



The Medusa And The Snail - More Notes Of A Biology Watcher

Lewis Thomas

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REVIEW by Andrew Parker (Toronto, Ontario Canada) This review is from: The Medusa and the Snail: More Notes of a Biology Watcher (Paperback) This collection of essays has held a special place on my shelf and in my heart for many years. I return to it often for both the ideas and the wonderful sense of life that Lewis Thomas injects into his writing. I have read other reviews here questioning both the scientific value of these essays and the author's scientific credentials. As for the latter - this man has been a doctor, a field researcher, a lab director, a professor, the dean of Yale medical school, President of the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and member of the Presidential Science Advisory Board. If you have an issue with these credentials your standards are a little too high. To speak of the scientific value of this book is difficult. Lewis Thomas didn't write like Steven Jay Gould, with clear theses, dates and names and cited research. He is more like Douglas Hofstadter. (if this comparison helps) I imagine that Lewis Thomas wrote these essays late at night after a day filled with details and the reductionism of modern science. These essays are the antithesis of what his days must have entailed. What we find on paper here are both the whimsical musings and deepest thoughts of a brilliant man whose whole life was devoted to practicing and teaching science. He writes beautifully, with humour, zest, and a sense of wonder that I find endlessly captivating. His love of the natural world is infectious. Please read this book. Of all the science books I've read (I have two science degrees) and all the fiction I've read, this book continues to inspire, teach, and amaze me.

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