

SIX
THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

As the proud warriors of sociobiology were led into battle by E.O.Wilson, so did the crusading anthropologist Ashley Montagu initially serve as the white knight on horseback for the opposition.

I first came to know him as the chairman of the committee who gave me a prestigious national award for *The Healing of a Nation*. Thereafter, we wove in and out of each other's lives with my marveling at and treasuring every contact I was lucky to have with this truly remarkable human being. After a lifetime of battling with immense scholarship and a wonderful sense of humor for all the sensible and decent causes, Ashley died at the age of 94. His output bearing on evolution was enormous. At times, *The Direction of Human Development* (Harper, 1955; Hawthorn, 1970) shows an echoing resemblance to the invisible book concealed within *The Descent of Man*. His book *Touching* (Harper, 1971) is a classic that will long endure.

Montagu did not develop any structured theory. Nor did he deal directly with morality. But if we set aside the word morality—and the fact Ashley first encouraged and then practically damned me for the direction I've taken, which we'll look at in Book III. If we simply focus on what is involved in human relational terms, *The Direction of Human Development* was perhaps the best articulation of the general thrust for the "lost Darwin" perspective other than Abraham Maslow's pivotal developmental of a humanistic psychology in *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Van Nostrand, 1948) or psychiatrist Roderic Gorney's *The Human Agenda* (Simon and Schuster, 1972; Guild of Tutors Press, 1979).

After a long review of both the biological and the social scientific evidence pointing in this direction, Montagu stated categorically, "We at long last have thus arrived at an understanding that there do exist certain universal values, and that these are born with every human being."

"Human nature is good," he unequivocally asserts.

Where most other evolutionists still found "diversity" or "complexity" were the only discernible directions for evolution, long ago Montagu ventured on to state what Darwin's long lost analysis made evident: that human agency injects direction into evolution and this

direction, however it may be stunted or blunted, is persistently and insistently moral.

"Since culture is the gift of human freedom, we are able to determine, within limits, the direction which the cultural process should take in the light of our experience and aspirations," Montagu told us.

Much of the book was also given to the development of love—rather than aggression—as not only the key emotion and value but also, in keeping with Darwin's lost vision, the directional thrust for our species.

"That is what we human beings seek all our lives, and society, culture, and our institutions, however insufficient some of them may be, all exist to secure that one fundamental satisfaction." His book, as a whole, Montagu hoped "may help humanity direct its own development toward the attainment of the optimum degree of health and happiness."

Yet Montagu too, although a voracious reader and recognized Darwinian scholar, was caught within the lash of the tale of the whale of paradigm. For he, too, skip-read *Descent* to bypass Darwin on morality.

This was particularly glaring in his book *Darwin, Competition and Cooperation*. Although Montagu already had begun to establish a wide, highly appreciative, and devoted readership, the book, as noted earlier he told me, "fell stillborn from the press." So embittering was the experience, indeed, that it seems to have led to the strange and unsettling experience I recount in Book III.

Published by Henry Shuman in 1952, *Darwin, Competition, and Cooperation* underlined the power of the "survival of the fittest" first half paradigm to quickly shove back into invisibility whatever threatens its rule. But it is to this first half that he assigns Darwin.

In other words, for all his enormous respect and liking for Darwin, to Montagu Darwin was truly and lamentably the icon of competition, and he, Ashley Montagu, was out to marshal the scientific evidence against unreconstructed "dog eat dog" Darwinism.

In *Darwin, Competition and Cooperation*, Montagu focused on the obvious part that cooperation as well as competition plays in evolution. But what he never seemed to realize was that the emphasis was already there in Darwin. Under variants of the root word "mutual" (for "cooperation" enters the literature at a later period), in Darwin's *Descent* what we know today as cooperation shows up in word counts 24 times in contrast to only 9 times for "competition."

But within Darwin's development of his theory, cooperation was not the be-all and end-all for human advancement. It did not over-ride competition in any form. The vital difference for Darwin was that cooperation was a component or subset of the over-riding drive of *moral sensitivity*.

Kropotkin had further made it clear that cooperation was a facet of the underlying core moral factor that any kind of rigorous theory, particularly of human evolution, must focus on.

The power of Darwin's theory lies in the tragic conundrum of its hidden agreement with the sullied and muddled ideal for the Creationists and other religious critics of science.

In other words, it could be that Darwin's greatest contribution was the fact that for the first time in the span of human history he provided the scientific grounding and backing for the emphasis of the great spiritual visionaries over thousands of years on a "moral sense" as central driver for evolution.

