

Evolutionary Psychology: Why it Fails as a Science and is Dangerous

Callie Joubert, P.O. Box 515, Hyper by the Sea, Durban, South Africa 4025.

Abstract

Evolutionary psychology is accepted as the fulfillment of Darwin's vision that psychology will one day be based on a new foundation. Evolutionary psychology is consequently portrayed as an explanatory science and the key to unlocking the mystery of where we came from, how we arrived at our current state, and what defines who we are. This paper demonstrates that evolutionary psychology fails as an explanatory science and why it is dangerous. Of first importance is to understand how evolutionary psychologists think about and approach the study of human psychology. The second part focuses on four problem areas for evolutionists, and shows that evolutionary psychology cannot explain consciousness, the self, free choice, and human nature. It then shows that science has not succeeded in confirming its commitment to physicalism. Finally, it shows why evolutionary psychology is the anti-thesis of a biblical understanding of origins and the nature of human beings. Christians and the public at large cannot afford to accept what they are being told about themselves from the perspective of evolutionary psychology.

Keywords: agency, brain, consciousness, creationism, evolutionary psychology, free choice, human nature, origins, psychology, self, soul

Introduction

Historically and biblically, true psychology has been held to be the study of the human soul (Holmes 1997; MacArthur 1991; Moreland and Rae 2000).¹ Both Christians and non-Christians understood what "care of souls" meant: the spiritual and moral well-being of a person (Benner 1988). But non-Christian psychiatrist Thomas Szasz (1988) noted that after the seventeenth century, the view of the soul as a unified spiritual, moral, and mental self that causally interacts with its body and as the originator and owner of its various mental states—experiences of sensations, feelings (pain, pleasure), thoughts, beliefs, desires, and acts of choice (agency)—had undergone a radical change.² Recently the change received new impetus with the arrival of evolutionary psychology.

Evolutionary psychology is postulated to be the fulfillment of Darwin's vision that psychology will one day be based on a "new foundation," that of the evolutionary story of origins (Buss 2005; Cosmides and Tooby 1997; Pinker 1997, 2002). Evolutionary psychology is consequently portrayed as the "new hope of mankind," understood as an "explanatory science of the human condition" (Pinker 2005, p. xvi). One leading evolutionary psychology advocate stated

that the discipline "provides the key to unlocking the mystery" of where we came from, how we arrived at our current state, and what defines who we are (Buss 1995, p. 27). However, a moment's reflection reveals that evolutionary psychology's explanatory hope parallels what creationists regard as the three core events in the Bible:

1. **Creation:** How did it all begin? Where did we come from? Why are we here?
2. **The Fall:** What went wrong? What is the source or cause of evil and suffering in the world?
3. **Redemption/Restoration:** What can be done about it? How can the world be set right again? Where must we begin? (cf. Kulikovsky 2009).

This paper demonstrates that evolutionary psychology fails as an explanatory science and why it is dangerous. Four reasons are offered in defense of this thesis. The first is that "evolutionary researchers have not found a new treatment for a single mental disorder" (Nesse 2005, p. 903). But that is not to imply that evolutionary psychology lacks any explanations for abnormal and criminal behavior. Those explanations, as will be documented, are often banal, ludicrous, and dangerous. Second, contrary to what evolutionary psychologists would have us

¹ It is rare today to hear that ethics is the study of human behavior rather than psychology. For example, non-Christian psychiatrist Thomas Szasz wrote that the "ethicist is a behavioral scientist par excellence" (Szasz 1973, p. 25). Theologian William Barclay was of the same opinion: "If you want to put it into one sentence, ethics is the science of behavior" (Barclay 1971, p. 13).

² Szasz not only agrees that the "soul is the essence of the human personality," but also as that which "distinguishes persons from animals or things and 'causes' them to be moral agents" (Szasz 1988, p. 26). Of importance is his sad but true diagnosis of the church: "Only with the decline of the power of the Christian churches, of the Christian religion, and of the Christian principles and practices in the cure of souls could new methods" of healing such as "shock therapy, psychotherapy or drug therapy [anti-depressants]" arise (Szasz 1988, p. 23, 31).

It is also sad that the idea that the earth is millions of years old is a result of the Church's compromise of Scripture in order to conform to the ideas of evolutionary geologists. For a discussion of the important topic, see Mortenson (2008, pp. 79–104). See also footnote 3.

believe, they are unable to explain consciousness, the self, free choice (agency), and human nature. It follows that evolutionary psychology fails as an explanatory science. Third, contrary to what proponents of evolutionary psychology claim, science has not succeeded in verifying or validating their commitment to monistic physicalism (materialism). And fourth, evolutionary psychology is the anti-thesis of a biblical explanation of origins and human nature.

The first part of this paper comprises an introduction to the foundational assumptions that underlie how evolutionary psychologists approach the study of human psychology. Then a brief review of what their critics say and some of their unresolved problems. In part two, I will show why evolutionary psychology fails as an explanatory science. In the third part, I will show that scientists have not succeeded in demonstrating that the self is not distinct from a brain. Finally, I will show why evolutionary psychology is the anti-thesis of a biblical understanding of origins and human nature. In contrast to evolutionary psychologists who are under constant pressure to search for explanations about our origins and make-up, creationists are under no such pressure.

Section I: What is Evolutionary Psychology?

Evolutionary psychology is conceived by its proponents as a revolutionary scientific paradigm or meta-theoretical framework in the field of psychology (Buss 1995, 2005; Duntley and Buss 2008). It is therefore both holistic and imperialistic in scope and nature. It penetrates and conceptually unifies every existing branch of psychology, be it developmental psychology, biological psychology, cognitive psychology, personality psychology, social psychology, organizational psychology, or abnormal psychology—on the foundation of evolutionary biology (Buss 2005, p.xxiii; cf. Fitzgerald and Whitaker 2010, pp.285–289). Evolutionary psychologists are also active in areas such as business ethics, the law, and criminology (Buss 2012; Cosmides and Tooby 2004; Jones 2005).

Its advocates claim the scientific project of evolutionary psychologists involves the mapping of our universal human nature.

Foundational assumptions

To achieve their scientific project, evolutionary psychologists must at least hold the following set of assumptions; otherwise no evolutionary psychological story of origins and human nature could exist. I will introduce them under the themes of origins, human condition and solution.

1. *On origins.* Evolutionary psychologists identify three accounts for the origin of life on earth. The first is the non-intelligent cause thesis, known as the blind, unconscious, and mindless “watchmaker”

(Dawkins 2006, p.5). David Buss says, “evolution is responsible for who we are today” (Buss 1995, p.2); natural selection is “the only known physical process capable of generating” complex physiological and psychological mechanisms (Pinker 2005, p.xiv).

So understood means,

1. only a physical specification can be accepted to explain what happened in the past and what will happen in the future, and for explaining human make-up and psychological functions,
2. from the physical, by means of the physical, only the physical can come,
3. we need an explanation for how a blind, unconscious, and mindless physical “process” can create conscious beings with minds capable of perception, feeling, thinking, believing, and free choice, and
4. if we can show just one thing true of consciousness that is not true of matter (physical things), or vice versa, then the evolutionary story of human psychology is false.

Evolutionary psychologists believe that we are members of the order “Primates, the group that contains all the monkey and ape species.” More specifically, our

lineage, the hominid (or in some terminologies, hominin) lineage, is a member of the African Great Ape clade (or family). Indeed, we share a more recent common ancestor with the chimpanzees...According to the genetic evidence, the human and chimpanzee lineages separated some time around 5–7 million years ago...The big change came 2.5 million years ago, with the emergence of the genus *Homo*, to which modern humans belong. This was marked by an expansion in brain volume (Dunbar, Barrett, and Lycett 2007, pp.1, 30–31).

It should be evident that evolutionary psychologists unite human beings with animals (cf. also Duntley and Buss 2008, p.31). Evolutionary psychologists must therefore maintain continuity between animals and humans as discontinuity counts against the plausibility of the evolutionary story.

The second account for the origin of life is the “seed theory” of geneticist Francis Crick—the idea that extraterrestrial entities visited earth millions of years ago and planted the seeds of life. Evolutionary psychologists are in absolute silence about this “theory.”

