**WRIGHT: THE MORAL ANIMAL**

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**Chapter 2: Male and Female**

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Introduction

On page 12 of The Moral Animal, at the bottom of the page it says that altruism is a genetic part of our species. You mentioned this in class as well, however if altruism is a part of our DNA, why does there seem to be so much crime? Which could be looked at as the opposite of altruism. -Benjamin Cole

**Chapter 1: Darwin Comes of Age**

1. (Pg. 21) Before Darwin became involved with zoology and animal development, he was set to be a doctor and study medicine. If Darwin had stuck to his doctorial path, how would his theory of evolution be different and based on varying underlying principles? - Melissa Karson

* ‘Darwinian Medicine: why we get sick’ (Williams and Nesse)

1. The text mentions that “each increment of human design was an accident.” Do you believe and support this statement, and how is it relevant to natural selection? - Melissa Karson

P28 “The basic ways we feel about each other, the basic kinds of things we think about each other and say to each other, are with us today by virtue of their past contribution to genetic fitness."

Agree/disagree? Don

**Chapter 2: Male and Female**

38: " we aren't designed to stand on subway platforms..." Granting this claim, doesn’t it illustrate the restricted scope of evolutionary explanations in behavior? Can we disentangle what is ours by innate design from what is due to development and culture, and are the latter less ‘natural’ Don

*Finicky females, eager males*

The choosiness of females can determine the proliferation of certain characteristics of males. In regards to the nature vs. nurture discussion in the introduction, are the characteristics that the female likes about the male genetically innate or a malleable preference based on her experiences?

This is from the introduction and Page 34 of The Moral Animal. -Taylor

In chapter two page 37, Wright discusses how “Genes leading to attractions that wound up being good for [the females’] ancestors’ genetic legacies have flourished, and those leading to less productive attractions have not.” One particular area of concern for this principle is that he fails to discuss the influence of mate-choice copying. This is a behavior characterized by females in a population choosing mates based on the mate choice of other females in the population. -Justin

(Pg. 40) Natural selection is described as an “evil process.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? -Melissa

Has contemporary culture resolved George William's "evils" of natural selection or has it facilitated the evolution of modern obsessions with youth, health, body image, and attractiveness? (Wright, 41) -Emma Anders

pg 43: "Drawing on cultures East and West, industrial and preliterate, Symons demonstrated the great breadth of the patterns imlied by the theory of parental investment:women tend to be relaively selective about sex partners; men tend to be less so, and tend to find sex with wide variety of partners in an extraordinary appealing concept." If the question pertains to parental investment, family formation, wouldn't males also be selective in choosing sex partners since they typically prefer females who will be nourishing mothers and housewives? Also, taking into account their responsibilites as a father? -Nare Avagyan

How does the Trobriand Islands in Melanesia represent the work of natural selection? Why is isolation important to see natural selection at work? "...the islands proved startlingly remote from the currents of Western thought. The natives, it seemed, hadn't even gotten the connection between sex and reproduction" (44). -Christina

Wright mentioned certain species that have the male spend more time with the young than the females (pg49). How does this relate to the theory as a whole and the growing trend among humans males to become more invested in their children?

-Sayed Sadat

In the second chapter of The Moral Animal, Wright asserts that female pipefish take on a more active courting role and possibly aggressive behavior because the males are more invested in the rearing of the offspring. If human males took on more active roles in child rearing, would it have the same effect on human women? Would men become more choosy and women more likely to compete? Could this be possible considering cultural limitations on marital roles? What role would human consciousness of this transition play? -Sarah Saad

In the section on Female Choice (p51-53), Wright puts forward an argument that by the female putting up resistance against the male sexual desire, then helps the species select stronger males for future generations. At the end of the section Wright says " Thus in sheerly Darwinian terms, coyness becomes its own reward.(p53)" I've read this three times and can't figure out how female resistance leads us to female coyness as it's own reward. -Nicole

*Evolution and the unconscious vs culture and rationality*

P 53 “Human brains evolved not to insulate us from the mandate to survive and reproduce, but to follow it more effectively.” To what extent are human brains currently fulfilling that evolutionary goal? Are they/can they work against it? Don

**Chapter 3: Men and Women p 55-**

(Pg. 59) The book claims that power of a male = his overall social status. Is this statement always true? –Melissa

Wright mentions the idea of pair bonding/ "romantic love" and contrasts it with the idea of innate polygyny. (Pg59) Is it possible to combine both theories and assume that love is kind of innate in both genders but males are capable of loving multiple partners while most females are not? -sayed sadat

The text on many occasions describes competition for female attention from males and even competition for male attention from females in a high MPI species, but when it comes to male seeking male or female seeking female attention, how does that work out? Furthermore will the male seeking male be more prone to competition than the female seeking female? -Angela

"the lifestyle of the modern philandering bachelor -- seducing and abandoning available women year after year after year, without making any of them targets for ongoing investment -- is not a distinct, evolved sexual strategy. It is just what happens when you take the male mind, with its preference for varied sex partners, and put it in a big city replete with contraceptive technology." (Wright, 63).   
While highly populated cities and progressive contraceptive technology & practices are major factors in explaining the modern bachelor's behavior, aren't there other things to be accounted for, such as less social value placed on marriage or media's influence on adolescent concepts about sex? -Athalie

"Why is it that husbands respond to infidelity with rage and wives respond to infidelity by blaming themselves and trying to 'win the husband back'?"- Page 66 –Kathleen

If female cheating is so evolutionarily advantageous, why do most females seem to be morally averse to it? Why would they develop moral aversion to cheating? –Alejandra

Why did concealed ovulation (Wright p 68) evolve? How might it have aided reproductive fitness? –Don

*Madonna/whore dichotomy*

Is this dichotomy objectively valid, valid only as a stereotyped reaction by males, or not valid at all?-Don

Are women less willing to have sex with random men because of the double-standard? Because they are **afraid** they will be called 'sluts?' Or because they are afraid of how they will be perceived? Do you believe that the test that have been done about asking college males and females if they would be willing to have sex with a random stranger are accurate? Are women **falsely** answering in order to not be frowned upon? –Rachel

(Pgs. 78 – 81) The book proposes a theory that some people are different “in their genes.” Do you agree with the statement that people are **destined** from the start to be classified and behave a certain way when they are older (i.e. a Madonna or a whore)? -Melissa

In chapter three page 80, Wright discusses how each strategy—the promiscuous and the faithful male and female—moves toward an equilibrium in the population. It is easy to comprehend (assuming each behavior is genetically inherited) how natural selection would favor this mechanism of equilibrium. However, we humans pride ourselves on intellect, some of which is genetically inherited. The majority of our reasoning ability, however, seems to stem from learning from the environment and employing our logic to new situations. The question is, if a human male devised a new successful strategy to increase his contribution to the gene pool based solely on his intellect, how could this be attributed to evolution? Further, how can we be so sure that genes are responsible for the two strategies (faithful and promiscuous) mentioned by Wright? –Justin

On page 80 there a was a brief discussion involving applying mathematical ratios to the Madonna-whore dichotomy. Would it be more informative to explain that these ratios are the median value of a ranges of behaviors instead of claiming these are a fixed ratio? By claiming that 5/8 is the median we could explain why more behaviors emerge in the population by saying they are a deviation away from an average. This way, we could explain why there would be no perfect example of a madonna or a whore but just deviations. –Chris

My question comes from the following quote: "Is the wife really duller and more nagging than she was tweny years ago? Possibly, but it's also possible that the husband's tolerance for nagging has dropped now that she's forty-five and has no reproductive future." pg. 88 Do you think the behavior of both men and women (in similar situations) is due to physiological changes or personality traits and personal outlook on life? -Nare

