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## Adapting evolutionary psychology

POSTED ON SATURDAY, JUL 23, 2011 4:11AM BY [S. ABBAS RAZA](#)

John Hawks in his blog:

I've been reading the new paper, "[Darwin in Mind: New Opportunities for Evolutionary Psychology](#)" , in *PLoS Biology*. The paper, by Johan Bolhuis and colleagues [1], is an extended attack on the methods of analysis that have been most forcefully advanced by John Tooby and Leda Cosmides (mentioned by name) and David Buss (mentioned only by his institution, UT-Austin).

Bolhuis and colleagues focus on four assumptions that underlie some of the hypotheses promoted by researchers like Buss, Tooby and Cosmides:

1. Humans were once well adapted to their environment (the "environment of evolutionary adaptedness"), but recent changes to human existence have created a mismatch of some human traits with the current environment.





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2. Human cognitive traits evolve slowly and gradually, so that they cannot be well adapted to recent environmental changes.
3. Human cognition occurs as an outcome of many specialized “modules” in the brain, not a few coordinated and flexible learning mechanisms.
4. Humans have the same cognitive processes whoever they are and wherever they live — in other words, mental adaptations are universal in humans.

Knowing all of these researchers, I don't think they would agree with all of this characterization. Some aspects are uncontroversial: Many humans display behaviors that appear poorly suited to current environments but may plausibly have been an advantage in past environments. Others are more reasonable than Bolhuis and colleagues present — for example I know that evolutionary psychologists usually express the “gradualism” assumption in a limited way, assuming that some cognitive adaptations are complex and therefore not likely to have arisen quickly as a result of a simple change in gene frequencies. Likewise, they do not assume that all human psychological traits are universal, but instead that those traits that appear universal are likely to have arisen in ancient environments shared by the ancestors of all humans. In short, I think the paper fails to accurately present the arguments put forward by mainstream evolutionary psychologists.

I've written on evolutionary psychology at some length, often in a very critical way (for a good example, check out [this post about David Buller's critical work](#) and evolutionary psychologists' lame response). But the idea of niche construction irritates me a lot more than evolutionary psychology ever does.

More [here](#).

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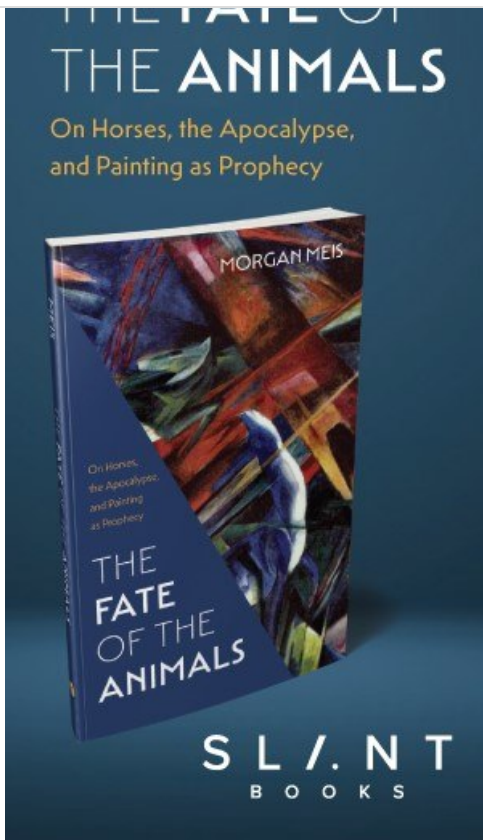
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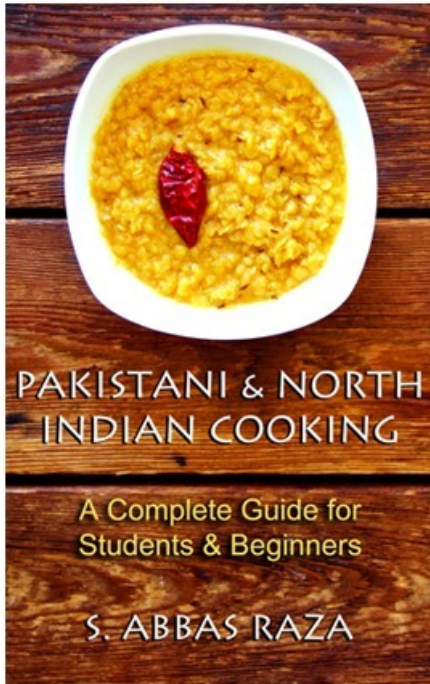


