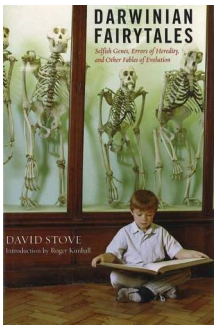
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# Darwinian Fairytales: Selfish Genes, Errors of Heredity and Other Fables of Evolution

door David Stove, Roger Kimball

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## 66 Highlights

Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 116

> In the olden days (this story goes), human populations always did press relentlessly on their supply of food, and thereby brought about constant competition for survival among the too-numerous competitors, and hence natural selection of those organisms which were best fitted to succeed in the struggle for life. That is, human life was exactly as Darwin's book had said that all life is. But our species (the story goes on) escaped long ago from the brutal regime of natural selection. We developed a thousand forms of attachment, loyalty, cooperation, and unforced subordination, every one of them quite incompatible with a constant and merciless competition to survive. We have now had for a very long time, at least locally, religions, moralities, laws or customs, respect for life and property, rules of inheritance, specialized social orders, distinctions of rank, and standing provisions for external defense, internal police, education and health. Even at our lowest ebb we still have ties of blood, and ties of marriage: two things which are quite as incompatible with a universal competition to survive as are, for example, a medical profession, a priesthood, or a state.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 123

> This Cave Man story, however implausible, is at any rate not inconsistent with itself. But the combination of it with Darwin's theory of evolution is inconsistent. That theory is a universal generalization about all terrestrial species at any time. Hence, if the theory says something which is not true now of our species (or another), then it is not true-finish. In short, the Cave Man way out of Darwinism's dilemma is in reality no way out at all: it is self-contradictory.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 125

> If Darwin's theory of evolution is true, no species can ever escape from the process of natural selection. His theory is that two universal and permanent tendencies of all species of organisms-the tendency to increase in numbers up to the limit that the food supply allows, and the tendency to vary in a heritable way-are together sufficient to bring about in any species universal and permanent competition for survival, and therefore universal and permanent natural selection among the competitors.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 150

> BUT IN THOSE distant times, Huxley informs us, human beings lived in "nature," or "in the state of nature," or in "the savage state." Each man "appropriated whatever took his fancy and killed whomsoever opposed him, if

> he could." "Life was a continual free fight, and beyond the limited and temporary relations of the family, the Hobbesian war of each against all was the normal state of existence."' It is hard to believe one's eyes when reading these words. Thomas Hobbes, forsooth! He was a philosopher who had published, two hundred years earlier, some sufficiently silly a priori anthropology. But Huxley is a great Darwinian scientist, and is writing in about Ago. Yet what he says is even sillier than anything that Hobbes dreamed up about the pre-history of our species. What, for example, is a Hobbesian savage, presumably an adult male, doing with a family at all, however "limited and temporary"? In a "continual free fight," any man who had on his mind, not only his own survival, but that of a wife and child, would be no match for a man not so encumbered. Huxley's man, if he wanted to maximize his own chances of survival, and had even half a brain, would simply eat his wife and child before some other man did. They are first class protein, after all, and intraspecific Darwinian competition is principally competition for the means of subsistence, isn't it? Besides, wives and children are "easy meat," compared with most of the protein that goes around even at the best of times.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 184

> no children, no women and hence, no men. In other words, that the human race could not possibly exist now, unless cooperation had always been stronger than competition, both between women and their children, and between men and the children and women whom they protect and provide for.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 189

> There is (as I said earlier) a contradiction at the very heart of the Cave Man way out of Darwinism's dilemma: the contradiction between holding that Darwinism is true and admitting that it is not true of our species now. But I should perhaps emphasize that the absurdities which we have just witnessed in Huxley, though they no doubt were generated by that initial contradiction, are additional to it.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 192

> The latter, as we saw, embraces the Darwinian theory, but then, in the case of man in historical times, illogically makes an exception to that theory. But the Hard Man despises that kind of feeble inconsistency: like the Earl of Strafford, his motto is "Thorough." He says that the Darwinian theory of evolution is true without exception, and it is just too bad for any appearances, that there are or may be in human life, which contradict that theory. They must be delusive appearances, that's all. Underneath the veneer of civilization, the Hard Man says, and even under the placid surface of everyday domesticity, human life is really just as constant and fierce a struggle for survival as is the life of every other species.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 199

> Hard Men hold, then, that life among human beings is no less a ruthless competition for survival than it is among pines, or cod, or flies. It follows that in human life, as in the life of those other species, there is no care of the sick, the old, the poor, the afflicted, or the mad, and no protection of the innocent within a community, or protection of the community itself from hostile communities. In plain English: there aren't really any such things in human life as hospitals, charities either public or private, priesthoods, police, armies, or governments.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 221

> This book is a powerful polemic against the encroachments of modern governments on the liberty of individuals. That is a real enough subject (to put it mildly) and one which is nowadays of rather more poignant interest than it was in 1884. But on every page of Spencer's book the characteristic Hard Man absurdity, of trying to prevent the inevitable from being led astray, lies like a tombstone. The evils which Spencer inveighs against are real, indeed. But they happen also to be ones which, if his own view of man were true, could not possibly exist.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 230

> And yet, for all its absurdity, it is very easy to understand how The Man versus the State came to be written. By 11884 the franchise in Britain had been extended to include virtually all adult males, with many results which could be easily foreseen. One of these results, which Spencer could see happening, and which by 11884 even a blind man could have seen, was that taxation was already obligating the middle and upper classes to have fewer children, in order that governments could support the irrepressible flood of offspring of the poor. But on the other hand, Darwinism says that population always presses on the supply of food, and that, from this pressure, competition for survival, and natural selection, must always ensue. Well, then, if Darwinism is an article of faith with you, as it was with Spencer, things like hospitals and unemployment relief are bound to look like wicked attempts to mislead the inevitable.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 235