Pg 91-92 Wright suggests that women and their children suffer when a divorce occurs-- especially if the men do not have high incomes. However, he proposes that the women and children will likely be better off if polygyny is allowed. If the men don't make much income, that small income must split up amongst multiple wives and their children, whereas a divorced woman can marry some one else and benefit from full income support. -Christina

*Miscellaneous*

Pg 106 Wright claims that humans don't live in an environment suitable for our minds, but humans play a great role in modifying their environment (ex: cities) so it can be argued that the human mind designed the environment. If at any given time, the mind does not suit the environment, then some sort of change must occur -- either the person seeks a better environment or the person adapts to the environment. Is that not matching mind and environment? –Christina

What are some evolutionary factors drive men to father boys over girls, other than the fact males are able to proliferate more efficiently? Should women have an innate preferance of having a boy rather than a girl? –Daniel

* Trivers-Willard, Wright p171

Is there an evolutionary explanation for period pains in females? Perhaps menstrual cramps a way of encouraging females not to waste eggs...- Charlette

**Chapter 4: The Marriage Market p94-**

I am having a little bit of trouble conceptually accepting the idea that humans are naturally a monogamous species. I can accept for that social pressures would encourage monogamy but there really doesn't seem to be a solid evolutionary reason why we are a monogamous species. This is not to say that I disagree with this assumption or support polygamy, but it seems to me that Wright never really gave a concrete answer to this. Did anyone else have a similar problem or are my standards of evidence a little too high? Chris

What do you think about the pros and cons of monogamy and polygyny as discussed by the author. Take into account monogamy (traditional families, with parental support); polygyny (decreasing crime rates vs risk for kids not growing up with both parents). "[Polygyny] might keep an appreciable number of men from falling into crime, drug addiction, and homelessness...."a child living with one or more substitute parents was about hundred times more likely to be fatally abused than a child living with natural parents" 103 -Nare

My question is: is Darwinism liberal? The solution to the "serial monogamy" crisis is overtly liberal in it's nature, creating an equal playing field by taxing the wealthy to provide for the poor. Or is Darwinism conservative? Wouldn't the social Darwinist let the rich get richer and acquire more wives as the poor wive-less men's genes are lost from the gene pool? I do realize natural selection is a process and it doesn't necessarily make the most sense to ascribe American political orientations to it, but Wright's discussion on p. 105 left me wondering which category it would fall under. -Sarah

*Did patriarchy promote polygamy?*

On page 95, Write introduces the idea that monogamy in stratified societies is artificially imposed to create equality among men. On page 99, he states that extreme polygamy is correlated with extreme political inequality. Wouldn't it be equally likely to suppose that polygamy is artificially imposed by individual men who have attained unequal political power, rather than the reverse? Most hunter and gatherer societies existed at the subsistence level and were largely egalitarian. -Alejandra

*Youth &beauty vs resources &status*

Pg. 110). If a woman marries an older man, it is generally for a man’s riches and financial stability. What is the reason man will then marry much older women? –Melissa

(Pg 125) The book mentions that premarital sex breaks bond of chastity and leads to a quicker divorce. Do you agree or disagree? -Melissa

"According to the Madonna-Whore Dichotomy, men have more respect for Madonna women so why is it that men who were 'shown pictures of Playboy models later describe themselves as less in love with their wives than do men shown other images?' Wouldn't a man just think of these models as women they only want to sleep with, so how would this affect their emotional feelings for their wives?" (Page 129) –Kathleen

*Which gender benefits or loses by monogamy?*

-I really struggled with many of the claims made in chapter 4, specifically that polygany is better for women than it is for men. I don't think that it is advantageous for a woman to have to share resources with another woman and her children. Even if the male is able to support two families doesn't the female still only get half as many resources for her offspring? Wouldn't it be better to have all the resources for herself and her offspring? -Nicole

In today's society, women, hopefully, are becoming progressively wealthier (self-sufficiently). In this case, the poorer men could do what the poorer women have done--marry up. The poor men could "share" a wealthy woman with other poor men. Wouldn't this solve one of the main problems that he has with polygyny? The problem that poor men would end up with no wife? –Charlette / Angela /If monogamy is best favored towards males and polygyny best favored towards females, why is it that males are still more promiscuous than females if it would benefit males as a whole to be monogamous? -Kelly

*Marriage as pacifier*

The beginning of the last paragraph on p101 says " It is not crazy to think that there are homeless alcoholics and rapists who, had they come of age in pre-1960's social climate, amid more equally distributed female resources, would have early on found a wife and adopted a lower-risk, less destructive lifestyle." It is crazy to say this! Neither alcoholism nor sexual aggression are behaviors that are modified by the presence of a woman. Maybe there are some examples of adopting lower-risk lifestyles like eating more healthy meals but rape and alcoholism are not cured merely by the presence of a woman. –Nicole (Pg. 100) / Melissa / Christina/Arnold

How and why did males of most species become the rulers or leaders? Are they really the true leaders if females have the power to control whether or not the males will become violent or rapists based on the "Pacifying Effect of Marriage?" - Page 102 –Taylor / Do you truly believe that men who do not find a mate are more prone to violence, drug abuse, murder? -Rachel

**Chapter 5: Darwin's Marriage**

(Pg 125) The book mentions that premarital sex breaks bond of chastity and leads to a quicker divorce. Do you agree or disagree? -Melissa

**Chapter 6: The Darwin Plan for Marital Bliss 128-**

**Chapter 7: Families 155-**

 Can the topic of “**kin selection**” (pg. 156) be generalized to such: Parents, siblings, aunts and uncles are all influenced in the way they treat their family members based on their observation of the specific family member's expression of genes? i.e. with the ants: the ants may see a certain behavioral traits that indicate undesired genes (in the case of the ants, sterility-prone, pg. 155), and they inherently know that these genes are harmful to the colony? Then, they sequester them to a job (door) where they will not have a chance to pass on their undesired genes? And in humans, the immediate family of individuals with tribally and/or familial beneficial genes will treat that family member better, giving them more food, water, and other resources, so that they can more likely reproduce (pg. 158)? Can this go farther, to say that, the tribe that individual is a part of will treat the family as a whole better, giving them more resources so that they can have a greater chance to reproduce and pass on the beneficial gene? - J. Michael Bain

My only question about tomorrows reading pertains to wrights analogy " The gear wheels of social evolution have a racket". Then later we states " A gene that repaid kindness with kindness could thus have spread through the extended family, and by interbreeding, to other families, where it would thrive on the same logic.... The racket of social evolution was forged". I am not quite sure he is saying? -Arnold Noriega

It makes complete sense that having a large social network with complicated ties and different levels of relationships helps create a community of mutual acceptance of social responsibilities. Its so simple but yet completely brilliant! (161) Khushboo

"To define the degree of commitment to any relative is to define the degree of indifference and, potentially, antagonism; the cup of common interest between siblings is half-empty as well as half-full. While it makes genetic sense to help a brother or sister, even at great expense, that expense is not unlimited." (Wright, 165) Wright further describes the relationship between siblings, how they compete for their parents' attention but still show genuine concern and care for a suffering sibling when the parents are absent. Does this type of relationship still apply to children who do not have siblings but see their cousins or close friends like brothers and sisters? Athalie Tom

Page 166 - Wright suggests that "Each child should, in theory, see itself twice as valuable as its sibling, while the parent, being equally related to the two, values them equally." He further discusses later the favoritism of male children vs female in regard to a family's position in society, but fails to mention the case with two sons. If this theory holds true, what aspect of it accounts for parents showing favoritism between two sons? –Justin

Wright mentioned that "Children are biologically vulnerable to a parent's propaganda campaign..." pg.168. In relation to the idea that we only help in those situation where the degree of relatedness (r) is equal to or greater than 1. If this concept in taught to us by our parents, then is it possible to teach children altruism regardless of relatedness? Meaning that they should be taught to risk their lives for anyone and overriding our genetic instincts? –sayed, If this is the case, why and how do children outgrow this sense of awe or vulnerability? How would he explain the know-it-all-teenager syndrome? -Sarah

