

EAORC BULLETIN 457 – 18 March 2012

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Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B - 19 April 2012

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NOTICES

Seminar at the British Museum: Cognitive Variations

Cognitive Variations: Reflections on the Unity and Diversity of the Human Mind

Thursday 22nd March 2012 at 10.00 am (tea & coffee served from 9.30am)

Centre for Anthropology, British Museum

THIS IS A FREE EVENT

The British Museum's Centre for Anthropology, in collaboration with the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI), is delighted to present a discussion between Professor Sir Geoffrey Lloyd author of 'Cognitive Variations: Reflections on the Unity and Diversity of the Human Mind' and Professor Mark Geller who reviewed the work for the JRAI.

The book presents a cross-disciplinary study of the problems posed by the unity and diversity of the human mind. On the one hand, as humans we all share broadly the same anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, and certain psychological capabilities – the capacity to learn a language, for instance. On the other, different individuals and groups have very different talents, tastes, and beliefs; for instance about how they see themselves, other humans and the world around them. These issues are highly charged, for any denial of psychic unity savours of racism, while many assertions of psychic diversity raise the spectres of arbitrary relativism, the incommensurability of belief systems and their mutual unintelligibility.

The author surveys a fascinating range of subjects, examining where different types of scientific, philosophical, anthropological and historical arguments can take us. He discusses colour perception, spatial cognition, animal and plant taxonomy, the emotions, ideas of health and well-being, concepts of the self, agency and causation, varying perceptions of the distinction between nature and culture, and reasoning itself. He uses recent work in social anthropology, linguistics, cognitive science, neurophysiology, and the history of ideas to redefine the problems and clarify how our evident psychic diversity can be reconciled with our shared humanity.

Bookings/enquiries: Ted Goodliffe (TGoodliffe@britishmuseum.org)

Second call for papers for the 2012 annual meeting of the Animal Behavior Society

This year's meeting will be held in Albuquerque, NM, June 10 - 14, with a special day of joint programming with the Human Behaviour & Evolution Society. The meeting includes an exciting and varied schedule of plenary talks and symposia (schedule-at-glance attached, more details on the conference website:

<http://abs-hbes.unm.edu>)

Abstract submission deadline has been extended to March 31.

Reminder: talk submissions will be accepted on a first-come first-served basis.

Registration is now available at the conference website:

<http://abs-hbes.unm.edu/>

If you previously submitted an abstract, note that you must also register before your presentation will be confirmed.

45th European brain & Behaviour Society Meeting

<http://ebbs2013.com/>

Our biannual stand-alone meeting will be held in Munich, Germany, September 6-9, 2013. The local organising committee, chaired by Mathias Schmidt, is enthusiastically committed to the organisation of what will be an outstanding scientific event.

The programme will be based upon plenary lectures, 12 symposia and free communications in the form of posters. In addition, the winners of EBBS Young Investigator Awards will be invited to present their work in a separate Young Investigator symposium.

We aim to have a well-balanced and high scientific quality programme, which reflects the broad scientific interests of the EBBS community, covering all areas of clinical and preclinical brain and behaviour research. We can only achieve this goal through active participation of EBBS members as well as non-members in the formulation of the programme.

The EBBS committee, acting as the programme committee, urges scientists with an interest in brain and behaviour to submit proposals for symposia on topics of their choice and to encourage colleagues, EBBS members or not, to submit proposals.

Guidelines:

- Symposia may be proposed by EBBS members or non-members, with no geographical restrictions.
- The organizer should be an established researcher.
- Symposia are two hours in length and comprise four speakers.
- Symposia should be focused on a relevant topic for brain and behaviour research.
- Proposals covering a novel topic not represented in previous EBBS meetings as well as with high age, gender and geographical diversity of the speakers will be preferred.
- Speakers, and only speakers, receive a free registration. No other financial assistance is available.
- Members of the EBBS committee cannot participate in symposia.

