

# Preface

This book is intended to fill a longstanding gap and growing need for information and discussion. Although many interdisciplinary books consider aspects of human nature and human society in a more-or-less naturalistic framework, we know of none that concentrates—as this one does—on findings that emerge from evolution-inspired investigations. The chapters of this book illuminate these findings and, in particular, discuss their consequences and implications for the way we view ourselves and humankind's relation to the world-at-large.

The new insights are applied here to evolutionary psychology, evolutionary ethics, and evolutionary ecology, to name but a few. Exactly these disciplines are at the core of today's most controversial debates between traditional and naturalistic interpretations of human nature. In the various chapters, leading authors provide evidence for the need to switch to the new view of humans, in spite of the understandable resistance to giving up some of our most cherished illusions.

The concept for this book owes much to the inspiration provided by Eckart Voland of the University of Gießen. In fact it mirrors the multifaceted character of his work, his naturalistic way of thinking, and his commitment to spreading a new, scientifically grounded image of humankind. Throughout his scientific career as an anthropologist and primatologist, Eckart Voland has dispelled many illusions, frequently questioning the traditional view that humans are exceptional. With his doctoral advisor, Christian Vogel, he pioneered the brand-new discipline of sociobiology in Germany. Based mainly on the *Krummhörn project*, which would shape his scientific life for the following decades, he has contributed major findings to the grandmother hypothesis and the area of parental investment. His research reveals that many decisions in human life are not as independent of the biological imperative as our intuition leads us to believe—unmasking yet another illusion.

Our first thanks therefore go to Eckart Voland for his scientific inspiration. We are grateful, in addition, to Ingrid Weil for triggering the initial idea, to Angela Lahee at Springer-Verlag for the enthusiastic support that helped to get this project started, and to the authors for their uncomplicated willingness to contribute.

It is to be hoped that the insights inspired by evolution will—as they become better recognized—lead to a new understanding of man’s place in nature, free of at least some of the illusions that encumber us today. This book should serve as a stepping stone along the way.

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