World Ordering

Drawing on evolutionary epistemology, process ontology, and a social-cognition approach, this book suggests “cognitive evolution,” an evolutionary-constructivist social and normative theory of change and stability of international social orders. It argues that practices and their background knowledge survive preferentially; communities of practice serve as their vehicle; and social orders evolve. As an evolutionary theory of world ordering, which does not borrow from the natural sciences, it explains why certain configurations of practices organize and govern social orders epistemically and normatively, and why and how these configurations evolve from one social order to another. Suggesting a multiple and overlapping international social orders approach, the book uses three running cases of contested orders – Europe’s contemporary social order, the cyberspace order, and the corporate order – to illustrate the theory. Based on the concepts of “common humanity” and “epistemological security,” the author also submits a normative theory of “better” practices and of bounded progress.

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World Ordering

*A Social Theory of Cognitive Evolution*

Emanuel Adler
University of Toronto
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Acknowledgments

Because this book is about how thinking involves relationships – how relationships are about practices and their evolution – it is not surprising that my own thinking and academic practice evolved with and because of relationships. I first began conceiving of cognitive evolution in graduate school forty years ago in close interaction with Ernst Haas, without whom this book would never have happened. I trace my intellectual origins to him. The ideas themselves evolved through universities I worked at, projects I was involved with, articles and books I wrote, conferences I attended, and most important, interactions with colleagues around the world and with my graduate students. Throughout all this time, I’ve had the good luck to accumulate numerous debts. If, because of the book’s long gestation, or for reasons of mere distraction, I forgot to mention individuals and institutions who deserve acknowledgment, I apologize.

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