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Nature's Magic: Synergy in Evolution and the Fate of Humankind

By Peter Corning



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Nature's Magic: Synergy in Evolution and the Fate of Humankind By Peter Corning

In Nature's Magic Peter Corning states that synergy--a vaguely familiar term to many of us--has been a wellspring of creativity in the natural world and has played a key role in the evolution of cooperation and complexity at all levels, from physics and chemistry to the latest human technologies. The 'Synergism Hypothesis' asserts that synergy is more than a class of interesting and ubiquitous effects. It has also been a major causal agency in evolution; it represents a unifying explanation for biological complexity and represents a different perspective on the evolutionary process. In contrast to gene-centered theories, or postulates of self-organization and emergent 'laws' of complexity, the Synergism Hypothesis represents, in essence, an 'economic' (or bio-economic) theory of complexity. Peter A. Corning, Ph.D., is the Director of the Institute for the Study of Complex Systems in Palo Alto, California. He has published numerous research papers and articles and three previous books, one of which was a theoretical monograph on the role of synergy in evolution, The Synergism Hypothesis: A Theory of Progressive Evolution (McGraw-Hill, 1983).



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Editorial Review

Review

"...a text that leaves one thinking anew about how complexity within living systems has evolved."

Frank T. Kuserk, Moravian College, Science Books & Films

"I like this book. It's exciting, well-documented, and well-argued. It's very informative both for professional biologists and well-read lay people; it will change their minds and get them to see synergies everywhere."

Professor Jack Cohen, Warwick University, author of *Figments of Reality*, and *Evolving the Alien* (with Ian Stewart).

"If you are under the impression that synergy is not particularly important, just try to tie your shoes with a single hand. The book will appeal to anyone interested in the place of evolutionary thinking in general intellectual culture. It will also be esteemed a particularly valuable contribution to the emerging discipline of bioeconomics."

Professor Michael Ghiselin, California Academy of Sciences

"Corning's new book makes for enjoyable reading, with clear, lucid, and transparent formulations, imaginative metaphors and similes, an encyclopedic scope, and a high convincibility factor. There is only one thing wrong with a book like this for a reviewer like me: every page contains at least one passage or paragraph which begs to be quoted...Far from being the umpteenth 'theory of everything,' Corning's magnificent book presents an invitation to look at everything in a novel and fresh way."

Prof. Johan M.G. van der Dennen, University of Groningen, the Netherlands.

"Corning is one of the most erudite thinkers in systems biology. His original synergism hypothesis, posed in 1983, attracted little attention but had profound implications for many areas of biology and particularly evolutionary studies. Like all good systems, the context has now changed and Corning's thesis has come in from the cold. Suddenly and obviously synergism is everywhere and Corning's book expounds this crucial idea in brilliant fashion."

Prof. Anthony Trewavas, FRS, Institute of Cell & Molecular Biology, University of Edinburgh

"This is a marvelous book, which will change your perception of reality, of how things work and act together. Corning's central claim...is that synergy...complements our contemporary scientific world view. Moreover, the concept of synergy is more tangible than the rather fuzzy concept of 'self-organization'... Corning is able to define synergy clearly, to list the most important properties of synergistic effects, and to give numerous examples of synergy in the living and non-living world...I believe this book has the potential of becoming a classic in complexity-studies."

Taede Smedes, Groningen, the Netherlands (review for Amazon.com)

"...a profound and widely encompassing amalgamation of inductive reasoning and broad repeating patterns directly affecting society itself. A work of impeccable, documented, ground breaking scholarship, *Nature's Magic* is so well written as to be completely accessible to academic and non-specialist general readers alike."

The Bookwatch

"For the intellectually curious reader who already knows something about evolution, is interested in scientific ideas that transcend disciplinary boundaries...this book will provide a great deal of food for

thought."

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"... this book will provide a great deal of food for thought."

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