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BOOK REVIEWS

Beyond Natural Selection, by Robert Wesson. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1991. 353 pp. $29.95, hardback, ISBN 0-262-23161-1.

This book is another criticism of the "neo-Darwinist synthesis," by which is meant the belief that evolution can be explained without remainder by natural selection working on spontaneous genetic mutations. Wesson mentions almost every weakness of evidence and every explanatory deficiency of neo-Darwinism. The gaps in the fossil record, the improbability of coordinated and simultaneous mutations that would be required to explain the giraffe's neck and the eye, the similarities in the biochemical composition of chimpanzees and humans and their great disparities in form and function, the misleading promissory note assuring us that the delineation of the structure of DNA would itself lead to an understanding of morphology, and the development of many organisms — our enquiring minds, for example — beyond any need for mere physical survival: these are only a few of the many unsolved problems that Wesson examines. Indeed, Wesson hurries his readers from one example to another so that at times I had the impression of reading a *catalogue raisonné* of everything we do not understand about biology, which is, of course, a great deal.

To be a critic of neo-Darwinism you do not have to put forward a better theory, as some neo-Darwinists have whiningly insisted their critics should. Wesson does not offer one. He is not a creationist, and his references to the explanatory value of modem chaos theory seem incomplete and almost half-hearted. He leaves the reader wondering, which is surely the state of mind most likely to lead someone else to think either of a replacement for neo-Darwinism or a major supplement to what it can explain.

Beyond Natural Selection is dense, but well-written and well-referenced. In examining its 30 pages of references I detected only trivial errors in two places.

In one respect, however, I found it disappointing. Although Wesson has familiarized himself with a vast amount of the technical literature of biology, he shows almost no awareness of his numerous predecessors in his criticisms of neo-Darwinism. He mentions Lamarck, but with some brevity, and he does not even give a reference to Lamarck's great work, *Philosophie zoologique*. He tells us that French biologists have been cool toward neo-Darwinism, but he does not guide us toward Grassé or Chauvin. And as for the numerous Anglo-Saxon critics of neo-Darwinism, they receive almost no acknowledgment apart from D'Arcy Thompson and members of the modem group at the Open University in the United Kingdom, such as Mae-Wan Ho. I cannot believe that Wesson — who shows an immense knowledge of biology — could never have

come across the writings of such critics of neo-Darwinism as E. S. Russel, H. Graham Cannon, Alister Hardy, and Michael Denton, to mention a few names only. This conclusion led me to the saddening conjecture that a too great desire to appear original had betrayed an unattractive selfishness.

Even so, I welcome *Beyond Natural Selection* as a useful work of reference to everyone interested in evolution and especially to persons who wish to know just about everything that is wrong with neo-Darwinism when it is proclaimed to provide a complete explanation of the processes of evolution. We cannot be told too often, to use one of Wesson's own phrases that "the construction of organs is a very different problem from the production of proteins, and much more difficult to master" (p. 221).

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First Review of Forbidden Science, by Jacques Vallée. Berkeley, Calif.: North Atlantic Books, 1992. 466 pp. $24.95.

Before reviewing this book, I would like to explain its personal significance for me. In 1971, I had a vacancy in my research group at Stanford University for a scientist with a background in astrophysics, statistics, and computers. The position had been advertised for only a very short time when, to my surprise and pleasure, a tall, handsome, soft-spoken Frenchman with impeccable manners walked into my office and offered his services. His name was Jacques Vallée.

The name meant nothing to me, beyond the association occasioned by his visit. However, he had been working with me for only a short time when I learned that he had written three books on UFOs. At that time, I had no interest in the subject. Since Jacques was then a colleague of mine, I felt an obligation to learn something of his interests and work. The book did not persuade me that the Earth is being visited by either little green men or big pink ladies, but it did persuade me that there is more to the subject than meets the casual scientific eye.

I therefore set myself the further assignment of studying the Condon Report that had, as every scientist knew, completely settled any remaining doubts concerning the reality of the UFO phenomenon. The first few pages of the Condon Report certainly gave that impression: Condon stated that the phe-