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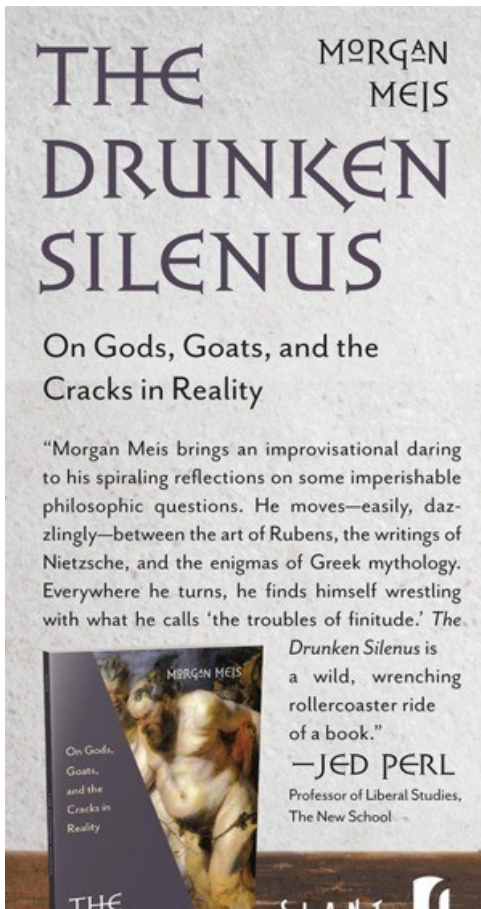
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## Recent Comments on 3QD

**Brad Kelley** I'm sure I saw this the first time it was ever shown on TV--my friends in grad school in philosophy LOVED Pee Wee! But wow, how amazing it still is....

**Paul Reubens (1952 – 2023) Actor And Comedian** · Thursday, August 10, 2023

**Jon Kujawa** Roger, Good catch! I missed that it didn't carry over in the copy-paste. Best, Jon

**On the Typography of Numbers** · Wednesday, August 9, 2023

**Philip** The more perceptive and principled have always understood that life is more than survival. From Socrates ("the unexamined life is not worth living"),...

**COVID-19 And The New Science Wars** · Wednesday, August 9, 2023

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**Brent Meeker** It's all very well to say interpersonal comparison is impossible, but the decreasing marginal value of money to me also depends on an interpersonal...

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**Philip** There isn't any evidence that women face bias in entering science other than "Women are statistically underrepresented in high-level science". But...

**Bias doesn't always undermine truth** · Tuesday, August 8, 2023

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**Roger Frye** The answer to your Roman numeral calculation needs a vinculum over the thousands part. I don't know a way to indicate that. Here is an approximation...

**On the Typography of Numbers** · Tuesday, August 8, 2023

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**Brooks Riley** What a wonderful thing to say, Azra, and beautifully written, too. Thank you so much.

**Catspeak** · Tuesday, August 8, 2023

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**jimculleny** My blue-collar father of ten I'm sure was one such Sisyphus — <https://jimculleny.wordpress.com/sisyphus-after-millenia-in-a-labor-loop-speaks-up/>

**How to Find Joy in Your Sisyphean Existence** · Tuesday, August 8, 2023

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**Azra Raza** Absolutely brilliant dear Brooks. And therefore absolutely tragic. This world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel. You are...

**Catspeak** · Tuesday, August 8, 2023

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**benny black** global warming has made simplistic statements like " Albert prefers the pie to a dollar, and Janet prefers a dollar to the pie, so the exchange..."