> But it was the eugenics movement which was easily the most spectacular example of Darwinian Hard Men struggling manfully to keep the inevitable from going wrong. This movement stemmed originally from the writings of Darwin himself (although you were not then, and are not now, supposed to say so). But its official founder and leader, and the man who coined the word "eugenics," was his cousin, friend, and disciple, Francis Galton. By about 1188o Galton had become convinced, and had begun convincing others, that some eugenic measures-or what might be called measures of "quality control in humans"-were absolutely imperative for Britain.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 238

> The eugenists leave us in no doubt as to why they thought this. It was because, in late nineteenth-century Britain, the fittest people were visibly not outbreeding the less fit. In fact the boot was on the other foot. The overwhelming tide of philanthropic and egalitarian sentiment had brought about a population in which there was (as several writers put it at the time) a preferential "survival of the unfittest." That is, a preferential rate of reproduction by the indolent, the improvident, the unintelligent, the dishonest, the constitutionally weak, the carriers of hereditary disease, the racially inferior, and so on. Of course other people might have drawn, from these same facts, a conclusion very different from the one that the eugenists drew. They might simply have concluded that Darwin's theory of evolution is false. After all, a eugenist does not have to be a Darwinian. Plato, for example, was a eugenist thousands of years before Darwinism was thought of. Strictly speaking, there was one other conclusion which Darwinians could have drawn from the demographic facts which terrified them: namely, that the mentally defective, the carriers of hereditary disease, and so on, actually were fitter than the average upper middle class Britons. But this would have required the superior fitness of one group of organisms

> to another to be identified with its having a higher rate of actual reproduction: an idea which, though it is neo-Darwinian orthodoxy at the present day, really is as ridiculous as Galton would have thought it. For suppose it were true, and suppose Jack decides to have children by Jill, though he through genetic misfortune is blind, violent, and of sub-normal intelligence, while she has inherited deafness, syphilis, and AIDS. Then even the best medical advisor could only say to these intending parents something like the following: "It's no good asking me or anyone else whether you two are fit, or how fit you are. That can be known only after you have finished reproducing. If you manage to leave behind you more children than the average couple, that will prove you are fitter than the average couple, or rather it will be your superior fitness. But there's only one way to find out, so off you trot and get stuck into it. You could be lucky. Beethoven's father, remember, was a genetic disaster." Galton and the other eugenists should really have concluded, then, from their demographic facts, that Darwinism is false. These facts (I should perhaps emphasize), though the eugenists certainly over-colored them, were real enough, and frightening enough too; just like that expansion of the state which very properly frightened Herbert Spencer. But of course it would have been entirely out of the question, a psychological impossibility, for someone like Galton to come to the conclusion that Darwinism is false. Galton's intellectual and emotional situation was therefore this. On the one hand there was Darwin's theory of evolution. If it is true, then competition for survival is always going on in every species, and as a result natural selection is always going on too. Therefore, preferential survival of the organisms best fitted to succeed in the struggle for life is inevitable. But on the other hand there were, right before his eyes, the quite oppressive demographic realities of contemporary Britain. What could poor Galton possibly be expected to conclude, except that the inevitable was being led astray, and needed the help of people like himself in order to be put back on the rails?

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 266

> This will be admitted to be the utterance of a Hard-enough Man, at any rate. In particular, it is plainly the utterance of a eugenist. Yet it was published in 11874: that is, at a time when eugenics was hardly even a gleam in Francis Galton's eye. Nor is it the utterance of one of the softer eugenists, either: think about Darwin's reference here to the singular folly of "allowing one's worst animals to breed."

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 282

> Of course it would be easy to find, in other authors, Harder-Man utterances than these. For example, in some of the writers who are quoted in R. Hofstadter's Social Darwinism in American Thought (11959): writers, that is, who used Darwinism to justify the economic activities of the "robber barons" of American capitalism about a hundred years ago. Not that even any of them was the Hardest Man of all Hard Men. That distinction belongs, as far as I know, to Adolf Hitler, an instructive quotation from whom can be found in M. Midgley's Evolution as a Religion (11985).'

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 285

> Some other Hard Men, then, would undoubtedly go further than Darwin does in the passages just quoted, and would add other things which he would not at all have agreed with: perhaps some idiotic proposition about the racial inferiority of Jews, for example. But is there anything in the above passages which even the most rabid of the American Social Darwinists, or even Hitler himself, would have disagreed with? If there is, I have failed to detect it. These passages are, in fact, just standard issue Hard Man material, and contain its standard issue

> inconsistency. For they combine, in about equal proportions, suggestions that man is inevitably subject to natural selection, and suggestions that we will have to be right on our toes to make sure he stays that way.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 290

> The last two paragraphs quoted reveal, in addition to Darwin's eugenism, his opposition to the practice of contraception. Nor was he, as one might have expected, opposed to contraception only where what he calls "the better members of society" were concerned. He was emphatically opposed to contraception altogether. He wrote, in reply to a correspondent who had expected him to have a very different attitude to that subject, that "over-multiplication [is] useful, since it cause[s] a struggle for existence in which only the strongest and ablest survive.... "S So it is clear enough that Darwin considered contraception to be one of the dangers threatening to overwhelm the inevitable.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 299

> So if nowadays Darwinian Hard Men are seldom to be met with, or at least to be identified, in print, the reason may simply be that they, and their editors and publishers, are frightened of such powerful and ruthless groups as feminists, blacks, Shi'ites, etc. My opinion, for whatever that is worth, is that this is the main reason for the apparent scarcity of Hard Men. In reality, I suspect, there are still plenty of them, especially among those neo-Darwinians who have come to be called "sociobiologists." They are too scared to say what they think, that's all.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 304

> The Soft Man is intellectually at ease. Having been to college, he believes all the right things: that Darwin was basically right, that Darwin bridged the gap between man and animals, etc., etc. He also believes, since he is not a lunatic, that there are such things as hospitals, welfare programs, priesthoods, and so on. But the mutual inconsistency of these two sets of beliefs never bothers him, or even occurs to him. He does not think that his Darwinism imposes any unpleasant intellectual demands on him. So he is not drawn to postulate, for example, as a concession to Darwinism, a period even in the remote past of all-out competition among people. He leaves that kind of thing to some of the television cartoons that five-year-olds watch. Still less does he think that his Darwinism requires him to advocate eugenics, or to oppose welfare programs, as the Hard Men do. In fact the politics of Darwinian Hard Men fill Soft Man with horror. They do, at any rate, until the suburb where he lives is taken over by blacks, or Shi'ite Moslems, or Croats, or Sikhs, or whatever.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 548

