ELEVEN
THE RISE OF THE SUPER NEOS

The mind space for America and the world at large is now the 1970s, post World War II. As historians and political scientists unite in telling us today, the race-baiting Southern strategy has shifted power from the Democrats to the Republicans in America. Richard Nixon has been elected American president for a first term in 1968, re-elected in 1972, then in disgrace forced to resign in 1974.

The next year, within the mind space of science, onto the stage—or, if you prefer, into the board room for NeoDarwinism, Inc.—strides Harvard eminence E.O.Wilson with *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis.*

Swiftly this book not only became the bible for the new field of sociobiology that Wilson launched with this book. It also became the center of a firestorm of protest by sociologists, feminists, psychologists, and geneticists. Inflammatory passages in the book sparked outraged charges of sexism and racism. Wilson's primary eminence was in the field of entomology, the study of insects—which further raised the question of his qualifications for pontificating on the human world. Among most readers, however, such concerns were swiftly dispelled by the magnitude of Wilson's scholarship. In his passion for nature, the range of its subject creatures, and in his rare new emphasis on the urgent need for scientific attention to the question of morality and moral evolution the book and the new field spoke to rising mass concerns.

In keeping with the glaring omission ever since Kropotkin, again there was nothing on *Descent* or Darwin on morality. But here at last, three quarters of the way through the 20th century, was the rare display of a firm philosophical grounding and far more than lip service to what for Darwin was the primary driver for human evolution. For Wilson provided an excellent summary of moral theorists and theories from the 18th century into the present.

Few so succinctly captured as much about the philosophical study of morality as Wilson did starting on page 562 in *Sociobiology*. John Locke,

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, and the modern John Rawls he identified as “ethical intuitionists.”

As Wilson saw it, the problem was that for them the brain was a "black box," or one had to operate on guesswork as to its contents. To Wilson what was needed was a shift to “ethical behaviorism”—or strictly going by what a person does rather than what he or she supposedly thinks. Here his position—completely contrary to the lost Darwin—was that morality is learned as a form of behavior ultimately always shaped by selfishness, rather than in any way by any pre-existing inbuilt directive.

Opposing this position, Wilson noted, was the developmental-genetic conception of Lawrence Kohlberg and Jean Piaget, which I deal with at length in *The River and the Star*. An important piece, however, was still missing. This missing piece Wilson felt that he and biologists Robert Trivers, William D. Hamilton, and zoologist Richard Dawkins were at last supplying with development of the new field of sociobiology.

Despite concern about the down side we’ll come back to in Book II, one couldn’t help welcoming in Wilson a mind capable of ranging beyond the amoral prison for lesser thinkers.

As few others had yet done at the time, Wilson brought consideration of moral brain structure into the picture. He linked morality to the "emotive centers of our hypothalamus-limbic systems." This is true. But already by that time the research of Paul MacLean was showing this is true only of the lower or “pure selfishness” limbic level for the brain affecting morality. The higher, self-transcendent moral level of Darwin's greater interest that the work of this great brain scientist confirmed, as I detail in *Darwin’s Lost Theory,* emerges with the higher and later development of the frontal lobes of our brains.

MacLean was delighted with and found striking the connection when I pointed it out to him. For the track that in the 1960s he uncovered in brain development from the emergence of the earliest reptiles up through mammals to ourselves, summarized here in chapter three, both mirrors and corroborates the theory for the evolutionary stages of the development of the “moral sense” that Darwin first wrote of at the age of 28 in 1837, for later development in *The Descent of Man.*

MacLean’s top brain placement for operation of the moral sense was also prefigured in Darwin. In another display of how Darwin’s intuition ranged far

beyond the data of his time into what scientists only well into the 20th century began to explore, he remarked on the function of the brain behind "the frontal part of the skull—the seat of the intellectual faculties."

Trivers' Vampire Bats

So now, after decades of wandering without a forceful champion among the Neo-Darwinians, within the mind space of science Wilson had raised the vision of morality as a factor in human evolution to a high place among the stars. Out in the political and economic mind space for America and the world at large, however, a new phase of the counter-revolution was taking hold.

In chapter eight and nine we developed the case for the use of chaos theory as the source for a new language for evolution. We've seen how by using the concept of the *attractor*, particularly the domination or *D-attractor* versus the partnership or *P-attractor*, we can track how evolution is advanced, or checked in place, or driven backward. We've glimpsed how, through this new perspective, we can see how the link is forged between what is said and done in the lofty or "clean" mind space of science and what is said and done in the "down and dirty" mind space of politics, economics, and religion.