**Let the Unrigging Begin** · Monday, August 7, 2023

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**Jerry Cayford** Thank you, Barry. What I like about OIRA's approach is exactly that it deflates the pretense to objectivity that, as you say, obscures the depth of...

**Let the Unrigging Begin** · Monday, August 7, 2023

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**Barry Goldman** They have six votes. Nothing else matters.

**The Death of Standing** · Monday, August 7, 2023

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**S Herb** Thanks, it's a nice write-up and I was indeed fully ignorant of OIRA. I gather that this was initiated by the Biden administration, more or less in...

**Let the Unrigging Begin** · Monday, August 7, 2023

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**Barry Kissin** "Since assigning weights to different people's marginal utility of money is by definition an interpersonal utility comparison, new CBA is no more..."

**Let the Unrigging Begin** · Monday, August 7, 2023

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**Brooks Riley** Olivier, how well you have addressed the notion of complexity in your questions to this one citizen of Ukraine! It's not just what Kseniia witnessed...

**Flowers for Ukraine** · Monday, August 7, 2023

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**Philip** who finally gave us a version without the orientalism, racism and sexism. .... And possibly without accuracy and authenticity too, in that case.

**a feminist take on One Thousand and One Nights** · Sunday, August 6, 2023

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✓ [Luke Lea](#) No snark. I sincerely think Taibbi is a first-rate journalist. Left-liberal but not afraid to call it like it is, at least as I see it.

[Matt Taibbi: How the Left lost its mind](#) · Saturday, August 5, 2023

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[Matt Taibbi: How the Left lost its mind](#) · Friday, August 4, 2023

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[Jim Harrison](#) May I take this occasion to bitch about the ceremonial use of the term "alleged"? "Alleged" is a term of art in law. It makes excellent sense to hue to...

[Welcome to the Zombie Election](#) · Friday, August 4, 2023

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[Michael Liss](#) The frustration of (yes, I know it's jingoistic) "Come on, folks, Land of the Free, Home of the Brave...we've got to be able to do better than this."

[Welcome to the Zombie Election](#) · Friday, August 4, 2023

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[Mike Bendzela](#) Sing it aloud: "America the Moribund."

[Welcome to the Zombie Election](#) · Friday, August 4, 2023

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[Michael Liss](#) Cheery article to start the day with.

[Welcome to the Zombie Election](#) · Friday, August 4, 2023

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[Luke Lea](#) Thanks for giving an independent, centrist, and highly talented journalist like Taibbi exposure.

[Matt Taibbi: How the Left lost its mind](#) · Friday, August 4, 2023

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[benny black](#) Democracy just doesn't work very well for minorities, along with many other systems of governance it has major flaws. So many people have been...

[Europe And The Roma](#) · Thursday, August 3, 2023

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[benny black](#) why does everything that happens in this world have to be linked to religious mumbo jumbo ?

[Robert Bellah: Religion in Human Evolution](#) · Thursday, August 3, 2023

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[benny black](#) "He argued that secularism is impossible, individualism is an illusion, and religious worship is inescapable.".....his argument is clearly...

[The Civil Theology of Robert Bellah](#) · Thursday, August 3, 2023

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[Ofinfinitejest](#) . How Matt Taibbi got humiliated on his lies. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pz5O-zWjxE>

[Matt Taibbi: How the Left lost its mind](#) · Thursday, August 3, 2023

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[Pait](#) The Brazilian Constitution deals with the issue by stating that some articles are written in stone - the "cláusulas pétreas" cannot be modified in a...

[Kurt Gödel's Loophole, the Israeli Supreme Court, and Strange Loops](#) · Thursday, August 3, 2023

## 3QD Design History and Credits

The [original site](#) was designed by S. Abbas Raza in 2004 but soon [completely redesigned](#) by Mikko Hyppönen and deployed by Henrik Rydberg. It was later [upgraded extensively](#) by [Dan Balis](#) in 2006. The [next major revision](#) was designed by S. Abbas Raza, building upon the earlier look, and coded by [Dumky de Wilde](#) in 2013. And this current version 5.0 has been designed and deployed by Dumky de Wilde in collaboration with S. Abbas Raza.

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