

***An exploration of the tension between science and religion by the Pulitzer and Orange prize-winning author***

# **ABSENCE OF MIND**

## **The Dispelling of Inwardness from the Modern Myth of the Self**

### **Marilynne Robinson**

*Published by Yale University Press on 10 June 2010, priced £16.99*  
*All press enquiries to Sarah Harrison, for Yale University Press, T: 07768 372892 or E: [sarah@sarahharrisonpr.com](mailto:sarah@sarahharrisonpr.com)*

In *Absence of Mind*, acclaimed writer Marilynne Robinson makes an incisive exploration of the tension between science and religion, showing how our concept of mind determines how we understand and value human nature and human civilisation. Robinson applies her astute intellect to some of the most vexing topics in the history of human thought – science, religion, consciousness. Crafted with the same care and insight as her award-winning novels, *Absence of Mind* challenges post modern atheists who crusade against religion under the banner of science. In Robinson’s view, scientific reasoning does not denote a sense of logical infallibility, as thinkers like Richard Dawkins might suggest. Instead, in its purest form, science represents a search for answers. It engages the problem of knowledge, an aspect of the mystery of consciousness, rather than providing a simple and final model of reality.

*Absence of Mind* consists of four chapters originally delivered as the 2009 Dwight H. Terry Lecture Series at Yale University:

- On Human Nature
- The Strange History of Altruism
- The Freudian Self
- Thinking Again

Robinson touches on what it means to be human, the role of altruism in positivist, Darwinist and neo-Darwinist thought, the role of the self as defined by Sigmund Freud, and the tendency of modern and contemporary thought to disallow subjective testimony about the nature of experience.

By defending the importance of individual reflection, Robinson celebrates the power and variety of human consciousness in the tradition of William James. She explores the nature of subjectivity and considers the culture in which Sigmund Freud was situated and its influence on his model of self and civilisation. Through keen interpretations of language, emotion, science and poetry, *Absence of Mind* restores human consciousness to its central place in the religion-science debate.

Marilynne Robinson is the author of *Gilead*, winner of the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for fiction; *Home*, winner of the 2009 Orange Prize; and *Housekeeping*, winner of the 1982 Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award for first fiction. She is also the author of two books of non-fiction, *Mother Country* and *The Death of Adam*. She teaches at the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop.

*Absence of Mind* is published by Yale University Press on 10 June 2010, priced £16.99

All press enquiries to Sarah Harrison, for Yale University Press, T: 07768 372892 or E: [sarah@sarahharrisonpr.com](mailto:sarah@sarahharrisonpr.com)