Now in that world, in the rightward, anti-New Deal gathering of political, economic, and religious forces, we are moving from the American presidency of Nixon toward election of former movie actor Ronald Reagan in 1980.

Concomitantly, as if only coincidental but through systems interconnections in fact subtly linked, with his prized developers of the new field what soared with Wilson plunges like a dead weight back to earth.

It seems like a touch introduced by a Charlie Chaplin or a Harold Lloyd for comic relief. For moving on from sweet peas and fruit flies, the favored experimental animal for highly respected biologist Robert Trivers was the vampire bat. And so began twenty years during which the most highly publicized research for sociobiology set out to prove that human evolution was indeed, beyond all quibbling or question, driven by selfishness, core drive for the mindset of survival of the fittest.

From his careful study of the behavior of vampire bats and other creatures Trivers arrived at the widely hailed principle of “reciprocal altruism.” This was the scientific conclusion that everything we do for any one else is fundamentally motivated by what they can do for us.

In what became a cluster of related findings the message was hammered across by the work of Charles Hamilton, Richard Dawkins, and to both cap them off and set them straight, the French Resistance leader and Nobel prize winning biologist Jacques Monod.

Seldom noted then, but obvious now was this dark social product. For the research of the Super Neos that seized the media fed the heady story that science now had proof that altruism, or the desire to help others that liberals and progressives made so much of, shrank to little more than selfishness in the end.

Moreover, while those who considered themselves up to date on things might revel in this new science that gave a moral face to greed, within religious America it became further reason to fight Godless science and its vile theory of evolution tooth and nail. Both slap in the face and thumb to the nose, by no stretch of the imagination was this what Jesus had said. And so was further fueled the wildfire spread of Creationism as a legitimate protest movement, with soon devastating political consequences.

Altruism Trivers defined as "An act that benefits another organism at a cost to the actor." This was in contrast to selfishness, which he defined as "An act benefitting the actor at a cost to someone else." Cost and benefit in both cases, he noted, was "defined in terms of reproductive success."

While on the surface these definitions seem to be properly rigorous and impressive, if we take a close look at what Trivers was saying—rather than, as is usual for the student or the faithful follower, letting them drift in and out of our heads with a nod—at least two aspects link to what was happening out in the mind space of America and its impact on the world at large.

First, it's important to notice how Trivers' definitions both set the conditions for and guaranteed findings that would substantiate only the "lower" half of the supposed motivation for altruism.

On checking what Darwin had actually said, I had found that the lost Darwin differentiates between two levels or kinds of motivations for what

we call altruism today. One is what he called the "base principle" accounting for “the low morality of savages.” This he found widely operating among us, no doubt about it, affirming that it *does* motivate us to help others, as Trivers claimed.

The other level for Darwin, however, was the higher principle of the "moral sense" embedded within us biologically over millions of years. Core to the “lost” completion for his theory, this is the thrust that not only impels us to again and again go beyond selfishness to help others, but is also the prime driver of evolution at the level of human emergence—which Trivers *by definition excludes.*

This is an old game for scientists. Define what you want to find in a seemingly impressive way, and then, lo and behold, amazement, amazement, why you have found exactly what you said was the case!

Hamilton’s Honey Bees

W.D. Hamilton was considered one of the most important of evolution theorists at the time of his death in 2000. Among his fellow biologists and the new field of sociobiology he was most highly respected for solving a problem Darwin had identified. It had further stumped Neo-Darwinian icons J.B.S.Haldane, Ronald Fisher, and Sewell Wright in the drive to unite Darwinian Natural Selection with Mendelian genetics we looked at in chapter seven.

Briefly stated, the problem was if natural selection favors the survival of the fittest, why do so many organisms including ourselves sacrifice themselves for the good of the group or others? Going strictly by the theory, evolution should uniformly produce selfish, not altruistic, behavior across the levels for species.

Darwin had raised the question in regard to the close cooperation one could observe in colonies of bees. As the best alternative to Trivers’ principle of “reciprocal altruism,” earlier Hamilton had arrived at the more restricted principle of “kin selection altruism.”

On closely studying the mating of bees with their Queen, Hamilton found a variety of strategies were used by the bees to favor the production of kinfolk rather than strangers. In other words, underlying what on the

surface appeared to be cooperative or altruistic behavior, he reported a subtle battle to restrict the gene pool strictly to offspring to which one was related.

Queens, for example, ate the eggs of those to be excluded. Most impressive to all those who could understand his advanced mathematics was Hamilton's rigorous demonstration of the power of numbers to certify how his observations of evolution in the bee world were Writ Large for us in the human world.

