



Evolutionary Psychiatry (EPSiG)

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Notes from the editor

This is our 9th EPSiG newsletter and we are in our third year of existence as a SIG. We recently held a successful symposium which was very well attended and the discussions were vibrant and interesting. We only really stopped when time ran out and then continued at dinner! Many new ideas were shared and useful links with others made.

Below is a link to the lectures given at the recent Second Evolutionary Psychiatry

Here are the links for the symposium that took place at RCPsych in London on 12 January. Feel free to share with any interested colleagues.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3G3Azwr9mRM&list=PL_qsGoSXTBoc2IUlcc0xjVAiWltQ6s4m4&index=1

Also you can access the full range of the speaker slides on EPSiG web pages on:

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/workinpsychiatry/specialinterestgroups/evolutionarypsychiatry.aspx>

At the symposium a number of people also asked how they may be part of this vibrant international online community. We have therefore also given out the email of the moderator of the WPA forum so interested people may join.

WPA group moderator is Mohammed J ABBAS and his email is mohdgum@hotmail.com

Feedback and links to our recent symposium will be in our next newsletter. Ed PSTJS

For those interested in participating in future on May 18th 2018 in our AGM at the college we will be looking at plans for the future. All those interested are welcome to attend. There will also be scientific presentations including Dr Nikhil Chaudhary, a Research Associate at University College London Human Evolutionary Ecology Group and a presentation on Alzheimer's and ageing.

EPSiG 2 Years On

Riadh Abed, Chair EPSiG

The evolutionary psychiatry special interest group has now been in existence for 2 years and I am midway through my term as founding chair so it seems a good time to reflect and take stock on how this budding group has been developing.

Looking back on the process of setting up the group during 2015 and jumping through the hoops of the college rules and regulations, it all seemed so improbable. Many (including myself) thought that it would be impossible to get the necessary 120 votes of members and fellows required by the college by-laws for the setting up of new SIGs. As it happened we got over 180 votes. And over the past 2 years the SIG membership has grown to around 800 members, although granted most remain silent supporters. The interesting thing about the birth and growth of EPSiG is that it has been an entirely bottom-up process. Unlike the faculties and many other college groups, EPSiG did not arise from any pre-existing administrative, statutory or other bureaucratic imperative.

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Although EPSIG is not unique in this regard (the philosophy and the spirituality SIGs come to mind) it is still remarkable that the support from the college membership occurred against a background of almost complete absence of evolution in standard undergraduate and postgraduate medical curricula and hardly any mention of the implications of evolution in standard psychiatric and medical texts. Moreover, and even more surprisingly, pivotal theories of human nature such as John Bowlby's attachment theory which are firmly based on evolutionary science continue to be discussed and taught with hardly any reference to their obvious and striking evolutionary roots. So, despite the strange and inexplicable neglect of the fact and the implications of evolution for the understanding of psychological function and dysfunction in humans, ordinary college members and fellows have voted with their feet in favour of rectifying this state of affairs.

From my perspective, the case for EPSIG rests on 3 basic propositions as I explained in my opening address to the Second Evolutionary Psychiatry Symposium. The first is the fact that the human brain, mind and psychology are products of evolutionary processes. The second is that this fact has far-reaching implications for the psychological function and dysfunction in humans that can only be fully appreciated through careful scientific enquiry and the third is that these implications have thus far been ignored and/or neglected by mainstream psychiatry.

Whether these considerations were the main motivators for colleagues to support the setting up of our SIG is not entirely clear. However, what is clear is that our supporters felt that evolution deserves an airing and that it may have something important to add to our understanding of mental health and mental disorder.

But raw numbers can sometimes be deceptive. Our AGMs remain relatively sparsely attended and the nucleus of members who are actively engaged in sustaining the core activities of our group remains small. Hence, for EPSIG to become truly viable it is clear that we will need a far greater number of actively participating evolutionary enthusiasts who are willing to invest time and effort into achieving the goals for which EPSIG was founded.

So, what have we achieved during the 2 years of EPSIG's existence? Well, we have held 2 AGMs, 2 half day scientific meetings and 2 international symposia as well as issuing 8 newsletters. We have also gained a seat on one of the MRCPsych syllabus committees. In addition, we have set up the EPSIG web pages on the College website and tried to keep these up to date and to include a range of evolutionary resources on them.

