

# Human Ethology Newsletter

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## New Editor Frans X. Plooij

**Frans X. Plooij** (1946 —) is Head of the Dept. of Research & Development in a Paedological Institute (an institute of Child Studies) in Amsterdam. He was educated in biology (ethology) and psychology at the Universities of Nijmegen (Prof. H. Oomen) and Amsterdam (Prof. A. Kortlandt), and did chimpanzee field-work in the Gombe Stream National Park, Tanzania (director: Dr. J. Goodall). The

field-data were processed in the MRC-Unit on the Development and Integration of Behavior, Madingley, Cambridge, England, under the supervision of Prof. R. A. Hinde. His dissertation on "The behavioural development of free-living chimpanzee babies and infants" was defended at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands, in 1980 (promotor: Prof. G. P. Baerends). A book on the subject was published in 1984 by Ablex Publ. Corp., New Jersey. Papers appeared in A. Lock's "Action, Gesture and Symbol: the emergence of language" (Academic Press, 1978), in Bullowa's "Before Speech: the beginning of interpersonal communication" (Cambridge University Press, 1979), in the Netherlands Journal of Zoology (1985) on the relationship between ethology and paedology, and in Wind et al.'s "Essays in human Sociobiology, Vol. 2" (Brussels: V.U.B. Press, 1986). He published several papers in Dutch, as well as a book focusing on the practical relevance and benefits of the ethological approach in clinical and educational settings. He taught at the Dept. of Developmental Psychology of Nijmegen University. At present his chief interests are preverbal communication, conflict, illness and aggressive behavior in human mother-infant interactions in the home environment, peer-peer interactions and maladaptive behavior in playgroups and the kindergarten, the clinician-child interaction in an assessment situation, and the application of the ethological approach to psychosocial assessment in naturalistic situations.

## From the Outgoing Editor

I must confess to some relief at the prospect of having one less professional responsibility. But I give up this job also with considerable regret. The opportunity to have ongoing interactions with such a group of enormously capable and personable professionals is a rare one, and I will miss it.

The Newsletter has been not just a product of my efforts, but that of a great many dedicated members of the Society — people like Bill McGrew, Ian Vine, Wade Mackey, Gail Zivin, Bill Bailey, and many others. They deserve a great deal of the credit for the things that have been right with the Newsletter over the past three years.

The Society's choice of the very capable Frans Plooij will go far in reducing the sense of loss I am going to feel. I urge all of you to give him the same kind of support you have given me, and urge those of you who have not become involved to do so. You will find it very rewarding.

Bob Adams



## Taking Darwin Seriously

by Michael Ruse

Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986,

£22.50 hbk, xv+296pp.

In the preface to this book Michael Ruse tells us that he wrote it as a response to the questions he was asked in a courtroom during the Arkansas Creation Trial. "In the months after the trial, because of the questions which had been asked — questions which I had never truly asked myself — I grew to realize that at least my Creationist opponents had a sincerely articulated world picture. I had nothing. — I still had no settled thoughts on the foundations of knowledge or of morality" (xii). In attempting to settle his thoughts he was led to the conclusion that our biological origins should be a starting point for philosophy today; that it is time for philosophy to take Darwin seriously.

The route to this conclusion is indirect. Ruse takes us on a brief guided tour of the biological background, a job that he has done before. The theory of punctuated equilibria is disposed of in less than two pages, and the plausibility of the hypothesis that there may be significant group selection is given a two paragraph discussion before it is jettisoned. We are then reminded of the mistakes of traditional evolutionary approaches to epistemology and ethics before embarking on a discussion of human evolution. (Again, these are topics which Ruse has written about in at least two other books). The emphasis in the chapter on human evolution is on the evolutionary continuity between ourselves and other species; this paves the way for the later use of evidence from, say, chimpanzee behavior to figure in the discussion of the evolution of human morality. Those who believe that our culture frees us from our biological origins are given a short shrift. If culture is "free floating" it would, claims Ruse, be very dangerous. We could have all sorts of cultural practices which may prove biologically maladaptive. On the other hand it would be a mistake to be too rigidly programmed; we must have the freedom to adapt to a changing environment. Ruse opts for the view that what we think and do is structured by our genes, and he uses E. O. Wilson's notion of an "epigenetic rule" to flesh out this hypothesis.