> Consider the most familiar and omnipresent kind of human population: a family, consisting of a father, mother, and at least one son and daughter. If the Malthus-Darwin principle were true, as many offspring as there is food to support would always be produced not only by the father with the mother, but by the mother with each of her sons, and by the father with each of his daughters. Since this does not happen always and everywhere, the Malthus-Darwin principle is false. Whether in fact it has ever happened even once, in the entire history of our species, may very reasonably be doubted: so strong and general is the aversion to incest.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 552

> As well as being averse to incest, our species practices, or has practiced, on an enormous scale, infanticide, artificial abortion, and the prevention of conception. No other species does anything at all of this kind, but we do, and we appear to have done so always. If the Malthus-Darwin principle were true, then every human life which has ever been deliberately ended before birth or shortly after it, or has ever been deliberately prevented from beginning, would otherwise soon have been ended anyway, by starvation. Have you ever heard of anything more ridiculous than this? In the city where you live, hundreds or thousands of artificial abortions are performed every day. Is it really true that there is not enough food to support even one of these potential children into adulthood? Well, that is what the Malthus-Darwin principle says, anyway: which must be admitted to be a consoling doctrine, even if not a true one.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 622

> In the present essay (unless I in turn have gone badly wrong somewhere), I have pointed out where it was that Darwin first went wrong about man. It was in accepting Malthus's principle, that in every species population always presses on the food available, and tends to increase beyond the size that there is food to support. This principle is not true without exception even in the case of other species, but in the case of our own it is extravagantly wide of the truth. Until he embraced this principle in 11838, Darwin was not logically committed to any propositions about man which are false. But once he adopted, in an attempt to explain evolution, the principle which Malthus had put forward, he did logically commit himself to a false belief about man.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 626

> Darwin's explanation of evolution, then, contains as an essential element a proposition which is false in the case of man. This conclusion is plainly of some historical interest, if it is true. But it is also of theoretical interest. For it means that Darwin's explanation of evolution, even though it is (as I said earlier) still the best one available, is not true.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 787

> In fact this "catastrophist" interpretation of Malthus manages to be just about the exact opposite of the truth. His principle of population is a proposition concerning, not only all species of organisms indifferently, but all times indifferently. It not only does not predict any particular "crisis," or other journalistic artifact, in the history of humans and their food: it does not pick out any singularity in time at all in the history of any species. Quite the reverse, in fact: for it says that the relation between a species and its food is, in a certain respect, always the same. The principle is this: that every population of any species is at all times as large as the available food allows, except when it is rapidly approaching that limit after having suffered a check from disease or some other cause, or after recently arriving in a new territory. At those times, the natural tendency to increase is less restrained than it normally is: new supplies of food, or a recent abnormally high proportion of deaths, provide an opening for an abnormally high proportion of a new generation to survive. Thus population "oscillates" (as Malthus is always saying) back to its normal size: that is, the maximum that there is food for.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 801

> Different species have, of course, very different gestation periods, and in most species sexual activity is confined to a certain season; but, subject to these and the like obvious qualifications, population increases immediately food does, and exactly as much as the increased food allows. That is what Malthus thought.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 803

> Yet most populations of organisms, most of the time, in spite of this tendency to exuberant increase, in fact increase only slowly or not at all. What, then, are the restraints or checks to population which operate effectually most of the time? In the human case, Malthus replies, the main ones are misery and vice. Human misery has, he says, three principal causes: famine, war, and pestilence, or-in less florid English-food shortage, war, and disease. By "vice" Malthus meant chiefly the use of "improper arts"' to prevent pregnancy or terminate it artificially; the "barbarous habit"3 of infanticide; and "unnatural vice"4 (i.e., homosexuality).

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 818

> It clearly follows from Malthus's theory that, if there are two human populations in which vice is equally prevalent, one will be more fertile than the other if it is less miserable than the other: that is (according the Malthus), if it is less exposed to the misery resulting from food shortage, disease, and war. Or we may say the same thing in terms of one population, at two different times: supposing vice equally prevalent at both the earlier and the later stage, if the population suffers less misery from war, disease and food shortage at the later stage than it did at the earlier, it will then be more prolific of children than it was earlier. In plain English: other things equal, and on the average, people who are less miserable (or more privileged) have more children than people who are more miserable (or less privileged). But this is not at all what we find in fact, either in history or in our own observations of everyday life. It is more nearly the very opposite of it. The words of a vulgar American song of the 1930s, that

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 824

> The rich get rich And the poor get children come closer to expressing the uniform experience of mankind, than does this consequence of Malthus' theory. It

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 824

> is quite certain that, in general, the poor are more exposed than the rich to the misery which results from food shortage, war, and disease. They are also less prudent and forward-looking than the rich. They are more ignorant, too, and therefore less able to make use of such prudence and foresight as they do possess. They have a smaller variety of things to occupy their minds than rich people do, and fewer sources of happiness open to them. They live more crowded together than the rich . . . Who could not easily continue this catalogue of differences? And then, we recall, sexual intercourse is one of the very few sources of happiness to which poverty is no bar. From all these familiar facts, common sense tells us imperatively to expect, what we find to be actually the case, that large families are commoner, on the whole, among the poor than among the rich. In other words, that increase of population is more repressed, not where food shortage, war and disease fall more heavily, but precisely where they fall more lightly.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 831