*Patterns of grief* (174-175) Grief is much stronger when a parent loses an adolescent child rather than a younger because the attachment is strongest since the parent is used to having the child close to them for so long. Whereas with an adult-aged child (who has likely already left the house years ago) the parent usually has already learned to cope with the separation. Grief is not stronger when, as Wright claims, the parent has more "rewards" to lose. Related thought: You have an old favorite pen you use everyday. Except one day... you lose it. At this point, you know the pen was almost out of ink anyway but you're more upset than if you lost the same pen the day after you bought it because you're used to having that particular pen for so long. The usefullness is already at it's end but your grief is stronger -- opposite of Wright's prediction. -Christina Van

"One of the most straightforward Darwinian predictions is that parents will care relatively little for children who are so defective as to have negligible reproductive value" (pg. 177). If this is the case, why does our society put great emphasis on helping the handicap if they have negligible reproductive value? Would it be smarter to just put them out of their misery? devil's advocate, Rachel Tran <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/timeline/euthanasia.htm>

* ‘Misery’ vs reproductive value

"One of the most straightforward Darwinian predictions is that parents will care relatively little for children who are so defective as to have negligible reproductive value." (pg. 177) In today's society, we have many families who have given birth to children with defects, but their love for them is still quite great and even at their death, there is still much sorrow shown. Maybe in Darwinian's time, it was harder to take care of such a child, but what of today's society? Does this prediction still apply? - kelly d. Parungao /Khushpoo

“Perhaps an analysis of “**favorite children**” would confirm that they possess these sorts of valuable attributes—valuable from the perspective of the parents’ genes, which may or may not imply value from the perspective of the child’s” page 179 If it is true that the favored children in a family have more valuable attributes in terms of genetics, how can we explain the social norm of parents favoring their youngest child? –Christina

* Favored attributes: Do parents what what’s best for their kids? Do they discriminate?
* Youngest need the most support in sibling rivalry?

How might the idea of social instincts in order to explain the origins of altruistic behaviors in humans explain the idea that "bad things happen to good people" or as Wright writes "Bravest most self sacrificial men would on average perish in larger number than other men. A noble man would leave no offspring to inherit his noble nature" (186-187) /I would be interesting in questioning reciprocal altruism in relation to group conformity like in situations where no one steps up to altruistically help someone out in times of danger. (ie. Catherine Genovese's murder 1964- comments like "I didn't want to get involved") Khushboo

**Chapter 8: Darwin and the Savages 180-**

**Chapter 9: Friends 189-**

"Animals, including people, often execute evolutionary logic not via conscious calculation, but by following their feelings, which were designed as logic executors."(Wright, 190) Then why do some emotions cause us to act against ourselves and others, in turn opposing evolutionary logic? -Athalie Tom

There was a question posed by Wright on the bottom of page 200, (How did **reciprocal alturism** evolve?) which gave me pause. I would argue that alturism was not intentionally selected for ( it is hard imagine a protohuman or chimpanzee keeping a mentally tally of who did what for whom) but was a side effect of other behaviors. The argument I would use would be that while it may have been advantageous for a member of a species to horde or murder, it would not have been beneficial to the entire species to engage in that behavior, thus the undesirable behavior would be selected against. –Chris

Does true altruism really exist? Do we do things purely out of selflessness or do we actually gain something positive for ourselves out of it? -Taylor

**Chapter 10: Darwin’s Conscience 210**

"The idea here is that childhood lies are not just a phase of harmless delinquency we pass smoothly through, but the first in a series of test runs for self-serving dishonesty....we learn what we can and can't get away with, and what our kin do and don't consider judicious deceit.(p217)" I found this claim interesting. I had never considered lying as innate or deceit as universal, yet it seems throughout history there have always been people who lied (big and small lies). Is lying still adaptive? –Nicole /Christina

What do you think shapes our conscience? Is it innate or is it shaped by our experiences? Is there a boundary of what is moral and not? "On consulting my sister, I concluded that it was not right to kill insects for the sake of making a collection." pg 213 Nare

"Once you think of genes as programming human behavioral development, and not just behavior, as molding the young mind to fit it's context--then we all start to look like victims (or beneficiaries) of our environment, no less than of our genes. (p223)" This recognition of how genes and environment interact was refreshing and surprising. -Nicole /Khushboo

Wright stresses that civility costs more than it buys. He states that "people we encounter each day don't know who we are and will never find out... so a reputation for integrity matters less now" (221). Since he is saying that it is more beneficial to manipulate and act in behaviors that are self-serving, would you say Wright is completely against the idea of "karma?" That it is more rewarding to be selfish than to treat others how we would like to be treated. -Kathleen

On page 222, Wright gives a cultural evolution hypothesis for crime, but why are some people genetically predisposed to antisocial or deviant behavior? Even if adopted at a very young age into a very different environment, children often still resemble their biological parents in terms of criminality. What kind of factors contribute to individual hereditary differences in conscientiousness? –Alejandra / "Maybe both of these findings, translated into evolutionary terms, are saying the same thing: that "cheating is an adaptive response, triggered when people are shunted to the bottom of the heap and thus find it hard to get resources legitimately." Although this adaptive response may apply to some people, there are still many individuals who rise against the idea of cheating, and succeed on their own. -Kelly

Although Wright stated that there is inner city crime due to low-self esteem, what accounts for those who grew up in that same city and succeeded without cheating? ~kelly

Page 224 - Wright explains how members of Victorian England society were "...acting conscientiously, politely, and considerately to the extent that it pays." Can the actions of Victorian citizens be properly viewed as exploitation to improve their social status by reciprocal altruism? Justin /Pg225 - "If he was a good man, he was good in passive reflection of his society's goodness." How does this translate to societies that do not appear as good? In a society that appears good but actually has a negative undercurrrent, should this man still be seen as a good man or a man covering up for his own negative values or behaviors? -Taylor

**Chapter 11: Darwin’s Delay 229**

In chapter 10 where it discusses Darwin's conciousness and how the littlest things bothered his conscious, it makes me curious if it took a toll on his conscious when christians began to refute and protest his claims about evolution. What do you think? -Angela

**Chapter 12: Social Status 236**

(Pg. 237) Is there a society where social status and hierarchy doesn’t exist in any form? Or is there always going to be a dominant figure in some form? –Melissa

/I agree with Wright that there seems to always be a hierarchy in any society in the world. I also think that this can play into the fact that monogamy is not a natural occurrence, and that promiscuity is more favored towards males as shown in the Aka pygmies of central Africa. -Benjamin Cole

In a modern society, how would one go about ranking himself? Wright describes group interactions such as giving and taking advice as means of erecting a ranking system, but there must be a less subtle and interactive method to be considered when social classes are considered. Also, how would Wright explain the imposed social hierarchy of Victorian society, especially considering that one's social position was largely hereditary with minimal social mobility? Could that be considered a product of evolutionary behavior or is it more of a result of culture? What would have had to be the evolutionary background for humans to evolve a more egalitarian system? Bountiful food and resources? Are there any species that exhibit near egalitarian models of behavior? -Sarah

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_inequality>;

The Spirit Level <http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/>

(Pg. 243) Do you agree with the concept that there is a direct correlation between social status and serotonin levels? (i.e. higher status = more serotonin) –Melissa/ On page 242 and 243, the author mentions that in vervet monkey soieties, those monkies with a high social status have higher levels of serotonin than those with lower social status.  My question has less to do with the implications of such a fact, but more about the reason for why the author has chosen to highlight this increase in serotonin.  Why is this important?  I know that serotonin is an important neurotransmitter, but to my knowledge, no study has ever proven conclusively that neurotransmitters production can directly influence human behavior, or that human behavior can directly influence neurotransmitter production.  All the studies I have seen have only managed to prove, at best, a strong correlation between an increase in neurotransmitter production and human behavior.  –Michael