The third account, creationism, is “largely incapable of being verified or disproved by observation or experiment and is not a scientific theory” (Buss 1995, p.2). If it is true that the findings of creation science cannot be verified, then it must be true of evolutionary psychology, because when life originated on earth (from either an evolutionary or a creationist perspective), there was no one present to observe it. By implication, evolutionary psychology is as much

a historical science as creation science, but with one major difference: creationists have the most reliable eyewitness of how life appeared on earth, the Creator himself (Genesis 1; cf. Psalm 33:6-9; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17).³

Evolutionary psychologists are also guilty of two fallacies. The first is the genetic fallacy—that is, to fault a view or belief purely on grounds of where it originates (in this case the Bible). What is crucially important in determining the truth of a belief is the evidence and arguments in support of it. Moreover, to assert that creationism is not scientific is not a scientific statement of science, but a metaphysical statement of evolutionary psychologists about science. To say what something is, is a metaphysical (philosophical) statement. The second fallacy is the fallacy of centrality. The fallacy maintains that natural selection is the only cause of physiological and psychological mechanisms known to scientists (that is, evolutionary biologists). They claim in effect that since evolutionary biologists do not know of another source or cause of life and our psychological make-up, there is none! All evidence to the contrary is simply ignored. The fact is that evolutionists have already ruled that “natural selection” is the only cause of living organisms, and there is therefore no need for an “an intelligent designer or supernatural forces” (Tooby and Cosmides 2005, p. 20).

2. On the human condition: survival of the fittest. When evolutionary psychologists talk about “environment,” they do not have a specific place or time in mind, but rather a period—from 2–3 million years to 10,000 years ago (Heylighen 2011, p.2). It is referred to as the *Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness*. The environment was that of the life of hunter-gatherers who encountered various problems to which they had to adapt in order to survive. These are mainly problems solving activities related to feeding (gathering foods), reproduction (detecting and attracting fertile mates, raising offspring), cooperative relations (detecting cheaters, free-riders and those that could be trusted, the exchange of useful information through gossip and story-telling) and avoiding dangers (enemies, predators, poisonous plants, and snakes) (Tooby and Cosmides 2005, p. 16).

The most important thing about this period from an evolutionist perspective is that it had to remain the same, in the sense that the same problems had to be recurrent. Because natural selection is a very, very slow process (Cosmides and Tooby 1997); without the same problems being recurrent over “deep time,”

natural selection would not have been able to work out a solution for the inability of our ancestors to deal with their environmental problems.

3. On the solution: the problem-solver. Evolutionary psychologists believe that over millions of years the brain evolved a massive number of specialized neural circuits—also referred to as “psychological mechanisms,” “modules,” “adaptations,” “programs,” and “information-processing devices”—which enable our ancestors to tackle the problems posed by their environment. The brain is “construed as a computational device (like computer hardware), and the “mechanisms” are programs (like computer software) that process information. In the words of John Tooby and Leda Cosmides,

Like cognitive scientists, when evolutionary psychologists refer to the *mind*, they mean the set of information processing devices, embodied in neural tissue, that is responsible for all conscious and nonconscious mental activity, that generates all behavior, and that regulates the body (Tooby and Cosmides 2005, p. 16).

We should, therefore, not make the mistake to think the word “mind” refers to anything other than or is in any way distinct from the brain. In different words, although the mental term “mind” is retained in talk, its essential reference is to and means the material operations of the brain (the neural tissue). As Steven Pinker explained:

The mind is a system of organs of computation, designed by natural selection to solve the kinds of problems our ancestors faced... The mind is what the brain does; specifically, the brain processes information... The mind is organized into modules or mental organs, each with a specialized design” (Pinker 1997, p.21).⁴

The computational organs, modules, programs or mechanisms are not only the central causal generators, organizers and adaptations of individual behavior and social and cultural phenomena, but collectively comprise our universal human nature (Buss 2005; Tooby and Cosmides 2005). Since the brain and its programs process information and generate behavior, it follows that there is no “need for an animate interpretive intelligence” or self, and programs are “far from being internal free agents” (Tooby and Cosmides 2005, pp. 9, 54).

But how would the evolutionary psychologist go about figuring out which program (brain organ, mechanism, or module) was functionally adaptive to the environment 2–3 millions years ago?

³ For a helpful discussion of the difference between operational science, which uses the so-called “scientific method,” and origin science, see Ham and Mortenson (2007), and Patterson (2007). Important to keep in mind is that the past cannot be observed directly; assumptions about the past therefore greatly affect the interpretation of circumstantial evidence. For a discussion of the stranglehold philosophical naturalism has on the interpretation of evidence in relation to the age of the earth, see Mortenson (2004).

⁴ Humans “possess coevolved bundles of psychological mechanisms” (Buss 2005, p.2; cf. also Buss 1995, p.5) and “minds are collections of mechanisms” (Tooby and Cosmides 2005, p. 11).

The method and approach of evolutionary psychologists

Assuming that their foundational assumptions are true allows the evolutionary psychologist to approach the study of the “mind” (brain mechanisms or modules) like an engineer. Steven Pinker explains what it means:

psychology is engineering in reverse. In forward-engineering, one designs a machine to do something; in reverse-engineering, one figures out what a machine was designed to do (Pinker 1997, p.21).

Evolutionary psychologists tell us that they follow a four-step process to determine the function of a particular mechanism or adaptation:

You start by carefully specifying an adaptive information processing problem; then you do a task analysis of that problem. A task analysis of that problem consists of identifying what properties a program would have to have to solve that problem well. This approach allows you to generate hypotheses about the structure of the programs that comprise the mind, which can then be tested (Tooby and Cosmides 2005, p. 16).

The method is so construed, together with the assumptions on which it rests, that evolutionary psychology appears as a coherent framework for thinking about human nature. However, fellow evolutionists have raised some substantial criticisms against the assumptions and working method of evolutionary psychologists.

What the critics say

Evolutionary psychological accounts of evolved brain mechanisms to solve so-called adaptive problems are often accused of being “just-so-stories,” meaning that their explanations are nothing but reconstructions of a hypothetical evolutionary past that may seem plausible, but which cannot be verified empirically (Heylighen 2011; Mitchell 1999). Evolutionary psychologists have two major defenses against this charge.

The first is that there exists a fundamental mismatch between our current environment and those of our hunter-gatherer ancestors. Behaviors that were adaptive then do not fit in well with the demands of ours today. For example, our ancestors were afraid of tigers which pose no threat to people in a modern city. They are more likely to be hit by a car, but a fear of cars is practically nonexistent. This is purely because natural selection has not had time to inscribe this fear into our genes (over the last 10,000 years). Consequently, they believe, the mismatch of environments

is at the origin of our many “diseases of civilization,” which include obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, allergies, depression, dementia [i.e.,

schizophrenia] and ADHD [attention deficiency and hyperactive disorder]. These disorders, which severely reduce our quality of life, are virtually unknown among hunter-gatherers” (Heylighen 2011, p.4).

The second defense is that their methods do not differ from those used by other scientists. Hypothesis, predictions, and experiments have shown, for example, that children under the age of five or six years of age are more likely to be abused by stepfathers than biological fathers. Thus, stepfathers care less about their stepchildren than about their biological children. For the evolutionary psychologist this makes perfect sense: “stepchildren do not pass on their stepparent’s genes” (Geher 2006, p.189; cf. Heylighen 2011, p.3). Could it be that the stepfathers simply do not love their stepchildren as much as their own? What about the possibility of the stepfathers having a distorted belief about and/or concept of care? What does this explanation say about stepfathers that do not abuse their stepchildren? Furthermore, is their “explanation” in terms of reproduction (gene replication!) an explanation, an excuse, or simply a misguided description of interpretations based on evolutionary presuppositions? We shall shortly see that evolutionary presuppositions are the keys to making sense of their “explanations.”

For evolutionary biology professor, Richard Lewontin, the “explanations” of evolutionary psychologists are no explanations at all. For example, why do babies cry? Those of us who had children would offer reasons such as being uncomfortable (“baby needs a fresh nappy!”), being hungry, or being ill. The evolutionary psychologist would say, “they are helpless, and unless they can distract their parents from other concerns they will not be sure they will be fed or rescued from pain,” from which follows that “natural selection will favor howling babies, since quite ones may be malnourished or suffer injuries and so are less likely to survive” (Lewontin 2005, p. 7). Lewontin concludes that evolutionary psychology “is not a theory applicable to historical change and cultural variation.”

For evolutionary psychologists Jeremy Abhouse and Robert Berwick the unhappy result of reconciling cognitive science with evolutionary biology is

a credulous conception about how the mind works (misrepresented as scientific consensus), an uncritical genetic determinism, and a borrowed evolutionary biology used not to generate hypotheses, but to rationalize” our own opinions or inventions. They say that we “can always rationalize a particular behavior or trait by inventing a past that must have been selected for it” (Abhouse and Berwick 1998, pp.2, 3).