> Of course, the distinction between rich and poor is not exactly the same as the distinction between the privileged and the rest: membership of a privileged class need not be constituted by wealth. It may be constituted by inherited rank, by individual military prowess, by religious authority, or by various other things. By any standards, and certainly by Malthus's standards, the Knights Templars in the year zz5o, or the Jesuits in 11700, were highly privileged people. Few people at the time were less likely than they were to die of starvation or disease, or to be killed in war. But they were not rich, in the sense of having individual command of unusual wealth. Officially, indeed, and certainly in at least very many cases in fact, they had no money at all. Of course the people who a little later expropriated both those privileged orders were convinced that their victims had left behind them, buried somewhere, mountains of gold. But that is merely a characteristic delusion of unscrupulous secularists who are short of cash. Even those expropriators, however, though like all enlightened persons they believed the worst about the official chastity as well as poverty of their victims, were never so stupid as to believe that the Templars or the Jesuits must have left behind them offspring proportional in numbers to the degree of privilege which the members of those orders had enjoyed. But that is what they should have believed, and what should have been true too, if Malthus's theory were true. Go to the extreme case and consider the most privileged classes of people that history can show: the people for whom the probability of death from starvation or in battle was lowest, and to whom the best medical attention of the time was available. Such classes have never been prolific of offspring in anything like the degree to which they were privileged. They have never even managed to maintain their numbers by reproduction. They have survived, when they have, by early recourse to non-biological expedients: recruitment or adoption.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 842

> The offspring of a most privileged class exhibit, in fact, more strongly than those of any other class, and far more strongly than the offspring of the poor, a proclivity towards a whole range of things, every one of which is more or less unfavorable to parenthood. To early sexual exhaustion, to sexual incapacity, to sexual indifference, to homosexuality, to religion, to study, to art, to connoisseurship, to gambling, to drunkenness, to drugs . . . To almost anything in the world, in fact, except increasing or even maintaining the numbers of their own class by reproduction.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 852

> Again, we can easily concede to Malthus that a large part of the infertility of the privileged is due, sometimes at least, to their stronger propensity to "vice" in the form of contraception or abortion. But here too there are countervailing tendencies. We are apt to be misled, on this subject, by thinking only of middle-class people, in countries like our own during the last hundred years. They, indeed, have lived under a heavy and increasing cloud of anxiety about the number of children that they can (as they vulgarly say) "afford." But a rich person is more or less exempt from that anxiety; while an aristocrat despises it, just because it is a middle-class anxiety. And not only the economic but even the physical burdens of motherhood are far lighter for highly privileged women than for others. Once the baby is actually delivered, the staff take over the whole of that not-very-interesting business.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 857

> The Malthus-Darwin principle of population, then, when it is applied to man, not only fails to predict the right relation between fertility and privilege, but predicts what is roughly the inverse of it. The incidence of "vice" in Malthus's sense varies in the wildest manner from time to time and from place to place. No sane person will believe, for example, that abortion and contraception were about equally prevalent among the Catholic ruling class of Austria in 11570, the Puritan theocrats of New England in 168o, the Whig lords who ruled England in the mid-eighteenth century, and the Japanese imperial circles of 11935-to take a handful of cases at random. But there is one fact which does emerge from human history with unvarying insistence, and it is a fact which is fatal to the Malthus-Darwin theory: that the natural rate of human increase is repressed the more, not where the misery due to famine, war, and pestilence falls more heavily, but precisely where it falls more lightly.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 863

> It is always painful, as Huxley said, to witness the brutal murder of a beautiful theory by an ugly fact. The Malthus-Darwin theory of population is certainly a beautiful theory, partly because it comprehends, in one simple biological scheme, the human and all other cases. Nevertheless, and whether or not anyone wants to know, it was brutally murdered, ages before it was born, by an ugly fact about human beings.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 1305

> One can therefore only conclude that Malthus considered the two criticisms I have mentioned, and all the others, either mistaken or unimportant. And if he did, well, there were intelligent people decades after his death who agreed with him. For the mathematical principle was in 1859 incorporated by Darwin into The Origin of Species, without any sign of doubt or uneasiness. He refers no fewer than nine times in that book to "all plants and animals ... tending to increase at a geometrical ratio,"22' to "the geometrical tendency to increase," and so on: and on two of these occasions he refers to Malthus by name."-- Thirty years later still, in Darwinism, Wallace likewise refers to "the rapid increase, in a geometrical ratio, of all the species of animals and plants. "23 I do not know whether either Darwin or Wallace ever heard of the objections which had been made to the mathematical principle long before. But if they did, they must have thought that there was nothing in them. If they did think so, however, they were wrong; and wrong in exactly the same way as Whately had pointed out that Malthus was. The mathematical principle is either straightforwardly false or else predictively impotent. It is false if "tends to increase geometrically" means "usually does increase geometrically." But if it means only "would increase geometrically if left to itself," then the principle could be true without there being, always or usually, any actual pressure of population on food at all, and hence without there being any struggle for life among conspecifics or consequent child mortality. It would not even follow that anything of that kind ever happens. Clearly,

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 1351

> "OH DARWINIAN STRUGGLE for life-what crimes have been committed in thy name!" Some of these crimes are well known, and have even become a political cliche. Namely, those of the American capitalists who, late in the last century and early in the present one, used the Darwinian idea of a universal struggle for life as a scientific justification of their ruthless acquisitiveness.24 It is less well known, but still is fairly well known, that

> Adolf Hitler found or thought he found an authorization for his policies in the Darwinian theory of evolution. He said, for example, that "if we did not respect the law of nature, imposing our will by the right of the stronger, a day would come when the wild animals would again devour us-then the insects would eat the wild animals, and finally nothing would exist except the microbes. By means of the struggle the elites are continually renewed. The law of selection justifies this incessant struggle by allowing the survival of the fittest. Christianity is a rebellion against natural law, a protest against nature.""

