

FOUR

THE KNIGHTS ERRANT

Of the force mustered to fight for the larger heart and mind, here occasionally I will be quoting without quote marks what I wrote of them in *Revolution and Counter Revolution*. One of the first in effect rode on horseback out of the frozen tundra. This was that most fascinating and under-valued of the remarkable men of the 20th century, Peter Kropotkin, the Russian prince who joined the rebellion against the Czar and became one of the lesser-known important scientists of his time.

Kropotkin wrote two of the only five books I found that provided a reasonably adequate recognition of Darwin's analysis of the moral sense in *The Descent of Man*. Best known is his classic that complements Darwin's *Origin of Species*. The book was *Mutual Aid*, the best edition of which was edited by and has an invaluable foreword by anthropologist Ashley Montagu (Porter Sargent, oddly no publication date given but I would guess the 1950s).

Where *Origin* focused on competition, *Mutual Aid* was the pioneering expansion of the Darwin of *Descent* in biological and naturalistic studies of cooperation among species.

Mutual Aid, however, only began what Kropotkin went on to develop into the most clear-headed and well-grounded account of Darwin on morality in his massively neglected but monumental posthumous classic *Ethics*.

Both are great books, and would help the cause of sanity if prescribed together as basic readings in the education of all biologists, naturalists, and certainly evolution theorists, I believe.

This famous anarchist, naturalist and moral theorist (whose *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, incidentally, is one of the richest, wisest, and most gripping of autobiographies) was the sole person in more than a century to recognize Darwin's pivotal position historically as the chief moral theorist after Immanuel Kant in modern times.

Along with Darwin's protégé George Romanes, Kropotkin's was also one of the earliest lost voices to decry the distortions of "Darwin's vulgarizers." His description of what the "vulgarizers" were already doing to Darwin at the beginning of the century is hauntingly prophetic of what was then to go on for nearly 100 years.

Of what the sociobiologists, supposedly backed by the authority of Darwin, were later to build into the selfishness versus altruism debate, Kropotkin had this to observe.

"Darwin, who knew nature, had the courage to boldly assert that of the two instincts—the social and the individual—it is the social instinct which is the stronger, the more persistent, and the more permanently present."

He wanted this book "to inspire the young generation to struggle, to implant in them faith in the justice of social revolution, and to light in their hearts the fire of self-sacrifice."

Further indicating the power of the paradigm in gutting interest in either a science of morality or Darwin on morality, this is likely why throughout the rest of the 20th century Kropotkin's *Ethics* was either almost or fully out of print ever since its posthumous publication by Dial Press in 1924.

Julian Huxley

Among Darwinians known for ethical vision, biologist Julian Huxley occupied a special place. Grandson of Darwin's "bulldog," Thomas Huxley, brother of the famous novelist Aldous Huxley, Julian was not only a major architect of the synthetic theory for Neo-Darwinian theory. From 1946 to 1948 he also served as the first director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Julian Huxley's humanistic vision is eloquently set forth in *Touchstone for Ethics 1893-1943* (Harper, 1947), earlier in *Evolutionary Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 1943), and later in *Essays of a Humanist* (Harper, 1964). In these sources we encounter the startling fact that—while Huxley was blithely and blindly unaware of Darwin's prior insight and attempt to build such—this central pillar for Neo-Darwinian theory specifically recognized the separation of the theory of evolution into the two distinct parts my research identified in Darwin. That is, Huxley separated the evolution of living systems, as he saw it, into a first half applying mainly to prehuman evolution, and a second and completing half applying mainly to human evolution. He also went beyond this to propose an exceptionally important counterpart principle to natural selection at the higher level. The full story, too long to go into here, is covered in *Darwin's Lost Theory* dealing with the history of the rise of what by the late 20th century swept like wild fire through all fields of science as self-organizing theory. Also unknown to him, Huxley's version of this insight had earlier been one of two long ignored major insights for Darwin.

Huxley's advocacy of what became self-organizing theory came in his call for a shift to *psychosocial selection* as an over-riding principle for the second or completing half for evolution theory. He reaffirmed that natural selection exists and massively operates, but that at our level *psychosocial selection* takes over.

"Though natural selection is an ordering principle, it operates blindly," Huxley observed. It "pushes life onwards from behind." It "brings about improvement automatically, without conscious purpose or any awareness of an aim."

Psychosocial selection also "acts as an ordering principle. But it pulls [us] onwards from in front. For it always involves some awareness of an aim, some element of true purpose." In psychosocial evolution "the selective mechanism itself evolves as well as its products. It is a goal-selecting mechanism, and the goals that it selects will change with the picture of the world and of human nature provided by [our] increasing knowledge."