* Experimental manipulations of serotonin level

pg. 243 If it is believed "that everyone is born with the capacity for high serotonin" then why do shy people have a hard time speaking up or running for president? How can a shy person trigger their serotonin level or is something suppressing their serotonin level? -Rachel Tran

The last paragraph on 240 to the top of 241 invoked a strange response in me. Specifically, I spent the entire time wondering how they were defining 'dominant' and 'submissive' strategies. I am not disagreeing with the point of the argument, but I would ask that they define their terms more concretely. Did anyone else have a similar issue? Related to this, is there any evidence or reason to suspect that an individual can shift from a dominant role to a submissive role and back again? The way the book describes these seemed a little absolute, implying that once and alpha always and alpha mentality. Chris

Wright talks a little bit about male chimp hierarchies being unstable but claims that female hierarchies, although hard to detect, are more stable. I would argue with this simply because female competition in hierarchies are truly very difficult to detect. So much of female competition for status is related less with physical aggression (or acts that are easier to discern in terms of outright competition for status) and related more with social coalitions and social aggression..which even in chimps as well as females in other species is difficult to study and could change dramatically over long periods of time if followed. While this may sometimes be directly related to sexual competition or reproductive potential, gaining higher status within female groups could be associated with so much more. For example, stable females hierarchies could be simply due to a deceitful facade since not everything that you see is what you get. I am reminded to some scenes from a popular movie:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cw_2GpSKoCA>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X34Jo5OAJ6s&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoUZN19Mkr0> -Khushboo

**Chapter 13: Deception and Self-Deception 263**

Pg - 264 "...we deceive ourselves in order to deceive others better" Is it possible that we deceive ourselves to increase our self-esteem instead of deceiving others? Is the deception of others what helps increase our self-esteem? –Taylor

My question for today's discussion is this: Wright assumes a specific innate mechanism for deception and self deception. How does he know that these mental processes are not just the result of a more general innate mechanism, such as consciousness, combined with current environmental factors, such as living in a group setting that encourages deception? -Alejandra

Why is it so hard for us to excuse other people's failures and rude behavior with circumstance, especially since we do it for ourselves? –Athalie Pg.268 While this may be a very minor point to pick on, Wright spent a good half paragraph talking about how we would expect to see a social animal with language downplay the feats of others. The point of the issue I have is that we don't know if this would be expected since we have never encountered another highly evolved social species with language. Making speculations about what we should expect to see is, to me at least, the sign of an extremely weak argument. (I have a better way of explaining this involving unique stimuli that I could elaborate on at some future date). –Chris

In Wright's account of social status the question of self-deprecation is raised. If a person would use this device as a means for humility when society knows in reality that their status is high, then how does one explain the cultural trait of self deprecation of England as opposed to the exaggeration of social status in the United States? If one has low social status and uses self-deprecation does this fall in the category of sociopath behavior and what is the distinction? - Alex Todd (Moral Animal pg. 269)/ In Chapter 13 when Wright discusses how "In Victorian England, boasting was frowned upon," but doesn't give the reasoning as to why this evolutionary tendency of boasting to gain status is for the most part socially frowned upon. Where do you think this shame for being overly prideful comes from? -Angela

* Is demonstrating deference/humility more important in a rigidly stratified culture?

 On pg. 270 in the book, Wright claims that women provide the husband with self-confidence by providing a standard of lower competence. Currently in society, women are being recognized as more equal individuals. I am curious if women still do this today (i.e. accept a lower status so the husband can feel better about himself). Thoughts? -Melissa…

Can reciprocal altruism and status hierarchy connect and overlap? Can these terms combine into one greater idea instead of being completely different entities?

(Pg. 273) Why does natural selection neither prefer honesty or dishonesty? Melissa

* Honesty to in-group favored by kin selection?

(Pg. 283) I thought the statement made by Wright about best friends was interesting… “best friends see each other least clearly.” Do you agree with this statement? Melissa /I think "best friends" may see each other \*more\* clearly in the sense that they do not commit the fundamental attribution error with each other--as opposed to a stranger whom they would likely not consider the circumstances under which the he acts. – Charlette/Taylor

“Friends engage in mutual inflation." By doing this are you being a good friend or a hypocrite if you're agreeing to things you might not believe or accept? How do you draw the line. pg. 283 -Nare

**Chapter 14: Darwin’s Triumph 287**

Wright mentions how we are humble at first to those whom we feel are superioir to us and after a while we tend to change our relationship with them according to our newly formed perspective of them. Wright uses the example of Darwin and Henslow to show this pg. 292..... How does this theory relate to our parents? it seems that we do change our perspectives of them as we become older but we still we are humble in their prescece.

Even in old age when they are not well mentally, we still feel "small" in their prescence. ----sayed

"The question naturally arises as to whether such useful self-doubt, however painful, might be part of the human mental repertoire, preserved buy natural selection because of its success, in some circumstances, at propelling social ascent." (pg. 297) How does self- doubt propel social rise? In what circumstances is this possible? –Kelly

* Compare p270

(Pg. 305) Wright mentions that if Wallace had not sent his journal of theory to Darwin, then Wallace could have been recognized as the main scientist who developed the concept of natural selection. Darwin would have only been seen as someone who was adding to an already existing theory (QUITE a big change from today!). Do you think that Wallace would have been recognized and taken as seriously as Darwin had been with his publication of the natural selection theory? Darwin did have a lot of expertise and Wallace was not a master/expertise in the study field yet. Would this have influenced if people took the concept as seriously and realistically as they did? Melissa

pg 308 Wright claims that when we harm a sibling we feel guilty because "natural selection "wants" us to be nice to siblings", but when we harm a friend, we feel guilty because natural selection "wants" us to [italics]look like[/italics] we're being nice". I feel that there are some friends who feel like family, or even closer to me than my own kin are. If I feel guilty for harming a friend, the guilt weighs just as heavily. If only the perception of altruism is required for reciprocation, then why isn't it so for both cases? -Christina

" Parents may be programmed whether they know it or not to adjust their children’s psyche's, even if painfully, in ways that promise to raise social status" pg 297-98   Why does Wright say this without supporting any evidence for his claim? Doesn't this contradict his prior investigation in earlier chapters of parenting? - alex todd

**Chapter 15: Darwinian (and Freudian) Cynicism 313**

"In our friendships, as in other things, we're deeply inegalitarian. We value especially the affection of high-status people, and are willing to pay more for it -- to expect less of them, to judge them leniently." (Wright, 314) While this may the case for some situations, I feel like, generally, this isn't true at all. Regardless of whether someone is our friend or not, we expect more from people who have more resources and are usually critical of them if they don't use their resources wisely. -Athalie

(Pg. 317) If we accept Darwinism, then we must abandon the idea that pain is something abnormal or unnatural (i.e. that something is wrong with pain). Thus, should pain be seen as part of natural selection? Melissa

(Pg. 320/321) There were a lot of contradictions between Freud and Darwin theory. The Freudian theory of human mind is labyrinthine (i.e. the mind is puzzling and tricky). Can Freud’s theory be equally accepted as Darwin’s theory even though there are so many conflicts? Is Freud’s theory still accurate?