EPSIG has been privileged to host some of the biggest names in the world of evolution at our international symposia. Eminent and pioneering evolutionists from across the world such as Randolph Nesse, Robin Dunbar, Simon Baron-Cohen, Martin Brune, Alfonso Troisi and Paul Gilbert have spoken at our 2 symposia to the delight of our members. In addition, Iain McGilchrist who is one of the world's foremost authorities on brain laterality spoke at our second symposium on the phylogeny and potential evolutionary implications of brain laterality on human psychology. Also, we have hosted Carmine Pariante in one of our half-day scientific meetings who discussed some evolutionary aspects of depression and Susanne Shultz who spoke about the evolution of the social brain. And, of course, several EPSIG members have had the opportunity to present their evolutionary work and/or chair sessions at our various meetings.

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Our first symposium attracted over 50 registrations and we had to turn interested colleagues away due to the small meeting room we had booked. So, for our second symposium we booked a large conference hall at the college and we attracted over 100 registrations. The response was very encouraging and may even be a turning point in the fortunes of EPSIG. Time will tell whether we are able to build on this and grow our support base further.

The YouTube lectures from our first symposium have been viewed collectively many thousands of times by colleagues from around the world and have proved to be valuable both as a group teaching as well as individual learning resource. We are hoping that the second symposium lectures will be as well received once they too are posted on the web.

It may seem rather grandiose for a relatively small group of evolutionary psychiatrists to think that they can influence the thinking and orientation of psychiatrists in the UK and across the rest of the world. Some see evolution as one more ideology in competition with numerous other ideologies in the marketplace of ideas. But we in EPSIG disagree with such a view. If evolution is a fact, and there are mountains of evidence to support this, then all of psychiatry is evolutionary by definition as there is only one kind of human; the evolved kind.

Sad News

Dan Wilson shared the news that John S. Price passed into eternity on Saturday at his home in Sussex, England. John was a key pioneer in the emergence of evolutionary psychiatry and a true gentleman who shall be greatly missed.

Here's John's home page, which gives a lot of information about him. Just a reminder of his important contributions. Go to <http://www.johnprice.me.uk/>.

His friends and colleagues, gave him virtual eulogies online, as they are scattered around the world.

Personal reflections on the death of John Price by Anthony Stevens



I'm deeply saddened by the news. We shall all miss him but I am particularly bereft because John had a profound influence on my life. Through our work together I came to love him like a brother and intellectually speaking I feel as if I have lost my other half. I met John in the summer of 1982 when I was invited by Paul Gilbert to join a study group that had grown up round the primatologist Michael Chance. I already knew of John's pioneering work on the application of evolutionary theory to an understanding of mood disorders, and greatly admired his paper published in the *Lancet* in 1967 (on 'the dominance hierarchy and the evolution of mental illness') and we

soon became firm friends. We discovered that we had both read 'PPP' (Philosophy, Psychology, Physiology) while we were medical students at Oxford, though we did not meet there because he finished the course three years before I began. Since then our careers had followed different routes, his taking him into genetics and general psychiatry, mine into

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general psychiatry and analytical psychology, but we found that over a whole range of psychiatric issues our ideas had been running on parallel lines. We shared a similar disappointment in the slow progress psychiatry had made in our lifetime and attributed this to the same causes, namely, its uncritical embrace of the medical and standard social science models, and its failure to adopt a Darwinian view of the adaptive function of psychiatric symptoms. At Oxford we were both greatly influenced by the work of Niko Tinbergen and Konrad Lorenz, while I had benefited from working with John Bowlby who supervised my research on attachment behaviour for my doctorate thesis. We both agreed that developments in ethology and evolutionary psychology were making it possible to bring psychiatry within the ambit of a new and rapidly evolving science of humanity.

Part of the excitement of our contacts with one another derived from our sense that we were in the vanguard of a new way of seeing things, and it encouraged us to embark on the ambitious (some would say presumptuous) project of writing our textbook of 'Evolutionary Psychiatry', in which we declared our conviction that a paradigm shift was under way, carrying psychiatry beyond the medical model (with its emphasis on the diagnosis and treatment of dubious disease entities) towards an entirely new conceptual framework which sought to define the basic components of human nature in terms of their evolutionary origins and their essential developmental needs.

I still retain happy memories of our lively exchanges as we thrashed out our ideas concerning the adaptive responses we thought responsible for the conditions psychiatrists had to treat. Some of this was done in John's home in Sussex where I enjoyed the generous hospitality of Antonia but mostly in my home on the edge of Dartmoor, as we walked with my dogs over the moor, pausing for a pint and a ploughman's at The Royal Oak at Meavy, or trekking along the South Devon coastal footpath, refreshed by more beer and a pint of prawns at The Dolphin Inn at Kingston. Happy and exciting times! Working creatively in such circumstances is one of the peak experiences that life has to offer. And it is only with John that I have had experiences of that quality. He was a great and brilliant interlocutor.