To this Darwin added, as components, "sympathy" as a motivator for the individual, and "cooperation" as an impelling and shaping social force.

Yet to this vital distinction Montagu—as well as all too many liberals prior to the wake-up call of the 2000 and 2004 American presidential elections—remained wholly blind.

Stephen Jay Gould

As legions of readers came to know, the books of Stephen Jay Gould were among the most delightful of his time. Gould became perhaps the major figure for the 20th century in bringing Darwin and his works to life. During the course of doing so, along with Montagu, he pioneered in first warning of, and then regularly hammering away at the inadequacies of sociobiology.

Here I will first summarize what I earlier covered of Gould's work in Book I, then move on to the jolts and other surprises that emerge on taking a new look at Gould from the more intimate perspective of this book.

Beginning with Social Darwinism, in *Ever Since Darwin* (Norton, 1980) Gould noted the persisting sequence for an eruption of killer ape, naked ape, Carleton Coon, Jensen and Shockley IQ differences books variously promoting imperialism, sexism, and racism under the guise of science.

What they all had in common, Gould cogently observed, was the "crude biological determinism" then beginning to cloud the rise of sociobiology.

In the midst of the customary courtesies and niceties of academia, which so effectively preserve the status quo, Gould was refreshingly blunt in exposing both the personal and the social functional motivations for purportedly Darwinian books of this type.

"They range, I believe, from pedestrian pursuits of high royalties for best sellers to pernicious attempts to reintroduce racism as a respectable science." Biological determinism, he observed, "has always been used to defend existing social arrangements as biologically

inevitable. . . Why else would a set of ideas so devoid of factual support gain such a consistently good press from established media..."

Sociobiology purportedly was setting out to promise more this time, and was being impressively expressed by scientists of the stature of E.O. Wilson. But Gould advised at the time that one must keep a wary eye on what happened with it. He hoped that rather than what he feared, "the pluralistic spirit of Darwin's own work will permeate more areas of evolutionary thought, where rigid dogmas still reign as a consequences of unquestioned preference, old habits, or social prejudice."

What then happened for the succeeding twenty years with sociobiology was a replay of everything on the down side that had happened earlier, only with increasingly greater force into the shameful entry of America into the 21st century. At the same time, however, here and there emerged the contradictions and inconsistencies in Gould and his fellow knights for "our side" that reveal the deeper dynamics of going up against and defending the paradigm.

Ironically, sociobiology's chief advance was probably in reawakening and forcing a new dialogue in both science and society on the subject of the passion of Darwin that particularly interests us here, his moral theory—of which Gould, as well as the other critics of sociobiology, as well as the sociobiologists themselves, were wholly unaware.

Aside from the vacuum on the subject that the books of both sides reflect, it is evident that when the sociobiologists focused on selfishness as the sole engine of morality, had anyone among the opposition known of Darwin's true beliefs on this score America and the world might have known a different close for the 20th century. For had they both read and comprehended what lies behind Darwin's writing of moral sensitivity 92 times and of love 95 times in *Descent*, they surely would have countered the Neos and the Super Neos with this knowledge. But there is nothing in Gould's *Ever Since Darwin* to this effect.

Instead, in this book Gould described the effectiveness of Hamilton's selfish kinship selection explanation for altruism in glowing terms—and then plunged into a lifetime commitment thereafter to the selfishness-as-the-engine-of- morality theory!

Surely this man whose stock in trade was that he seemed to have read everything Darwin ever wrote backwards and forwards might now quickly wise up, one thinks. But no, in his very next book, *Hen's Teeth and Horses's Toes* (Norton, 1983), he further entrenched himself in the same pit of selfishness as the sociobiologists. For here Gould also brought up the chief piece of so-called Darwinian wisdom not only wholly counter to what Darwin himself really believed, but also wholly counter to what for Darwin was central to the construction of the completing second half of his theory.

This comes up in a chapter on "nonmoral nature." After reviewing the evidence of the

brutality of nature, Gould disparages the "tradition of attempting to read moral meaning from nature." The answers to the questions of morality "do not, and cannot, arise from the data of science."

Strange indeed, when this is again precisely what Darwin was doing throughout the whole of *The Descent of Man*. Moreover, Darwin was already in hot pursuit of evidence of the rise of morality out of "the data of science" in his private notebooks as early as his return from the famous voyage of the Beagle.