(pg. 320) (pg.320) Wright claims, "As for the memory of humiliations, their uncomfortable persistence dissuades us from repeating behaviors that can lower social status; and, if the humiliations are of sufficient magnitude, their memory may adaptively lower self-esteem." Would it be valid to argue that the memory of humiliations can also work in a reverse manner and perserve self-esteem by building defense mechanisms, therefore maintaining social status? Daniel

**Chapter 16: Evolutionary Ethics 327-**

Wright wrote that "[w]hat is in our genes' interests is what seems 'right'--morally right, objectively right, whatever sort of rightness is in order" (pg. 325), but that doesn't seem to be the case. I mean...having sex isn't widely perceived as "morally right" at all. He even goes on in the next chapter to explain how people try to adhere morals to evolution, greatly implying that they weren't in sync in the first place (e.g. pg. 330). As someone who would generally call herself an utilitarian, I would like to play devil's advocate a bit on his praise of utilitarianism. According to utilitarianism, wouldn't it then be the best for us to devise some sort of great machine that we could plug everyone into and it would make everyone feel happy? Everyone would just lay there and feel happy for their entire lives. I wonder how other people think of this... :P Charlette

* Geoffrey Miller on [why we don't get visits from aliens](http://seedmagazine.com/content/article/why_we_havent_met_any_aliens/) “The business of humanity has become entertainment, and entertainment is the business of feeding fake fitness cues to our brains”.

(Pg. 328) Are moral discourse/ feelings always under suspicion?

(Pg. 330) Does evolution really have no discernible end?

Pg 330. Building off of the statement that evolution has no discernible end and that our 'morals' were the means to reach this unspecified goal, could we make the argument that there is an underlying set of 'rules' that are guiding the development of morality? My point is that human 'morality'was not coded for in any explicit sense, but the underlying basis for them was. Related note: Assuming that we such underlying rules exist, where in the brain would we expect to find them? There was mention of the reptilian and protomammalian parts of the brain which seem to be potential candidates at least in theory. -Chris

On page 335, Wright mentions that, "everyone's happiness can, in principle, go up if everyone treats everyone else nicely." Later on the same page he writes, "[Mill] wanted to maximize overall happiness; and the way to maximize it is for everyone to be thoroughly self-sacrificing." It seems that in society, a constant self-sacrificing behavior would eventually lead to a loss of resources if one considers the actions of **cheaters**, ultimately producing a decrease in happiness for the majority. Furthermore, it seems that if one were to consider "the welfare of everyone else exactly as important as [his] own welfare," his ability to pass genes to the next generation would decrease (page 336). –Justin /Christina Van

I thought an interesting topic to discuss/debate was the idea of ones happiness "interfering with the happiness of others" (P.337). I argue that since everyone's definition of 'happiness' varies, how does one's happiness interfere with another individuals? Some people have various ways of expressing their emotions of happiness. A smile is universal but what about the cultures that prohibit excessive smiling and laughter in public (i.e., Middle Eastern countries, especially for women). -Mona

On page 341, Wright argues that love makes us want to further happiness of others, and that it makes us give up a little so that others may be happier. My question: what are the constraints to which love will make us sacrifice our own happiness? Also I think this is a huge generalization especially in terms of resources that deal with the proliferation of one's genes. Is this really the only reason love exists? I strongly disagree with Wright if he is arguing that it is. –Arnold

Why should love be doubted? Although Wright states that "sometimes love is hurtful," how do we know that it is actually Love that is causing the hurtfulness? In the example of the woman in Texas who was planning to murder for a cheerleading position for her daughter, how do we know that this wasn't out of some other feeling? ~kelly

How is it that some people can take the same idea that Darwin proposed and turn it into really opposing ideas? I am specifically refering to the Utilitarian vs. Social Darwinism ideas, which both seem to be using the concepts Darwin proposed but in completely different ways.(pg.341)----sayed

In ch.16 Wright describes our reaction to rivals and our justifications. I was wondering how our peers might became rivals instead of friends. Wright explains, "liking them won't elevate our social status, aid our acquisition of material or sexual resources, help our kin..." But how do we make that judgment on a subconscious level? As peers, wouldn't we all be competing for the same resources and social statuses anyway, so how is it possible to differentiate between rivals and friends?

I was also aimlessly wondering about affection and care for animals.What evolutionary benefit might this serve? Does this imply animals are part of our "kin" or at least inner circles? -Sarah

Throughout chapter 16, wright discusses our ability to be moral based on darwins theory on evolution, and to be honest this argument seems slightly pointless because first of all, morality without religious implications tends to hold a major varience throughout each culture. Second of all I feel that since religion strongly influences the morality of today's society, there is no way to determine what "morality" would even be define as to people who have never experienced it. For example we cannot figure this out through asking non religious people to define morality because though they personally do not agree with religious beliefs, they grew up on a society that defines it through the media, the school system, etc. What would we consider morality? -Angela

**Chapter 17: Blaming the Victim 345-**

Do you believe we have "free will" or is every thing we do triggered by some biological basis? –Rachel / I understand (and believe is the case) determinism, but I still am not very clear what the point of having the illusion of free will. Can someone explain this to me? - Charlette

According to Darwin on page 350, all behavior is determined and so therefore we are not responsible for any of our actions. However, how can you argue that just because all of our behavior is biologically mediated, it isn't shaped by factors under our control? We can choose to seek out or make specific changes to our environment that then effect our actions, our interactions with the environment are reciprocal and not just passive. And genetics alone aren't enough to explain our behavior, since twins can choose different environments. So, isn't it true that people do have control over their choices to at least some extent? -Alejandra Fernandez

1. What is the difference between biological determinism and genetic determinism? Wright claims they are not synonyms even though people use them frequently to mean the same thing. (pg. 349) –Melissa/Daniel

P. 350 how would 'delusion of free will' be an adaption? as stated by Darwin? Selina

"as the biological (that is, environmental-genetic) underpinnings of behavior come into view, we must get used to the idea of holding robots responsible for their malfunctions (p355)" This is a bold claim, and while I feel like people are more than the sum of their synaptic firings, the more I learn about the brain the more inclined I am to believe that it is true. Thoughts? -Nicole

P.357 there is a quote from an anthropologist regarding divorce. It seems that wright disagrees with both quotes. Write seems to want to say we are biologically programed to do all the things we do (oxytocin for love, ect) I disagree, we have a genetic blue print for certain actions but there is certainly room for wiggle room and change. -Selina

This isn't a question so much as a thought experiment inspired by some of the readings. After reading pages 356-358, where Wright talks about the intellectual groundlessness of blame (375), I wondered what a 'blameless' society would look like. -Chris

**Chapter 18: Darwin Gets Religion 364-**

Pg 364 How infinite is the plasticity of our brains in regards to our behavior? Can someone who is "incorrigably bad" be reformed as long as it is in the first few decades of their life? Taylor

On page 366, Wright argues that there is an expectation that the doctrines people latch on to have some kind of harmony with the mental organs natural selection has designed. Also, that sages are manage to sell the same themes about human nature. However he does admit that people do not choose certain doctrines that are in there best sexual interest. This being said, would one expect Human nature to evolve from group selection of some kind and not individual selection? Arnold/Benjamin

Before reading ch. 18, I assumed the discussion would concern the evolutionary basis of religion. While Wright discusses demons and evil as well as brotherly love, he doesn't directly approach the idea of God or gods. I was wondering how much evolutionary psychologists knew about the creation of God. When did ideas of God or worship begin? Do other species worship? Also, what is the evolutionary basis for demons? How did this sort of disassociation with human behavior and wants benefit humans in evolution? Is this a form of self-deception? -Sarah Saad

2. Demonic temptation is defined as an evil being that tries to entice people into seemingly minor but ultimately momentous wrong doing. Premarital sex used to be seen as a complete wrong doing and frowned upon by many people. However, today, premarital sex is not seen as that wrong and many people do it. Does that mean that demonic temptations have lessened with time? Or, is it that people all have demonic temptations inside of them that can't be fixed? (pg. 367) –Melissa

I also have issue with the middle paragraph on 368 where Wright discusses evil. I will admit that he does use a fairly decent definition of the word evil, talking about it more as an abstract force driving us to pursue something that used to be in our genetic interest but do not bring long term happiness or cause suffering to others. My problem is stems from the fact that he calls these forces a ghost of natural selection. It seems that he is giving genes intentionality, making them conscious entities who are trying to pursue their own goal. Was I the only one bothered by this or am I overreading this section? Chris

