



Beyond Biofatalism: Human Nature for an Evolving World

Gillian Barker

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Beyond Biofatalism is a spirited response to the pessimism of mainstream evolutionary psychology, which argues that human beings are incapable of building a more inclusive, cooperative, and egalitarian society. Considering the pressures of climate change, unsustainable population growth, increasing income inequality, and religious extremism, this attitude promises to bury us before we even try to meet these threats. Beyond Biofatalism provides the perspective we need to understand that better societies are not only possible but actively enabled by human nature. Though she takes issue with the pessimism of evolutionary psychologists, Gillian Barker appreciates their methods and findings. She considers their work against a broader background to show human nature is surprisingly open to social change. Like other organisms, we possess an active plasticity that allows us to respond dramatically to certain kinds of environmental variation, and we engage in niche construction, modifying our environment to affect others and ourselves. Related research in social psychology, developmental biology, ecology, and economics reinforces this expanded view of evolved human nature, while philosophical exploration reveals its broader implications. The result is an encouraging foundation on which to build better approaches to social, political, and other institutional changes that could enhance our well-being and chances for survival.

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