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 1357

> What deserves to be well known, but has in fact been virtually forgotten, is this: that if Darwinism once furnished a justification, retrospective or prospective, for the crimes of capitalists or National Socialists, it performed the same office to an even greater extent, between about 1188o and 19zo, for the crimes, already committed or still to be committed, of Marxists. It is in fact scarcely possible to exaggerate the extent to which Marxist thought in this period incorporated Darwinism as an essential component. Marxists do not believe, of course, that there will be any struggle for life among human beings in the future classless society. But it was that Darwinian conception which Marxists at this time adopted as their description of human life under capitalism. The reader can easily verify this statement, by opening any Marxist book, pamphlet, or newspaper of that period, whether written by an American Marxist, a Russian one, a German, or whatever. For example, an American book which borrowed its title from Darwin and Wallace, The Struggle for Existence, and which, despite being a very large volume, had reached its seventh edition by about 1904:26 what sort of book would that have been? Hardly anyone nowadays could guess the right answer to this question. But to anyone familiar with the Marxist literature of this period, the right answer will be obvious: it was a manual of Marxism. In Russia in the 188os, numerous small groups contended with one anther for the leadership of the entire communist-terrorist movement. Sergius Stepniak was the leader of one of these groups, and he published a collection of his pamphlets, Nihilism As It Is, in about 1893. In this book he rests his own group's claim to the leadership on its having arisen, from other "incomplete organizations, by virtue of natural selection"27 under Czarist pressure. Of course Stepniak and W. T. Mills (who wrote The Struggle for Existence) are authors now forgotten. But not all the authors who combined Marxism with Darwinism have been forgotten. Jack London is one who has not. Another is Upton Sinclair, whose powerful Marxist novel The Jungle (19o6) portrays life in Chicago under capitalism as life in a Darwinian jungle. Yet another is August Bebel, the leader of Marxist Social Democracy in Germany in the late nineteenth century. His main book-and a good book too-was Woman Under Socialism (1879),2$ which is a perfect example of the blending of Darwinism with Marxism, especially in Chapter V of its longest section, "Woman in the present." The 11904 English translation of this book, I may add, was from the thirty-third German edition: a fact which will indicate how far from being idiosyncratic was Bebel's combination of Darwinism with Marxism.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 1372

> present-day reader is likely to think that this combination, even if it was once common, must always have been an incongruous one. But that is a complete mistake, and can only arise from ignorance, or from a present-day Marxist hostility to "biologism." If the combination of Darwin with Marx were incongruous, then a book like Bebel's would have to be full of leaky joints or weak stitches, wherever the author's Marxism ended and his Darwinism began, or vice versa. But anyone who attempts to identify any such weak points in Woman Under Socialism will find his attempt more educational than successful.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 1375

> It will perhaps be said, in defense of Darwinism, that many and enormous crimes have been committed in the name of every large and influential body of ideas bearing on human life. Whether that is true or not, I do not know. But even if it is, there are great and obvious differences, among such bodies of ideas, in how easily and naturally they amount to incitement to the commission of crimes. Confucianism, for example, or Buddhism does not appear to incite their adherents to crime easily or often. National Socialism, by contrast, and likewise Marxism, do easily and naturally hold out such incitements to their adherents, and indeed (as is obvious) owe a good deal of their attractiveness to this very fact. It is impossible to deny that, in this respect, Darwinism has a closer affinity with National Socialism or Marxism than with Confucianism or Buddhism. Darwin told the world that a "struggle for life," a "struggle for existence," a "battle for life"29 is always going on among the members of every species. Although this proposition was at the time novel and surprising, an immense number of people accepted it. Now, will any rational person believe that accepting this proposition would have no effect, or only randomly varying effects, on people's attitudes towards their own conspecifics? No. Will any rational person believe that accepting this novel proposition would tend to improve people's attitudes to their conspecifics-for example, would tend to make them less selfish, or less inclined to domineering behavior, than they had been before they accepted it? No.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 1387

> These considerations are exceedingly obvious. There was therefore never any excuse for the indignation and surprise which Darwinians and neo-Darwinians have nearly always expressed, whenever their theory is accused of being a morally subversive one. For the same reason there is, and always was, every justification for the people, beginning with Darwin's contemporaries, who made that accusation against the theory. Darwin had done his best (as I said in Essay z above) to separate the theory of evolution from the matrix of murderous ideas in which previously it had always been set. But in fact, since the theory says what it does, there is a limit, and a limit easily reached, to how much can be done in the way of such a separation. The Darwinian theory of evolution is an incitement to crime: that is simply a fact. It

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 1725

> A more familiar form of the same objection to the selfish theory is this: if humans had been uniformly and invariably selfish to begin with, how could they ever have come (as they plainly have come) to regard selfishness with moral disapproval? The problem is actually more general than that. How could they ever have come to regard anything with moral disapproval; or for that matter, with moral approval either? Still, it is clearly the special case, of the moral disapproval of selfishness, which poses this general problem in its sharpest form to the selfish theorist. The

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 1748

> I cannot, for my own part, take any interest in these neo-Darwinian "solutions to the problem of altruism." The reason is that I cannot take "the problem of altruism" seriously in the first place. Neither should anyone else take it seriously. For if you do-if you start off by thinking that altruism is a problem-then logically you will not be able to stop short of thinking (with Richard Dawkins) that it is a problem why mothers do not welcome baby

> snatchers, or of thinking (with E. 0. Wilson) that it is a problem why he does not always try to kill or maim the professors who are his enemies. But it is perfectly obvious that once Darwinian armor-plating has reached this degree of thickness, it is completely impenetrable by common sense, or even sanity. The fact is, there is no problem about human altruism. The only problem is Darwinism and neo-Darwinism.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 1755

> I do not believe for one moment that human beings ever were regularly subjected to a struggle for life, and a child mortality, anything like as severe as Darwin and Malthus imply that they must always be; and my reasons are the ones I have given in Essays z, 3, and 5, for thinking that Darwin and Malthus were badly wrong about man from the very start. As for those sociobiologists who by implication deny the very existence of human altruism: my reason for disagreeing with them is simply that I am not a lunatic.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 1758

> There is no reason whatever, apart from the Darwinian theory of evolution, to believe that there ever was in our species an "evolution of altruism" out of a selfish "state of nature." People believe there was, only because they accept Darwin's theory, which says that there is always a struggle for life among conspecifics, whereas there is no such struggle observable among us now, but a great deal of observable altruism instead. The right conclusion to draw, of course, is that Darwin's theory is false. But the conclusion usually drawn is the Cave Man one: that there must have been an evolution-admittedly difficult to explain-from an originally selfish human nature into our present altruistic and tax-paying state. This, however (as a great philosopher said in another connection), is first raising a dust, and then complaining that one cannot see. There is extremely little observable struggle for life, and much observable altruism, among present-day kookaburras, too. They are loyal spouses, and devoted parents to their slow maturing young; and if you expect to see kookaburras squabbling over food like gulls, you should come prepared for a very long wait. Are we therefore to infer, because Darwin's theory of evolution is such a wonderful idea, that there must long ago have been a Hobbesian war of all kookaburras against all kookaburras? Are we obliged to generate a vast game-theoretical literature, to explain the mystery-a mystery indeed-of how originally selfish kookaburras could have evolved into the petit bourgeois kookaburras we see now? Presumably not. And yet if not, then why expend time and thought on similar stories, which are absurd as well as unnecessary, about the evolution of our own species?

