

THIRTEEN

THE TWILIGHT OF THE SUPER NEOS

If we may pull back and see the battlefield as if from a helicopter, it becomes evident that from the perspective for our species during the 20th century this was like an argument under a street lamp that went on for 100 years.

Punctuated by fist fights, it was the thrilling activity at the same street corner, under the same old lamp, to which on hot nights the fans swarmed eagerly to watch. Now up to the plate, or into the ring, dancing, waving hands in fat gloves above his head, dancing while rotating to take in the crowd, steps a fresh new macho champion for the Super Neos.

The crowd cheers. The fight begins. Meanwhile, silent in the shadows stands Jesus, Gautama—or the lost Darwin—unable to be heard. Or elsewhere, simply busy doing what needed doing to *evolve* rather than go backward, were people like Maria Montessori and Abraham Maslow.

Meanwhile, what was happening out in the mind space for America and the world at large? Century after century, journalism, history, and street talk have primarily keyed to whoever were the chief figures currently empowered by prevailing D-systems. Hence, for the stretch from 1980 into the early 21st century, the primary story for whether we were evolving or going backward could be collapsed into how the American president of the late 20th century Greed Era set the stage for the American president of the early 21st century Debacle.

Year after year what emerged in policy and action became the great mystery of the time to millions both in America and worldwide, who found it impossible to believe this was actually happening in America. Could this really be the agenda for the land of the free and the home of the brave, of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Abraham Lincoln?

Had the nation been a patient in a psychiatrist's office, a case of trance induced by hypnosis might have been the diagnosis. But trance on such a wide

scale? How was it possible?

The experience with Hitler earlier, as well as cases soon to emerge during the Debacle—the rise and fall of the largest banks and brokerage houses in America, the multi-billion dollar Ponzi schemes, the corruption of newcomers like Enron and long time respected brand names for every industry, et cetera, et cetera—reveal an answer. For from child and wife abuse to the big stories of species abuse that rock nations, century after century the trance seems to be the cobra spell that accompanies forays of the devastation of the D-attractor and D-attractor human engineering at work.

And in the case of late 20th century America, what was the purpose of this trance? Its systems-function seems to have been to mask the construction of a new social, political, and economic edifice dedicated to the 21st century persistence of counter-revolutionary human engineering.

But to what end? If we set aside all the books that have been written to flesh out an answer; if we simply look at what happened with the wisdom of the street, which can hone in on evolutionary pros and cons with no formal instruction, the criteria for the human to be constructed seemed to be something like this.

What was needed was a human who knew how to make money and contribute the huge amounts that were needed for political campaigns. Who knew all the right people and knew how to keep the wrong people down. Who knew how to say all the right things, yet do what was needed and get away with it. Who would obey without question all commands from on high. Who could be counted on for loyalty to the death. But, above all, this—as it was here the corporate sponsors were most concerned. One must construct someone who would automatically buy and buy and buy everything the sponsors built or shipped in from overseas and advertised.

In 1932 Julian Huxley's brother, the novelist Aldous Huxley, in his brilliant dystopia *Brave New World*, first warned of where the D-attractor was driving us. In 1935, in *It Can't Happen Here*, Sinclair Lewis gave the insight a homespun American setting and the prophetic Berzelius "Buzz" Windrip, a smiling good old boy rightwing jokester elected president. In 1949 George Orwell pointed to the ultimate end place for the trajectory of the D-attractor in *1984*. Then in 1980, four years after the publication of *The Selfish Gene* and five years after publication of *Sociobiology*, in the year of the election of

Ronald Reagan to the first of two terms, a book appeared that got little press, for which sales were minimal, but which seemed to capture an immensity of meaning in just two words.

The book was *Friendly Fascism* by political scientist Bertram Gross. *Friendly Fascism: The New Face of Power in America*.

And what was and is the relation of the Neos and the Super Neos to all of this? It could be argued that by no means were they the cause of our joy ride to a bitter end. Among them were some of the better minds of their time. Among them were men and women of high ideals and unquestionably prosocial intentions. It could be said, quite rightfully, that what happened to them was a demonstration of the powerful hold upon them and a majority of the rest of us of the over-riding power of the D-attractor and the domination system mindset, ideology, and paradigm.

It could be said, quite rightfully, that this was and is a case of the isolation of the mind space for science within the mind space of America and the world as a whole. Within this mind space—as indicated by the action of attractors within fields in chapters seven and eight—the discourse is, by necessity, conducted in a host of private languages. But out in the surrounding mind space for everybody else most of us are still so far behind that much of the time it is as if Freuds and Einsteins have emerged in the Middle Ages.

