

EVOLUTIONARY THEORY & PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

A Symposium Sponsored by
The New York City Chapter of the
Association for the Advancement of Philosophy and Psychiatry

November 13, 1999

**Cathedral House
Church of St. John the Divine
1047 Amsterdam Avenue at 112th St.
New York City**

A recent explosion of interest in hereditary determinants of mental processes and the application of evolutionary theory to psychology has given new meaning to older Darwinian views of human nature. It has once again become fashionable to invoke the survival value of both cognitive and behavioral traits in order to explain their origin and function.

This outlook has produced novel approaches to the study of psychopathology. The latest theoretical advances in evolutionary theory, developmental neuroscience, population genetics and DNA biochemistry are being applied systematically to the study of depression, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders and the addictions. Technical innovations in the laboratory as well as concepts like kin selection, heterochrony, random drift and strange attractors are moving research forward at a rapid clip.

However, many questions remain. Some are strictly matters of scientific fact. It is difficult to devise empirical tests for adaptationist perspectives on psychopathology. Moreover, we still have no general agreement on the degree to which human behavioral traits are inherited. Do genes really exert the most crucial influence on normal and abnormal human psychology? Even if they do, phenomena like stimulus-transcription coupling, which may allow learned changes in brain physiology to feed back on gene expression, raise doubts that DNA's effects on the mind are unidirectional.

Further questions raise troubling philosophical and social issues. Not only does the paradigm of Lamarckian cultural transmission continue to challenge the most overarching claims of genetic reductionism. In addition, it is possible that cultural biases,

rooted in the competitive ideology of our market-driven economy, are actually fueling our current fascination with the inherited aspects of mental illness. One may then ask where such biases could lead--to a dark new version of Nazi eugenics, perhaps, or to a bright future of cures for madness through gene therapy. Might there be an ethically fertile and intriguing spectrum of possibilities between these two extreme forecasts?

The NYCAAPP conference planned for November 13, 1999 at St. John the Divine Cathedral in New York City will bring together clinicians, researchers and philosophers interested in evolutionary theory, its application to mental illness, and the resulting implications for scientific epistemology, philosophy of mind, biomedical ethics, and clinical practice.

Session I: FORMS OF PSYCHOPATHOLOGY I

Bruce Levine, New York University

Moderator

- 9:00 AM -- Compensatory Reproductive Fitness Among Relatives Of Schizophrenic Patients**
Matthew Avila, Maryland Psychiatric Research Center
- 9:20 AM -- The Mathematics of Melancholy: An Evolutionary Economic Model of Depression**
Beth Kirsner & Aurelio Jose Figueredo, University of Arizona
- 9:40 AM -- The Effect of Depression on Perceived Mate Value and Mating Opportunities**
Beth Kirsner & Aurelio Jose Figueredo , University of Arizona
- 10:00 AM -- Evolutionary Psychology and Complexity Theory: Mania, ADHD, ODD, and Dysthymia**
James Brody, Evolutionary Psychology Forum Online
- 10:20 AM -- Evolutionary Psychology, Antisocial Behavior, and Mental Disorder**
Christian Perring, Dowling College
- 10:40 AM -- Questions and Answers**
- 11:00 AM -- Break**

Session II: FORMS OF PSYCHOPATHOLOGY II

Nassir Ghaemi, Harvard University

Moderator

- 11:10 AM -- KEYNOTE ADDRESS**
Unipolar Depression as an Evolutionary Adaptation for Changing the Social Niche
Paul Watson & Paul Andrews, University of New Mexico
- 12:00 Noon -- Questions and Answers**
- 12:10 PM -- Lunch Break**

Session III: THERAPEUTICS
James Phillips, Yale University
Moderator

- 1:00 PM** -- **Active Darwinism and Psychotherapy**
James Brody, Evolutionary Psychology Forum Online
- 1:20 PM** -- **Contrasts Between Social Therapy And Evolutionary Theory**
Hugh Polk, East Side Institute
- 1:40 PM** -- **Great Expectations**
Nicholas Humphrey, London School of Economics
- 2:00 PM** -- **Questions and Answers**
- 2:20 PM** -- **Break**

Session IV: THEORETICAL AND META-THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS
Jennifer Radden, University of Massachusetts
Moderator

- 2:30 PM** -- **Evolutionary Primacy of Emotions**
Ladislav Kovac, Comenius University
- 2:50 PM** -- **Bounded Functionality**
Oscar Vilarroya, Universidad Autonoma de Barcelona
- 3:10 PM** -- **Raise the Stakes**
James Brody, Evolutionary Psychology Forum Online
- 3:30 PM** -- **Good Evolutionary Reasons**
Patricia Greenspan, University of Maryland
- 3:50 PM** -- **Ontological Reduction And Integration In Psychiatric Genetics Research**
John Sadler, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas
- 4:10 PM** -- **Wave Genetics and the Semiology of Culture**
Donald Mender, NYCAAPP Program Committee Chair
- 4:30 PM** -- **Questions and Answers**
- 5:00 PM** -- **Adjourn**

For Registration Information Contact:

Donald Mender, M. D.
NYCAAPP Program Committee Chair
515 North Wagner Avenue #3

Mamaroneck, NY 10543 USA
Solzitsky@aol.com

[Back to Meetings and Conferences](#)