The species — wide regularity in our classification of colours is used as an example of a primary epigenetic rule at work. We tend to break colours up into four basic categories (blue, green, yellow, red), and different languages have classificatory terms for these basic colour categories. This universality of the phenomenon is taken as evidence of its genetic base, as is the (supposed) universality of the workings of a secondary epigenetic rule, that which results in non-copulation between close relatives. Here the action of the genes is indirect. The hypothesis is that those with whom we are brought up are not those to whom we feel sexually attracted. Over-familiarity breeds sexual contempt. As biological siblings are generally brought up together, the mechanism of sexual non-attraction tends to lead to the absence of maladaptive incest. When there is an exception to the general rule of biological sibling familiarity, then natural selection can be fooled, as it apparently is in the case of children reared in kibbutzim, where the over-familiarity can occur between non-siblings who are reared together. Here the lack of sexual attraction is taken as further evidence in

favor of the hypothesis despite the non-relatedness of those involved. This is not objectionable provided that the same standards are adhered to in other areas of the socio-biological controversy. In avunculate societies (those where the adult males look after their sister's children rather than those of their wife) one would think that natural selection would fool the husbands into caring for their wife's children, despite the probability that his sister's children are probably (possibly?) more closely related to him because promiscuity makes paternity doubtful. Here the absence of the "being fooled" phenomenon is taken as evidence in favor of the natural selection hypothesis. It appears that one can have one's evidence and do an awful lot with it.

All of this is ground which has been covered in other places. If there is anything new, it is in the emphasis on the epigenetic rules, the conception of which Ruse seems to take on board with the minimum of critical attention. A much criticized feature of the notion of epigenetic rules is its link with that of "culturgens": the epigenetic rules affect the probability of using one culturgens as opposed to another. Culturgens can be instruments, ideas, dispositions to behave, artworks, and so on — anything which forms part of a culture. And cultures are aggregates of culturgens. In fact culturgens, essential to Wilson's idea of an epigenetic rule, are not mentioned by Ruse, so he is not in a position to criticize them. The idea of such culturgens presupposes an extremely atomistic conception of culture, one which allows for the probability of the existence of culturgens "atoms" to be calculated independently of one another. This surely should merit some discussion, but Ruse pushes on regardless.

Armed with epigenetic rules, Ruse is now in a position to make good his claim that our biological origins should be a starting point for philosophy. He returns to epistemology and morality in order to test our power of epigenetic philosophising. I will concentrate on the discussion of morality. Here we get a quick review of the development of the concepts of kin selection and reciprocal altruism in animal studies, before moving on to the human morality. The major claim made by Ruse is that we can better appreciate the nature of morality if we attend to the evolution of morality. Take the feeling that we ought to look after our children before taking care of other people's children. This is in line with what one would expect from kin selection, the difference being that in us this is not only a feeling, it is also, claims Ruse, experienced as a moral duty. This where we can effect the move from animal "altruism" to human (genuine) altruism. "Epigenetic rules giving us the sense of obligation have been put in place by selection, because of their adaptive value." (p. 223). It is also where the serious problems arise. Ruse notes that utilitarianism will say that prejudicing our actions in favor of our own is just prejudice: but he claims that utilitarianism is wrong about that. Darwinism seems to fit more with our moral intuitions than does utilitarianism, he says. Now if that is used as evidence in favor of Darwinism, it does not prove relevance of our biological origins to our moral theorising. At best it shows that the deliverances of Darwinism may agree with our moral theorising. So what? Take the other face of human kin selection, the "epigenetic" rules of nepotism. Say such behavior is biologically explicable. My moral intuitions say that nepotism is immoral. No more biological knowledge is likely to shift that belief. The new foundation



for moral philosophising seems to be baseless.

On the whole this is a disappointing book. Ruse writes very clearly and simply, a definite bonus in a field awash with rhetoric. He also disclaims any originality, so it is a trifle harsh to accuse him of repeating stale news. However, he himself has written often on these topics, and what there is that is new does not justify book-length treatment. The publisher should also have insisted that the references be spelled out in greater detail. Too often there are references which clearly refer to just a page or short section of a book but all we are given is the title of the book, without reference to the relevant pages. That is just sloppy.

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## Introduction of "Ethology of Law"

As part of the Fifth International Conference on Human Ethology in Tutzing July 27 to July 31 the newly developed field of "Ethology of Law" was introduced during a round table session. Participants in this presentation were: Professor Wolfgang Fikentscher (chair), Dr. Margaret Gruter, Dr. Hagen Hof, Professor Fred Kort, Professor Michael McGuire, Professor Reinhold Zippelius.

Previously, in a major address at the conference Professor Eibl-Eibesfeldt had emphasized that human ethology is the biology of human behavior. Ethology of Law builds on the recognition that law (implicitly or explicitly) can express human behavior. In other words, human behavior is expressed in the laws of individual societies and simultaneously law shapes and channels human behavior.