This one might think was a sensible idea easy to grasp. Surely nothing here for anyone to get uptight about and decide that it must, at all costs, as we've seen in the case of the mind boggling D.Daiches Raphael, be squashed. But increasingly one comes to see, this is not the real world we are looking at. This is the surreal world of first half Darwinism and the Father of Almighty Misery Paradigm.

Yet Huxley's eloquent critique of the Neo-Darwinism he helped establish was not only swept under the academic rug. He himself became *persona non grata* in many quarters. He had much more to offer us today. The portrait he provides of Darwin as a person and the development of his theory within the context of his time in "The Emergence of Darwinism" in *Essays* is one of the best short treatments. In larger format, his biography *Charles Darwin and His World* (written with H.B.D.Kettlewell, Viking, 1965) expands the portrait and is the best-illustrated and handsomest of all the biographies I examined. But when we come to the question did Huxley have any notion of the extent or significance of Darwin's own lost completion for his theory, again we confront the power of the imposition of invisibility. For the answer is no.

Here was the man to whom Darwin was a personal hero, who other than Kropotkin was to perhaps best articulate the essence of Darwin's lost completion of theory in our time. Yet despite the fact he recognized the inadequacies of the very Darwinian first half he himself helped set in place, and despite the fact that with passion he championed the need to develop the adequate second half and complete the theory, Julian Huxley had absolutely no comprehension of the fact this was precisely what his hero had earlier called for!

In other words, although in prison terms as free as a trustee, one might say, like all the rest he too was penned in by paradigm.

In *Essays*, he writes of "Darwin's failure to recognize explicitly the radical differences between man and other animals, especially between the process of evolution in man and in other animals."

Yet this was precisely what Darwin did in *Descent*. He went on to state of Darwin that

"nowhere does he point out man's truly unique and most important characteristic—cumulative tradition, the capacity for transmitting experience and the fruits of experience from one generation to the next; nor does he discuss the implications of this new human mechanism of change, as he did so exhaustively for the biological mechanism of natural selection."

Again this is not only a description of what Darwin actually did both in his early notebooks and in *Descent*. It would serve as a reasonable summary of Darwin's core rationale for our development up through the emergence over millions of years: of at first sexual instincts, then parental instincts, then social instincts, and on to the ascendancy of emotion and reason in moral evolution.

In his biography of Darwin, he writes of how Darwin's overwhelming focus on prehumans led him "to neglect and indeed even fail to mention the fact of man's uniqueness, with all its consequences."

Yet it was precisely the intensity and sophistication of Darwin's systems scientific analysis of human evolution that is so striking in this 'invisibilized' body of theory lost even to Julian Huxley—by any other measure one of the most knowledgeable and sympathetic of his heirs.

Theodosius Dobzhansky and Teilhard de Chardin

Another architect of the synthetic theory, rightfully celebrated for his great contribution to modern biology, was Theodosius Dobzhansky. And what did he tell us?

In his sole reference to the invisible book in *Mankind Evolving: The Evolution of the Human Species* (Yale University Press, 1962), Dobzhansky told us that "In his books Darwin confined himself to biological matters, even in *The Descent of Man*."

What hope can there be for science, one is tempted to ask, if an eminence cherished and by some even worshipped as this great biologist could fail to abide by the basic dictate one wags one's finger at the undergraduate to remember, remember, remember. Throughout the 20th century, stressed in every classroom in graduate studies, was the fundamental requirement for a decent "review of the literature"—that is, actually reading, not faking the basic source material for one's field—before pronunciamientos.

Like Huxley, Dobzhansky also had misgivings about the exclusively biological embedding of neo-Darwinism. Teilhard de Chardin was the fascinating combination of Catholic priest and anthropologist who came up with a scientific face for a theory of evolution embodying both spiritual and moral development. For this heresy he was not only proclaimed beyond the pale by science but forbidden by the Catholic hierarchy to publish his writings

throughout his lifetime.

With astonishing boldness, when you think of the kind of courage this required within the context of his position and friendships in biology, Huxley was so taken with de Chardin that he wrote the foreword to de Chardin's main book *The Phenomenon of Man* (Harper, 1959).

Like Huxley, for a time Dobzansky—like others that one might find surprising, a devout Christian—also veered toward the heresy of Teilhard de Chardin because of the way it seemed to open the "higher path" that both he and Huxley, a devout atheist, felt was missing from the NeoDarwinism they had created.

But soon, as biologist Stanley Salthe noted in *Development and Evolution* (MIT Press, 1993)—an invaluable critique of evolution theory and theorists over hundreds of years—the incredible pressure of paradigm that we see emerge and re-emerge forced Dobzansky to retreat and shut up.

