

Bruce H. Lipton & Steve Bhaerman, Spontaneous Evolution: Our positive future and a way to get there from here.

Mary Leslie

2015

Satir International Journal

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Original citation:

Leslie, M. (2015). Bruce H. Lipton & Steve Bhaerman, Spontaneous Evolution: Our Positive Future and a Way to get there from here. *Satir International Journal*, 3(1), 58–60. <https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/satir/article/view/15107>

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Book Review

Bruce H. Lipton & Steve Bhaerman, *Spontaneous Evolution: Our Positive Future and a Way to get There from Here*. Hay House 2009 p. 367 US \$ 25.95 (ISBN 9781401925802).

Reviewed by Mary Leslie, Satir Institute of the Pacific

“Inherent within all living organisms is an innate drive to survive, known by science as the biological imperative. Contrary to what conventional science and religion have been telling us, evolution is neither random nor predetermined, but rather an intelligent dance between organism and environment. When conditions are ripe—either through crisis or opportunity—something unpredictable happens to bring the biosphere into a new balance at a higher level of coherence.”

Bruce Lipton’s earlier seminal work, **Biology of Belief**, published in 2005, provided ground breaking scientific evidence that our attitudes and emotions control our physiology, our biology and our gene expression. He postulated that beliefs and environmental factors could alter the structure of our DNA. He is a former medical school professor and research scientist. His experiments have helped articulate the mechanisms by which cells receive and process information and how DNA is controlled by signals from outside the cell, including from our positive and negative thoughts.

In this sequel, Bruce’s co- author is Steve Bhaerman, a political science major, author of several books, a comedic satirist, and a pioneer in alternative education and holistic publications. Steve’s ideas were forming for a book he intended to call **Healing the Body Politic**, an integration of psychology, personal growth, meditation and spirituality. Bruce and Steve were inspired by the overlap and synchronicity of their ideas and passions. It is their stated hope that “the new biology and other insights in the world of science can be applied to our societal beliefs and help us address the threatening situations we currently face.”

The thesis of the book evolves from the assertion that evolution is synonymous with learning, and learning is based on pattern recognition. Recognizing the old patterns is fundamental to freeing us from the ‘old story’ with its unconscious programming, leaving space for the new story to emerge. They provide tools to help us more consciously participate in that evolutionary unfolding. It is an ambitious effort, requiring integration at many levels, scientifically, spiritually and philosophically. At one point I had an experience, metaphorically, of travelling over this ambitious expanse of material, with a few leaps of faith along the way. However, overall, I felt they managed the vastness well, and leave the reader with a sense of possibility, hope and much to ponder.

In Part I, *What if everything you know is wrong?*, they urge us to take a new look at our old story and see that cultural philosophy and individual perceptions are actually *acquired beliefs* that determine not only our biology, but also the way we relate to the world we live in. They trace the evolution of the balance of the prevailing paradigms historically of Spirit and Matter from 8,000 BCE to the present time, and the Human Genome Project of 2001. With this project, they feel evolution has begun to move in the direction of greater balance between science and materialistic values for the third time in history. Holism is their word for what they see emerging as 2012 approaches, citing a renewed regard for Native American beliefs and practices as one factor among many in this emerging evolution. In Part II, *Four Myth-Perceptions of*

the Apocalypse: they use the following headings: Only Matter Matters; Survival of the Fittest, It's in Your Genes and Evolution is Random, as they highlight and debunk these myths with their alternate view of reality, which felt fresh and quite optimistic, for the most part. In Part III, *Changing the Guard and Re-Growing the Garden*, the authors introduce the elements of a new story, a vision into the future, inferred from the study of scientific evidence and reason, to support their thesis that evolution is not random. They note the similarities of structures biologically at various higher and lower tiers of organization as proof of the nonrandom nature of evolution.

On a more global and societal level, the authors name a number of persons they would describe as paradigm shift agents, such as: Albert Einstein, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, the Dalai Lama and a host of 'cultural creatives'. They profile a number of American scientists, including Elizabeth Targ, and Larry Dossy, medical physicians, who pursued an interest in researching the interface between hard science and impacts of prayer and belief on patient outcomes. They outline The HeartMath Institute's Global Coherence Initiative, a science-based program designed to assess the coordinated influence of millions of people who consciously practice care and intention to shift global consciousness from instability and discord, to balance, cooperation and enduring peace.

The authors challenge the reader to individually confront our own programming in order to transform evolutionary possibility into reality. They suggest that the pathway to conscious change involves at least three fundamental elements: intention, choice and practice. They draw on emerging discoveries in neuroscience, such as the major role mirror neurons (neurons considered to be at the root of empathy, the ability to discern others' thoughts and intentions) play in the creation of coherence in an evolving human population. The authors point to the evidence of these mirror neuron chain reactions from such world leaders as Mandela, John F. Kennedy, and Martin Luther King Jr where collective shifts resulted from their profound and empathetic messages. Leaders may be helpful catalysts, as they create a more healthy and inclusive frame of reference, thereby helping to change the world in small, but significant ways "from the inside out." Though this felt somewhat simplistic, at first glance, it does provide a fresh way to view 'change agents' throughout our history.

Why is this book timely for a clinician who aspires to, and is inspired by, Virginia Satir's approach to healing? I sensed, as I read this book that, Virginia would look favorably on *Spontaneous Evolution*. It embodies her holistic approach, of body, mind (including beliefs) and spirit throughout. The authors give voice to their and her deepest yearning for peace within, peace between and peace among, as a central thesis. They draw from established scientific, political and historical material throughout the book, as they attempt to write their new story or interpretation and weave a more holistic, ethical and spiritual perspective and vision. This, at times, felt a bit vast and disconnected, but I feel it came together by the end of the book in a coherent form.

Virginia Satir did not limit her healing focus to the level of the individual and family, and gave expression to the many levels that impact our well-being, and that of our broader communities. *Spontaneous Evolution* calls us to the urgency of our times, and our planet, to think and act broadly and congruently. This book is quite engaging, despite its breadth, depth and hard hitting truths. They underline that global healing requires all of us, at all levels, cellular, personal and social, to bring the greatest consciousness and compassion we can bring to our daily lives and interactions. They provide evidence that deep healing and evolution, at a social and political level, is happening and eminently possible and achievable.

“*Spontaneous Evolution* introduces the notion that a miraculous healing awaits this planet once we accept our new responsibility to collectively tend the Garden rather than fight over the turf. When a critical mass of people truly own this belief in their hearts and minds and actually begin living from this truth, our world will emerge from the darkness in what will amount to a *spontaneous evolution*.” (excerpt from the cover jacket of *Spontaneous Evolution*).