"Lao-tzu had said, "It is the way of the Tao... to recompense injury with kindness." (pg 365) Evolutionarily, how could responding to injury with kindness help the person being injured? -Christina Van

In both chapter 17 Wright addresses the issue of "determinism"  and that we are all products of our genes and environment, then later on in Chapter 18 he talks about morality being the key distinction that could possibly separate us  from our animal traits and instincts that we seem to be a victim of. This idea is nothing new having it been proposed centuries ago by the ancient Greeks philosophy of Aristotle, Epicurean, Stoicism ect. but these moral guidelines have yet to be taught in schools because the topic is very taboo. If environment and morality  play such a strong roll in the way we develop as humans how can we intertwine the two? Any thoughts? –Alex

"Appeals for brotherly love are comparable to a politician's self-serving appeals to patriotism. In fact, appeals to patriotism are, in a way, appeals for brotherly love on a national scale." (Wright, 373) As ironic as the concept behind brotherly love may seem, they Bible also tells the story of the "Good Samaritan," which suggests that people show kindness and empathy toward those of different ethnicity/background/religion. Can we not apply this lesson to our every day behavior? Athalie

In Chapter 18, Wright discusses demonic temptation. He writes, "there is indeed a force devoted to enticing us into various pleasures that are (or once were) in our genetic interests but do not bring long-term happiness to us and may bring great suffering to others." He then states that that force is "the ghost of natural selection." Is the function of natural selection seen as mostly negative then? Page 378 –Kathleen

In Ch 18, Wrights comment on ancient scripts discussing self deception in terms of passion/pleasure/wealth/status etc rang very true for me. Part of it may have to do with growing up with Hindu cultural values engrained by teachings from the bhagvad gita and considering myself a Buddhist, but it still makes sense. -Khushboo

Workman and Reader

**1. Introduction to Evolutionary Psychology**

1. (pg 9) Workman and Reader touched on the idea of eugenics and genetic engineering. Eugenics states that people should encourage individuals whose traits benefit society and produce offspring and discourage those whose traits are less desirable. What is your opinion on the morality of eugenics/genetic engineering? Is it okay to artificially produce someone that is technically not "natural" for any purposes? -Melissa

On page 27 of the textbook there was a statement that evolutionary psychology is politically incorrect. I have two questions regarding this. First, is an idea perceived as politically incorrect because of how the ideas are communicated or is it because of something else? Second, does the political correctness or incorrectness of an idea have any bearing on its validity? More simply, is something wrong because it is politically incorrect or is it politically incorrect because it is wrong? -Chris

In their box on Eugenics (pg. 11-12) and with their questions on the morality of selecting against genetic defects (pg. 28-29), the authors highly imply that "eugenics" is immoral. In their gruesome examples, the United States forcefully sterilized people whom they thought to have "inferior" genes and the Nazis systematically killed people with "inferior" genes... but that seems to be a strawman argument against genetic engineering. They bring up all these cases in which people mistakenly thought that skin color or a faulty IQ test proved inferiority and then proceeded to take away the freedom and lives of people, but that is not inherently implied with the idea of eugenics. I see no problem with replacing genes in my child to make him/her smarter, prettier, healthier, and/or happier (assuming no negative side effects)--but the authors make it sound like such we should never even consider genetic engineering in people. – Charlette

"Evolutionary psychology attempts to provide ultimate as well as proximate explanations of human behavior. Proximate mechanisms are those that directly cause a particular behavior (for instance we have sex because we enjoy it) where as ultimate explanations are cast at the level of design by natural selection (we have sex because it leads to offspring)." Could all human behavior really be explained in proximate and ultimate terms? What about behaviors that humans enjoy but may not necessarily benefit them?? Athalie

**2. Mechanisms of Evolutionary Change** 31

Workman & Reader pg 52 What if the coefficient of relatedness generally is accurate at predicting how much someone will help another person based on relatedness only because people we are related to tend to be in our lives more often, thus we know them better and consequently favor them? -Christina Van

My question concerns ch. 2 of the textbook as well as the Moral Animal. Wright strongly asserts that the means of phenotype variation can only be due to recombination and crossing over and other types of variation in gamete formation as opposed to something behavioral or environmental that a parent experiences in his or her lifetime. Though he does give the exception of radiation, he ignores epigenetics. Epigenetics concerns heritable phenotype and genetic expression through means other than DNA and allows for increased value in environmental effects. Workman and Reader briefly discuss this in the form of maternal inheritance of mitochondria. What would this mean for our understanding of evolution and heritability? -Sarah Saad

2. (pg. 53) The idea of reciprocal altruism is brought up in the text (do something good for someone, you will have something good done upon you in return). Can the idea of reciprocal altruism be a synonym for the word "karma'? What about the idea of bad karma... is that the same as not doing a reciprocal altruistic act?

**3. Sexual Selection** 58

On page 59 they talk about **intersexual and intrasexual** selection. Is it possible that we as a species have developed both at the same time? Such as fighters that not only have fighting skills to show how sexually fit they are, but also have perfect bodies for females to want to choose them. Same with athletes. –Benjamin

Here is my question: How would intrasexual and intersexual selection work in a homosexual culture? Or within homosexuals? -Rachel

**Handicap Hypothesis** How would the good-geners explain a male peacocks plumage? If anything the feathers are a detriment to their survival as their bright colors attract predators. –Sarah

Gazelle stotting=signals to predator; cost must be substantial and effectively less for fitter individuals; androgen and immunosuppression?; conspicuous consumption, muscle? (Miller).

The Handicap Hypothesis states that men develop adornments to show that they can survive and are real signals of genetic quality. The book states that this theory has been very controversial. Could you explain more why this theory is seen as so controversial? (pg. 64) –Melissa

* Alternatives: Fisher runaway selection; elaboration as evidence of health (Hamilton-Zuk)

Males use adornment to attract females or show they are a signal of real quality. So, if males use adornment for attraction only.. does this mean that they are real quality as well? (i.e. not all human males who are the most attractive men are also the best quality men) (pg. 65) –Melissa

The book mentions a few polygynous species, but not any **polyandrous** species. I have red-eared slider turtles at home that I believe are an example of polyandry because the females are much larger than the males. I just found it interesting that though there should be intrasexual competition between the females, there isn't any. The males are much more aggression towards each other and towards the females. Also, it's still the males who try to win the females over rather than vice versa. -Christina Van

69 In regards to Muller's ratchet theory, if an asexual species did not procreate at all, wouldn't this hinder the progression of the harmful mutation? Would this be an easier way to do this as opposed to sexual reproduction where you may or may not pass on the mutation? -Taylor

In a situation involving both intra-sexual and inter-sexual selection, which would have the stronger influence? -Justin

On page 74 in box 3.4, the author claims that females have a choice in deciding who to mate because she usually calls out loudly when a male mounts her. However, aren't males relatively spread out since it's usually a group of females/pups with just one male? If a female called out, what are the chances of a bigger male being close enough to "come to her rescue"? - Charlette

Why is the biotic environment more influential than the abiotic environment? It seems that the physical environment would tend to guiude natural selection more. (Pg. 70) ---sayed

* The Red Queen

With regards to the Red Queen Theory, what are the other hypothesis out there to explain why certain systems appear to be unchanging on a macroscopic level but are in fact changing on on a microscopic level? The only hypothesis I can think of is punctuated equilibrium, but that seems to be an insufficient explanation of what we see. -Chris

In our modern society,where sex can easily be separated from reproduction, do you think that female choice is still a dominant evolutionary pressure? Is male aggression still an advantageous trait? -Nicole