And what is true of a hypothetical environment is just as true of inventing new modules in the brain.

In short, evolutionary psychology is a story of the origin of human psychological (brain) mechanisms, referred to collectively as human nature; human nature evolved over millions of years in an environment of evolutionary adaptedness. The hunter-gatherers who encountered various problems to which they had to adapt in order to survive, and the evolved (Stone Age) brain and understanding its mechanisms serve as the key to solving human problems. Evolutionary psychology is also the expression of three philosophical presuppositions: scientism (science is the only source of credible knowledge of the past, human origins, and the human condition; creationism is not scientific), naturalism (natural selection is the only source or cause of intelligent life and human cognitive development, which rules out any explanations of immaterial entities such as an intelligent Creator and the human spiritual soul),⁵ and physicalism. Evolutionary psychologist Glen Geher clarified what this physicalism entails:

[T]his perspective is monistic to the core; it conceives of human behavior as resulting from the nervous system—including the brain—which was, according to this perspective (and to most modern scientists who studied psychological phenomena), shaped by evolutionary processes such as natural selection (Geher 2006, p.185).⁶

A few unresolved problems

It must be said that evolutionary psychologists let us know that they have not yet been able to provide an explanation for phenomena such as music, religion, suicide, and homosexuality. With regard to music the hypothesis is that it keeps the community together, but it does not explain why we like music. Similarly, it cannot explain the propensity of people to believe “incredible religious doctrines” such as the existence of a

benevolent shepherd [that is, Jesus Christ—cf. John 10:14], a universal plan [read redemption, restoration, a new heaven and new earth], an afterlife, and divine retribution...they beg the question of *why* the mind should find comfort in beliefs that it is capable of perceiving as false (Pinker 2005, p.xv).

The covert attempt to picture Christian beliefs as senseless does not escape our attention. The evolutionist conclusion, however, is that religious

belief is a “by-product” of the brain, something natural selection never intended. Therefore, it cannot solve adaptive problems.

Suicide, we are told, “can be adaptive if an individual has no chance for reproduction but can increase future reproduction of kin by using resources they could use instead” (Nesse 2005, p.913). It is not entirely clear what this is supposed to mean. On the one hand, it seems that suicide is functional as long as the sole consideration is the ability to reproduce. Suicide is “acceptable” when you can no longer reproduce and you are becoming a burden to your kin by using resources they could have used instead. To illustrate the problem with this theory, the writer has an uncle and aunt who, subsequent to their marriage, discovered they could not have children of their own, and later adopted two newborns (a boy and girl—not blood related—and both attorneys today). Should we think that it would have been beneficial to evolution for them to commit suicide upon discovery that there would be no chances for them to have progeny? Had they even thought about their genes when they decided to adopt? Not once in nearly forty years has the thought crossed their minds. The fact that they derived huge joy and pleasure from raising children who are not genetically related to them is counter-intuitive to evolutionary psychology.

“As for why so many individuals are exclusively homosexual, this remains unanswered, but not for want of theories” (Nesse 2005, p.916). Why are there many “theories” but no evolutionary psychological explanation for this phenomenon? The answer is: homosexuality counters the whole evolutionary psychological edifice built on reproduction and “survival.” Many highly creative scientists and philosophers throughout human history were neither married nor homosexual—Descartes, Newton, Locke, Pascal, Kant, and Kierkegaard—to name a few. Psychiatrist Anthony Storr (1988), who studied the lives of these people, has shown that they were driven by a love of study; their work was more important to them than marriage, and reproduction was never a driving force in their lives.

We can next look at whether evolutionary psychology provides conceptually coherent explanations of consciousness, the self, free choice, and human nature.⁷

⁵ Prominent naturalist and philosopher of mind Jaegwon Kim stated that in philosophy of mind/psychology, with “few exceptions, most philosophers now in this field take pride in identifying themselves as naturalists” (Kim 2003, p.85). There are at least two causes of their pride: (1) what they construe as the “causal closure” of the physical domain,” meaning that natural events or processes in our world cannot be “breached by traditional theological systems that allow ‘miracles,’ that is, divine causal intervention in the spacetime world” (Kim 2003, p.91), and (2) the “scientific method” as the only method “we should use to obtain reliable information about the world” (Kim 2003, p.95)—a mental posture known as “scientism.”

⁶ “Physicalist monism” is the philosophical doctrine that everything that exists is physical; the world consists of only one kind of stuff. It says that if you start with a physical effect, you cannot go back and search for a non-physical cause (Papineau 2001). Talk of immaterial entities such as God, angels, and human souls/spirits and minds will therefore make no sense, unless they can be reduced to matter.

⁷ Buss states: “The value of evolutionary theories and hypotheses, like the value of all theories and hypotheses must be gauged by their conceptual and empirical harvest” (Buss 1995, p.5). Indeed, but more important than empirical evidence is the interpretation of the evidence, and more important than mere concepts are conceptual coherence and the explanatory power of any particular theory.

Section II:

Consciousness, the Self, Free Choice, and Human Nature

Consciousness

In 1991, the atheist philosopher Daniel Dennett wrote that “human consciousness is just about the last surviving mystery” (Dennett 1991, p. 21). Why is consciousness a mystery for evolutionists? It is widely acknowledged that consciousness is the mark of mental life. Naturalist and philosopher John Searle says, “The way that human and animal intelligence works is through consciousness” (Searle 1998, p. 31). Pinker concurs with what many non-evolutionary psychologists and philosophers regard as the features of consciousness: self-knowledge, direct access to one’s own thoughts, and sentience (“subjective experience, phenomenal awareness, raw feels, first-person present tense, ‘what it is like’”—Pinker 1997, pp. 135–136). “Among the various people and objects that an intelligent being can have information about is the being itself,” he says, adding, “Not only can I feel pain and see red, I can think to myself” (Pinker 1997, p. 134). In short, consciousness is what a person is immediately, directly aware of about himself from a first-person perspective. So why is it a mystery and what is the evolutionary explanation for the reality of consciousness, given that the physical (material) world is all there is, and that natural selection is the only account of how all living things came to be? The consensus view is that consciousness and experiences reside in and “emerges from” (that is, caused by) the brain (Chalmers 2007, p. 231).

There are at least three problems facing the evolutionary consensus view. Atheist Colin McGinn put the first problem in the form of a question: “How could the aggregation of millions of individually insentient neurons generate subjective awareness?” (McGinn 2003, p. 438). The problem is: If individual neurons are not conscious, then how can the collective—all the brain cells together—be conscious? It is a sound principle that something cannot come from nothing; one thing, in other words, can only pass on to another what itself possesses. The second problem is, “conscious experience is not directly observable in an experimental context” (Chalmers 2007, p. 361). Thus, if individual neurons are not consciousness; if consciousness cannot be observed, and from the physical only the physical can come, how can the physical brain cause self-conscious awareness? The third problem is that the explanatory methods of science do not suffice:

the usual methods of cognitive science and

neuroscience fail to account for conscious experience...nothing that they give us can yield an explanation (Chalmers 2007, p. 232).

We conclude that conscious experience goes beyond what can be derived from a naturalistic and physicalist account of consciousness. It is for this reason that naturalist and philosopher Jerry Fodor confessed:

Nobody has the slightest idea how anything material could be conscious. Nobody even knows what it would be like to have the slightest idea how anything material could be conscious. So much for the philosophy of consciousness (Fodor 1992).

Professor of philosophy and psychology Margaret Boden agrees (1998, p. 10).⁸

It is therefore no little anomaly that evolutionary psychologists continue to talk about consciousness while they believe there is no such thing as a conscious self, albeit not as historically understood.

The human self

In 1998, evolutionist and neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran and writer Sandra Blakeslee registered a question that has apparently plagued scientists for millennia:

In the first half of the next century, science will confront its greatest challenge in trying to answer a question that has been steeped in mysticism and metaphysics for millennia: What is the nature of the self? (Ramachandran and Blakeslee 2003, p. 493).

The historical answer to this question is that the self—the *I*, me, person—is the originator and owner of all its conscious experiences (sensations, feelings) and mental states (thoughts, beliefs, longings, desires). We can identify three interrelated causes of why the existence of a self is a problem for science.