It is as if the Neos and the Super Neos and their critics argued within a private retreat deep in the woods, or within a sound proof glass room where they could be seen but not heard.

Their discourse was discrete and constrained by professional standards. But as it was transmitted by the guesswork of those outside the glass trying to lip read what was being said inside, increasingly it was caught within the backwash of the political, economic, and religious D-attractors for the time.

On the other hand, this very isolation underlines the crucial responsibility of the scientist and all other privileged scholars for what happens out in the wider world.

Back in Darwin's time the proud catch phrase for Marx was that he "stood Hegel on his head." That is, where the philosopher Hegel maintained that evolution is driven by the dialectic of revolution versus counter-revolution of ideas, Marx maintained that ideas at the high end were driven by economics and politics at the low end. The Neos and Super Neos stood Darwin on his

head. Here was Darwin, attuned to thousands of years of progressive theology and hundreds of years of progressive philosophy, right side up in maintaining the moral sense was paramount in driving human evolution. And here were the Neos and the Super Neos, attuned to an update for the doctrine of Original Sin as prime driver. So they flipped him upside down and out in the wide world when the question came up of “What is evolution,” for lack of anything better, up came the handy answer provided by the thrust of the D-attractor and domination system.

If you had graduated from high school, the answer was “survival of the fittest.” If you had finished college and perhaps gone on to graduate study, one might add it was something to do with “selfish genes.” And thereafter, across all the levels for human activities for our species, so did this mindset of “survival of the fittest” and the “selfish gene” primarily shape the action for both the people and the nations of the 20th century.

As we’ll see in Book II, for philosophic back up they picked the Hobbes and Nietzsche of the war of all against all, rather than—as Darwin keyed to—the Kant, Hume, Hutcheson, and Jesus, Gautama, and Mencius of the inbuilt moral sense. As is said of those who with the best of intentions are the enablers of everything from alcoholism to drug addiction, the Neos and Super Neos became the enablers of the greater sickness of the over-riding paradigm. Though cloaked in the robes of academia and wearing the most gloriously tasseled mortar-boards on great occasions, they became the scientific Typhoid Marys of their time.

But what of the fact that most of the Neos and Super Neos were self-avowed liberals, even progressives? Why would they blindly go on year after year ignoring how their work was being used to pave the way to the D-attractor future? Why do they still persist and prosper, as if none of this had ever happened?

This question I must leave to psychologists far more gifted than I am. I can only provide food for thought in Book II.

The Super Neo Bible

Of the many books produced to advance the Super Neo case for the offspring of sociobiology, evolutionary psychology, perhaps most

representative was one early on known as their bible.

Edited by anthropologists Jerome Barkow and John Tooby and cognitive psychologist Leda Cosmides, published in 1992, in *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture* twenty-five bona fide social scientists set out to prove theory with active intervention in a world of real immediate needs rather than only speculatively on paper, as could be said of Kauffman and other theorists for the opposition.

In surprising ways, *The Adapted Mind* was a statement of an agenda for proving theory through action research which called to mind the pioneering work of Kurt Lewin and his students that transformed psychology a half century earlier. Out from the sociobiological base they pushed into such badly needed areas for an evolution-oriented activist psychology as how can we shift from gut-cutting competition to cooperation, how best improve mating and sex, parental care and children, how do perception, language, and intrapsychic processes fit into the picture for action, even the intriguing, all-too-seldom-come-by idea of how do we improve environmental aesthetics.

In many ways a 136 page opening chapter "The Psychological Foundations of Culture" by John Tooby and Leda Cosmides was an impressive intellectual achievement. It was also an important historical document for what it recorded of the legitimate strengths and prospects for this fresh new contender.

On the positive side, Tooby and Cosmides made the same critique of social science that many others have tried to advance: of the weakness of a social science divorced from natural science. How chopped up into all the little divisions that ignore one another, social science is like a throwback to the age of feudalism, with each little barony guarding its territory against the others, ungrounded in either the perspective of or loyalty to evolution or evolution theory.

Their critique of a social scientific bias against the idea of anything being innate or "biological" in human behavior was also well founded. Their stress on empirical rigor and the careful attempt to link the findings of chemistry, biology, information science, etc., with cognitive psychology was similarly well-grounded.

Barring the problems we'll come to, their critique of social science was, in short, the kind of historically needful corrective—or kick in the pants—that

social science needed.

