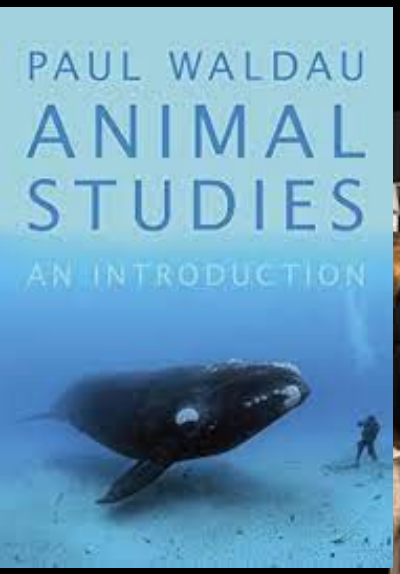
- about animals

(such as philosophy, history, law)

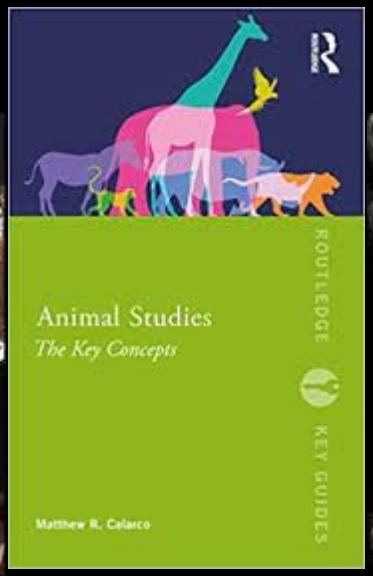
- of and with animals

(such as biology, psychology, anthropology etc.)

(Human-)
Animal Studies











The Oxford Handbook *of*
ANIMAL
STUDIES

animals and language







- animal are ‘dumb’ automatons
- language as the defining difference

‘talking animals’







- only in children’s books and ‘family films’
- un-scientific anthropomorphism







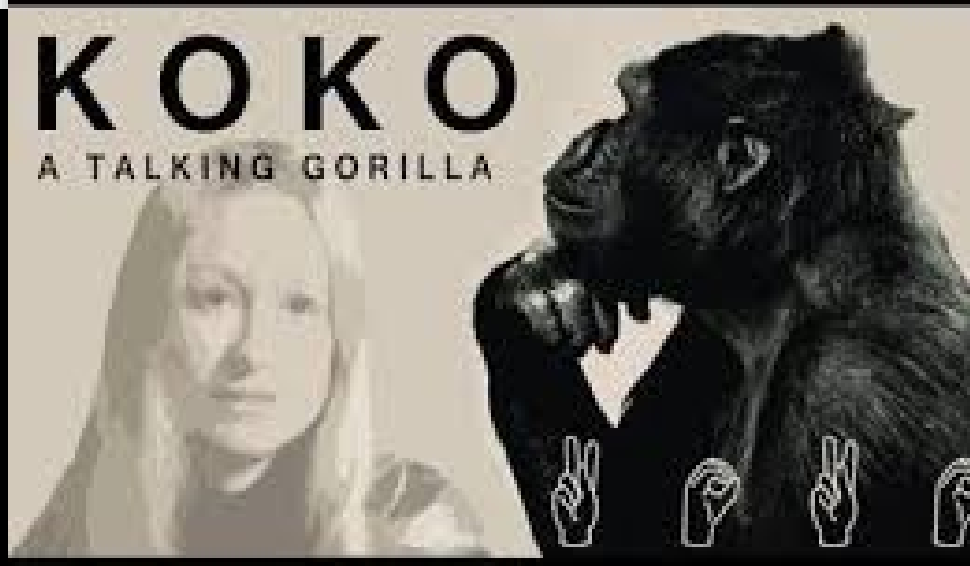
[The girl who talked to dolphins]
(Christopher Riley, UK 2014)
[trailer]

apes and *sign* language



Project Nim
(James Marsh, GB 2011)
trailer

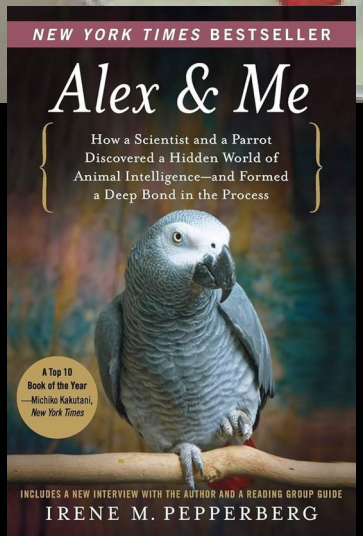
A conversation with Koko the gorilla
(USA 1999)
trailer



