

## Book Review

### ***Evolutionary Psychology: An Introduction.* Lance Workman and Will Reader**

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 2008. 506 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-88836-3, \$120.00 (hardback) and \$55.00 (paperback)

It has been 34 years since E.O. Wilson famously prophesied that sociobiology would soon “cannibalize” psychology. Although it is debatable whether evolutionary theory’s impact on psychology and other social sciences has been as great as Wilson anticipated, few would doubt the influence is growing. One indicator is that many psychology departments now offer courses entitled *Evolutionary Psychology* or something similar. Moreover, to help teach them, there are now several effective introductory textbooks (Barrett et al. 2002; Gaulin and McBurney 2003; Buss 2007; Cartwright 2008). The second edition of Workman’s and Reader’s text/book is a valuable addition to this group.

Workman’s and Reader’s text/book differs from similar titles in several ways. First, it generally assumes the reader has little or no previous background in psychology. Thus, when treating traditional psychological topics (e.g., cognition, emotion), the authors deliberately bridge an evolutionary perspective with conventional psychology. The chapter on cognitive development is especially effective in this regard, synthesizing Piaget’s foundational ideas, ethological perspectives, and contemporary findings from developmental psychology and animal behavior. Second, Workman and Reader consistently show that, for many issues, there is no such thing as “the evolutionary psychology perspective”; instead there are many possible perspectives. For instance, although the phrase “evolutionary psychology” is closely associated with the domain-specific approach of Tooby and Cosmides (who helped coin the term), other approaches are fruitful and worth distinguishing. Third, Workman and Reader give ample attention to traditional psychological topics that are neglected or only briefly touched by rival books. For example, 25 pages are devoted to psychopathology and 35 to language. The collective impact of these

differences is that this book may be the most effective one in integrating evolutionary theory with mainstream psychology. In fact, with the possible exception of Gaulin and McBurney (2003), it is probably the only one that could be uncontroversially adopted as an *Introduction to Psychology* text.

This second edition builds off a successful first edition (Workman and Reader 2004) that was organized similarly. This edition includes an entirely new chapter on individual differences, and substantial updates to many others. For instance, recent behavioral genetics findings are incorporated in several chapters, and chapter 6 now features an excellent summary of the recent work on the evolution of morality. This edition also features discussion questions at the end of each chapter and several new discussion boxes.

The book does have some weaknesses. Most notably, the first three chapters, which provide background on evolutionary theory and the precursors of evolutionary psychology, despite being mostly effective, have a few regrettable omissions: the crucial concept of adaptation, although used throughout, is never formally defined or treated; parental investment theory is defined, but Trivers’ crucial prediction about the occurrence of sex-role reversed species is not presented. In addition, readers examining their areas of expertise may find they receive little attention. For example, judgments of physical attractiveness are presented as if they could be fully attributed to preferences for youthfulness: sexual dimorphism, symmetry, facultative preferences (e.g., changes across the menstrual cycle), and other theoretically important and intensively researched concepts are almost entirely overlooked. Although regrettable, a sprinkling of such shortcomings is probably inevitable in such a wide-ranging text.

Overall, I like the second edition of Workman and Reader and recommend it as undergraduate text because the material, voice, and format will appeal to students. I also enthusiastically recommend it to the many evolutionists interested in human behavior that have long felt frustrated by mainstream psychology’s apparent unwillingness to incorporate

an evolutionary perspective. This integration has in fact been happening, and this book does a terrific job showing it.

## References

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doi: 10.1093/icb/icp001