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 1772

> THE SELFISH THEORY of human nature was always explicitly intended by its adherents to explode the belief, assiduously cultivated by priests and other obscurantists, that a vast gulf separates our species from all other animals. It was intended, as Darwinism was always intended, to bridge the gap between man and the animals, to mortify human self-importance, and to "cut us down to size." Now isn't that just too bad? Because a vast gulf does separate us from all other animals, in point of altruism, as in point of intelligence. That is simply a fact, and a very obvious one, even if it has been stated by a billion obscurantists. V

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 1863

> We saw earlier, in Mandeville, a clear case of this insoluble difficulty. Men were originally, and are still by nature, he says, selfish and non-moral; but then morality was brought in by "law-givers and wise men." Yet law-

> givers and wise men are just men, after all. Hence if what Mandeville had first said about human nature were true, they could not possibly be unselfish or considerate or cooperative themselves, and even if they were, could not possibly have interested their savage or wolfish fellows in acquiring these unheard-of and plainly deleterious attributes.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 1866

> Freudianism suffers equally from the same fatal defect. According to this theory, all the impulses which are natural to human beings are collected in the id. But then, to "drive" the super ego, what source of psychic energy is left? The super ego has the onerous task of imposing a veneer of regard for others, order, and decency, on the selfish, anarchic and indecent impulses of the id. It is supposed to be a fearfully effective engine for this work too, inflicting untold misery on nuns and countless others, by denying satisfaction to their natural sexual impulses. But what fuel can this mighty engine of repression possibly be running on? It

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 1980

> This is by now generally known. But it has not been generally noticed that it is fatal to a favorite idea of Freud. He told his readers that civilized people are discontented, because of the uniquely heavy burden of "instinctual renunciation" which civilization, as distinct from "savage" life, imposes. No wonder his civilized readers were more than willing to believe him, especially since he implied that we could probably by now well afford to loosen the clamps just a little bit! But in fact the mores of any "savage" society require far more "instinctual renunciation" than civilization does. Enlightened opinions, as I said earlier, are always superficial, and the causes of our civilization's discontents lie a good deal deeper than a Freud could imagine. In any case, we have now actually tried, on a gigantic scale, the remedy for discontent which Dr. Freud recommended; but alas, we are more discontented than ever.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 1988

> The differences between humans and other animals, and between civilized humans and others, are exactly as great and as many as-as they are found in fact to be! And they are found to be, in fact, many, vast, and intractable. Human societies are almost inexhaustibly various, but there is one thing which no human (or even animal) society is even remotely like: namely, "savage" life, and civilized life below the veneer, as selfish theorists conceive it. They think of people as though they were the molecules of a confined volume of gas, which have no mutual sympathy, or any other influence, except by way of collisions with one another. This is the selfish theory to a T, as long as you impute to each molecule a ceaseless and exclusive regard to its own interests. The only thing wrong with this idea is that there is nothing whatever in reality which corresponds to it.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 2176

> Genes, like viruses, have a strong tendency to self-replication. But to describe genes as "selfish" on that account, or on any account, would be just as nonsensical as describing viruses as "selfish." Genes can no more be selfish than they can be (say) supercilious, or stupid. Yet while no real life virologist ever has called viruses "selfish" (as far as I know), there really is a geneticist who does insist on describing genes as "selfish." This is Dr. Richard Dawkins, of Oxford University, and to say that he insists on talking in this way is to understate the

> case extremely. He wrote a book which purports to explain evolution as principally due to what he calls the "ruthless selfishness" of genes. And, as if in order to exclude all charitable misunderstandings, he actually entitled his book The Selfish Gene.' Since it is not only nonsense, but very obviously nonsense, to say that genes are selfish, it might reasonably have been anticipated that the publication of this book would injure Dr. Dawkins's scientific reputation. But in fact the effect was the very reverse. The Selfish Gene not only became a best seller, but at once elevated its author into the very front rank of biological authorities: a position which he enjoys to this day.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 2214

> This is the explanation of the runaway success of The Selfish Gene. The book did not contain any addition to existing knowledge or theory in evolutionary biology. Indeed (except for its last chapter, of which I shall speak later), it did not even claim to do so. It was avowedly a book which expounded, combined, and semi-popularized the main contributions which others had made to evolutionary biology in (roughly) the preceding forty years: say, since R. A. Fisher's The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection (1930). But Dawkins had the wit to perceive, as no one had before him, that genes, since they are hidden, powerful, and immoral, furnished the materials for a book of "Secrets and Scandals of the Court of King Gene." No power on earth could have prevented such a book from succeeding. DAWKINS

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 2228

> Yet Dawkins says he uses the word "selfish" in the behavioral sense (as we have just seen), and he will have it that genes are selfish. But what connection is there, between selfishness in the behavioral sense, and that feature of genes on which everything in The Selfish Gene turns: their self-replicatory propensity? To justify his calling genes selfish in the behavioral sense, Dawkins would need to show that self-replication increases the selfreplicator's chances of survival. But how on earth could he, or anyone, possibly make that out?

