

TEN
LIBERALS, CONSERVATIVES, AND
MORAL SENSE

In Stephen Jay Gould and others we've glimpsed the stance, belief, or dictum going back to T.H.Huxley, Darwin's "bulldog" and Julian Huxley's grandfather, that morality has nothing to do with nature.

We've also glimpsed the stream of moral philosophy, which Darwin denied, resurrected by sociobiology. that within any adequate theory of evolution morality must be seen as strictly a byproduct of the drive of selfishness.

Now, in still another touch of the surreal, we must consider the fact so powerful was the hold of the paradigm of our concern that by the late 20th century in America this doctrine became the prevailing belief not merely for conservatives, but also for liberals, scientists, and even self-avowed humanists.

The leadership of the American Humanist Association and the readership of its avowedly progressive magazine *The Humanist* became loaded with starry-eyed worshippers of sociobiology. In the 1960s Abraham Maslow and Erich Fromm were among those honored with the AHA's prestigious Humanist of the Year award. But by the dismal turn of the century, first in 1996 Richard Dawkins, then in 1999 E.O. Wilson, and in 2004 Daniel Dennett and 2006 Steven Pinker, were named Humanists of the Year.

What happened seems at times like something to which only a Voltaire, Kafka, or the Marx Brothers could do justice. Politically it came to a head with the American presidential elections of 2000 and 2004. For among the many semi-hidden agendas behind the struggle was the tragicomic fact of a science so lost without a firm grounding in the lost Darwin it could believe that morality had no place within evolution or science—and thereby tossed an incredibly powerful political weapon to the righteous ranting of the Rightists by default.

Likewise unsettling is the degree to which scientific advance in evolutionary theory was blocked by liberal paradigmatic oversight.

Inevitably, this may seem a puzzling non-issue to logical readers for this book. But behind the scientific face to the struggle of Montagu, Gould, Lewontin, Rose, Kamin, Gruber, and

Richards was something that must swiftly now be incorporated into evolution theory. If science is to help win rather than help lose the battle for 21st century mind the theory of evolution must expand to deal with the evolutionary impact of the drive of liberal versus conservative, of progressive versus regressive, of the venturesome against the status quo.

What throughout the 20th century was at issue here was not just a factor in the blunting, diverting, and warping of the activist mind. Of more importance was the over-riding issue of the moral sense, and Left-Right, liberal-conservative differences in moral sensitivity and the requirements for moral evolution.

Behind the battle of the books lurked the fact that liberals tend to see goodness solely as a matter of causes and movements. Where do you stand on women's rights? The environment? Homelessness? Rampant greed? Peace whenever war is threatened, etc., etc?

But as the word "moral" became ever more firmly locked into fundamentalism and rightwing conservatism, this not only fired up the rightwing brand of politics that fed on the doctrine of "survival of the fittest" and "selfish genes." It fueled both the explosive expansion of the Creationists in America and of Islamic terrorists globally. For exhibited in the lack of attention to the moral issue in their books could be seen how liberals had fallen into the trap of avoiding—as though it were a poisonous mushroom or a black widow spider suddenly plopped upon one's dinner plate— not only the word "moral," but also the idea of an over-riding concept embracing all causes and movements.

By contrast, in book after book clasp the word "moral" with a ferocious and pious proprietorship to themselves, conservatives tended to look upon the social, economic, or political disruption of anything labeled a "cause" or a "movement" as automatically evil.

However obviously good the goal—however obviously in keeping with the dictates of Jesus, Gautama, decency, good sense, or any other source of true morality—the fact remains, as the lock-step conservative sees it, that causes or movements are by their very nature messy, disrespectful, and profoundly improper.

Causes and movements are automatically seen as the enemy because they're trying to fundamentally disrupt whatever presently exists. Therefore they endanger the status quo to which the conservative clings fearfully while showing a tough face to the outer world. They are therefore unquestionably and unalterably evil and must be squashed or fought tooth and nail.

So as the 20th century marched toward its miserable end we had this situation worthy of the lemmings, who by legend all together regularly rush to leap off the cliff to mutual

destruction.

On one hand, with both science and liberals having handed over the word "moral" to them to use as a club, the conservatives set out to use it to beat into submission and lambast with gusto all those with whom they disagreed. Meanwhile, back at the ranch—while its vital causes were being muddied and made suspect by being labeled immoral—liberalism stood by the old corral, rolling a cigarette and looking foolish.

The end result was that both liberals and conservatives collaborated in invisibilizing the Darwinian second half and all it might have helped change for the better. Together they engaged in what, if unchanged, could become the dance of death for our species through the invisibilizing of the higher truth about ourselves that drove Darwin originally to complete his theory.

One would be hard put to decide whether the situation most calls to mind Lewis Carroll and *Through the Looking Glass* or Shakespeare at his most tragic. For this is our life. This is the lives of our children, and their children. This is the destiny of our species we are looking at—not merely at two radically different kinds of people to be hated, feared, lampooned, or mocked by one another.

We are looking at a bedrock fact for human evolution and survival increasingly meaningless to those with no sense of history, or of our real nature, or of the evolutionary stakes at hand. We are looking at the surrealism verging into nihilism rampant in the democracies of this earth, where the politics of liberals versus conservatives are equated with football or other forms of mass entertainment. Who's winning, who's losing, who's providing the most salacious current scandal?

Thanks to the power of the old paradigm to go on invisibilizing the higher capacities for our species, we are looking at the plummeting zeitgeist that gave us the least qualified of presidents in all of American history to provide our maximally challenged world with leadership going into the 21st century.

We are looking at the necessity for liberals to much better understand conservatives, and conservatives to much better understand liberals if they are to work together, rather than block each other, in both the scientific and the social realization of the Darwinian vision they both share.

The joint vision of a species released from ignorance, fear, and delusion to at last live more of the good life.