**4. The evolution of Human Mate Choice** 81

**Concealed ovulation and the provisioning hypothesis**: "This, in addition to explaining the sexual division of labour, greater upper-body strength in men and dishonest oestrus in women, the provisioning hypothesis may even explain the very reason we fall in love." In the book, provisioning hypothesis is defined as "the notion that the male-female pair bond arose, in part, out of the fact that males provided meat for their female partners," and I'm not quite sure how it could be a reason we fall in love. Can this be explained in more detail? Maybe it is just a factor for why we fall in love, but not necessarily the very reason we fall in love. –kelly/ P 87 Is the provisioning hypothesis totally wiped out in industrialized societies? Is there still some remnants of the idea that women gather while men hunt in our society? –Taylor / On page 89 to 90, the author talks about the the lose of women's red swellings and the argument is that some species developed deceptive signals to made males believe they are always fertile. Wouldn't this argument be more believable if women just developed a red swelling that was always swollen? Arnold

In the Workman and Reader book, on pg 92, Workman and Reader argue that humans should be classified as monogamous.  But on pg 91, they say that in species where the male is larger than the female (sexual **dimorphism**) there is competition among the males of the species for access to groups of women (polygamy, technically polygyny).  They also say that human males are about 20% larger than human females.  Doesnt that make humans sexuaally dimorphic, and don't those facts argue more strongly for the viewpoint that human beings are naturally polygamous? –Michael

* But: trend to decreasing dimorphism (‘Revenge of the wimps’?)

"...sex differences are generally smaller than **cultural** differences....In societies where women now have greater financial independence....male status and resources are valued less" (pg 108) Workman and Reader seem to imply that our environment plays more of a role than our genes in regards to choosing a mate. –Sarah/During the chapter discussing human mating behaviors there were various examples of how men and women from different cultures had different criteria they were looking for in a mate. My question is how much of these cultural differences a reflective of our evolutionary history or are they merely reflective of cultural differences? If the later, then I would think this issue would fall more in the realm of sociology, where it could be better explained. If this does fall into the former category, what sort of tests could we run to determine this? –Chris

In response to women's relationship strategy on pg. 106... After so much talk about monogamous relationships, I suppose someone ought to bring up the question of how different things would be if there was a \*good\* polygamous society. (My boyfriend insists that people would be unhappy in "open" relationships.) Assuming that a generally happy polygamous society is possible, I wonder how big of a change that would be for society, since our monogamy seems to reach so many aspects of our lives--from the high school arena to the political arena of law. - Charlette

After reading about the evolution of human mate choice it seems that the male and female strategy is contingent to external factors( environment, culture, resources ect.). However I was wondering what would happen if a  primitive male with high status and resources felt that the female harem was lacking in who he wanted to carry his genes on to, would he move to another tribe or settle for whatever he has? Same with the female who possibly had a substantial amount of physical attractiveness and only low status males? - Alex Todd

* Chimps are patrilocal; incentives for females to move, disincentives for males

On Page 107, it stated that "Females who perceive themselves as less attractive might be more likely to engage in casual sexual relationships since they are less likely to gain a long-term high quality partner." What causes these females to think lowly of their appearances? How would an evolutionary psychologist explain this variability in self-esteem? I'm very interested to hear what the class thinks, but I unfortunately can't make it to class today because I am feeling really sick. – Kathleen

* Compare Madonna/whore: quality/quantity tradeoff differs between genders?

1) If indeed dishonest oestrus was a way for women to keep men attracted to them how may one explain a woman's inability/ability to keep a man around despite displaying those qualities?

2) How may evolutionary psychology explain alternate mating systems like polyamory?

3) With women like this around, (<http://www.yanksarecoming.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/female-bodybuilder.gif>)

how may the provisioning hypothesis explain the similarity in body size between men and women?

4) Why does the sexy sons hypothesis not consider the passing on of attractive traits to daughters rather than sons? Since daughters are equally responsible in attracting male partners with greater status and financial resources in today's day and age.

5) For women to get feedback about their attractiveness from men, wouldn't they have already had more partners than unattractive women? This doesn't explain the Trivers hypothesis. -Khushboo

I found this really interesting talk on genetic engineering and I thought it might be interesting to share with everyone. Harvey Fineberg: Are we ready for neo-evolution? -Arnold

<http://www.ted.com/talks/harvey_fineberg_are_we_ready_for_neo_evolution.html>

I found an interesting article about an experiment in which robots evolved alturism. The link is below. Chris

<http://news.sciencemag.org/sciencenow/2011/05/even-robots-can-be-heroes.html>

**(5. Cognitive Development** 112

Page 125 explains that infants have preference for facelike images rather than non-facelike images, but it takes time for them to refine their face-processing abilities. Is there an advantage to take a rather long time to developing these skills? Why take over a year? What about only a few months? Christina Van

**(6. Social Development** 145

**7. Social Behavior, Kin Relationships, Conflict** 182

Suppose that primates are not able to recognize paternal kin, as many evolutionary psychologists/ primatologist have assumed. What would that mean for  how natural selection produces adaptations? [-](javascript:;) Alex Todd

1. Suppose a child grows up to become a **criminal** and breaks moral codes. Does this potentially mean that there was little parental investment when the child was young (i.e. there was little teaching of moral codes)? (pg. 195) -Melissa

2. When do siblings typically grow out of their **rivalry** stage and fight less? The book describes sibling conflict as investment that is taken away from one sibling by a parent and given to the other sibling. When does this rivalry end? (pg. 197) –Melissa

If we favor kin, then why do some people **adopt** unrelated children? -Christina Van/Rachel (‘true altruism?’) / Could adoption also serve as a possible self survival mechanism? If a person cannot have a child of their own, will adopting one and raising them increase the chance of reciprocal altruism for when the person is older and needs help or personal care from their adopted child? –Taylor

On Pg 192 there is a brief discussion of r-selection and k-selection. The book does explain that r-selection is found in unstable environments and k-selection is found in stable. My question consists of two parts. First, are there any species that switch between r and k selection depending on the state of the environment? Second, if such a species existed, in what environment would we expect to find it? -Chris Reinert

On page 197, the book starts talking about parent-offspring conflict and tries to explain it in terms of differing interests between the parent and the offspring. Supposedly, the offspring wants more of the mother’s attention when the mother has a second child, but the mother wants to start diverting more attention to this second child because it would be more advantageous to her… While vying for attention does seem like it would cause some conflict, why do I get the feeling that family conflicts often concern other things than simple tantrums for attention? I would think that families tend to have more conflicts than between friends because you spend so much more “forced” time with your family. – Charlette

Workman and Reader discuss how the parents need to increase their fitness by disciplining their offspring to be acceptable members of society in order for them to mate and reproduce one day, how does child abuse fit into this theory? Is it just an overreaction of our natural urges or does it vary by culture/socio-economic background? (pg202) ---sayed

This isnt a question based on a particular argument from the book, but I was wondering about evidence on the in-group vs out-group literature. To what extent does the categorization of others in an out-group effect the genetic variability of a small tribe? Could the incorporation of other tribes be driven for genetic diversity to avoid diseases from wiping their gene pool? -Arnold

**8. Social Behavior, Reciprocity** 209

Can you please clarify how indirect reciprocal altruism is not a form of group selection? Isn't indirect altruism a form of group selection, since individual members of a group evolve behaviors that are based on the survival of the group as a whole? -Alejandra

My questions are as follows: Workman and Reader describe blood donation as example of recipricol altruism that does not require direct repayment but instead impresses others. Is social pressure really recipricol altruism? -Sarah Saad/ On pg. 209, the book argues that blood donation can initially be seen as an act of pure altruism because the donor does not see the recipient of the blood and there is little chance for repayment from the recipient to the donor since the process is anonymous.  However, then the book argues how actually in fact blood donation is still considered reciprocal altruism because rather than direct repayment from recipient, the donor is seen as very impressive, a good human being by others, and more likely for others to want to cooperate with him in the future.  The book states that minor deeds can be seen as rewarding especially when observed by others.  My question is: are there any forms of pure altruism or are all acts in some way considered "reciprocal altruism"?  To me, it seems like all altruistic acts have some self-serving benefit.