We felt that we could justly claim our book to have been a pioneering work, for, appearing as it did in 1996, it was the first dedicated textbook entitled 'Evolutionary Psychiatry' (our added 'A New Beginning' asserted our belief that that was precisely what it was). But, as we anticipated, it was not greeted with universal acclaim by our colleagues. Though some were generous in their praise, declaring that we had made a substantial contribution to a deeper understanding of such disorders as manic-depression, anxiety, phobic states, sadomasochism, bulimia and anorexia nervosa, others castigated us for indulging in speculative thinking in the absence of hard empirical data and concocting 'Just So' stories. While having some sympathy with their irritation, we felt justified in reassessing already-existing data in the light of evolutionary theory, and in the second edition, published in 2000, we suggested ways in which research programmes could be designed to test the kind of 'bold hypotheses' which we and other evolutionary psychiatrists were proposing.

In later years it has been a source of gratification to both of us to witness the gain in momentum that the evolutionary approach to mental distress has enjoyed, with the marked increase in the volume of evolutionary inspired publications and the emergence of the internet as an essential resource for evolutionary psychiatrists to present their research and discuss their ideas. Though advancing age has discouraged us from participating actively in these welcome developments they are precisely of the kind we looked forward to when we worked on our book. Although I have been privileged to make a contribution to these

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developments, my contribution is dwarfed by that of John. His 1967 *Lancet* paper was the foundation paper of British evolutionary psychiatry. Since then, he has given support, encouragement, advice, and generous allocations of his time to a host of workers committed to the same path. As a group we owe him an incalculable debt.

Anthony Stevens January 2018

Other recollections of John Price

From Alfonso Troisi

Thank you for letting us to know the sad news. After Mike McGuire, we lose another pioneer in the field of evolutionary psychiatry. Yet, passing away, they did not confirm the pessimistic belief of Robert Louis Stevenson:

"We uncommiserate pass into the night
From the loud banquet, and departing leave
A tremor in men's memories, faint and sweet
And frail as music."

Martin. Brune. This is really sad news! I recall that we spoke about John when preparing our section symposia for the Cape Town meeting and were wondering if he could participate in that event. A few years ago, we had a marvellous conference with John about human universals which took place in a small place in Northern Germany (Delmenhorst), and I vividly remember many fruitful discussions with him and the other participants. Even though I have met him just a few times, I have learnt very much from his thoughtful writings, and I also liked him as a person. His work on evolutionary psychiatry is ground-breaking and will remain influential, I'm sure. John will be greatly missed.

Randolph Nesse

What sad news to begin the New Year! John inspired us all with his knowledge and creativity, but even more with his humanity and deep understanding. Our last long conversation was at an ancient burial site in Germany, where we could not help but muse on mortality. His ideas have already made our world better, and they will live on and evolve further with our help. And I think of John every time I grind pepper with a coffee mill inspired by the one I first saw in his kitchen.

Gerald A. Cory, Jr. I just returned from a long trip to learn of the sad passing of John Price. He was a true pioneer and will be greatly missed.

Jay R. Feierman, M.D. That is very sad for me to hear. The last time I saw John was at the ISHE conference in Bologna, Italy in 2008. We sat next to one another at the banquet. He had to leave the banquet after only 15 minutes or so because he said that he was very hard of hearing and that the noise of people talking made it that he could not hear even the person sitting next to him talk. I've known John for more than 30 years. He contributed an article to the *Ethology & Sociobiology* Special Issue on "The Ethology of Psychiatric Populations" for which I was the guest editor in 1987; and then he contributed another chapter to the *Biology of Religious Behavior* book I edited in 2009, titled "The Adaptiveness of Changing Religious Belief Systems." John and I have kept up email correspondence over many years. I had great respect and admiration for him and considered him a dear friend. I will truly miss him.

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Hopefully, some of his ideas and writings will continue after his death. He was definitely one of the founding fathers of evolutionary psychiatry.

Here is John's earliest paper on evolutionary psychiatry, which was published in 1967. Does anyone know of any paper by anyone on evolutionary psychiatry that was published before 1967? Some people interested in evolutionary psychiatry and evolutionary psychology today were not even born in 1967.