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 2237

> Equally plainly, the same is true of genes. By making a copy of itself, a gene certainly does not gratify its selfishness in the ordinary sense of that word, since (as I said earlier) genes cannot be selfish in that sense. But neither does it do anything selfish in the behavioral sense. Self-replication would even seem (to a layman such as myself) rather to worsen a gene's chances of survival, since it must use up a sizable part of its limited energy store. But even if that is merely a layman's misunderstanding, it seems obvious enough that a gene, by self-replicating, does not improve its own chances of survival. (Its replica is not going to look after the parent gene in its old age, for example.) Which is to say, that the self-replication of a gene is not selfish, even in the sense in which Dawkins says he is using that word.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 2243

> At this point, however, Dawkins would remind me that "the selfish gene ... is not just one physical bit of DNA ... it is all replicas of a particular bit of DNA, distributed throughout the world."' What a gene does by self-replicating, he says, is to benefit "itself in the form of copies of itself."" "The gene is a long-lived replicator, existing in the form of many duplicate copies" of itself." There: you have just witnessed how Dawkins made out

> the case on which his whole book depends. How he managed, that is, to represent the self-replication of genes as being selfish in the behavioral sense. Well, there is nothing to it, really, once you have seen how the thing is worked.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 2247

> All you need to do is to talk about things which exist in the form of other things, and more specifically about things which exist in the form of copies of themselves; and the job is done.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 2263

> IF YOU CANNOT, without fudging, get from self-replication to self ishness even in the behavioral sense, then you certainly cannot get from self-replication to selfishness in the ordinary psychological sense. And yet it is not really open to doubt that it was the ordinary sense of the word which, though repeatedly disavowed by the author, really "carried" Dawkins's book with his readers. Suppose that, before publishing it, Dawkins actually had done what he says is always open to him, or to anyone to do: translate every reference in the book to selfishness "back into respectable terms," about self-replication.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 2266

> What would have been the result? The title of the book would have become The Self-Replicating Gene: which is about as interesting as watching paint dry, or as entitling a book about cats, The Fish-Eating Cat. And in the process of translation, every suggestion of revelations being made about wicked, powerful, and hidden rulers, would have been lost. Without these allurements, the book would have fallen "dead-born from the press." Or at best, it would have made no greater public impact than (for example) G. C. Williams's Adaptation and Natural Selection (1966): a book of very similar scientific content to The Selfish Gene, but of far greater merit, which was never anything remotely like a best seller.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 2575

> ACCORDING TO the shared genes theory of kin altruism, the helpfulness of human brothers and sisters towards one another is due to their having (on the average) half of their genes in common; just as the helpfulness of human parents towards their children is supposed to be due to their having exactly half their genes in common. If this is true, then what vast quantities of altruism must exist, between generations or between siblings, in all those species which reproduce either parthenogenically or by fission! For the members of these species share all their genes with their offspring or with their siblings. If there is one thing which dignifies common human life, and goes some way to relieve its overall charmlessness, it is parental love. Yet human parents share with their offspring only half their genes. Imagine then, if you can, the perfect altruism which a parthenogenic offspring must receive from its parent! This probably explains why that chap Jesus had such a vast idea of his own importance. And every time a bacterium divides into two genetically identical "daughter" bacteria, what complete and selfless altruism must unite those two sisters! The contrast with our own meager efforts in the way of sibling altruism is too glaring for any of us to contemplate without pain and mortification. Sociobiologists deserve our thanks, then, for reviving the pre-Darwinian tradition of Mrs. Gatty, by drawing edifying Parables from Nature (11855). Yes, even from the meanest of our fellow creatures. I

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 2592

> On second thoughts that is not the only objection which asexual reproducers, such as bacteria and dandelions, present to the inclusive fitness theory. As well as that theory's inconsistency with Darwinism, there is another objection: its inconsistency with the facts. For between sister bacteria, and between parthenogenically reproducing dandelions and their offspring, there is no kin altruism. Not just much less of it than the theory leads one to expect: there is none at all. Two sister bacteria, despite their genetic identity, will slug it out with each other for the means of subsistence, just like any other pair of good Darwinian girls. A fact so awkward for the inclusive fitness theory, and at the same time so obvious, was bound to demand attention from the first. Accordingly, Professor W. D. Hamilton, in the famous article in which he first put forward the inclusive fitness theory, tried to apply a patch to this obvious puncture. But I cannot report that he succeeded. He first says that the extent of asexual reproduction may have been greatly exaggerated: which is understandable enough, in both senses of "understandable." After that point, however, I at any rate am unable to understand what the patch is which he proposed to apply; and still less able, therefore, to tell whether it is a good one."

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 2599

> PART OF WHAT the inclusive fitness theory says is that people love their children because they have half their genes in common with each child. But children are not the only things which people have half their genes in common with. Each woman shares half her genes with each egg she produces, whether fertilized or not, and a man shares half his genes with each sperm he produces. The theory of inclusive fitness would therefore seem to predict that every woman loves each of her eggs as much as her children, and that each man loves every one of his sperm like a father his son. This certainly does not sound like anyone I know: not even remotely like. But I cannot deny that my experience of life is small. Does it sound like anyone you know, or have ever heard of? And if altruism is proportioned to shared genes, what about the converse case? Your wife shares only half her genes with each egg, and you share only half your genes with each of your sperm. But an egg of your wife, and a sperm of yours, has all its genes in common with the adult organism which produces it. So if what causes altruism is shared genes, our eggs and sperm must be putting in a 100 percent altruistic effort towards us. Yet as far as I know, nothing of this kind has ever been observed. Parents nowadays often complain, it is true, that they have produced a number of affectionate little layabouts who can scarcely be prevailed on to leave home. But I have never heard of this complaint being levelled against either eggs or sperm, and it would seem to be a complaint entirely without foundation in either of those cases. Indeed, in the case of sperm, it would surely be the reverse of the truth, since they are, if anything, in culpable haste to leave home.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 2610

> Then, if human brothers have the amount of mutual helpfulness that they generally do, because they share about half of their genes, two sperm of any one man ought to exhibit the same degree of mutual altruism. For they too share about half of their genes with each other. Can you believe this? I can't. I cannot believe even that two sperm of one man have either liberty or equality, but fraternity seems to me entirely out of the question. Even from the point of view of sociobiology itself, the idea is absurd. A sperm is just a packet of paternal genes, after all, and according to sociobiologists, every gene is ruthlessly selfish. So how come, if every gene in every packet is selfish, that the packets are so all-fired fraternal? In any case, if what some other biologists report is true, the relations among the sperm of any one man are in general rather the reverse of fraternal.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 2816