... here is a funny clip from the TV show *Friends* how a self-less act does not exist.  <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9oP9ea2w-c>  (start at 38 seconds)  -Melissa

Pg. 218 How indoctrinated is xenophobia? If we were mainly concerned with our in-groups, why would we as a country spend so much time and effort fundraising for other countries during disasters and not as often for disasters in o ur own country? -Taylor

Pg 223 Group Formation Based on Minimal Information Discrimminating between in/out groups is very useful when it comes to distinguishing between family and friends from strangers or enemies, but why did discrimmination based on minimal information come about? How could that be helpful to our ancestors? -Christina Van

**8. Thought and Cognition** 229

Rhesus monkeys see opportunities to cheat, and worry about being caught: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbQf6X9UkX0>  -Mona

My question concerns substrate neutrality. I just don't understand how the nature of the substrate does not affect it's computations. How is substrate neutrality justified? -Sarah Saad

"Free will and consciousness are not entities that exist outside the material world; they are part (perhaps a special part) of the computational machinery of mind which, in turn, is produced by the brain." (238) If free will is part of our computational machinery, then shouldn't we have the choice to make decisions, and then have the actions take place after our decisions have been made. "But it is also possible that our conscious selves only become involved in decisions that cannot be dealt with automatically." (238) Why is this? And even when things are dealt with automatically, are we still consciously aware of the decision to do so? -Kelly

On page 240, it is mentioned that Klein, Cosmides, Tooby, and Chance (2002) "...argue that memory evolved to support the decision-making process. This assertion doesn't seem logical. It seems as though memory would need to precede the ability to make decisions because how can one decide without relying on memory? –Justin

Page 244 Persistence is the "repeated recall of disturbing or unpleasant events". I suppose this could have evolved in order to prevent people from making the same mistakes or to help us to avoid repeat of a negative situation. However, we don't often have persistence of a positive experience. Wouldn't that motivate us to seek the same positive experience again? Why isn't this selected for? -Christina Van

On page 247, the book brings up the conjunction fallacy problem where they describe a stereotypical feminist, and then say that it is wrong to think that she is more likely to be a “bank teller who is active in the feminist movement” as opposed to just a “bank teller.” I’ve come across this problem many times (since my honor’s thesis is based on a theory by the authors of this problem), and I still disagree that this is illogical. I understand the conjunction fallacy, but I feel like if we came across this description of someone in real life, she would probably be a feminist banker as opposed to just a banker. - Charlette

Chapter 9 :   In the case of the memory tool of Heuristics, what is the difference between representativeness bias and base rate neglect? ( pg. 247) - Alex Todd

I understand why derived memories would be important to our ancestors, but why do we have such a huge capacity for other types of semantic memory?

Our ancestors' survival depended mostly on their immediate surroundings and experiences. They didn't have to remember textbook facts the way we do today. Why are we so good at memorizing facts with little to no bearing on our actual experiences-historical dates, telephone numbers, or mathematical formula, for example? -Alejandra

In regards to humans being informavores, how is it that we always consume information but at the same time we have built in systems, like blocking, that prevent us from retaining information? pg. 259 ---sayed

With all we know about the fallibility of human memory, why do we rely so heavily on things like eyewitness testimony? –Taylor

If you whole heartedly believe in free will, free choice, then do accidents truly exist? Or is that just a defense mechanism people use to excuse themselves from their free will? -Rachel Tran

**9. Language** 263

On pg. 270 the text states that  the concept of association such as the stimuli of object and sound is false. However, attention impairments are well documented in children with different forms of learning disabilities. Is it possible that these learners with disabilities do use associative learning in word learning and this why they have problems developing effect word learning strategies? – Alex

On page 270 there is a discussion of Chomsky's Universal Grammar. My question is, if some form of universal grammar does in fact exist, what would we expect it to be like? Could we potentially us it to create a 'universal language' that everyone could partially understand? Where would it be located in the brain? I would hazard a guess that it would be near Wernicke's area. -Chris

The author mentions Chomsky's hypothesis that the "language organ" evolved for a purpose other than language and was later "co-opted" for the purpose of language (pg. 271). Chomsky's assertion doesn't seem strong enough to support his conclusion that language in and of it self was not selected for. It is as if he is arguing that the human eye evolved for some some purpose other than vision, which could be plausible. The fact of the matter is that the ability to communicate with language provided fitness gains for our ancestors, which to me, seems indicative of selection--be it natural selection, sexual selection, etc. –Justin

On pg. 274, the book goes over Chomsky's hypothesis that "the language organ evolved for some other purpose and was co-opted, or exapted, for its current purpose." I still don't understand what grounds he uses to come up with this hypothesis... what other purpose could the "language organ" have been developed for? I can only see some connection to language and "spatial navigation"...- Charlette

Throughout this chapter, it starts off by saying language arised by natural selection (pg. 267), but then goes on later in the chapter to say that language was actually developed to meet sexual selection needs (pg. 295). In your opinion, Is language a bi-product of sexual selection, natural selection, or more of a combination of both natural and sexual selection? –Melissa

While I would like to agree with Miller's theory, I think his research, men's supposed greater achievements in art and language, is more reflective of social pressure than innate male ability. –Sarah

* Examples: writing, lecturing…

Is believe that there is observation of a population of signers in Central America that shows that in the absence of any copying these signers created from scratch a grammatically structured language. This seems to support Chomsky's idea of a language organ. -Nicole

Do you believe that language is innate (i.e. as seen with the concept of Universal Grammar)? (pg. 273) Or, is language more a function of learning? –Melissa

"Humans have a genetic predisposition to want to live with, work with, and interact with other humans. The exchange of ideas between humans, then, is necessary because it allows us to live, work, and interact with each other in relative peace and understanding, or at least to tolerate one another. Without the exchange of ideas humans would most likely not be able to tolerate one another, and would not be able to live in peace with one another. Making noises with our throats(speaking) was the easiest way to achieve this, it was quicker and required less energy than, say, drawing pictures in the sand. Speaking did help us evolutionarily, and as a result was passed on indefinitely. However, communicating that there is a wild boar attacking is still very basic, and there is no immediately apparent explaination for the existence of language for non-tangible objects (like for ideas instead of things). I believe they can be explained by another trait humans posess: a large brain and an exceptionally large frontal lobe, which allows us to think about and develop ideas much more deeply than any other animal, living or dead. Since we're assuming humans both a) require communication to cohabitate, leading to the development of language, and b) since they think about complex ideas about possibilities and non-tangible concepts, it goes without saying, that eventually, humans would find a way to communicate those ideas to one another."

This type of explanation avoids the problems of explaining how or why language as innate, because really it's not language. It's the desire to communicate ideas and the ease of manipulating one's throat to make noise that is innate. Those concepts seem much easier to prove than Chomsky's innate language organ. -Michael

Would being deaf (pre-sign language) reduce one's fecundity? If so, why is that set of genes still in the population? Does being deaf offer any advantages evolutionarily? -Nicole

Is the development of language associated with the development of musical skills? –Athalie

Do you think our closest relative - the ape - is able to comprehend language entirely? Kanzi proved to be extremely intelligent, but can we go even further with that? -Rachel

**11. Emotion** 299

Pg 303 When I first heard William James' proposal that emotion follows physical signs (ex: "we fear because we tremble"), I thought it was very strange. However, this study by Dutton and Aron shows that perhaps physical feeling can come before emotional feeling. It's the shaky bridge and attraction study. –Christina Van <http://www.psychwiki.com/wiki/Misattribution_of_Arousal_Paradigm>

**12. Psychopathology** 327

**13. Individual differences** 364

**14. Evolutionary Psychology and Culture** 401