parroting? *parroting!*





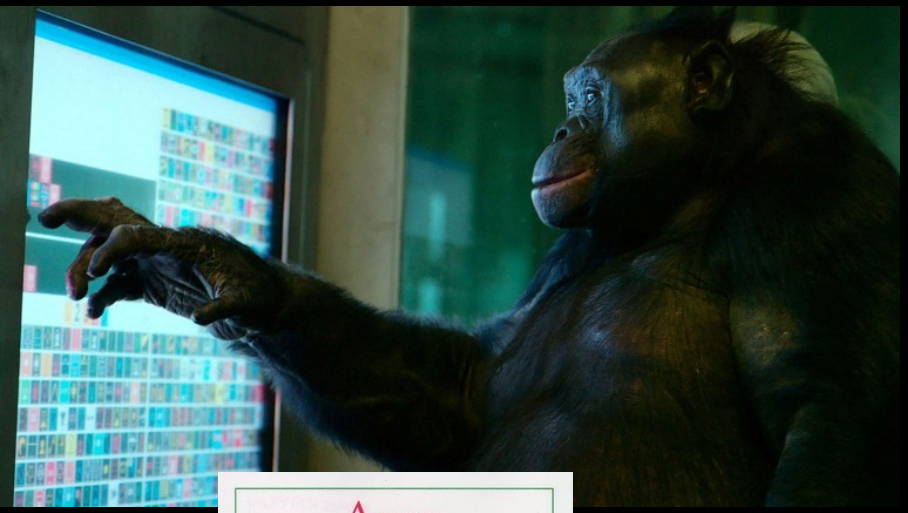


Irene Pepperberg

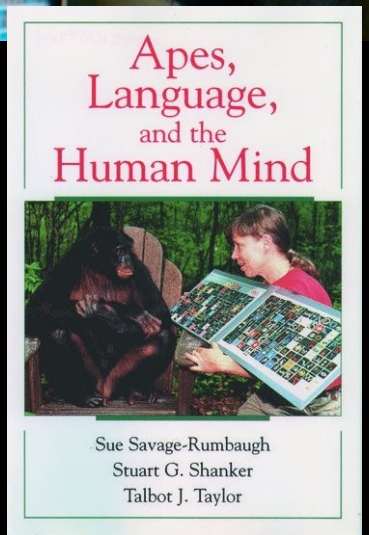
World Science Festival

The Moth: Alex & Me

apes and *symbolic* language







TED talk Sue Savage-Rumbaugh:
“The gentle genius of bonobos”

Animal Computer Interaction







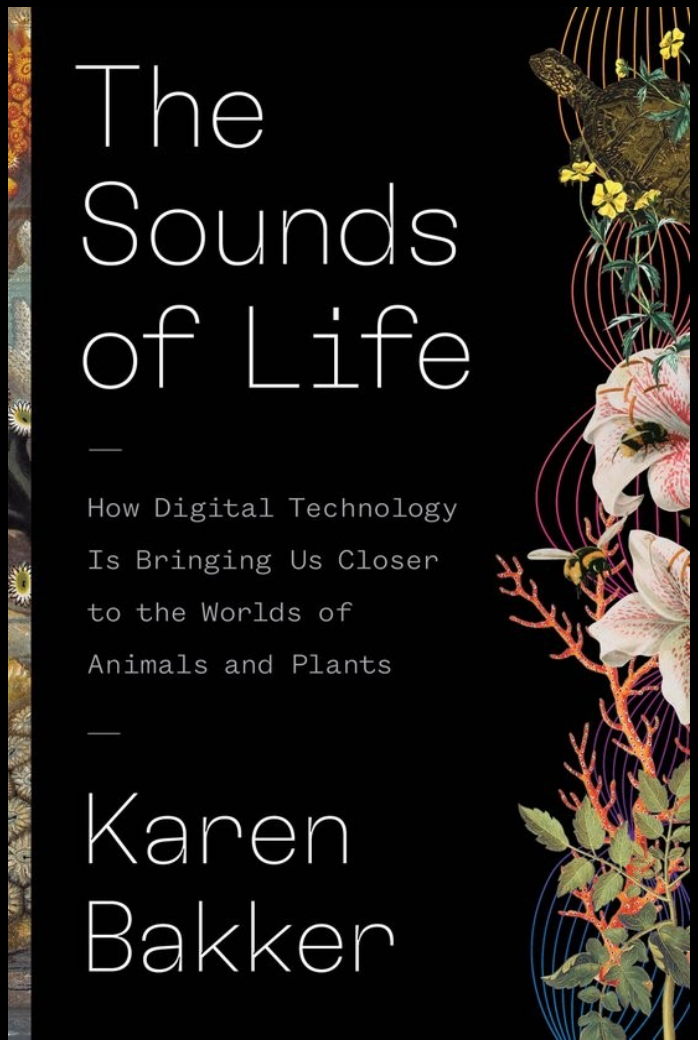


Interspecies Internet





Karen Bakker





“Could an orca give a TED talk?”





“A zoological version of Google Translate is likely to be available within a decade, maybe two.”

Karen Bakker
The sounds of life (2022)

(factory) farm animals



cow quiz



chicken happiness meter

giving animals a voice – l i t e r a l l y



