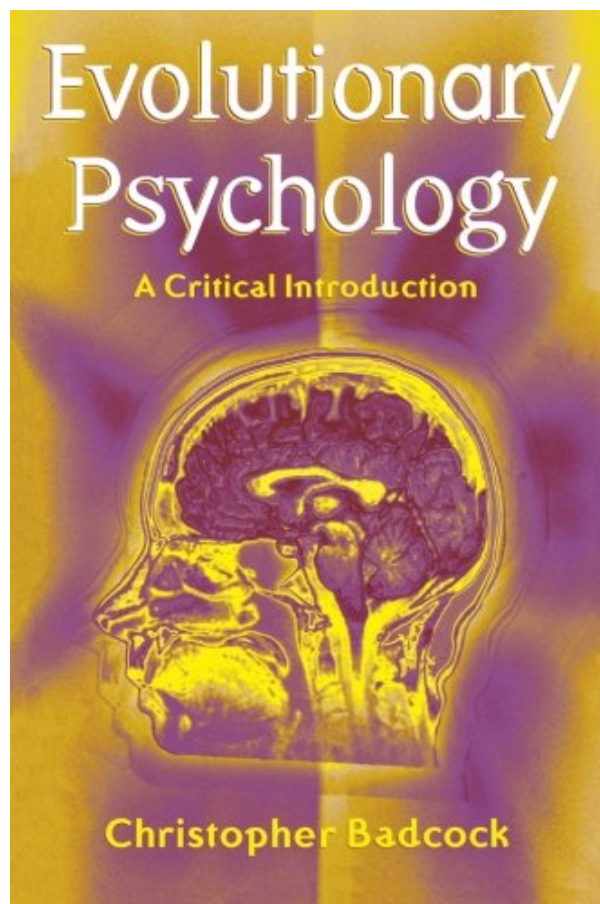
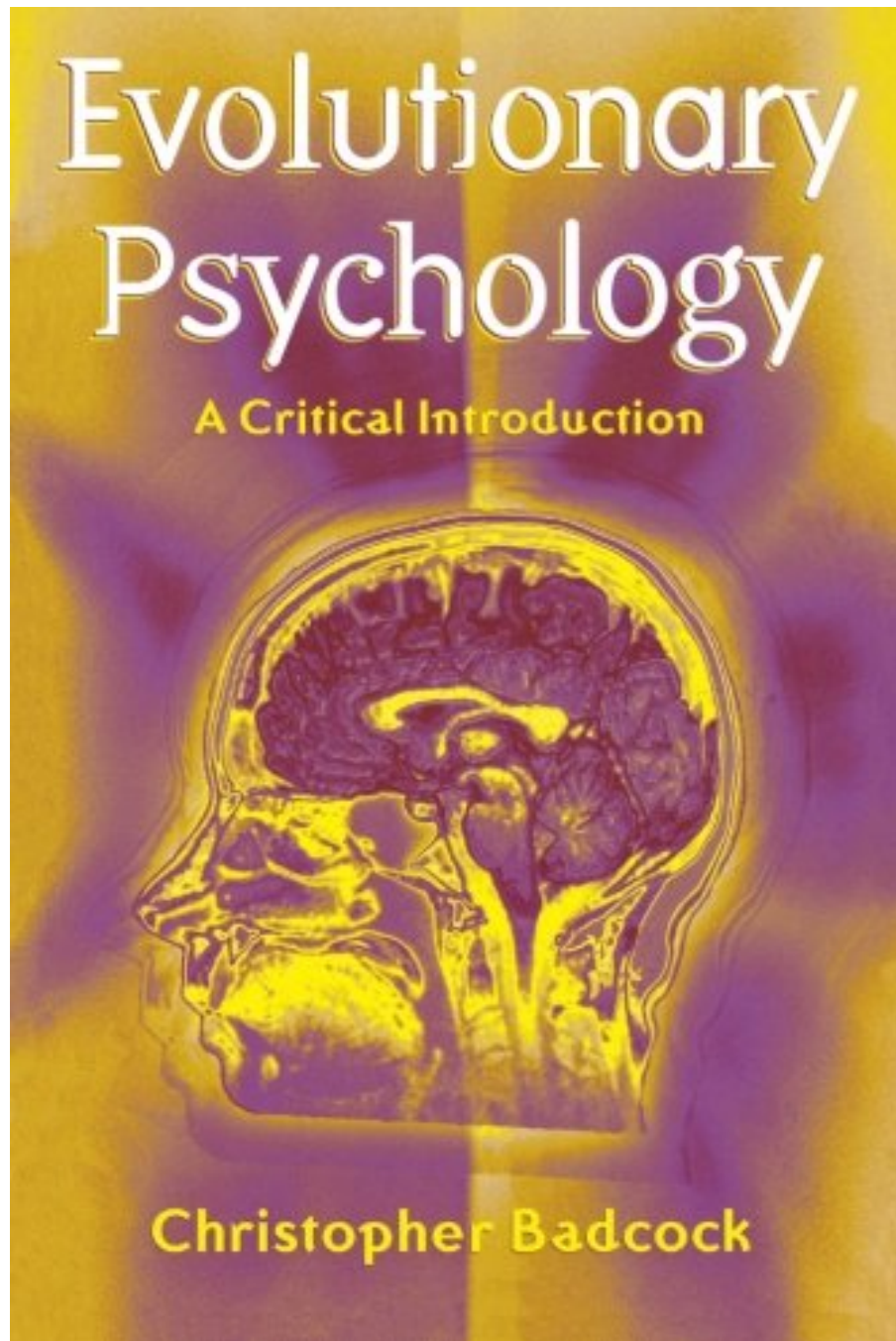


**EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY: A
CRITICAL INTRODUCTION BY
CHRISTOPHER BADCOCK**



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Review

'Christopher Badcock has produced the most thorough integration of modern genetics and human behaviour to appear. This stimulating book will be valued by those who want an up to date treatment of modern genetics and human behaviour and who value a bit of controversy and a touch of speculation in their reading.' Charles Crawford, Simon Fraser University

'Once again Christopher Badcock has written a compulsively readable book on an important topic. The application of Darwinian evolutionary biology to our understanding of the human mind and our social behaviour is producing cutting-edge science, and Badcock explains the advances made and the problems remaining with skill and insight. Knowledgeable both about the social sciences and the discoveries of modern biology, this book offers a penetrating analysis of the interactions between the branches of science. Written in a clear and understandable style, Evolutionary Psychology will surely be a standard work on the subject for years to come.' Michael Ruse, University of Guelph

'Christopher Badcock's Evolutionary Psychology: A Critical Introduction has got to be one of the better introductory texts out there. It is a way into what can often be perceived as an intimidating and overly science-based endeavour. In fact it is extremely informed from within the natural sciences, but it is also intensely fascinating ... Christopher Badcock has done an excellent job introducing the public to a field that is often mired in high academia and scientific obfuscation.' Self & Society

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From the Back Cover

According to evolutionary biologists, we are the minders of our genes. But, as Christopher Badcock points out in this book, it is only recently that evolutionists have realized that minders need minds, and that

evolution needs psychology to fill the yawning gap between genes and behaviour.

Evolutionary Psychology assumes no prior knowledge of the subject, and concentrates on the fundamental issues raised by the application of modern Darwinism to psychology. Basic concepts of evolution are explained carefully, so that the reader has a sound grasp of them before their often controversial application to psychology is discussed. The approach is a critical one, and the author does not hide the many difficulties that evolutionary psychology raises. Examples include the strange neglect of Darwin's own writings on psychology, and the fact that no existing theory has succeeded in explaining why the human brain evolved in the first place.

The book is the first to give a non-technical account of remarkable new findings about the roles that conflicting genes play in building different parts of the brain. It is also the first to consider the consequences of this for controversies like those over nature/nurture, IQ, brain lateralization and consciousness.

Evolutionary Psychology is based on many years experience of teaching evolution and psychology to social science students, and is intended for all who wish to get to grips with the basic issues of one of the most exciting and rapidly growing areas of modern science.

