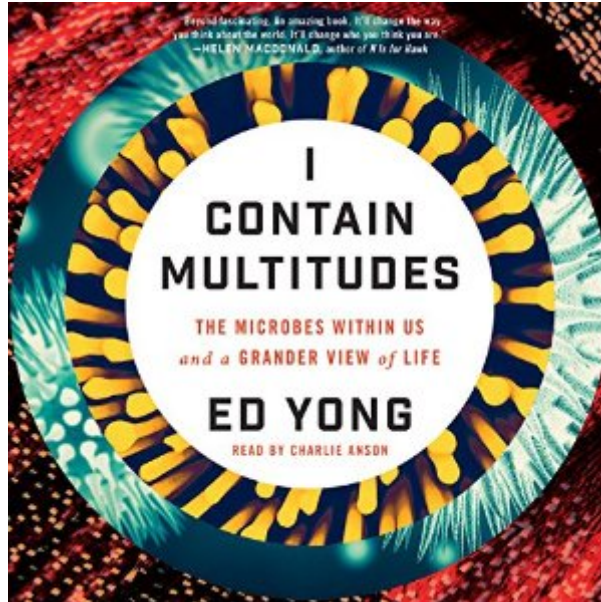


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# I Contain Multitudes: The Microbes Within Us And A Grander View Of Life



## Synopsis

Joining the ranks of popular science classics like *The Botany of Desire* and *The Selfish Gene*, a groundbreaking, wondrously informative, and vastly entertaining examination of the most significant revolution in biology since Darwin - a "microbe's-eye view" of the world that reveals a marvelous, radically reconceived picture of life on Earth. Every animal, whether human, squid, or wasp, is home to millions of bacteria and other microbes. Ed Yong, whose humor is as evident as his erudition, prompts us to look at ourselves and our animal companions in a new light - less as individuals and more as the interconnected, interdependent multitudes we assuredly are. The microbes in our bodies are part of our immune systems and protect us from disease. In the deep oceans, mysterious creatures without mouths or guts depend on microbes for all their energy. Bacteria provide squid with invisibility cloaks, help beetles to bring down forests, and allow worms to cause diseases that afflict millions of people. Many people think of microbes as germs to be eradicated, but those that live with us - the microbiome - build our bodies, protect our health, shape our identities, and grant us incredible abilities. In this astonishing book, Ed Yong takes us on a grand tour through our microbial partners and introduces us to the scientists on the front lines of discovery. It will change both our view of nature and our sense of where we belong in it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It's time we became friends with microbes. And not just with them but with their very idea, because it's likely going to be crucial to our lives on this planet and beyond. For a long time most humans have regarded bacteria as a nuisance. This is because we become aware of them only

when something goes wrong, only when they cause diseases like tuberculosis and diarrhea. But as Ed Yong reveals in this sweeping, exciting tour of biology, ecology and medicine which is pregnant with possibility, the vast majority of microbes help us in ways which we cannot possibly fathom, which permeate not just our existence but that of every single other life form on our planet. The knowledge that this microbial universe is uncovering holds tantalizing clues to treating diseases, changing how we eat and live and potentially effecting a philosophical upheaval in our view of our relationship with each other and with the rest of life. Yong's book shines in three ways. Firstly it's not just a book about the much heralded "microbiome" - the densely populated and ubiquitous universe of bacteria which lives on and within us and which rivals our cells in terms of numbers - but it's about the much larger universe of microbes in all its guises. Yong dispels many misconceptions, such as the blanket statements that bacteria are good or bad for us, or that antibiotics are always good or bad for us. His narrative sweeps over vast landscape, from the role of bacteria in the origins of life to their key functions in helping animals bond on the savannah, to new therapies that could emerge from understanding their roles in diseases like allergies and IBD. One fascinating subject which I think Yong could have touched on is the potential role of microbes in seeding extraterrestrial life.

Echoing Charles Darwin's concluding paragraph in the first edition of Darwin's "On the Origin of Species" in its subtitle, noted science journalist Ed Yong's "I Contain Multitudes: The Microbes Within Us and a Grand View of Life" is an exceptional, quite riveting, account explaining how bacteria and other microbes have played - and continue to play - important roles in shaping the course of the history of life on our planet. Yong offers us a compelling account of microbial ecology - especially the human microbiome - that can be seen as a worthy successor to David Quammen's masterful book on biogeography, "The Song of The Dodo: Island Biogeography in an Age of Extinction", Quammen's other notable works on evolutionary biology and Carl Zimmer's excellent books ranging from microbiology to evolutionary biology. While Yong does not explicitly refer to the coevolution of bacteria and other microbes within their plant and animal hosts, he does stress the importance of the mutualistic aspects of coevolution, noting as the main theme of his book, symbiosis between microbes and those other, much larger, organisms for which they are the "multitudes" within them. Yong takes readers on a compelling journey through space and time, noting some of the most important figures in the history of microbiology as well as introducing us to important contemporary microbiologists, and especially, microbial ecologists, such as University of Texas, Austin entomologist Nancy A. Moran, who is highly regarded for her research into the

coevolution of aphids with their microbiomes, and most recently, honeybees with theirs.

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