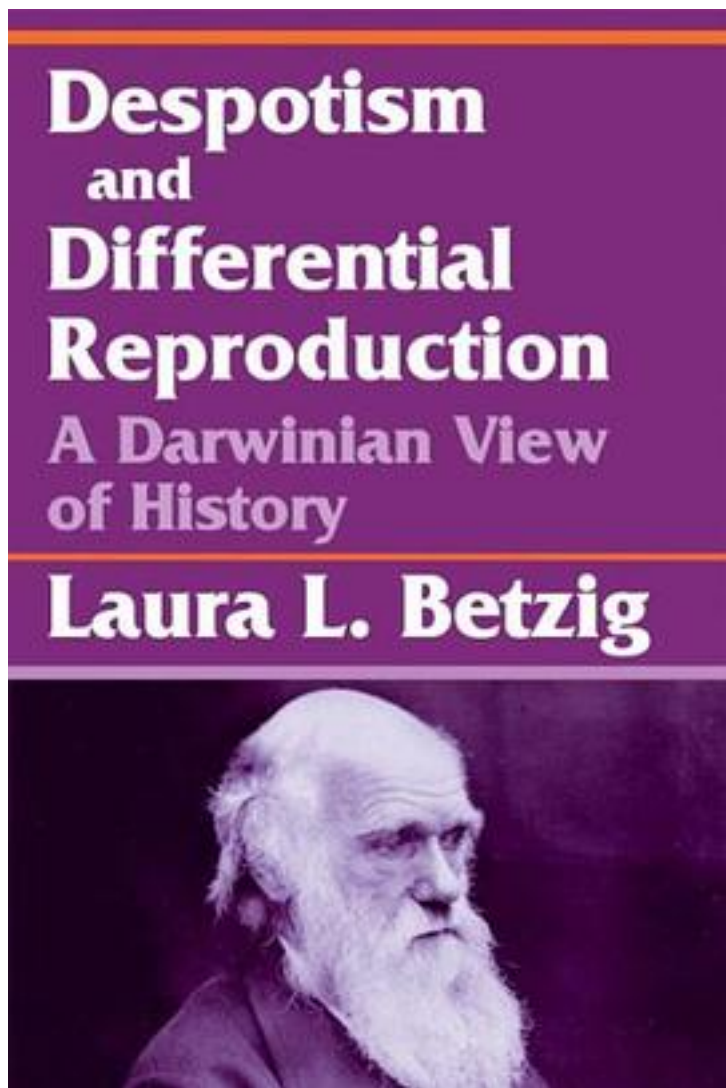


Despotism and Differential Reproduction



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"Much light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history," thus ended Darwin's *Origin of Species*. For many years, the book provoked a flood of argument, but yielded little evidence. In the first century after the book's publication, virtually no one tested Darwin's theory against the evidence of human history. Now that tide has changed. Laura Betzig challenges the proposition that the evolved end of human life is its reproduction by presenting the literature on conflict resolution from over a hundred societies. The research results presented in *Despotism and Differential Reproduction* convincingly uphold Darwin's prophecy.

A basic premise behind research has always been that understanding the way things are should contribute to our ability to change them to the way we would like them to be. This idea forms the basis for Betzig's research--she sets out to explain how things really are by leading the reader through the historical and natural conditions that have promoted despotism in the hopes that this might eventually eradicate it. She begins with the idea that reproduction is the end of human life, and that all forms of power and strength are exploited in reaching this end. In this way, Betzig shows with startling clarity how power corrupts and how despotic governments continue to exist in the world today. Engaging--even at times railing against--existing literature on human and social evolution, such as that of Rousseau and Marx, Betzig asserts herself as a formidable and undeniable voice in this debate.

Since Darwin's monumental work, more has been said about why questions regarding how human history has been shaped by natural history should not even be asked, than has been said in an effort to answer them. This work puts a stop to that by testing the Darwinian hypothesis and finding that he was right: light has in fact been shed on human political and reproductive history. Controversial and creative, this book makes no apologies for its bold messages and interdisciplinary boundary blending and addresses a topic of continuing interest and importance.

作者介绍:

Laura L. Betzig is known for her studies in despotism and democracy in history as well as history of the West. In addition to this book she has also written *Human Reproductive Behaviour* and *Human Nature: A Critical Reader*. She has held positions at Northwestern University, the University of California, and the University of Michigan.

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