Price, J.S. (1967) Hypothesis: the dominance hierarchy and the evolution of mental illness. Lancet, 2, 243-246.

Glenn Weisfeld Not coincidentally, just yesterday I came across an article by John, on chronic fatigue syndrome. I think this is emblematic of the wide scope of his contributions. A fitting tribute might be a symposium in his honor at an ISHE meeting.

Hanson Park I deeply mourn his death. I learned a lot about evolutionary psychiatry through his excellent books and papers, and I shared his wisdom with other psychiatrists in other countries, including South Korea. While we were discussing how to lecture his research on Korea, I am deeply saddened to hear such sad news. I send comfort to the bereaved family.

Joseph Polimeni To my knowledge, the only other "evolutionary psychiatry" paper is Mayr, Huxley, Osmond and Hoffer's paper highlighting the schizophrenia paradox in 1964. Mayr and Huxley apparently came up with the schizophrenia paradox idea independently, and then recruited Osmond and Hoffer (psychiatrists) when writing the paper. Mayr and Huxley only identified a possible problem in the current formulation of schizophrenia. In contrast, John's Dominance Hierarchy hypothesis in 1967 appears to be the first theory clearly outlining how evolutionary forces may have shaped mental illness. If I recall correctly, the essential elements of evolutionary psychiatry are all implicitly expressed in that paper. Joseph Polimeni

Paul Gilbert Oh, that is sad! I was very sorry to hear that he is gone. I encountered John's thinking early on in my career and was greatly influenced by it. I didn't have the chance to spend much time with him, but I will miss him and his vision. It's a lonelier world. Thank you for letting us know Dan this is indeed sad. John was incredibly influential for and on my thinking and indeed many evolutionary psychologists

I wrote to John while I was writing my first book on depression in 1984 and was lucky enough to meet up and then some years later in the late 80s and early 90s we formed a little group with Anthony Stevens, Michael Chance, Brian Lake Dorothy, Heard and Dave Stevens to discuss how to think about evolutionary process in mental health issues and also how to get the approach more recognised. The 1984 BJP paper was such an effort. We met in various locations including at times at my own and John's house every 2 to 3 months. Sadly only myself and Anthony remain now

These were very heady days. Michael Chance published his *Fabrics of the Mind* Book in 1988 and of course John and Anthony went on to publish their very influential *Evolutionary Psychiatry* which has just been reissued. He was a fantastic inspiring and enthusiastic mentor to me in those early days and we had long discussions about the importance of developing measures for testing his model. That job fell to me and over the years developed a range of

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scales such as the social comparison scale, submissive behaviour Scale, defeat scale and all available on (<https://compassionatemind.co.uk/resourcesresources/scales>)

We also published papers together here are a few. I sought to try to get evidence for John's model and the social rank theory of depression and anxiety. Leon Sloman was also very important and influential and we edited a book called subordination and defeat (2000). In a subsequent email I will send some other papers on this issue of social competition and the social rank model as taken up by others, he was one of the leading thinkers seeing the link between evolved mechanisms and the regulation of a range of psychological processes that are contextually linked. The evolutionary mechanisms that evolved for conflict management were the missing link. Nowadays we're beginning to explore the distinction between competing for self and kin and resource holding versus altruism and resource sharing -- major issues in the world today and their link to things like life history and social context. He will be greatly missed, fondly remembered and inspirationally followed.

Chris Cantor Sad indeed. Not only was John a great thinker, but I agree with Joseph (below) he was very generous with his time for which I thank him personally.

Andy Thomson How sad. He was very kind to a middle-aged, lost shrink, naive to Evolutionary Psychiatry. I loved our conversations and the time with him at meetings.

Prof. Dr. W.J. Hoogendijk Wonderful to see how many warm responses are evoked by this sad news. John must have been a remarkable man that fueled and inspired our enthusiastic Evolutionary Psychiatry community.

Mark Erickson Like Andy, John took me under his mentoring wing early in my career. My interest was in the Westermarck effect. I soon came to think of John as intellectual kin to Edward Westermarck - each man far ahead of his time. My most recent memories are of lively evening conversations over scotch at meetings - usually of the WPA. I am envious of all of you who made it to Odintune Place - I never did. Somehow the name seemed just right. Dan, thanks for letting us know. I will raise my glass high to John tonight.