> At least, I have never met with any exposition of the theory in which it was burdened with either of those dispiriting qualifications; and I have read such expositions by Hamilton, Dawkins, Alexander, Ruse, and Trivers, as well as by many less well-known authors. On the contrary, the theory is always, in my experience, put forward without any qualifications at all. It is flatly stated, in effect, that the degree of kin altruism varies as the proportion of genes shared. In this unqualified form, the theory is indeed, as we have seen, extremely easy to disprove. But that is not because it is a straw man misrepresentation of the real theory. It is the real theory.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 3077

> OLPHINS and some other animals have lately turned out to be more intelligent than was formerly thought, and present-day computers are capable of some amazing things. Still, if the question is asked, what are the most intelligent and all-round capable things on earth, the answer is obvious: human beings. Everyone knows this, except certain religious people. A person is certainly a believer in some religion if he thinks, for example, that there are on earth millions of invisible and immortal non-human beings which are far more intelligent and capable than we are. But that is exactly what sociobiologists do think, about genes. Sociobiology, then, is a religion: one which has genes as its gods. Yet this conclusion seems incredible. Was not religion banished from biological science a long time ago? Why, yes. And is not sociobiology a part of biological science (even if a very new part, and a controversial one)? No. Sociobiologists really are committed to genes being gods, as I will show in a moment.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 3175

> Genes, even if they were alive, and did possess intelligence and purpose, would still be hopelessly miscast in the role of the world's greatest manipulators. Manipulation requires not only influence and intention to influence, but means. Yet what means of manipulation have genes got? They are sans limbs, sans organs, sans tissues, sans nerves, sans brains ... sans everything. If they were capable, under these crushing handicaps, of any sort of manipulation, they really would have a good deal of the god about them.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 3387

> The natural first candidate to consider is just: "genes are replicators." But this will not do. If it means that all genes replicate, it is false straight off, since many do not; those of childless people, for example. If it is true, it can only be in the indefinite way that "dogs bark," "fish swim," and "cats are fish eaters," are true. But then, as a translation of "genes are selfish," it is altogether too respectable; in fact, an embarrassing anticlimax. "Genes are replicators" gets rid of the implication of purpose, all right. But ". . . are replicators" falls so very far short in meaning of ". . . are selfish" that the translation is a truth not worth stating. Everyone knows that genes are replicators. But not everyone knows (to put it mildly) all the hair-raising consequences which follow at once from the proposition that genes are selfish.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 3582

> But the discovery of the sexuality of plants was not only intellectual dynamite: it was moral and political dynamite as well. For the Christian religion, after all, had waged war from its very start against the sexual

impulse in man: not just against its hypertrophy, but against the thing itself. It had always been obvious to every thoughtful person that the sacrament of Christian marriage was no more than an uneasy compromise with the deadly sin of concupiscence. And yet, how could something which not just we and the "beasts" do, but which wheat and apples and roses and oaks do, be an offence against the divine nature and purpose? The conclusion which was bound to be drawn, and was drawn, was that, in spite of St. Paul, sexual intercourse is innocent. This was a conclusion, of course, which Enlightened persons of the eighteenth century were already becoming convinced of on other grounds: discovery of the sexuality of plants merely provided the final scientific proof of it. Universal sexual emancipation had been high on the agenda of the Enlightenment from the start, along with the destruction of religion and of monarchical government. Sexual intercourse was to be freed, in the happy future, from the trammels of religion and "priestcraft," and of all laws of marriage, property, or inheritance. Contraception and feticide, from having been offences against divine, or moral, or civil law, were to be made not merely universal rights, but civic duties.45 The great sexual emancipators after i8 59-Havelock Ellis, Freud, Lenin, Marie Stopes, Margaret Sanger, Margaret Mead, Wilhelm Reich-were all Darwinians as a matter of course. But heroic labors in this great cause had been performed earlier, by the evolutionists Diderot and Erasmus Darwin, by Condorcet, Godwin, Shelley, and Fourier among others. Fourier looked forward to the day when Europe would be permanently crisscrossed, no longer by armies or crusaders or missionaries, but only by troupes of the most renowned sexual athletes, in permanent public competition, in order to keep before the eyes of the populace a constant reminder of the highest point which human felicity can reach.46 When we, the beneficiaries of all these liberators, remember them in our grateful thoughts, we ought not to forget what they all owed, and therefore how much happiness we all owe, to the scientific labors of Camerarius and Grew.

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Highlight (Geel) | Locatie 3727

Human life, then, straightforwardly contradicts the Darwinian conception of life at various points. But as well as that, human intelligence and consciousness plainly have a degree of autonomy which is wildly inconsistent with Darwinism. If intelligence and consciousness in humans are always subordinated, like all other adaptations of organisms, to their striving to increase, then The Origin of Species was an attempt by Darwin to increase the number of his descendants. But it was not. Ergo, etc. Similarly, some sociobiologists have realized that, according to the account which they themselves give of all communication-namely, that it is a form of manipulation by genes-their own publications are simply power plays by their genes for increased representation in the next generation. This realization is, very naturally, found both discouraging, and somewhat bewildering, by the authors concerned. For after all, when they began their careers, they had thought they were doing something entirely different: namely, biological science. Yet if what The Selfish Gene says is true, what else can that book be, but manipulation of its readers by the genes of Richard Dawkins, striving for their own maximal replication? Thus does the new religion, like revolutionary Marxism, consume its own devotees. But then, they had "asked for it," if ever anyone did. In fact the autonomy of the human intellect will always present insuperable obstacles to any attempt at the complete mechanization of the picture of life. For suppose that some super-Darwin of the future attempts in a book to reduce every concept of biology, without remainder, to concepts of basic physics; and suppose he succeeds in this attempt, and is even recognized to have succeeded. This would certainly be a book of unparalleled scientific importance: an event that would put everything else in the history of thought absolutely in the shade. But how could this book itself be translated without remainder into the language of basic physics, while still saying what it said at first?