

**Book:** *The Great Adventure: Toward a Fully Human Theory of Evolution*

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I confess I came to this book not as an expert of evolutionary theory, but as a person with a deep passion for futures and the development of the human species. In particular, my personal research relates to educational futures and the futures of consciousness. Thus the critique that follows cannot stand as that of an "impartial" expert's opinion, but merely as the considerations of a relative layman in the field of evolutionary theory. Considering my particular research foci, I found much in the volume to enthuse about.

The contributors to this volume are all members of the General Evolution Research Group. This was formed in 1986, and its purpose is "to bring together a small group of scholars from a variety of disciplines and nations to explore possibilities for the development of a general...evolution theory" (p.304). Ervin Laszlo is its primary founder and leader, with *World Futures: the Journal of General Evolution* being its mouthpiece.

Let me begin by stating that this is not only a well-written volume, but a necessary one. As Loye points out in the concluding chapter regarding the idea of "evolution," the mindsets of most scientists (and indeed the layperson), have been seized so thoroughly by the concepts of natural selection and blind chance that anyone challenging this idea with suggestions of "normative or developmental goals and ideals as

well as standards and benchmarks for what constitutes evolution" is confronted by the reaction that "this is not only heresy but naïve and stupid." (p.281)

Yet most futurists are all too aware of the limitations of a purely biological and mathematical depiction of evolution. As Loye himself points out, conceptions of "ideal goals" are routine in futures (p.281). In futures there is generally an implicit representation of development and evolution which incorporates conceptions that exist above and beyond the merely physical and biological. And this is where this book is most valuable for futurists. Each of the contributors adds an extra dimension or two to the idea of evolution, until the total picture is one that is inclusive not only of the cosmic, chemical/Physical and biological dimensions that currently dominate the neo-Darwinian hegemony, but also includes developments in brain science and psychology, as well as cultural, social, economic, political, technological, educational, moral, spiritual, and consciousness evolution. To this is added the necessity for an action-oriented approach (p.277). The tools that are offered to move us forward are also somewhat heretical: including love (Eisler, Loye, Goerner, Bradley, Bausch and Christakis); partnership (Eisler, Goerner); communication and creativity (Goerner, Montuori, Combs and Richards); human agency (Bradley, Loye); creative action (Eisler, Goerner, Loye); and spiritual and consciousness evolution (Bausch and Christakis, Eisler, Goerner, Loye).

There is not room here to comment upon all 11 articles individually, but Loye's "Darwin, Maslow, and the Fully Human Theory of Evolution" is worth mentioning, as it encapsulates much of the spirit of the book, and will be an eye-opening piece for those unfamiliar with Loye's work. He argues that Darwin has been almost completely misrepresented by the neo-Darwinists. He points out that Darwin only wrote of "survival of the fittest" twice in *The Descent of Man*, whilst writing of love, moral development, and mind/consciousness hundreds of times in total.

Yet the latter are totally ignored in mainstream evolutionary theory, a case of what Loye calls "the mind-binding and blinding power of paradigm." (p.23) Loye goes on to argue that Darwin actually presaged the development of transpersonal, positive and humanistic psychology, and indeed the relevance of moral development and "a spirituality freed of deism and dogma" ( p.23).

This book is aptly named. It contains an exciting array of research at the frontier of evolutionary theory. It may annoy purists of mainstream evolutionary theory for the same reason it excites the more speculative and adventurous amongst us, especially at the times that it moves into the explorative domains of evolutionary theory. Bradley's contribution stands out here, with his piece "Love, power, brain, mind, and agency." His endogenous construction of human evolution, heavily influenced by Pribram's holographic theory of perception, is predicated upon the rather prolix notion of a:

principle of organisation that governs any whole...(which) is non-local, distributed throughout the system and enfolded into its parts. It is this same notion of field, of a distributed order of socioaffective connection mediating the transformation of biological energy into psychosocial order that is the basis for ...(my) account...(p.140).

Yet as Loye points out in the introduction, Bradley's contribution is worth persisting with, despite its broad scope of theory and difficult language. Other contributions in the volume, it should be pointed out, are far more layman-friendly. The contributors generally manage to convey their understandings in easy-to-comprehend form, and considering the cross-disciplinary nature of the volume, this is a key component of its value to its potential audience.

As Loye argues, evolutionary theory "requires a massive updating, integrating and streamlining if it is to meet the needs of the twenty-first century, if not our survival itself over the long run." (p.21) This is no small task, but Loye and his colleagues are doing an invaluable job of getting the ball rolling.