



# The Hand: How Its Use Shapes the Brain, Language, and Human Culture

By Frank R. Wilson

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"A startling argument . . . provocative . . . absorbing." --*The Boston Globe*

"Ambitious . . . arresting . . . celebrates the importance of hands to our lives today as well as to the history of our species."

--*The New York Times Book Review*

The human hand is a miracle of biomechanics, one of the most remarkable adaptations in the history of evolution. The hands of a concert pianist can elicit glorious sound and stir emotion; those of a surgeon can perform the most delicate operations; those of a rock climber allow him to scale a vertical mountain wall. Neurologist Frank R. Wilson makes the striking claim that it is because of the unique structure of the hand and its evolution in cooperation with the brain that Homo sapiens became the most intelligent, preeminent animal on the earth.

In this fascinating book, Wilson moves from a discussion of the hand's evolution--and how its intimate communication with the brain affects such areas as neurology, psychology, and linguistics--to provocative new ideas about human creativity and how best to nurture it. Like Oliver Sacks and Stephen Jay Gould, Wilson handles a daunting range of scientific knowledge with a surprising deftness and a profound curiosity about human possibility. Provocative, illuminating, and delightful to read, **The Hand** encourages us to think in new ways about one of our most taken-for-granted assets.

"A mark of the book's excellence [is that] it makes the reader aware of the wonder in trivial, everyday acts, and reveals the complexity behind the simplest manipulation." --*The Washington Post*

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

The hand is, among other things, a complex symbol, representing both the creative and the prosaic. This blending of the spiritual and the mundane is what makes the hand unique, as it in turn makes us unique among animals. Neurologist Frank R. Wilson has taken on a heroic task: to *explain* the hand on both of these levels and to show us how we use these marvelous instruments to find and create meaning in our lives.

Anthropology, neuroscience, music, and puppetry all figure prominently in *The Hand*, which effortlessly guides the reader through its million-year biography. Brains and thumbs growing and changing to accommodate each other, discovering tools and language together, kicked us out of the monkey house for good. While there is still controversy over whether we are the brainiest animals on the planet, it is abundantly clear that we are the handiest.

This manipulative ability is our greatest strength and our most terrible flaw. Without hands we would have no Louvre but also no nerve gas. But, Wilson says, our situation is more complex. Our access to far greater means to achieve our ends gives us a greater hunger for meaning. We long to use our hands to satisfy our needs--whether spiritual or down-to-earth. This creation of meaning from nothing may be our greatest achievement. In the end, *The Hand* is brightly optimistic, showing that our reach truly does exceed our grasp.  
--Rob Lightner

#### From Publishers Weekly

Neurologist Wilson (*Tone Deaf and All Thumbs?*) gathers arguments from anthropology, psychology and medicine, along with the personal stories of musicians, backhoe operators, puppeteers and prestidigitators, to demonstrate the centrality to intelligence of our human hand. His account of the coevolution of hand and brain through our primate ancestors is fascinating, and the science he cites is rigorous and profound. The insights along the way are startling to the layperson even if old news to savants. For example, the size of a primate's neocortex is proportionate to the size of its maximum stable social group (our own being about 150). The emphasis throughout is on "the interaction of the biologic and social processes," as, for example, an artist, from early childhood, finds her way toward her instrument, and also as the species itself evolves over millennia, starting, as Darwin observed, with the freeing of the upper limbs by our descent from the trees. Out of the analysis of intelligence as fundamentally somatic there emerges a critique of educational theory. Wilson is a passionate advocate of process-centered teaching with attention to individual intelligences. Despite absorbing material and an ultimately cogent and important argument, his book dwells too long on inessential details of the case histories, and it sometimes loses steam in scholarly discourse; also, the organization into short, pithy chapters obscures the structure of the whole. Thus, although their work is rewarded, readers have to labor a bit too hard to tie the argument together. B&w illustrations throughout.  
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#### From Library Journal

Why human beings developed such large brains is an open question in evolution. Neurologist Wilson argues that oversized brains were advantageous in order to control the hand, which in turn makes it possible to control the external environment. Drawing upon biology, linguistics, psychology, anthropology, and other fields, he exhibits a firm "grasp" of diverse subjects.

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Do you have favorite book? In case you have, what is your favorite's book? Book is very important thing for us to learn everything in the world. Each guide has different aim or goal; it means that publication has different type. Some people feel enjoy to spend their time for you to read a book. These are reading whatever they have because their hobby is reading a book. What about the person who don't like reading a book? Sometime, individual feel need book whenever they found difficult problem or maybe exercise. Well, probably you will need this *The Hand: How Its Use Shapes the Brain, Language, and Human Culture*.

#### **Paula Cofield:**

This *The Hand: How Its Use Shapes the Brain, Language, and Human Culture* book is absolutely not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book is actually information inside this guide incredible fresh, you will get data which is getting deeper you read a lot of information you will get. This *The Hand: How Its Use Shapes the Brain, Language, and Human Culture* without we recognize teach the one who examining it become critical in thinking and analyzing. Don't become worry *The Hand: How Its Use Shapes the Brain, Language, and Human Culture* can bring any time you are and not make your tote space or bookshelves' grow to be full because you can have it within your lovely laptop even cell phone. This *The Hand: How Its Use Shapes the Brain, Language, and Human Culture* having good arrangement in word as well as layout, so you will not sense uninterested in reading.

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