About the Author

Christopher Badcock is Reader in Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

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4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

A SUGGESTION THAT "DIFFERENT BRAIN SYSTEMS MOTIVATE DIFFERENT BEHAVIOUR"

By Steven H Propp

Christopher Badcock is Reader in Sociology at the London School of Economics. He wrote in the Preface to this 2000 book, "I must emphasize that this book is not intended to be a general critique of evolution or

psychology... where a fundamental issue of evolutionary interpretation does have pertinence to evolutionary psychology, I have discussed the difficulties that are relevant to it... Similar remarks apply to psychology... This book is described as a critical introduction not because it is critical of the fundamental claim that human psychology has evolved... but because much criticism is warranted by the application of that belief to particular aspects of psychology by evolutionary psychologists." (Pg. xi-xii)

He suggests, "just because something has evolved doesn't necessarily mean that it is 'particularly well designed' for performing its function. On the contrary... many important adaptations in the human body are not particularly well designed for their adaptive purpose and are certainly far from optimal in the way they work." (Pg. 21) He later points out, "Behaviourism... showed that even laboratory animals cannot be regarded as blank slates, conditionable at the whim of the behaviourist. On the contrary, behaviourism's failures suggest that if there are strict limits to the conditioning of animals, they are likely to be even stricter ones where human beings are concerned." (Pg. 243)

He argues, "Indeed, it is genetically true that genes need not---and indeed cannot---contain all the information that would be necessary if they really were completely detailed blueprints for organisms. The human genome could not possibly store enough data to detail every connection between brain cells, for example, simply because there are so many billions of them... This is nothing like enough to code them all in DNA, even if every one of the three billion bases available in the entire genome were used." (Pg. 60) He adds, "Those who balk at the idea of genes building behaviour ... are probably doing so in some part because ... they jump directly from the gene to behaviour without thinking of the agent that must lie in between. The concept of the epigenetic agent explains how and why genes can be the units of inheritance and yet the agents that they generate can have capabilities that far exceed their own." (Pg. 70)

He states, "According to this approach, the nature/nurture controversy would ... [be] one between maternal and paternal genes that build different brain systems, motivate different types of behaviour, and conflict over fundamental issues like egoism and altruism... The maternal genome of the individual will always be biased in favour of ALTRUISM because maternal genes will always be shared with other offspring of the same mother... maternal genes of the individual will favour INTELLECT over instinct for much the same reasons: instinct can be biologically programmed by paternal genes, but the mother's genes can rely on her nurturing role and pervasive environmental influence to educate and mould the psychology of her children..." (Pg. 264-265)

He summarizes, "to date, evolutionary psychology has thought about the problem principally in terms of the whole organism, and has seldom considered the possibility of conflict between different parts of the individual's genome... this book... suggests a new possibility. This is that there is not just one brain with one evolved psychology, but at least two, and that different brain systems motivate different behaviour to benefit different sets of genes... the nature side of the nature/nurture controversy appears to correspond to one of these, and the nurture side to the other. Clearly, if evolutionary psychology is to succeed as an enterprise it must be the psychology of both..." (Pg. 267-268)

This is an interesting approach, that will be of interest to those wanting discussions of the "metatheory" aspects of evolutionary psychology.

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent introduction that holds the attention

By Susan Hardy

This was the first book on evolutionary psychology I read, and it was an easy-to-understand and engaging introduction that gave me the background I needed to tackle more difficult works such as The Adapted

Mind_. Badcock explains the history of the movement well, treats most issues with healthy skepticism, and explains natural selection in such a way that most readers, even those without preexisting knowledge of evolution, should find quite easy to understand.

That being said, I had a couple of problems towards the end of the book, Badcock's strange fascination with Freud being first among them. He takes some very interesting data on unconscious processing and treats it as evidence that Freud was right on about all the defense mechanisms and so forth. He also seemed too set on the goal of reframing the mother/fetus relationship as an "arms race", although this is a more minor criticism. If it weren't for the Freud apologetics, I'd give this book 5 stars.

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