First, the idea is that science can explain everything except the center of everyone’s inner world, his consciousness. If science cannot explain the nature of the self, then science is unable to provide people with a plausible worldview about the kind of things that exist, their natures, and their coming to be. The second cause is a fear of immaterial entities; subjectivity “becomes a door” through which “religious notions can enter and reassert themselves against” materialism and natural science (Robinson 1982, p. 2). The third cause follows naturally: dualism—the idea that the material world is not all there is, and a human being is a deep unity of an immaterial spiritual soul and material body—a metaphysical view that evolutionary psychologists totally reject (Hagen 2005, p. 146).

Evolutionists decided to treat the self not as a

⁸ The evolutionary anthropologist John Tooby and his evolutionary psychologist wife, Leda Cosmides, merely conclude on the following note: “At present, both the function of conscious awareness and the principles that regulate conscious access to emotion states and other mental programs are complex and unresolved questions” (Tooby and Cosmides 2005, p. 56). In simple terms, they have no explanation for the reality of consciousness.

conceptual and metaphysical problem, but rather to turn the problem into an empirical problem. They conceptualize the self as a material or physical object that can be observed, studied by scientific methods, and handled with human hands. In the words of Pinker, it

is still tempting to think of the brain as it was shown in old educational cartoons, as a control panel with gauges and levers operated by a user—the self, the soul, the ghost, the person, the “me.” But cognitive neuroscience is showing that the self too, is just another network of brain systems (Pinker 2002, p. 42).

We shall document that Pinker’s statement is far from true. However, Pinker registers an inconsistency. How can he and his fellows continue to talk about self-knowledge and “direct access to one’s own thoughts” when not a single person has access to his own brain? It is misleading and incoherent, to say the least. But Searle thinks he has an answer, namely, that it is useful to talk that way:

We do need to postulate the self, but it is a purely formal postulation. It is not an additional entity [that is, in addition to the brain] (Searle 2007, p. 121).

So either we deceive ourselves to think we are not our brains, or evolutionary psychologists are deceiving us when they talk “as if” the self is something other than the brain, when it is not. We have already seen that they retain mental terminology when they actually have the brain in mind; so their terminology is extremely misleading.

Agency and free choice

According to naturalist John Bishop,

[T]he problem of natural agency is an ontological problem—a problem about whether the existence of actions can be admitted within a natural scientific ontology....[A]gent causal relations do not belong to the ontology of the natural perspective. Naturalism does not essentially employ the concept of a causal relation whose first member is in the category of person or agent (or even, for that matter, in the broader category of continuant or “substance”). All natural causal relations have first members in the category of event or state of affairs (Bishop 1989, p. 40).

Bishop acknowledges that natural agency is a problem for the evolutionist. But let us first clarify what an “agent” is.⁹ An agent is a person with special capacities as part of his constitution—thoughts, beliefs, desires, sensations (feelings), the ability to know, understand, evaluate (judge), act, and so on. Second, an agent must possess consciousness, otherwise he would be unable to present to himself possible courses of action and evaluate whether a given action

is appropriate or not, including evaluating whether his beliefs, desires, feelings, or thoughts—associated with the action—is relevant or not. Third, an agent must remain the same through change; otherwise a person who committed a crime a week ago and is now standing in front of the judge cannot be punished for his crimes if he is found guilty. And fourth, an agent must be free in two senses: he must be able to do something freely and must have the ability to do otherwise, or have willed to do otherwise. Why then is agency another problem for the evolutionist?

“Agency” is a conceptualization of free will and choice in terms of which a core component of an intentional act is an intentional endeavoring or purposing. If a person can exercise active power as a first or originating mover in trying to bring about some effect for a reason, then a person also has the ability to refrain from exercising active power. The reason for an action serves as the purpose or goal for which a person acts. In other words, an agent acts voluntarily, for example, choosing freely to think about one thing rather than another, or directing his attention on one object in a garden and then another. These are necessary and sufficient conditions for an intentional act. This is a problem for the evolutionist because moral (and intellectual) responsibility entails freedom as a necessary condition for responsibility, and reconciling a naturalistic and ethical perspective becomes impossible for the naturalist. In the words of Bishop:

The idea of a responsible agent, with the “originative” ability to initiate events in the natural world, does not sit easily with the idea of [an agent as] a natural organism (Bishop 1989, p. 1).

The evolutionary psychologist tries to answer this problem, but fails. We have already had occasion to note that evolutionary psychologists believe that the brain consists of a collection or bundle of physical mechanisms or modules. Pinker tells us that thoughts and behavior are “generated” (that is, caused) by a “struggle among mental modules with differing agendas and goals” (Pinker 2002, p. 40; the reader should note that Pinker ascribes personality attributes to mere matter, a phenomenon known as *anthropomorphising*). Despite the fact that some behaviors have no “inhibitory breaks,” we have no reason to be concerned, because there is another brain system, the “supervisory system” that “push[es] the buttons of behavior and override habits and urges” which, and we note carefully, are not “implementations of [a] rational free agent” (Pinker 2002, p. 43). This conception raises some philosophical questions for the evolutionary psychologist to consider.

If behavior is determined by having the right gene

⁹ For insight into the nature of what is known as “libertarian agency,” see Goetz (2000, pp. 156–186).

in place, or is caused by molecules in motion in the brain, and someone is caught in an act of rape, theft, or being dishonest, could an appeal to an impersonal “supervisory system” do? It is counter-intuitive to think that an *impersonal* supervisory “system” can accept responsibility for choices and intentions in the same way a person can. If people’s behavior is determined (set/fixed) by activities in their brains, then surely it follows that we cannot hold them responsible for irrational behavior, in just the same way as we cannot hold people responsible for contracting leukemia. If Pinker’s evolutionary story is true, then we cannot hold people responsible for speeding in traffic. But then, what would be the point to safeguard people against accidents if they cannot be held responsible and accountable for their actions, or if we consider them as being incapable of self-control? It appears that to take people to be rational and able to exercise choices is a precondition for considering their actions to be genuine instances of free agency, or of making sense of their mental states, or of their ability to fake them, thus being capable of entertaining both true and false thoughts.

Something should be conceded in this line of argument, and that is that people do things for a reason, even if it is not a good reason or a belief not necessarily rational. It is a chilling idea, but Pinker points out (with special hope?), it may just be that biology will show that we are all blameless for our misdeeds and our “heart[s] of darkness” (Pinker 2002, pp. 51, 76).

However, five years before Pinker wrote these words, he already indicated that free will is simply another enigma...How can my actions be a choice for which I am responsible if they are completely caused by my genes, my upbringing, and my brain state? (Pinker 1997, p. 558);

A final conundrum is morality...How did *ought* emerge from a universe of particles and planets, genes and bodies? (Pinker 1997, p. 559).

His expert conclusion is that “perhaps we cannot solve conundrums like free will and sentience” (Pinker 1997, p. 561). By now it is evident why not; the idea of a responsible agent (self) with the originative power to initiate events in the natural world cannot make sense in the worldview of evolutionism. The same holds true of human nature.

Human nature

To be consistent with the evolutionary story of origins, evolutionary psychologists must do two things. First, they must necessarily postulate an unbreakable continuance between particles, animals, and human beings. In other words, they must believe that one kind of thing is able to produce another thing very different from itself in kind, for example, an ape

to produce a human being. Why must they necessarily maintain this view? They are very aware that an unchanging nature or essence make the evolutionary story wholly untenable. In the words of naturalist Ernst Mayr:

The outstanding characteristic of an essence [nature] is its unchanging permanence....If species had such an essence, gradual evolution would be impossible (Mayr 1987, p. 156).

This was also the realization of evolutionist and philosopher David Hull (1989, pp. 74–75). Evolutionary psychologists must also reduce the metaphysical concept of human nature to a biological concept. We have previously seen that evolutionary psychologists regard the collection or aggregate of brain mechanisms as comprising our universal human nature. But this naturalistic reduction creates several problems for the evolutionary psychologist to explain.

If the brain consists of thousands of modules, each responsible for some particular psychological “trait” (perception, reasoning, memory, decision, choice, language, goals, planning, emotions, and so on), what unifies them into a single whole, given that there is no self who is generating or causing its own thoughts, beliefs, sensations, and desires, or that is the owner of all its experiences and mental states? We are left in the dark if the brain is not conscious. Further, if human nature is to be understood in terms of operations of the brain, then a human being does not come into being at conception, but only when a fully functional brain has developed. But, if the whole brain and its individual operating mechanisms comprise human nature, then, when a human being loses 20% of his brain he must necessarily lose 20% of his nature. And that cannot be; a person who has parts of his brain removed because of a brain tumor is still a fully human being. By contrast, something that loses its nature, or parts thereof, will cease to exist; if a fish turns into a dog tomorrow, we will say the fish ceased to exist, and a dog came into being. In different words, a nature tells us what something is and what it is that makes it what it is. It is therefore an all or nothing affair, because the inner nature of living things does not come in degrees.