John Greene

Now for a part of the story for which I'm indebted to the fact that Darwinian biographer James Moore urged me to look up this man, whose work seemed to be so efficiently obliterated by the paradigm I had never encountered any mention of it.

As luck would have it, John Greene turned out to be a tall, lean, 90-year-old living just ten miles away from me. In the 1950s, then a young professor who had been teaching American history elsewhere, Greene arrived at Iowa State University a bit wobbly and uncertain in mind, for he faced having to switch to teaching the new subject for him of the history of science. Bit by bit in the process of trying to stay ahead of one's students that such moves entail, he found himself so intrigued by the history of evolution theory that he began to write a book about it. But then came what macrohistorian Arnold Toynbee identified as the time of crisis and opportunity.

Young John Greene had only covered the earlier years of the work of Buffon, Lamarck, and a neglected 18th century evolutionist Lord Monboddo, for whom he had developed a considerable enthusiasm, when he was suddenly confronted with the need for a crash course in self-educating himself on Darwin. A prize was being offered with guarantee of publication for the winning book.

He realized that his book had a good chance —except for one big glaring hole. The deadline meant he had to add to it something on Darwin in an ungodly hurry. He buried himself for the first time in a frenzied reading of Darwin, dashed off two chapters to add to his book, and won the prize.

The book, *The Death of Adam: Evolution and Its Impact on Western Thought* (Iowa State University Press, 1959) soon became the benchmark work for an understanding of pioneering evolution theorists among Neo-Darwinian insiders and led to Greene's friendship and dialogue over many years with Dobzhansky and the later architect of Neo-Darwinian theory, Ernst Mayr—who finally died at age 100 in 2005, with Greene himself following in his 90s in 2008.

I stress how Greene came fresh to the subject ("it was not until my forty-first year that I met Charles Darwin," he tells us), as well as how quickly his book engaged Dobzhansky, is because Greene is one of the only four people I found within the span of the 20th century to display anything beyond a superficial or weirdly distorted recognition of the nature and possible importance of Darwin's lost completion of theory.

This raises the question I will repeatedly come back to as we go along. It is that in going up against the paradigm—and indeed in regard to what in fact drives human evolution—why only these four out of so many thousands, and indeed millions by now, who for over 100 years were able to ignore the rest of Darwin?

What about them either personally, or in their situation, or as the great psychologist Kurt Lewin stressed, in a combination of both, accounts for the difference?

"His *Descent of Man* showed clearly that he was a moral as well as a natural philosopher, a social as well as a natural scientist," Greene wrote.

He went on to outline in seven pages the main points of what prior to his book only Kropotkin, or afterwards only theologian James Rachels and psychologist and historian of science Robert J. Richards seem to have discerned of the lost completion.

A key observation for Greene was that, for Darwin, "Not 'the survival of the fittest' but 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you' had come to be regarded as the true maxim of human conduct."

Kropotkin the genial intellectual renegade, social revolutionist, and anarchist *outsider* had seen this. Now this wholly unindoctrinated, still open-minded newcomer to the by then well-established entrenchment of Neo-Darwinian Mind was forced by circumstance to "bone up" on Darwin practically overnight. And thereby free of the paradigm's internal warning of the impending heresy of linking moral theory to Darwin, or any other violation of the prevailing expectancy for "survival of the fittest"—had strayed into what by default had become the forbidden territory.

The picture is beginning to emerge of what sociologist Robert Park was first to call the wisdom of "marginal man." This was Parks' observation of the difference between being an insider or an outsider living along the "margin" of any system or paradigm.

Repeatedly one finds that those securely placed or "at home" within any system of mind,

or paradigm, can be wholly blind to something that will not only be obvious to, but quite literally can only be perceived by the outsider—who does not yet, or may never, identify with the mainstream paradigm.

Greene's book was hailed as brilliant. He went on to build a reputation for a dogged integrity rare in science. True to the pattern for the paradigm, however, as far as providing any threat to the continued rise and hegemony of Neo-Darwinian Mind, by and large Greene's perception of the lost theory was as good as lost all over again.

On the last page of *The Death of Adam*, however, he issued this warning against the triumph of the supposedly "value free" survival-of-the-fittest kind of Neo-Darwinian Mind that again now threatens the 21st century.

"The conflict of nations and races, far from raising mankind to ever higher levels of virtue, freedom and culture, threatens to accomplish the destruction of the human race," Greene observed. "Science and technology, which were to have led the way to a bright new future, have become increasingly preoccupied with devising new and more dreadful weapons of obliteration.

"The historical Adam is dead, a casualty of scientific progress, but the Adam in whom all men die lives on, the creature and the creator of history, a moral being whose every intellectual triumph is at once a temptation to evil and a power for good."