Gould not only returned to this theme in *Bully for Brontosaurus* (Norton, 1991). In nature or evolution, he told us, "The answers are not lying out there, waiting to be discovered." Indeed, he continued to deny any connection between nature and morality as late as 1999, just one year short of the new millennium.

In the 1400 pages of Gould's huge almost posthumously published (he died in 2002) *The Structure of Evolution Theory* (Harvard University Press, 2002)—impelled I believe by his own fundamental nature as a progressive moral being—he struggled with Darwin on morality for the last time in portions of three pages. But soon what started out as a fumbling in the right direction, collapsed within a detour into another aspect of theory.

"As humans, we surely have a legitimate personal interest in our moral behavior, but we cannot enshrine this property as occupying more than a tiny corner of nature," he concluded.

Lewontin, Rose, and Kamin

Following Gould's first punch at the sociobiologists in 1980, neurobiologist Richard Lewontin, sociologist Steven Rose and psychologist Leon Kamin followed in 1984 with what, as noted in Book I, many hoped might prove to be the knockout blow in the classic one-two punch technique for boxing. The intended right to the jaw was *Not in Our Genes* (Pantheon), which contained chapters not only of unsettling insight in their exposure of the social and political consequences of unreconstructed sociobiology. In the closing chapter, in a comparison of the new biology and the old biology, the authors engaged in an analysis of the relation of ourselves and all other organisms to our environment of profound importance to the task of joining the first half to the second half for Darwinian theory.

"Organisms do not simply adapt to previously existing, autonomous environments," they observed in a manifesto for the view of ourselves—as well as all other organisms—as active agents in the shaping of our destiny. Expressing precisely what 100 years earlier Darwin had shown in his construction of the invisibilized body of his theory, we "create, destroy, modify, and internally transform aspects of the external world by [our] own life activities to make this

environment."

Lewontin, Rose, and Kamin further punched across how and why the concept of free will—which ever since Immanuel Kant has been central to the theory of morality—was not the illusion sociobiologists and biological determinists in general tended to claim.

"Our brains, hands, and tongues have made us independent of many single major features of the external world," they observed of the departure for the human into what can now be seen as the second and completing half for Darwin's theory.

"Our biology has made us into creatures who are constantly re-creating our own psychic and material environments, and whose individual lives are the outcomes of an extraordinary multiplicity of intersecting causal pathways. Thus, it is our biology that makes us free."

Yet despite the fact the points they were making closely mirror what Darwin was saying earlier, in Lewontin, Rose, and Kamin, as earlier in the books of Gould and Julian Huxley, there was absolutely no evidence I could find that they'd ever read the long bypassed sections of *Descent* we are tracking here.

Howard Gruber

The first book to pierce the veil of invisibility with any impact was Howard Gruber and Paul Barrett's *Darwin on Man* (Dutton, 1974, with a fine University of Chicago edition now available).

As noted in Book I, through psychologist Gruber's painstaking labor of many years, for the first time Darwin's stature as a social scientist became evident. Darwin the psychologist emerged and one began to glimpse his sophistication as a systems scientist.

Particularly eye-opening was the attachment to their book of the Gruber-Barrett full text of Darwin's early notebooks. Unpublished for 132 years, this was the first time this startling new material became available to a reasonably wide readership. Jotted down by Darwin in the white heat of thought at the early high point for his creativity, just after he returned from the voyage of the *Beagle*, to most readers this has seemed no more than a jumble with a spark here and there. Some, however, found the early notebooks opened up a wholly new perspective on Darwin.

In my own case, as I report in detail in *Darwin's Lost Theory*, I found they contained the keys that unlocked the doors into the full Darwinian realm—both the ground-in-to-the-point-of-banality first half to his theory, and the hitherto invisible completing second half.

Gruber had been one of my professors during the years I worked on a doctorate at the

New School for Social Research. When first I saw his book I chuckled with the memory of the scuttlebutt I found among his students at the time. The word was that Prof Gruber had been wasting his time for years on a fuddy duddy study of something as old-fashioned and remote from the study of the psychology or anything else we were there to learn as the life of Darwin. Much later his initial encouragement became for me a rare island within a rip-tide-ridden sea of doubt during all the years it took to piece together and finally gain publication for my own “radical” books on Darwin and evolution theory.

As we’re beginning to see, a very rough road indeed lies ahead for anyone who might dare to show what unfolds if we link the invisible book within *Descent* to the roots for the humanistic completion of his theory in the early notebooks or, God forbid, our lives, and the life for our children, and pro or con the destiny for our species.