It is not like someone walking into a room with a first step, then a second, until the person finally entered the room. The implication for our understanding of the human person is this: there is no such thing as a non-human person. There can be persons that are not human (God, angels), but no humans that are not persons. By analogy, there can be colors that are not red, but no red things that are not colored things. But there is one more point. If the brain is constantly changing in blood flow and oxygen levels, and if the brain regularly gains and discards some of its parts, what can account for the sameness of the self’s

identity through change over time? Evolutionary psychologists leave us in the dark. However, there is another explanation for why human nature is an all or nothing affair.

The self is an enduring individual substance and is not identical with an interval of time. Times have parts; an enduring individual thing is a continuant, and moves through time. It is not like a cricket match with innings at different times. It can therefore exist at more than one time; it can persist through changes (like a leaf and chameleon turning from green to brown) in its properties and still remain the same thing—that is, what it is.

The point is that properties do not show up in the world by themselves. Substances are the owners of their properties; properties are “in” them, but not like water in a glass. A substance is a whole and is not an entity that “emerges” from interaction between externally related properties, parts, and capacities. The unity of a substance is ontologically prior to its parts, and parts are what they are in virtue of the nature of a substance and their function in the substance as a whole. The capacities of a substance are therefore possessed by it solely by virtue of the substance belonging to a natural kind; the capacities James has are his because he belongs to the natural kind “being human.” James as a person or self is therefore prior to his parts; parts are gathered and formed by the direction of an immaterial soul and its nature taken as a whole.

If a human being is the kind of entity it is, because of the essential properties it has by virtue of its basic nature, then a description of the powers or capacities and functions of the self will provide more accurate information about a human being than an analysis of a brain. In other words, we can think of the nature of the soul as a “this-such”—kind of thing—a combination of a universal nature, an individuating part, and the relation that connects them.¹⁰

Evolutionary psychologists are physicalists. For them the self is a brain and central nervous system plus a body, and conscious mental life—thoughts, desires, emotions, and pain (sensations with a certain felt quality) is nothing but physical events in the brain. But the properties of matter are such things as weight, size (length, width, and height), shape, hardness, and density, none of which are characteristic of consciousness and mental states. No thought or belief can be put on a scale to measure its size, shape, or weight.

To see the difference, picture a red rose you saw and smelled two days ago. If you close your eyes and pay attention to your mind’s image, you see a red color (a property of the rose). You are experiencing the rose

you smelled. Note two things: (1) there is neither a red rose alongside you nor inside you, yet (2) there is something red inside you—in your mind—namely, the image of the red rose. Now, if a neuroscientist opens your skull, he will not find a red image in your brain while you are having the sense image. The sense image has a property in your mind—redness—that your brain does not have. Therefore, the mind and brain are not identical. In other words, the red rose’s sense image is a mental entity of your immaterial self, and not a physical one. The same holds true for the smell of the rose. The neuroscientist will not find the odor of the rose and/or its pleasantness in your brain.

The simple fact is that consciousness is constituted by a subjective feel or texture of experience itself, which, as we saw earlier, the physicalist cannot explain. If physicalism is true, then there is no mental self; the brain is the only possessor of mental life—construed as physical events or states of the brain. In contrast, the first-person point of view is the vantage point that I use to describe the world from my own perspective. So when I use the indexical “I,” it refers to my self that knows by a direct, immediate, private acquaintance with my own consciousness in acts of self-awareness. But I do not know what is going on in my brain; neither do I need to know. This difference shows why a neuroscientist who is watching a person’s brain on a computer screen while he is thinking, has to ask the person to give a report of what he is thinking about, and why. And since he has no access to his own brain, the report cannot be a report of his brain or about what is going on in his brain. Thus, and again, mental states and brain states cannot be identical.

Finally, as noted, evolutionary psychologists teach that brain mechanisms are far from free and the self is just a useful fiction. Thus, given choice A and B, I will be unable to choose either one. In a word, human free will does not exist. Because human free will does not exist, determinism must be true. This means, for physicalism to work, evolutionary psychologists have to radically revise our commonsense notions of freedom, responsibility, praise and blame, obligation, and punishment. And if these commonsense notions exist and are true, this no free will idea is nothing less than dangerous. Agent causation requires free will, and substance dualism (immaterial soul/self and material brain) embrace this view.

With this in mind, we can now proceed to look at reasons why science has not succeeded in demonstrating that the self is not distinct from the brain, and thus is contrary to what evolutionary psychologists would have people believe.

¹⁰ For an excellent discussion of universals and a universal nature as a “bare particular,” see Moreland (2001, pp. 148–157).

Section III: Scientific Evidence for the Existence of an Immaterial Self

Experimental study such as those conducted by David McCabe and Alan Castel (2008), Deena Weisberg and four colleagues (2008), and Donato Ramani (2009) has shown that there are at least two major reasons why neuroscientific information generates interest in knowledge of the brain. On the one hand, neuroscience is perceived to have the authority and prestige of a hard empirical science, and seeing neuroscientific information may allure people into believing they have received a scientific explanation when they have not;

People may therefore uncritically accept any explanation containing neuroscientific information,” even if “the neuroscientific information is irrelevant to the logic of the explanation (Weisberg et al. 2008, p. 470).

People believe explanations to be valid even when these explanations contain significant flaws or gaps in reasoning. Conversely, brain images have a particular persuasive potential conferring credibility to neuroscience data.

It is therefore crucially important to bear in mind that the

discipline of neuroscience today is materialistic. That is, it assumes that the mind is quite simply the physical workings of the brain (Beauregard and O’Leary 2007, p.x).

As we have previously seen, this is precisely the view held by evolutionary psychologists. But it is also true of the discipline known as the philosophy of mind. In the words of evolutionists George Botterill and Peter Carruthers: “*physicalism* of one sort or another is now the default approach in the philosophy of mind” (Botterill and Carruthers 1999, p. 4). Thus, if we would make a mistake and blindly accept what we are being told about ourselves by certain psychologists, neuroscientists, and philosophers; their interpretation of scientific data is a manifestation of their metaphysical (philosophical) presuppositions.

The scientific evidence tells us that a brain is not conscious, you are. In the words of Searle: “No single neuron can cause and realize thoughts” (Searle 2007, p.99). In other words, a brain does not think, you do. Eminent neurophysiologist Maxwell Bennett and philosopher Peter Hacker let us know that the only thing a brain scientist knows about a person when he is looking at the person’s brain is “what goes on there while he is thinking; all fMRI scanners can show is which parts of his brain are metabolizing more oxygen than others when the person in the scanner is thinking” (Bennett and Hacker 2007, p. 143). Put another way, the only thing a neuroscientist could discover are neural (brain) states that correlate with

certain states of consciousness. “But *that* discovery cannot show that it is *the brain* that is conscious” (Bennett and Hacker 2007, p.136).

“The goal of psychotherapy is to help people choose new patterns of behavior,” says neuroscientist Mario Beauregard (2007, p.232). He then adds that intentionality,

(the first-person perspective) is essential because the psychotherapeutic work is guided to a large extent by the content of the patient’s mental states and processes, for example, thoughts and feelings (Beauregard 2007, p. 232).

He concludes his long academic paper in which he discusses various scientific studies as follows:

Agentic factors, such as beliefs, goals, aspirations, desires, and expectations...cogently supports the interactionist view that the contents of subjective experience can causally influence physiological processes/events in the brain (Beauregard 2007, p.233).

The word “interactionist” refers to the interactive relationship between the soul/mind and body/brain.

In an experimental study of the effects of placebos (“drugs” that have no active, pharmacological ingredients) and antidepressants in patients with major depression, psychiatrist Helen Mayberg and six other researchers found that placebos produce changes in the brain that are “indistinguishable from that seen with active antidepressant treatment” (Mayberg et al. 2002, p. 728). This indicates that placebos clearly demonstrate a mind/brain interaction that is guided by subjective factors such as beliefs, expectations, meaning, and hope. The researchers concluded that attention to “new cognitive strategies that enhance awareness of self-defeating thinking styles and behavioral patterns that contribute to feelings of depression is a primary goal” (Mayberg et al. 2002, p. 731). This is not at all new to a Christian.

