Rupert Sheldrake
Biography

British biologist Rupert Sheldrake (born 1942), with a Cambridge biochemistry PhD and Harvard research background, emerged as a provocative challenger to scientific orthodoxy. Moving beyond conventional plant development studies, he proposed the radical theory of morphic resonance in the 1980s. This concept posits that self-organizing systems—from cells and crystals to flocks of birds and human minds—inherit a collective memory through non-material, pattern-shaping "morphic fields." Sheldrake argues that nature operates not by fixed, eternal laws, but by evolving habits. The more often a specific form or behavior occurs, the stronger its associated morphic field becomes, making it easier for similar systems anywhere to adopt it through resonance. This "formative causation" aims to explain phenomena like instinct, rapid species-wide learning (e.g., rats mastering a maze faster globally after initial success elsewhere), telepathy in bonded animals, and even phantom limbs.

Sheldrake's ideas drew fierce criticism, epitomized by his clash with arch-materialist Richard Dawkins. A notorious 2013 interview saw Dawkins dismiss morphic resonance as "nonsense" while admitting he hadn't read Sheldrake's key work, leading Sheldrake to accuse Dawkins of unscientific dogmatism. Sheldrake framed this conflict in his book *The Science Delusion* (2012), a direct counter to Dawkins' *The God Delusion*, arguing rigid materialism stifles inquiry. Despite decades as a fringe figure, Sheldrake's work is experiencing a big reappraisal. While not claiming morphic fields are quantum fields, leading physicists like Nobel laureate Brian Josephson and Basil Hiley (collaborator of David Bohm) note compelling parallels. Concepts

like non-locality (instantaneous connection across space), observer effects, and holistic field theories in quantum physics resonate with Sheldrake's vision of an interconnected, memory-laden universe where information and organization are fundamental. His foundational works remain *A New Science of Life* (1981), *The Presence of the Past* (1988), and *The Science Delusion* (2012).

Major Books

The Science Delusion (2012):

A critical examination of the ten core dogmas of modern science, challenging the materialist worldview and advocating for a more open, inquisitive approach to biological and physical phenomena.

Presence of the Past (1988):

An expansion on his earlier theories, exploring how memory, habit, and heredity function through morphic resonance, suggesting that the "laws" of nature may actually be more like evolving habits.

A New Science of Life (1981):

The landmark text that first introduced the hypothesis of morphic resonance, proposing that nature has an inherent memory and that "morphic fields" shape the form and behavior of all living systems.