Thus, a mother will protect her child before her sibling's child, her sibling's child before a cousin's child, and a cousin's child before a stranger. Hamilton's formula $C < R \times B$ became next step up for the mathematics of evolution.

That is, **C**ost in fitness to the actor is less than (<) the genetic **R**elationship between the actor and the recipient times (x) the fitness **B**enefit to the recipient.

Again we find a finding that out beyond the tidy world of science could be welcomed and put to work toward political and economic ends. Here was a science that made it obvious the inheritance tax was an abomination that should be abolished. In fact, if this were a sensible world, all taxes, which unfairly penalize the better sort, should be abolished. Voting should be restricted, et cetera, et cetera.

Above all, during what became known among historians as the Greed Era, this seemed to further certify that selfishness is good. For wasn't this impressively support for the core rationale for the "trickle down" economics of the Reagan years? Wasn't this scientific proof that selfishness helped others in the end?

While lacking the huge investment in mathematics, which not only lay beyond Darwin's time but for which he would have had no aptitude, once again in the lost Darwin I found Hamilton's explanation for altruism confirmed.

But here again was the critical difference to which the Super Neos were emotionally and cognitively blind.

Darwin specifically divided his analysis of altruism into a lower selfishness and a higher "do unto others" level —with the lower countered by his over-riding observation, and over-riding case, for the transcendence

of selfishness as part of a growing up process for ourselves, and for the evolution of our species, through the operation of "higher agencies."

Dawkin's Selfish Genes

Trivers and Hamilton mainly produced articles for journals that few outside their field read. Their tremendous influence came about through what others wrote about them and the wonders of selfishness for doing good in the world. Next to the plate, however, came a zoologist with an uncanny gift for reaching beyond the sacred inner core to make science come alive to a wide readership.

In 1976 Richard Dawkins made his mark on history with publication of *The Selfish Gene*. By the year 2000 *The Selfish Gene* had sold over one million copies, with translation into 25 languages. As further tribute to his impact, as a takeoff on the long established image of T.H.Huxley as Darwin's bulldog, Dawkins was dubbed Darwin's Rottweiler.

In retrospect, it's striking to see how many of the reasons for the evolutionary backward thrust for sociobiology are revealed in the saga of Dawkins and *The Selfish Gene.*

To begin with, here was the triumph of an idea that could never have been taken seriously had American education been up to European standards. For it was like Hans Christian Anderson's story of the emperor served by the rogue tailors, who weave for him invisible clothes ostensibly of gold, who then successfully parades naked through the throng until at last a child cries out "but he has no clothes!"

It could be said that here was the uncomfortable kinship to an idea not only ridiculed in the early, quasi-scientific years of evolution theory, but picked up three quarters of the way into the 20th century and successfully hailed as the answer to everything.

The earlier idea was that evolution was transmitted by a tiny replica of the human being within the sperm of males called the homunculus. Now it seemed that for Dawkins the gene was to serve the same function as the transmitter for not just any kind of human being. Most specifically, it seemed be tailored to order for what politically and economically was getting underway for reliable production of the *selfish* human being.

In the mind space of science the idea wasn't this foolish or simplistic. But if we bring more new language for evolution into play, it can be seen how and why out in the mind space of America and the world at large this is precisely what Dawkins' title and presentation was widely taken to mean.

In other words, within the field for scientific mind the idea of a so-called selfish gene could be approached with all the intricacies, qualifications and rigor with which scientists advance their discourse. But out in the wide open space for the field of popular public and leadership mind the image of a selfish gene with the power to govern all of evolution not only could take wide hold. It could swell out into the mind space of America and the world at large until it had become a significant factor in the thrust of the *D-attractor* driving the mind of its time in the regressive political and economic direction increasingly taking hold..

Should this be hard to picture, two more terms for a new language may clarify the situation. From the cybernetic theory of mathematician Norbert Weiner and others, now widely used in management science, comes the operation of *feedback* and the *feedback loop.* From the sociology of Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal and others, the other term is the operation of *vicious cycles* versus *virtuous cycles.*

A book is written, or a personality or policy takes hold. Back to the author or policy originators comes the *feedback* of purchase, acclaim, high lecture fees, etc. Whatever thereafter happens is that, if one writes, or is, what the prevailing political, economic, and social system is looking for, there is set in motion a mutually-reinforcing *feedback loop* embracing innovators and consumers. Depending then on the direction toward which this loop is pointed, it can become either a morally backward-driving vicious cycle or a morally forward-driving virtuous cycle.