Scripture abounds with examples of the interaction between a person’s spiritual state (the heart), the content of his thoughts, feelings, desires, and physical health, including “Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in trouble; My eye wastes away with grief, Yes, my soul and my body!” (Psalm 31:9); “When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long.” (Psalm 32:3); “Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression,...” (Proverbs 12:25); “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.” (Proverbs 13:12); “A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones” (Proverbs 14:30); “A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken” (Proverbs 15:13); “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones” (Proverbs 17:22); “Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles” (Proverbs 21:23).

All these texts show three things: (1) the “heart of man reflects man” (Proverbs 27:19; cf. 1 Peter 3:4); (2) the writers who recorded these texts reflect knowledge of human persons without any understanding of the brain; (3) honest, straightforward interpretations if scientific data will never contradict the issues about which the Bible speaks. Recall that brain scientists found that self-defeating thinking styles and conduct are causing physiological changes in the brain. The Apostle Paul expressed this truth without any reference to the brain:

...whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:8–9).

Section IV: Evolutionary Psychology as the Anti-Thesis of Biblical Revelation

Evolutionary psychologists claim that vision, language, emotions, and cognitive functions are all products of a physical process called natural selection. Atheist Richard Dawkins describes the properties of this “maker” as follows:

Natural selection, the blind, unconscious, automatic process which Darwin discovered, and which we now know is the explanation for the existence and apparently purposeful form of all life, has no purpose in mind. It has no mind, and no mind's eye. It does not plan for the future. It has no vision, no foresight, not sight at all. If it can be said to play the role of watchmaker in nature, it is the *blind* watchmaker” (Dawkins 2006, p. 5).

We have seen that evolutionary psychologists must believe in the continuity between particles, animals, and human beings. Human beings evolved from some ape-like creatures over millions of years, and death, evil, and suffering must have been present in the world prior to the Fall of Adam and Eve (“ancestral hominids were ground-living primates; omnivores”—Tooby and Cosmides 2005, p. 24). Natural selection also produced all human organs including the eye (Cosmides and Tooby 1997, p. 14). These beliefs are in total contradistinction of how the Bible describes the Creator and His creation. Reasons that show that it is impossible to conceive of the Creation without an all-powerful Creator and design without a maximally intelligent Designer are:

- In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1).
- Who has measured the waters[a] in the hollow of His

hand, measured heaven with a span and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding? (Isaiah 40:12–14).

- The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork (Psalm 19:1; cf. Romans 1:20).
- And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (Genesis 2:7).
- And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place (Genesis 2:21).
- For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus... (Ephesians 2:10).
- He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see? (Psalm 94:9).
- Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day (Genesis 1:31).
- Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day... (Exodus 20:9–11).

In contrast to the natural story of evolution, is

1. the biblical Creation account and the supernatural activities of the Creator (Genesis 1:1, 2; Isaiah 40:12–14); and
2. in contrast to the man-inspired physical story of natural selection, is the Spirit-inspired Word of God or Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16);
3. in contrast to the story of millions and billions of years of gradual evolution, is the direct, immediate, and fully functional creation of the Creator over a period of six days of 24-hours each (“let there be”—10 times; “and it was so”—7 times; “God saw that it was good”—7 times; “there was evening and there was morning, the Xth day”—6 times; cf. Genesis 1:3–31); and
4. in contrast to the story of human beings evolving from some ape-like creatures over millions of years, is the Creation account of the direct and immediate creation of Adam and Eve in the image of God, in mature form, and separate from animals (Genesis 1:26–27, 2:7, 21–23, 5:1–3; James 3:9);

5. in contrast to the evolutionary emphasis on and story of the brain, is the soul or spirit of man (Zachariah 12:1; Matthew 10:28; James 2:26) and the human heart (“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life”—Proverbs 4:23; “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man”—Mark 7:21–23);
6. in contrast to the story of one kind of thing capable of evolving into another thing different from itself, is the creation of natural (created) kinds with the ability to reproduce only “after their kind” (Genesis 1:11–12, 20–21, 24–25);
7. in contrast to the evolutionary story of millions of years of death and suffering before the Fall, is the “very good” creation of the Creator (Genesis 1:31) and spiritual and physical death following the rebellion of Adam (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12–21, 8:18–25);
8. in contrast to the evolutionary story with its emphasis on the here and now, and reproduction and survival, is the glorious hope provided by the Creator in the beginning (Genesis 3:15), a new heart and eternal life now (John 3:3–7), and a new heaven and new earth one day in the future (John 14:2; Revelation 21:1–5, 22:1–5). The factual conclusion is that the evolutionary psychological story about us and that of the Word of God represent two fundamentally different and divergent paths.

Thus, in contrast to evolutionary psychologists who are under pressure to explain to us how human nature, consciousness, the self, and agency can “emerge” from brain matter and how we could have evolved from ape-like creatures, biblical creationists are under no such pressure. God not only created kinds of things and equipped them with abilities appropriate to and natural for them to exercise, but also created the first human persons in His image. Creationists already have a first instance of a perfect Person; in God they have a paradigm case of what a self-conscious, moral agent is, and accept therefore that their inner psychological, spiritual, and moral properties, capacities, and qualities are analogous to those of their Creator. In other words, they accept that human persons are ontologically, epistemologically and morally analogous to God.

Moral concerns

According to evolutionary psychologists, an explanatory hypothesis for some emotion or cognitive faculty must begin with a theory of how that faculty would have enhanced the reproductive chances of the bearer of that faculty in an ancestral environment

(Pinker 2005, p.xiv). The relevant question is, for what was the faculty (trait) useful? The most consistent answer for the evolutionary psychologist is to say the attaining of some reproduction-related goal. The follow-up question is: would it be wrong to lie or deceive someone if and when a person is presented with an opportunity to be sexually unfaithful to his spouse? V.S. Ramachandran and Sandra Blakeslee assert that the biological ability to lie and deceive evolved because “of the need to impose stability, internal consistency and coherence on behavior” and the “need to conceal the truth from other people”. The theory, which they do not find convincing, is that evolution “allow[s] you to lie...as a car salesman can. After all...it might be useful to lie—in a job interview or during courtship (‘I’m not married’).” However, they add, the problem is that “your limbic system often gives the game away” (Ramachandran and Blakeslee 2003, p.507).

Why should the brain work against itself (assuming for a moment that it can think and feel) when it is useful and in its own interest to lie and deceive? It just does not make sense. However, it is easy to see here the seeds of the philosophy of pragmatism. In this pragmatic view, the question is not whether something is true, but whether it works for you. But even if it works, it would still be wrong. It is hard to see how harmonious living in society could be possible if people do not keep their promises, do not comply with their agreements, or do not fulfill their contractual obligations. Scripturally lies and deception are tied to the nature of the evil one (cf. Genesis 3:1–7; John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 13–15; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 3:12).

About incest, evolutionary psychologists claim: “incest avoidance and love for family members are rooted in evolved mechanisms for kin recognition” (Tooby and Cosmides 2005, p.7). Tooby and Cosmides further tell us that there are a number of things that evolutionary psychologists are very certain of, and one of those things is that our ancestors had “deleterious recessives rendering them subject to inbreeding depression if they mated with siblings” (Tooby and Cosmides 2005, pp.23–24). The relevant question is, is this an acceptable explanation? Nowhere are the two evolutionists telling us that our ancestors avoided incest because they thought it would have been an immoral thing or morally repugnant thing to do; we are simply left with the impression that “inbreeding depression” was too much for them to bear, and that it would have interfered with someone’s reproductive success (or “survival”).

It may therefore come as a surprise to the reader, but many behaviors which we would normally categorize as abnormal, criminal, and sinful are

not so categorized by evolutionary psychologists.¹¹ Consider the so-called “postpartum depression” disorder. The disorder refers to the tendency of mothers to withdraw attention from a newborn straight after birth. And it is quite correct; it has been universally regarded as a “mental illness.” However, according to evolutionary psychologists, postpartum depression is

consistent with what would be expected in an adaptation whose function is to reduce investment in the newborn when there are insufficient resources and social support, or when the infant has serious health problems suggesting that it would not survive and reproduce in a foraging world (Sell et al. 2003, pp. 51–52).