Down the Slippery Slope

But then came the slide down the slippery slope of what became the Super Neo mentality into the old blood sport for the D-attractor's captive cohort. Setting up the great sociologist Emile Durkheim and, more recently, the revered anthropologist Clifford Geertz, as straw men for the villains of their piece, they painted a woefully cock-eyed picture of 20th century social science as almost wholly based on the idea—which in fact went out of science centuries ago—of the mind as a "tabula rasa" or "blank slate."

This was the phrase to which the fresh new champion for the Super Neos, psychologist Stephen Pinker, returned in his best seller *The Blank Slate*.

Social science, Tooby and Cosmides claimed, looks at the organism—that is, us along with all other creatures—as an "empty vessel" to be filled by the astonishment they fixed on for the central villain.

For the scoundrel for their manifesto for human salvation was none other than the process of *learning*! The monster was this process upon which our species has presumably been foolishly expending time, energy, and an incalculably huge investment in schools for at least 5,000 years.

This is such an astounding claim we must take a close look at how they arrived at it.

Social science, they tell us, has been overwhelmingly governed by the idea of "nurture" to the exclusion of "nature." In other words, a large part of our problem today is that we have presumably become the unthinking captives of the idea that everything we are is governed by what happens to us as we go through life rather than by what we are born with through the transmission of genes and the dictates of biology.

The simple historical and unquestionable fact is that the hoary "nature versus nurture debate," which bogged down psychology in the early part of the 20th century, was long ago put way behind us.

To put this within the picture for a new language for evolution, so prevalent across all fields involved was the knowledge that we are composed of nature *plus* nurture that by the late 1940s Kurt Lewin could put it in the form of a simple formula $B = f(P, E)$. Or **B**ehavior is a function of **P**erson and

Environment.

The perception of what is supposedly to fully function as a human being can be glimpsed through passages such as this.

"Just as the fields of electrical and mechanical engineering summarize our knowledge of principles that govern the design of human-built machines, the field of evolutionary biology summarizes our knowledge of the engineering principles that govern the design of organisms, which can be thought of as machines built by the evolutionary process."

One could pass this by as only a metaphor, except for two facts. One is that the suggestion in context is that we are little more than machines built by the evolutionary machinations of some Great Robot in the Sky. The other is that this rather horribly smacks of D-attractor construction of a handbook for late 20th century human engineering.

Worth carving in stone over the portal of every school of the 21st century are the names of the psychologists and neurologists involved in the study of perception, motivation, memory, and language whose work provides the foundation for the field of education and at least 300 years of gaining a reasonably good understanding of the process of learning.

For example: William James, Ebbinghaus, Dewey, Montessori, Piaget, Thorndike, Terman, Pavlov, von Bechterev, Watson, Skinner, Koehler, Wertheimer, Guthrie, Hull, Lashley, Hilgard, Dollard, Underwood, Milner, Rayner, Mednick, Harlow, Hebb, Lashley, Bartlett, Guilford, and Pribram and MacLean in brain research.

Yet of all this effort Tooby and Cosmides in effect tell us that well-meaning souls such as these merely "reified this unknown functionality, imagining it to be a unitary process and called it 'learning.'" This concept, they tell us, not only remains "in genuine need of explanation," but "will eventually disappear as cognitive psychologists and other researchers make progress in determining" what is really going on here.

They tell us that the same progressive oblivion lies ahead for such concepts as "culture," "intelligence," and "rationality."

I must further note the fact that within the 666 page mass of *The Adapted Mind*, which purports to map the future for us, among hundreds of references and thousands of index entries, only a single item refers to a single page having to do with anything about moral sensitivity, or moral development, or

morality. And when one goes to this single item what does one find? Typically some post-modernist academic mush under the revealing subhead "Conscience, Guilt, and Neurosis."

Under the bold banner of evolutionary psychology is this to be the brave new world they herald?

Is this supposedly what's to come when the delusions of the thousands of social scientists and educators who came before this courageous band of scientific salvationists are, as they trumpet, "replaced with knowledge"?

Here, I would suggest, can be glimpsed a warning of what came to be. For one doesn't have to go far to find what soon thereafter became the vicious cycle of teach to the test for American education.

Aren't we looking at the systematic transvaluation whereby out of the pristine mind space of science, comes blind support for the corruption of political, economic and religious mind space, which in turn becomes a tool for the twilight attempt at human engineering during America's astonishing entry into the 21st century?

Aren't we here looking at the question of whose science, whose politics, whose economics, whose technology, and whose religion is to win the battle for 21st century mind?