Riadh Abed

Very sad news indeed. Although I never had the privilege of meeting John, I corresponded with him and spoke to him on the phone on a number of occasions in connection with the setting up of the WPA EP Section and he was always the perfect gentleman. I am, of course, like most on this list, indebted to him for his pioneering work on evolutionary models of mental disorder and his book with Anthony Stevens, as its title states, represented a true New Beginning.

Russell Gardner, Jr. Wonderful to see all the outpouring of tributes for John Price. Thanks Dan Wilson for notifying everyone. Condolences to Antonia Price for her loss, as well as to his son and daughters all of whom will greatly miss him. Thanks Paul Gilbert for acknowledging his role in ASCAP. For its fifteen years he was the Associate Editor always there across the pond for advice, contributions and support. This was an informal monthly publication near the end of the twentieth century--an acronym for Across-Species Comparisons and Psychopathology, His daughter sometime in the last six months or so was good enough to dispatch to me a handwritten communication from John. It was short and cheerful; he knew he was failing but tranquil and enjoying whatever life he had left. I had seen him last in 2013 on a visit to England when already his legs made it hard for him to get

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around. We have a redbud tree in our backyard that he insisted on giving us during his visit in 2009 after Dan Wilson had invited him for a guest appearance in Nebraska. "To help you think of me," he said, and I see it when I face out that west window but the reminder recurs. It has large leaves and has grown greatly. For the ancient Egyptians, west is the direction of the dead, but the tree's large leaves symbolize his vitality, his renewing and lasting legacy.

Future SIG meetings

Further dates for meetings are to be discussed at the AGM

Future meeting dates include:- May 18th 2018 Half-Day Scientific Meeting and AGM (full details TBA)

Events

Evolutionary Event at RSM Tuesday 13 March 2018

Psychiatry and evolution: Biological and social perspectives

Royal Society of Medicine
1 Wimpole Street
LONDON
W1G 0AE 

We forward below information about the RSM Psychiatry event on "Psychiatry and Evolution: biological and social perspectives" and about the impact of evolution and society on mental health. This one day conference will explore social, environmental and evolutionary influences on human behaviour and mental health. We have been informed EPSIG members may be entitled to the reduced registration rates such as for RSM members. As yet we are not sure how exactly this will work but it may be worth enquiring.

This conference will introduce how ideas of evolution enrich our understanding of humanity and human development on the individual and collective levels, and how these ideas may also relate to psychiatry and psychopathology.

This conference will introduce how ideas of evolution enrich our understanding of humanity and human development on the individual and collective levels. Come along to find out how these ideas relate to psychiatry and psychopathology.

The conference will be of interest to psychiatrists, psychologists, group and individual psychotherapists, as well as all of those who aspire to have a deeper understanding on how evolutionary and social influences interact.

Link to : <https://www.rsm.ac.uk/events/events-listing/2017-2018/sections/psychiatry-section/pyk05-psychiatry-and-evolution-biological-and-social-perspectives.aspx>

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Psychiatry and evolution: Biological and social perspectives www.rsm.ac.uk

Objectives

- Achieve a broad overview of evolutionary ideas as relating to psychiatry
- Gain an understanding of how genes, organisms, collectives and the environment, whether physical or cultural, may be relevant to human development, well-being and psychopathology
- Learn how development may be influenced and made possible by biological and cultural factors
- Learn how the fields of evolutionary biology and medicine engage with the various theories of psychiatric nosology and evolutionary selection
- Discuss new understandings and theories in the fields of evolution and psychiatry

Confirmed speakers

Professor Randolph Nesse, Professor of Psychiatry, Professor of Psychology

Dr John Drury, Reader in Social Psychology,

Professor Vittorio Gallese, Professor of Human Physiology, Professor in Experimental Aesthetics

[book now ▶](#)

Resources and EPSIG Website

The link to the EPSIG web pages that contain a range of resources is below:

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/workinpsychiatry/specialinterestgroups/evolutionarypsychiatry.aspx>

Articles for the newsletter

We welcome submissions for future newsletters in the form of articles, reviews and interviews. Please send to me at

Evolutionary Special Interest Group of the Royal College of Psychiatrists

paulstjohnsmith@hotmail.com

Correspondence: Replies, suggestions and clarifications on articles are welcomed and may be printed/included in our next newsletter .

Also, we welcome brief reviews of seminal articles where there is an evolutionary or other relevant conceptual angle (please include the weblink if the article is open access).

Please send any submissions to me at:- **paul.stjohnsmith@hpft.nhs.uk** or **paulstjohnsmith@hotmail.com**