Certainly the realization of a lack of support (financial or otherwise) could lead to depression, but evolutionary psychologists leave us with the impression that the mother’s withdrawal from the newborn is normal, if not excusable, and therefore not to be seen as morally irresponsible conduct. Could it be that the newborn is simply not wanted? Is this not the killing of an innocent and helpless human being? Could it be that the decision to let the baby die leads to guilt which in turn causes the depression? If so, then that is precisely in accord with how the Creator designed us to function. If guilt is an emotion that follows from judging oneself in violation of a standard, then this phenomenon is a demonstration of the moral law of God written in the human heart of which the conscience bears witness (Romans 2:14): “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13).

Evolutionary psychologists explain criminal behavior (cf. footnote 11) as just one of three strategies referred to by “exploitive resource acquisition strategies” (Buss 2012, pp. 93–94). What these strategies entail is the procuring of resources by taking them from other people through tactics of threat, coercion, force, terrorism, deception, manipulation, or murder. The purpose of this behavior, we are told, is to achieve reproductively-relevant goals or resources. How should we go about, or, how did our ancestors go about achieving these ends? By attaining some form of status. But why status in particular as oppose to being relatively poor, but honest, hard-working, and being respectful to others? Position or rank is useful; its usefulness determines easy access to things such as “desirable mates.” So why would one take (steal) from others that which do not belong to oneself?

The core of the evolutionary psychological

explanation lies in the phrases “rapid means” and “more quickly.” Buss puts it as follows: (1) “Exploiting the resources from others is often a rapid means of resource acquisition. Successful theft secures resources more quickly than relying on one’s own hard-earned labors”; (2) “Sexual assault secures sexual access more rapidly than the longer process of honest courtship”; (3) “Killing a rival often secures rapid access to that rival’s resources, as well as quickly eliminating a key resource of competition for as yet-unclaimed resources.” The author concludes that a “working hypothesis is humans have evolved adaptations to steal, assault, and kill” (Buss 2012, p. 96).

So what would make it wrong when the purpose of criminal deeds (“exploitive resource acquisition strategies”) is to achieve reproductively-relevant goals or resources at the expense of others? The only answer the author provides is that criminal behavior is something “most in society find abhorrent” (Buss 2012, p. 94).

Intuitively, the reasons why most people find such conduct repugnant include, because they believe they earned their possessions through hard work; they respect an honest courtship and the sanctity of marriage, and they respect the life of another human being. But if what “most people” find as abhorrent is the only reason why criminal conduct is morally wrong, then we are all in trouble. What if most in society think it is all right to abuse babies for fun? Would that be right?

First, if a naturalistic ethic holds that ethical terms and concepts (goodness, worth, and right) can be reduced to properties that are biological, social, psychological, or physical in nature, then the term right in “X is right” would mean what is approved by most people—people vote and the majority rules; is what maximizes interest, usefulness, or expediency, or is what furthers group survival. The point is not that the term “right” is not moral any longer, but rather that it has been turned into a property that is social in nature (what is socially approved, acceptable and credible), and psychological, for example, what an individual likes to be right (subjectivism). Second, to measure the psychological or biological property means to give it an operational definition; “right” is what people arrive at through a process of debating and voting. In other words, “rightness” means just what most people want. On the individual level “rightness” can be defined by some observable traits

¹¹ Buss says, for example, “What is often disparaged as a maladjusted personality marked by impulsivity and lack of self-control instead can be conceptualized within life-history theory as an adaptive stable strategy deployed in response to a realistic appraisal of a shorter time horizon” (Buss 2009, p. 361). The reader may not know this, but impulsivity and lack of self-control are two of the most outstanding characteristics of the psychopath, otherwise known as the antisocial or sociopathic personality (Carson and Butcher 1992, pp. 283–292; cf. Clarke 2011). Other common characteristics include inadequate conscience development, irresponsible behavior, manipulative behavior, ability to exploit and impress others (for example, with schemes how to make “easy money”), rejection of authority, and the inability to maintain good relationships. Compare this information with what is later described as “exploitive resource acquisition strategies” by evolutionary psychologists.

of the body and so reduced to physical behavior that can be observed and measured.¹²

There are at least two objections which we can raise against this kind of ethical naturalism. The first is that it confuses is (a description of what most people want and do) with ought (what should be the case) by reducing the latter to the former. But moral properties are normative properties; they are prescriptive. As such they carry with them a moral “ought”; if some act has the property of rightness, then (1) a person can perform the act, and (2) a person ought to perform that act. To understand the second objection, let us consider “rightness” to be “what is approved by most people.” Why is this kind of reduction misconceived? For one thing, what the majority approved of can be morally wrong, such as Nazi Germany. So, if most people approve of abusing babies for fun, then according to this version of ethical naturalism, this act would be right. But even though it was approved by most people, it would still be wrong. On the other hand, some acts can be right even if they are not approved of by most people.

It should be evident that evolutionary psychologists are not telling us anything new about the moral condition of the human heart. Instead, they raise a considerable amount of worrisome alarms. Scripture reveals to us that the whole of creation underwent a radical metamorphosis since Adam’s willful disobedience to our Creator; Cain committed the first murder out of a combination of uncontrolled emotions—jealousy, envy, anger, feelings of rejection, and depression (cf. Genesis 4:1–4; 1 John 3:10–12). He mistakenly thought that his view of things could become the measure by which they are to be judged. The rest of human history speaks for itself; human wickedness increased exponentially because “...every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). It must therefore be said that the cure for the human heart is not a theory, therapeutic technique, or an anti-depressant, but a Person—Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. He paid the price for our crimes against our Creator with His own life, and His universal invitation is as new as the day when He first uttered it:

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light (Matthew 11:28–30).

¹² Kim is correct to say that naturalists consider normative/moral properties to be natural properties, for example, “identification of good with pleasure, right with optimal promotion of happiness, etc.” (Kim 2003, p. 96). Why should the Christian not believe this? For one thing, if good is identical with pleasure, and right with what promotes happiness, then it follows that anything a person does that is pleasurable is good, and whatever promotes happiness (lies, deception, and the exploitation of others) is right. But this cannot be. Many people derive pleasure from exploiting and manipulating other people to achieve their own happiness (a phenomenon now labeled as “narcissism” and “Narcissistic Personality Disorder”). Their victims are more than often emotionally frustrated, mentally confused, and physically exhausted. Also, there are people who derive pleasure from horrible desired satisfactions such as regularly fondling young children. In the naturalist view this would have to count as good. For another thing, pain can also be good, even if not pleasurable (cf. Psalm 119: 67, 71; 2 Corinthians 12:7; Hebrews 12:9–11).

Conclusion

This paper set out to defend the thesis that evolutionary psychology fails as an explanatory science and is morally dangerous. The arguments advanced and the evidence considered have shown that evolutionary psychology poses as a rival to the biblical record of origins and human nature as described and explained in the revealed and true Word of God. Contrary to what evolutionary psychologists would have people believe, they are unable to explain consciousness, the self or “I,” free choice, and human nature. Thus, it is a total failure as an explanatory paradigm of human nature. Also, contrary to what evolutionary psychologists would have people believe, science has not confirmed that you—a self and a person—are a brain. Consideration of the moral concerns has shown that evolutionary psychological explanations are not only banal or ludicrous, but inherently dangerous to our self-understanding and our lives together in society.

Therefore, Christians and the public at large cannot afford to accept what they are being told about themselves from the perspective of evolutionary psychology.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank the reviewer of this paper and his much appreciated corrections.