Symposia proposals have to be submitted by using the submission form before June 11, 2012. Please send the fully filled out submission form to the following e-mail address: symposia@ebbs2013.com. Selected symposia will be announced in early August 2012.

PUBLICATIONS

KEY:

NEWS: items that cannot stand as an independent source.

REVIEWS: items that review a book or publication.

ARTICLES: items that are quotable, but which count as secondary sources.

PAPERS: quotable primary source items.

Proceedings of the Royal Society B - No issue this week

Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B - 19 April 2012

NOTHING OF INTEREST

New Scientist - 17 March 2012

NEWS

Chinese human fossils unlike any known species – The newly described Red Deer Cave people show an unusual mixture of modern and primitive features. Where did they come from?

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21328564.100-chinese-human-fossils-unlike-any-known-species.html>

ARTICLES

NOAM CHOMSKY – Meet the universal man – Why can everyone learn Portuguese? Is Twitter a trivialiser? A whistle-stop tour of our intellectual landscape in the company of Noam Chomsky

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21328560.200-noam-chomsky-meet-the-universal-man.html>

JUSTIN L BARRETT – The God issue: We are all born believers – Our minds solve fundamental problems in a way that leaves a god-shaped space just waiting to be filled by religion

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21328562.000-the-god-issue-we-are-all-born-believers.html>

ARA NORENZAYAN – The God issue: Religion is the key to civilisation – As early humans expanded beyond hunter-gatherer groups, religion was the glue that held societies full of strangers together

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21328562.100-the-god-issue-religion-is-the-key-to-civilisation.html>

ROBERT N MCCAULEY – The God issue: Science won't loosen religion's grip – Those who would dance on religion's grave are underestimating its staying power

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21328562.200-the-god-issue-science-wont-loosen-religions-grip.html>

VICTOR J STENGER – The God issue: God is a testable hypothesis – Whether an ultimate creator as envisaged by religion exists or not is a question that science can address

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21328562.300-the-god-issue-god-is-a-testable-hypothesis.html>

ALAIN DE BOTTON – The God issue: Alain de Botton's religion for atheists – Religions are not literally true but neither are they total nonsense. Alain de Botton explains why atheists need to reclaim the useful bits

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21328562.400-the-god-issue-alain-de-bottons-religion-for-atheists.html>

Science - 16 March 2012

ARTICLES

J R STEWART & C B STRINGER – Human Evolution Out of Africa: The Role of Refugia and Climate Change –

“Modern human migrations and interactions began during the buildup to the Last Glacial Maximum, starting about 100,000 years ago. By examining the history of other organisms through glacial cycles, valuable models for evolutionary biogeography can be formulated. According to one such model, the adoption of a new refugium by a subgroup of a species may lead to important evolutionary changes”

<http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/summary/335/6074/1317>

PAPERS

QIAOMEI FU et al – Complete Mitochondrial Genomes Reveal Neolithic Expansion into Europe – “In order to test if a signal of population expansion is still present in modern European mitochondrial DNA, we analyzed a comprehensive dataset of 1,151 complete mtDNAs from present-day Europeans. Relying upon ancient DNA data from previous investigations, we identified mtDNA haplogroups that are typical for early farmers and hunter-gatherers, namely H and U respectively. Bayesian skyline coalescence estimates were then used on subsets of complete mtDNAs from modern populations to look for signals of past population expansions. Our analyses revealed a population expansion between 15,000 and 10,000 years before present (YBP) in mtDNAs typical for hunters and gatherers, with a decline between 10,000 and 5,000 YBP. These corresponded to an analogous population increase approximately 9,000 YBP for mtDNAs typical of early farmers. The observed changes over time suggest that the spread of agriculture in Europe involved the expansion of farming populations into Europe followed by the eventual assimilation of resident hunter-gatherers” <http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0032473>