In this way, during the two terms for the Ronald Reagan presidency in America, Dawkins' work became influential in the use of science to help certify social policy, for success for his books was a tribute to a rare ability to capture the essence of a scientific idea with striking imagery, and to write with a clear, strong, and engaging style. Dawkins went on beyond implanting the idea of a "selfish gene," to success for implanting *The Blind Watchmaker* as an image for the Neo-Darwinian theory for the operation of Natural Selection and Random Variation. Also, in tribute to his gift for

influencing a wide readership, came to be his use of the "meme" as an analogue for the operation of the selfish gene and survival of the fittest at work everywhere within our minds and the mind of the world at large.

There was, however, no joy in one chunk of his readership. Among political scientists and sociologists was the concern about how sociobiology was being used to advance the political power of all that, within the perspective of a new language, was cumulating within the wake of the thrust of the regressive D-attractor. And in at least two other regards biologists found Dawkins' thinking uncomfortably slippery. There was discomfort (along with envy!) with the way Dawkins could simultaneously play the two fields—that is, the hypothetically pristine field of scientific mind and the inevitable distortion of scientific concepts by ideology out in the field of popular mind. Further, it was that he did this while claiming he wasn't saying what he was saying.

Another reason only now becomes apparent. It is that the work of Dawkins and the unreconstructed early sociobiologists not only served to further invisibilize what Darwin really said. With the most profound of consequences, it was implanting precisely what Darwin himself was foursquare *against* as the holy gospel for science. And through the subtle transvaluation from the mind space of science to the mind space for politics, economics, and the raging of regressive religion it was sharpening the drive toward disaster within the mind space of America and the world at large.

So what was Dawkins saying in *The Selfish Gene?*

We must teach our children altruism because "we cannot expect it to be part of their biological nature," he tells us. In a world generated by successful genes driven by a "ruthless selfishness," "much as we might wish to believe otherwise, universal love and the welfare of the species as a whole are concepts that simply do not make evolutionary sense."

Obviously no one who had ever bothered to read Darwin on the subject could have written this. Having unloaded the substance of his thoughts about morality in a few stray lines in *The Selfish Gene,* in *The Blind Watchmaker* in 1987 and *River Out of Eden* in 1995, Dawkins avoided tackling anything further to do with altruism, morality, ethics, or values. It just seemed to be a matter in which he was wholly uninterested.

The Heights, the Depths, and the Ultimate Challenge

And so we have this new science that with a noble, sincere, and notably heart-felt vision of service to humanity E.O.Wilson set in motion within the mind space of science—and the blind plunge thereafter into the mutually reinforcing dynamics of the vicious cycle swelling the backward thrust for the regressive D-attractor within the mind space of America and the world at large..

If it should thought this is an exaggeration, or doubted this was what happened, one quote from all the books and studies that flowed together to become the *oeuvre* of the Super Neos tells the story.

In retrospect, it seems to foreshadow the attitude toward the "do-gooder" that lay behind the smirk that became the badge of office for the prime agents, missionaries, or what have you for the D-attractor Vice President Cheney, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld of "stuff happens,"and most characteristically the president himself during the G.W.Bush presidential years. The quote is from *The Economy of Nature and the Evolution of Sex* by Darwinian eminence Michael Ghiselin.

Of the moral sensitivity of the "altruist" that Darwin celebrated as the central driver for ourselves and for human evolution, Ghiselin tells us this:

> "Given a full chance to act in his own interests, nothing but expediency will restrain him from brutalizing, from maiming, from murdering—his brother, his mate, his parent, or his child. Scratch an 'altruist' and watch a 'hypocrite' bleed. No hint of genuine charity ameliorates our vision of society, once sentimentalism has been laid aside. What passes for cooperation turns out to be a mixture of opportunism and exploitation."

Three years earlier, in 1971, however, the book *Chance and Necessity* by Nobel prize winning French biologist Jacques Monod put such a snide mindset to shame with a statement of the dark moral challenge out of the Neos that became both the challenge and the albatross around the neck for the Super Neos.

> Where then shall we find the source of truth and the moral inspiration for a really scientific socialist humanism, if not in the sources of science itself, in the ethic upon which knowledge is founded, and which by free choice makes knowledge the supreme value—the measure and warrant for all other values? An ethic which bases moral responsibility upon the very freedom of that axiomatic choice. ..

But then to this soaring statement of faith in science Monod added the bleak conclusion that asks our battered and bewildered species to welcome being left out in the cold with nothing but the science of the Neos and the Super Neos for comfort, alone in the universe.

> The ancient covenant is in pieces; man knows at last that he is alone in the universe's unfeeling immensity, out of which he emerged only by chance. His destiny is nowhere spelled out, nor is his duty. The kingdom above or the darkness below; it is for him to choose.