References

- Abhouse, J.C. and R.C. Berwick. 1998. Darwin on the mind. *Evolutionary psychology is in fashion—but is any of it true?* *Boston Review*, April/May 1998.
- Barclay, W. 1971. *Ethics in a permissive society*. Glasgow, United Kingdom: Fontana.
- Beauregard, M. 2007. Mind does really matter: Evidence from neuroimaging studies of emotional self-regulation, psychotherapy, and placebo effect. *Progress in Neurobiology* 81:218–236.
- Beauregard, M. and D. O’Leary. 2007. *The spiritual brain. A neuroscientist’s case for the existence of the soul*. New York, New York: HarperOne.
- Benner, D.G. 1988. *Psychotherapy and the spiritual quest*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.
- Bennett, M.D. and P. Hacker. 2007. The conceptual presuppositions of cognitive neuroscience. In *Neuroscience and philosophy: Brain, mind, and language*, ed. M.D. Bennett, D. Dennett, P. Hacker, and J. Searle. New York, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bishop, J. 1989. *Natural agency*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

- Boden, M. 1998. Consciousness and human identity: An interdisciplinary perspective. In *Consciousness and human identity*, ed. J. Cornwell, pp. 1–20. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Botterill, G. and P. Carruthers. 1999. *The philosophy of psychology*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Buss, D.M. 1995. Evolutionary psychology: A new paradigm for psychological science. *Psychological Inquiry* 6, no. 1:1–30.
- Buss, D.M. 2005. Introduction: the emergence of evolutionary psychology. In *The handbook of evolutionary psychology*, ed. D.M. Buss. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Buss, D.M. 2009. How can evolutionary psychology successfully explain personality and individual differences? *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 4, no. 4:359–366.
- Buss, D.M. 2012. The evolutionary psychology of crime. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Criminology* 1, no. 1:90–98.
- Carson, R.C. and J.N. Butcher. 1992. *Abnormal psychology and modern life*. New York, New York: HarperCollins Inc.
- Chalmers, D. 2007. The hard problem of consciousness. In *The Blackwell companion to consciousness*, ed. M. Velmans and S. Schneider, pp. 225–235. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Clarke, R.M. ed. 2011. *Antisocial behavior: causes, correlations and treatments*. New York, New York: Nova Science Publishers Inc.
- Cosmides, L. and J. Tooby 1997. *Evolutionary psychology: A primer*. Retrieved from <http://www.psych.ucsb.edu/research/cep/primer.htm> on February 16, 2010.
- Cosmides, L. and J. Tooby. 2004. Knowing thyself: The evolutionary psychology of moral reasoning and moral sentiments. In *Business, science, and ethics. The Ruffin Series*, ed. R.E. Freeman and P. Werhane, no. 4, pp. 91–127. Charlottesville, Virginia: Society for Business Ethics.
- Dawkins, R. 2006. *The blind watchmaker*. London, United Kingdom: Penguin Books.
- Dennett, D. 1991. *Consciousness explained*. London, United Kingdom: Penguin Books.
- Dunbar, R., L. Barrett, and J. Lycett 2007. *Evolutionary psychology: A beginner's guide: Human behavior, evolution and the mind*. Oxford, United Kingdom: One World.
- Duntley, J.D. and D.M. Buss 2008. Evolutionary psychology is a metatheory for psychology. *Psychological Inquiry* 19, no. 1:30–34.
- Fitzgerald, C.J. and M.B. Whitaker. 2010. Examining the acceptance of and resistance to evolutionary psychology. *Evolutionary Psychology* 8, no. 2:284–296. Retrieved from www.epjournal.net on July 31, 2012.
- Fodor, J.A. 1992. The big idea: Can there be a science of mind? *The Times Literary Supplement* 4567:5–7.
- Geher, G. 2006. Evolutionary psychology is not evil! (...and here's why...). *Psychological Topics* 15, no. 2:181–202.
- Goetz, S. 2000. Naturalism and libertarian agency. In *Naturalism: A critical analysis*, ed. W.L. Craig and J.P. Moreland, pp. 156–188. Oxford, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Hagen, E.H. 2005. Controversial issues in evolutionary psychology. In *The handbook of evolutionary psychology*, ed. D.M. Buss, pp. 145–174. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Ham, K. and T. Mortenson. 2007. Science or the Bible? *Answers* 2, no. 3:22–26. Retrieved from <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/am/v2/n3/science-or-the-bible> on August 24, 2012.
- Heylighen, F. 2011. Evolutionary psychology. In *Encyclopedia of quality of life research*, ed. A. Michalos. Berlin, Germany: Springer.
- Holmes, A.F. 1997. *Fact, value, and God*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Hull, D. 1989. *The metaphysics of evolution*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.
- Jones, O.D. 2005. Evolutionary psychology and the law. In *The handbook of evolutionary psychology*, ed. D.M. Buss, pp. 953–974. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Kim, J. 2003. The American origins of philosophical naturalism. *Journal of Philosophical Research*, (issue supplement, *Philosophy in America at the turn of the century*) 28:83–98.
- Kulikovsky, A.S. 2009. *Creation, fall, restoration. A biblical theology of creation*. Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor.
- Lewontin, R.C. 2005. The wars over evolution. *The New York Review of Books*. Retrieved from <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/18363> on February 13, 2010.
- MacArthur, J.F. 1991. The psychology epidemic and its cure. *The Master's Seminary Journal* 2, no. 1:3–20.
- Mayberg, H.S., J.A. Silva, S.K. Brannan, J.L. Tekell, R.K. Mahurin, S. McGinnis, and P.A. Jerabek. 2002. The functional neuroanatomy of the placebo effect. *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 159 no. 5:728–737. Retrieved from <http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/article.aspx?articleid=175519> on June 11, 2012.
- Mayr, E. 1987. The ontological status of species: Scientific progress and philosophical terminology. *Biology and Philosophy* 2:145–166. Retrieved from <http://mechanism.ucsd.edu/teaching/philbio/readings/mayr.ontologicalstatusofspecies.1987.pdf> on March 8, 2011.
- McCabe, D.P. and A.D. Castel. 2008. Seeing is believing: The effect of brain images on judgments of scientific reasoning. *Cognition* 107, no. 1:343–352.
- McGinn, C. 2003. Can we solve the mind-body problem? In *Philosophy of mind. Contemporary readings*, ed. T. O'Connor and D. Robb, pp. 438–457. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Mitchell, M. 1999. Can evolution explain how the mind works? A review of the evolutionary psychology debates. *Complexity* 4 3:17–24.
- Moreland, J.P. 2001. *Universals: Central problems of philosophy*. London, United Kingdom: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Moreland, J.P. and S.B. Rae. 2000. *Body & soul. Human nature & the crisis in ethics*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Mortenson, T. 2004. Philosophical naturalism and the age of the earth: Are they related? *The Master's Seminary Journal* 15, no. 1:71–92.
- Mortenson, T. 2008. "Deep time" and the church's compromise: Historical background. In *Coming to grips with Genesis. Biblical authority and the age of the earth*, ed. T. Mortenson and T.H. Ury, pp. 79–104. Green Forest, Arkansas: Master Books.
- Nesse, R.M. 2005. Evolutionary psychology and mental health. In *The handbook of evolutionary psychology*, ed.

- D.M. Buss, pp.903–930. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Papineau, D. 2001. *The rise of physicalism*. Retrieved from www.kcl.ac.uk/ip/davidpapineau/Staff/Papineau/OnlinePapers/Risephys.html on August 5, 2011.
- Patterson, R. 2007. What is science? *Evolution exposed*, pp.19–32. Green Forest, Arkansas: New Leaf Press. Retrieved from <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/ee/what-is-science> on August 23, 2012.
- Pinker, S. 1997. *How the mind works*. London, United Kingdom: Penguin Books.
- Pinker, S. 2002. *The blank slate: The modern denial of human nature*. London, United Kingdom: BCA.
- Pinker, S. 2005. Foreword. In *The handbook of evolutionary psychology*, ed. D.M. Buss. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Ramachandran, V.S. and S. Blakeslee. 2003. Do Martians see red? In *The history of psychology: Fundamental questions*, ed. M.P. Munger, pp.492–510. New York, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ramani, D. 2009. The brain seduction: The public perception of neuroscience. *Journal of Science Communication* 8, no.4:1–8.
- Robinson, H. 1982. *Matter and sense*. London, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. 1998. How to study consciousness scientifically. In *Consciousness and human identity*, ed. J. Cornwell, pp.21–37. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Searle, J. 2007. Putting consciousness back in the brain: Reply to Bennett and Hacke, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience*. In *Neuroscience and philosophy. Brain, mind, and language*, ed. M. Bennett, D. Dennett, P. Hacker, and J. Searle, pp.97–126. New York, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sell, A., E.H. Hagen, L. Cosmides, and J. Tooby. 2003. Evolutionary psychology: Applications and criticisms. In *Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science*, ed. L. Nadel, pp.47–53. London, United Kingdom: Macmillan.
- Storr, A. 1988. *Solitude: A return to the self*. London, United Kingdom: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Szasz, T.S. 1973. *Ideology and insanity: Essays on the psychiatric dehumanization of man*. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books.
- Szasz, T. 1988. *The myth of psychotherapy: Mental healing as religion, rhetoric, and repression*. New York, New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Tooby, J. and L. Cosmides. 2005. Conceptual foundations of evolutionary psychology. In *The handbook of evolutionary psychology*, ed. D.M. Buss, pp.5–67. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Weisberg, D.S., F.C. Keil, J. Goodstein, E. Rawson, and J.R. Gray. 2008. The seductive allure of neuroscience explanations. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 20, no.3:470–477.