Gruber and Barrett's book itself did not move on to link Darwin's moral theorizing in the notebooks with the carefully expanded and extensive statement in *Descent*. Nor did it so much as hint that in this connection we are looking at the completion for Darwin's theory of evolution. But it won a National Book Award for its pioneering and opened the way for the first person in a century to do anything with some chance for abiding impact with the connection.

This was psychologist and historian of science Robert J. Richards at the University of Chicago.

Robert J. Richards

As I wrote in Book I, in an entire century of scientific scholarship supposedly devoted to probing everything of any importance whatsoever in Darwin, Robert J. Richards' *Darwin and the Emergence of Evolutionary Theories of Mind and Behavior* (Chicago, 1987) was the only book I could find other than Kropotkin's *Ethics* that went into Darwin's moral theory in any depth.

This book was not only a masterwork of research exceeding even Gruber and Barrett's labors. It was also an indispensable source for understanding Darwin's moral theory in relation to the context of its times and to the evolution of evolution theory as a whole.

"Darwin expended considerable effort on a theory of moral evolution, because he judged the moral sense, or conscience, to be by far the most important distinguishing feature of human nature ... Darwin's method of approach had already been established during the period of his great creative effort, from late summer of 1838 through spring of the next year ... He now resurrected those early ideas, but altered, reformulated, and greatly refined them."

As these quotes indicate, I could never have kept at this task for going on now two decades, nor have written this book or its companions on Darwin and moral evolution, without the reassurance as to fact and emphasis that Richards almost alone provided. It is, for example, the only book I know of that within its covers contains so much of the rich lost story of which so little is covered elsewhere, but which we need to reclaim if we are to at last understand what evolution is really all about.

For example: The impact of the Scotch moral philosopher Sir James Mackintosh and of Immanuel Kant on the formation of the moral mind of the teen-age Darwin. The comparable exploration of his friend and rival Herbert Spencer, who actually coined the disastrous phrase Darwin regretted ever using, "survival of the fittest." The passing of the baton from Darwin to his disciple Romanes, from Romanes then to his student Lloyd Morgan, and from Morgan to cross the Atlantic to Henry Osborn, William James, and J.M.Baldwin in the first attempt to break out of the prison of biology with a theory of evolution capable of transforming our world.

All this one can only find brought back to life in Richards. But even here I found the ambiguity that rises from the difficulty of trying to see Darwin through the clean and polished lens of the old as well as the still clouded lens of a new and better paradigm.

"Meager scholarly attention has been paid to Darwin's ethical theory," Richards observed. He attributed this neglect, however, not to any problem in going up against the paradigm with the threat that one might turn the useful old Darwin of "survival of the fittest" upside down with such a dangerous subject as morality. Rather, to him the problem was that Darwin on morality "seems too redolent of utilitarian selfishness—not the sort of thing a friend would care to mention."

It would appear, Richards told us, "that in advance of the sociobiologists, Darwin had already discovered the selfish gemmule spoiling the core of every good intention."

Can this be?

Can I really be reading this almost precisely 100 years after Darwin's death, I wondered at the time—for Darwin died in 1882 and here was Richard's book emerging in 1987.

Again here was a case of what happens during the surreal world of transition between the old and the new paradigm.

In other words, after an immense work of scholarship in which Richards actually revealed that Darwin believed otherwise, so powerful was the hold of the prevailing paradigm even on him that he put Darwin squarely in the sociobiological camp on selfishness!

Seemingly wholly at variance, but revealing the quandary that seizes even the best of

minds, Richards went on to note that in Darwin's theory "moral action was not motivated by self-interest," rather being guided by "an immediate instinct" and "social habits."

This was cloudy but all right if one already had a clear picture of how selfishness relates to altruism according to the "new" Darwinian perspective.

The picture that emerged, for example, if you spent time pursuing Darwin's thought on the selfishness-altruism relationship over a thirty year period was this. Darwin said, yes, we are selfishly motivated, but this is the lower or "base principle" level of a motivational structure that evolves into a higher level of self-transcendence based on truly caring for others.

In other words, it's a matter of personally, socially, and evolutionarily growing up.

But without this way of knowing how to interpret what Richards was telling us, one would just dutifully settle for the idea that Darwin was wholly of the selfishness school—particularly when Richards wound up the book extolling the wisdom of Wilson and Dawkins!