DARREN CURNOE et al – Human Remains from the Pleistocene-Holocene Transition of Southwest China Suggest a Complex Evolutionary History for East Asians – “Our analysis suggests two plausible explanations for the morphology sampled at Longlin Cave and Maludong. First, it may represent a late-surviving archaic population, perhaps paralleling the situation seen in North Africa as indicated by remains from Dar-es-Soltane and Temara, and maybe also in southern China at Zhirendong. Alternatively, East Asia may have been colonised during multiple waves during the Pleistocene, with the Longlin-Maludong morphology possibly reflecting deep population substructure in Africa prior to modern humans dispersing into Eurasia” <http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0031918>

SOPHIE STEELANDT et al – Children Base Their Investment on Calculated Pay-Off – “To investigate the rise of economic abilities during development we studied children aged between 3 and 10 in an exchange situation requiring them to calculate their investment based on different offers. One experimenter gave back a reward twice the amount given by the children, and a second always gave back the same quantity regardless of the amount received. To maximize pay-offs children had to invest a maximal amount with the first, and a minimal amount with the second. About one third of the 5-year-olds and most 7- and 10-year-olds were able to adjust their investment according to the partner, while all 3-year-olds failed. Such performances should be related to the rise of cognitive and social skills after 4 years” <http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0033239>

MIRIAM BEISERT et al – Rethinking ‘Rational Imitation’ in 14-Month-Old Infants: A Perceptual Distraction Approach – “In their widely noticed study, Gergely, Bekkering, and Király (2002) showed that 14-month-old infants imitated an unusual action only if the model freely chose to perform this action and not if the choice of the action could be ascribed to external constraints. They attributed this kind of selective imitation to the infants' capacity of understanding the principle of rational action. In the current paper, we present evidence that a simpler approach of perceptual distraction may be more appropriate to explain their results. When we manipulated the saliency of context stimuli in the two original conditions, the results were exactly opposite to what rational imitation predicts. Based on these findings, we reject the claim that the notion of rational action plays a key role in selective imitation in 14-month-olds” <http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0032563>

DANIEL LIU BOWLING et al – Expression of Emotion in Eastern and Western Music Mirrors Vocalization – “In Western music, the major mode is typically used to convey excited, happy, bright or martial emotions, whereas the minor mode typically conveys subdued, sad or dark emotions. Recent studies indicate that the differences between these modes parallel differences between the prosodic and spectral characteristics of voiced speech sounds uttered in corresponding emotional states. Here we ask whether tonality and emotion are similarly linked in an Eastern musical tradition. The results show that the tonal relationships used to express positive/excited and negative/subdued emotions in classical South Indian music are much the same as those used in Western music. Moreover, tonal variations in the prosody of English and Tamil speech uttered in different emotional states are parallel to the tonal trends in music. These results are

consistent with the hypothesis that the association between musical tonality and emotion is based on universal vocal characteristics of different affective states”

<http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0031942>

PNAS - 13 March 2012

PAPERS

PAUL K PIFF et al – Higher social class predicts increased unethical behaviour – “Seven studies using experimental and naturalistic methods reveal that upper-class individuals behave more unethically than lower-class individuals. In studies 1 and 2, upper-class individuals were more likely to break the law while driving, relative to lower-class individuals. In follow-up laboratory studies, upper-class individuals were more likely to exhibit unethical decision-making tendencies (study 3), take valued goods from others (study 4), lie in a negotiation (study 5), cheat to increase their chances of winning a prize (study 6), and endorse unethical behavior at work (study 7) than were lower-class individuals. Mediator and moderator data demonstrated that upper-class individuals’ unethical tendencies are accounted for, in part, by their more favorable attitudes toward greed” <http://www.pnas.org/content/109/11/4086.abstract>

Scientific American - April 2012

NEWS

Fast Talkers – some languages sound faster than others, but most convey information at the same rate.

ARTICLES

KATE WONG – First of our Kind – The Australopithecus sediba find in South Africa raises “missing link” issues: is it the last australopithecine in our lineage, or the first homo, or not in our lineage at all?

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Martin Edwardes

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