

Evolutionary Explanations

Psychology

How evolutionary arguments in psychology work, and where they overreach.

Well supported

- Fear of snakes and heights is prepared learning
- Kin selection predicts helping patterns
- Sexual selection explains some dimorphism
- Disgust as pathogen avoidance
- Universal facial expressions

Contested

- Just-so stories with no testable prediction
- Assuming current traits were selected for
- Ignoring cultural explanations
- Over-reading small sex differences
- Reverse-engineering from modern behaviour

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

A good evolutionary hypothesis makes a prediction that could fail.
One that explains any outcome explains nothing.

The environment of evolutionary adaptedness is not the modern one.
Mismatch explanations are often more useful than adaptation ones.