

DAVID ELLIOT LOYE, PIONEER

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Abstract

David Elliott Loye was a pioneer in our modern understanding of the Darwinian evolutionary paradigm. His contributions are discussed in the context of the most current evolutionary and cosmological views of science.

Keywords: David Loye; Evolution; Cosmology; Darwin; Darwinism

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It is my pleasure to offer comments on the life and work of David Loye. David was known to so many of us for his important contributions to social and evolutionary thinking, beginning with his award-winning book *The Healing of a Nation* (1971) and then, especially to us in the field of evolutionary biology, his multiple works on the history and legacy of science's Darwinian paradigm. I corresponded with David about the importance of these latter works and featured many of them in my professional newsletters shared with myriad colleagues and the public, as part of my own work in evolutionary science and its socio-religious dynamics, especially because it fit my roles in the United Nations community (Committee on Spirituality, Values, and Global Concerns, 2022).

David was part of an important paradigm shift led by thought leaders, scientists, technologists, and futurists who could see what was ahead and what had been missed

or co-opted from the past, and could suggest what the future world vision and understanding would likely look like. In the life sciences, forward-looking practitioners were drawing conclusions about the future even before full data sets were there to support their views. This brought some consternation, even sometimes marginalization, from some mainstream peers. However, the larger fact was that mainstream science was actually in the process of “catching up” with these innovators’ views, often producing the very data sets that supported these pioneers’ earlier (often called premature) conclusions. As these debates were going on, the predicted new paradigm was breaking through, *with* the data sets to support many of these early innovators’ conclusions.

Today, a newer paradigm is now in place based on multiple scientific breakthroughs across myriad fields and with evidence at all scales. It has revealed a radically expanded perception of the universe that science studies. Moreover, its knowledge is converging with universal wisdom and spiritually based teachings, realizing a unified nature of reality and embracing an unfolding collective evolution. Central to its unitive vision is the recognition of universal interbeing, interconnectedness, and interdependence, and a profound recognition of belonging with the whole universe, a universe in which our planetary home, Gaia, is only one of myriad fractals. The emergence of this new paradigm predicts an ever-increasing evolutionary shift in consciousness.

Revolutionary insights are uncovering a universe whose appearance emerges from deep levels of causation. It suggests that our universe not only exists and evolves as an entirely unified and even innately sentient entity, but also is meaningful and purposeful, even *existing to* evolve—evolving from simplicity to complexity and diversity, toward ever-greater levels of individuated and collective self-expression, self-awareness, and conscious interdependence. Above all, multiple scientific disciplines are concluding that mind and consciousness are not something we have, but rather, to quote cosmologist Dr. Jude Currivan “what we and the whole universe, in fact, *are*” (Currivan, 2022, p. 233).

Sometimes, across the process of this emergence, it is forgotten who the pioneers were who actually pointed out something first. Occasionally, as the journal *Systematic Zoology* did with ‘panbiogeographer’ and plate tectonics pioneer Leon Croizat, posthumous apologies are offered for overlooking or rejecting their work (Croizat et al., 1974; Hull, 2009), but not that often.

In sum, today’s emergent understanding is revealing a cosmology of evolutionary consciousness. In evolutionary science, a key area of David’s writings, current science has radically amended the traditional representation of Darwinian natural selection as solely meaning “survival of the fittest,” wherein the definition of fitness is “the best competitor.”

Rather, a revolution began in 2015, summarized first in Yale University Press/Templeton Press’ first book in its “Foundational Questions in Science” series. This book, *Does Altruism Exist: Culture, Genes and the Welfare of Others* (Wilson, 2015), was dubbed the first “post-resolution” publication summarizing this paradigm shift. It documented, from massive arrays of data from supercomputers and other new methodologies, an extended conclusion concerning the nature of evolution: Once evolution reaches the relationships between, and hierarchies within, groups, then nature’s definition of “fitness” changes from “the best competitor” to “the best cooperator” (Wilson, 2015, 2019). This is today’s view of group and multi-level’ natural selection: selection that chooses ‘for the good of the whole’ and helps us understand how altruism, ‘goodness’ itself, actually evolves.

Particularly considering cultural evolution, in the domain of a conscious and intelligent species exercising volition, agency, and conscious choice, this view—countering the implications of the long-held rubric of ‘Social Darwinism’ that has dominated our realms of economics, business, and politics for nearly two centuries—this ‘kinder’ view of evolution was obvious to many, including David. From 2004 to 2010, David wrote on precisely these topics. But, as others and I have pointed out (Wilson & Johnson, 2021) much of academic evolutionary science was confined to the

study of genetic evolution, ignoring or ceding to other fields the study of cultural and personal evolution. In that older Darwinism, all genes were called “selfish” and the evolution of altruism was regarded as theoretically highly implausible (Wilson & Johnson, 2021).

Evolution was concluded to have no purpose. Mutations took place at random, and the only direction provided by natural selection was what adapts organisms to their immediate environments. However, since David’s early implorings, “hard” evolutionary science has expanded to include epigenetic, personal, and cultural change in addition to genetic change. It can explain the evolution of altruism in addition to selfishness. In addition, to say that evolution can have a directed component, especially in the case of human cultural evolution, is no longer generally heretical. These facts led prominent evolutionary scientists like D. S. Wilson and E. O. Wilson to redefine the field of sociobiology in terms of the new, wider paradigm of evolutionary biology, understanding this profound shift in the definition of fitness as complexity increases in a system (Wilson & Wilson, 2007, p. 345).

Altruism, the implications of its evolution and group and multi-level selection “for the good of the whole,” now beg a new historical question. After a century and a half of “Social Darwinism” claiming that evolution was all about competition, from the lowest to the highest, can our world now dominated by the shark-tank rubrics of business, economics, and politics adjust to this new view of what is true in the most current science? Can we realize that because of this basic blunder about Darwin’s message, we had in fact ended up with dystopia instead of utopia? And with this knowledge, how can we best move forward? These questions were at the heart of David’s writings.

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Kurt Johnson, PhD, (www.lightonlight.us, www.unity.earth) has worked in professional science and comparative religion for over 40 years. With a PhD in Evolution and Ecology he is author of over 200 scientific articles and seven technical books. A prominent figure on international committees, particularly at the United Nations, he has authored or co-authored several influential and award-winning books: *Our Moment of Choice* (2020) (Gold Nautilus, COVR and Living Now Awards), *The Coming Interspiritual Age* (2013), *Nabokov's Blues* (2000) and *Fine Lines* (2015) (Brian Boyd Prize, 2019). Living in New York City, Kurt was associated with the American Museum of Natural History for 25 years and served on the faculty of New York's Interfaith Seminary for 12 years. He is host for the *Convergence* series on VoiceAmerica, publisher of three magazines: *The Convergence*, *Light on Light*,

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