

TWELVE
MIND AT THE END OF ITS TETHER

This is the title that remarkable novelist, pioneering writer of science fiction, futurist and historian H.G.Wells gave his last book.

Wells had matured and come into his creativity during the late 19th century period of great optimism for our species. He was himself by nature a bouncy and ebullient writer and visionary. But aghast at the shattering of his world by World War I, nearing his own death and despairing over the unaccountably sudden downward and backward direction for human evolution, he wrote of what so many of us fight to keep from feeling today: of the despair of the sense of mind at the end of its tether.

By now I must ask whether the reader shares with me this at times overwhelming sense of the surreal—as if, beyond joking, we have entered the nightmare world of Dali, Dada, Beckett, Satre, Kafka, or Marat-Sade, where all becomes a celebration of sense dissolving into senselessness, with both players and audience liberally larded with lunatics.

For beyond the conflict of liberals versus conservatives, progressives versus regressives, or any of the other divisions we track in search of an answer to what has happened to us, isn't this the fundamental unsettling we have been looking at?

That in all these books by all these people, to whom in one way or another Darwin has been meaningful, we have been looking at a sampling of the higher order minds of the 20th century. Yet repeatedly the picture is that of mind—not just theirs but the minds of all of us, including very much myself—not only taught to skip-read Darwin and miss his emphasis on love and moral sensitivity as the primary drive for human evolution. Isn't the worse of it how thereby we were programmed by paradigm to avoid anything that was and is in any way labeled with the dread word moral, as though it were some great bog hole in the middle of the road.

And is not the most unsettling message this? That no matter how brilliant we are, how well educated, how brave, strong, or independent-minded we think we

are, the invisible power of the over-riding paradigm we've explored, which worldwide still enslaves practically all of us from birth to death, can lead us around like a dancing bear with a ring through its nose?

Looking back, I feel the need for a Mozart, Verdi, or Brahms to give proper weight and dimension to what I feel should be a requiem for the prisoners of the paradigm.

Why, and Again and Again Why?

Why did so many of the books the better mind hungered for languish either on the back shelf or out of print?

Why in the supposed home of the brave and the land of the free did the fully human, moral-action oriented theory and story, which by now thousands of us were trying to get across, exist as if its books were the products of an endangered species that must live in hiding?

Why were we made to feel like ghosts along with Darwin inhabiting some afterworld, out of which we could see into the world of the living, but so seldom find a way to touch or reach them?

By what dark magic was the oblivion for the passion of Darwin's completion of theory that lasted for over a century extended into invisibility for those of us who were pursuing the same vision, the same ends?

Isn't it apparent by now that we are looking at a matter of species survival that requires of us an expansion of awareness, of caring—and of rage and just plain courage or guts, as they say—far, far beyond the customary scientific or social proprieties?

This book and its companions were written out of two vital perspectives for the science of the 21st century. One is of all the social sciences and the humanities that beyond the grip of a tunnel-vision biology reveal to us the majesty of the cultural evolution that provides our species with a culminating opportunity and responsibility. The other is the perspective of a new scientific discipline for which today in America there still exist no college departments or majors so identified to give it academic power to help *positively* shape the future. Going out of and beyond the earlier development of what became established as systems science, this is the comparatively new field of a moral action oriented *evolutionary* systems science.

Here is a sample of the application of such a perspective directly and bluntly to what we've seen emerge in the battle of the books.

The Pathological Dynamics of the Darwin Industry

The question for us is how, in the case of the generation and publication of books dealing with Darwin and evolution theory, did the blinding and control of mind by paradigm operate through the creation and manipulation of a Darwin Industry.

We have only to draw on the insights of the great sociologists, political scientists, and economists to see that here we are looking at an industrial complex in which:

- 1) A scientific product that the prevailing socio-political-economic system has found to be useful for systems-preservation and systems-maintenance—that is the mindset of first half or "survival of the fittest" Darwinism—is
- 2) marketed through a network of editors and prestigious publishers, augmented by all other media, that found the product to be not only blessed by the prevailing power structure, and thereby "safe" but also highly profitable; to
- 3) in the end reach what over the years has—as a rancher would build his herd, or a fish farmer his pond—been built into a captive readership for the distribution of this globally and heavily promoted product that in fact, beyond a wholesale blinding by paradigm, is driving our species and our planet toward destruction.

Isn't this what can now be seen behind the otherwise mystifying series of explosions into popularity of books ranging from the earlier 20th century "killer ape theory" books of Raymond Dart and the "territorial imperative" of Robert Ardrey to those more recently of selfish genes, blind watchmakers, and blank slates?

We have seen Peter Kropotkin and Ashley Montagu tweak the paradigm. We have seen Julian Huxley and Stephen Jay Gould briefly lift the veil of invisibility to peek beneath it. But then on behalf of the way the script for the prevailing story or theory is supposed to play itself out, comes the intervention of the puppet master of paradigm. Deftly it lifts the master board from which the strings dangle and suddenly the tweakers and the peekers are gone from the stage.

Now, if we look more closely, we see how within an ever greater concentration of ownership and power for the media, by and large those who remain on the stage are, now not so surprising, published by an informal consortium of the most prestigious academic and mainstream trade presses.

We've seen what this process of paradigmatic inclusion and exclusion has meant for work ranging from the lost completing half for Darwin's theory to the efforts over the 20th century by the thousands of scientists and educators who, with no knowledge of their lost grounding heritage, tried to advance a moral and action-oriented second Darwinian revolution.

In closing out this book at age 85, I find it haunting beyond expression to once again see and hear the voices of so many of those I have known—so many of them, long dead now, whose articles have long since died in journals for a readership by a handful of their long dead friends, whose books have gone down the drain of the same fate, or whose special dream of what they had hoped to see published during their lifetime for a while yellowed in old attics, to be tossed into the trash to clear space for new generations in the end.

Wilson and Dawkins, published by the two most prestigious of the university presses in the U.S., Harvard and Oxford, remain continuously in print. By contrast, Kropotkin's *Ethics* barely showed its face in publication by the long-defunct Dial Press to go out of print for over half a century. Ashley Montagu's book on cooperation in evolution, as he once bitterly told me, "fell still born from the press."

Why must we go into this uncomfortable stuff that is either suspected or well known to many scientists, but for a variety of reasons—including the fear of finding themselves blacklisted from further publication throughout America, if not the English-speaking world as a whole—is left unsaid?

I wish it could be otherwise, for I am not so bold as not to know that I myself invite oblivion for this as well as everything else I write by tearing away the curtain to reveal what is going on backstage.

But this is a book about the paradigmatic impact of books as it affected the shaping of the modern mind throughout the 20th century, as in the 21st century this impact so clearly now affects the chances for our species to survive and prevail.

Were I not to tear away the curtain and reveal what lies behind it, I would be collaborating in the perpetuation of everything I have come to hate with a passion and have set out to help end.

So here we are at last. Out in the open. In defiant transition from the old to the new. Will at last, across all fields, progressive science mobilize to gain the better world we have for so long been denied?

In Book III: *Up Against the Paradigm*, we'll take a look at the inside story of

those who, during the final quarter of the 20th century, more often with laughter than lamentation, labored to build the kind of science of evolution we need to win the battle for human survival.