The presentations by Fikentscher and Hof addressed themselves to this twofold role of law. In this context the research direction which McGuire suggested at the conference is particularly pertinent. He pointed to the importance of examining policy proposals that are under consideration for legislation with respect to their recognition of evolutionary foundations of behavior. The approach illustrates the value of ethology for the solution of salient problems in human society.

Fikentscher and Hof emphasized that one of the main functions of law is "channeling" behavior. This function presupposes a close relationship between scholarly inquiries to the biological foundations of law and similar inquiries in the field of Political Science. Only recently Political Science has emerged as a separate discipline in the several thousand year tradition of "Legal Science." Until the Post-World-War II period, Political Science was integrated into the curriculum of the schools of law in most European universities. Today, Political Science still focuses on areas of public law, the structures and the institutions of the state, even if other fields of inquiry have attracted more special attention.

From an ethological perspective an association between legal scholarship and political science develops. Ethological explanations for legal behavior and political behavior were sought and developed independently and simultaneously. (Publications by Caldwell "Biopolitics, Science, Ethics, and Public Policy" in 1964, followed by Wiegele "Biopolitics: Search for a more Human Political Science" in 1979, were forerunners in Political Science; Gruter "The Relevance of Ethology for Law" 1976, opened the discussion in the legal field.)

Fred Kort represented the Political Science's interest in legal research in the field of human ethology. He emphasized that the evolutionary — neurobiological approach is important to develop comprehensive explanations of legal and political behavior. In a different context this point had been stressed earlier in the conference by Detlev Ploog, who emphasized the evolutionary basis of human behavior.

Referring to the concept of "Anthropology of Law" as a complementary field of research, Reinhold Zippelius emphasized the importance of focusing on "human" or "anthropos" in the search for ethological explanations in the field of law.

Margaret Gruter addressed the need for further research efforts in continuing dialogues between ethologists, neurobiologists and legal scholars. Such research is presently under way within the framework of the Gruter Institute for Law and Behavioral Research. A special multidisciplinary Study Group is dealing with affiliative behavior and its legal implications. The human need to affiliate with co-specifics and the problems arising from these needs manifest themselves in ways that often have legal implications. Research in areas such as genetics and physiology, may contribute to a better understanding of the affiliative relationship between parents and offspring.

Judges and legislators are faced with many important decisions in unknown territories due to new knowledge and as a consequence of recently developed technologies. For example just yesterday (a fraction of a second in our millions of years old evolutionary history) we heard of "surrogate mothers." What are the rights and what are the obligations of surrogate mothers and biological fathers? Can we still speak of a "natural" mother? What are the rights of children procreated by new technics? On what basis should the law decide? Can Ethology of Law be of help by bringing accepted biological data to the attention of those involved in legal decisions? These questions are being addressed.

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## From an Ethologist's Journal

by: William T. Bailey

"Current utility may not be equated with historical origin, or, when you demonstrate that something works well, you have not solved the problem of how, when or why it arose." Stephen J. Gould, *Natural History*, Nov. 1986, p. 24.



In re Trivers on parent-offspring compare with Goldstein, Freud, & Solnit, *Beyond the best interest of the child*. E. g., "Children, far from sharing the adults' concerns, are frequently put in direct conflict with them."

Problem with human infanticide: under harsh conditions humans (may) **kill** their female offspring. But we expect those with fewer resources to **produce** daughters.

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Late entry in the "Daring Ideas Contest," a poem:

### When you prove God exists, name Him after yourself.

If it has no mass,  
If it has no energy,  
If it cannot be calculated,  
It could never have evolved from a lower form.  
It does not exist and must not be believed, right?  
That is not to say what ever it "is" may be demonstrated,  
Demonstrated 1 day in the future to exist, 1 day may come  
and About the same time, 1 of us scientists will prove God  
exists, 2.

Who will see Him, Ist?  
God sitting above ghosts, Holy and not! there!  
Egos cherishing civil rights intact!  
The luck o' the Irish helping psychological state  
Self concepts to  
Trolls holding self-evident truths!

For the time being,  
Let us **disagree** among ourselves,  
Consensus does not substitute for  
Demonstration.  
When you **prove God** exists,  
Name Him after yourself.

**Bubba Nicholson**

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## Research Fellowship in Evolution and Psychiatry

The Evolution and Psychiatry Program in the University of Michigan Department of Psychiatry offers a Research Fellowship to begin July 1, 1987. This unique Program offers an opportunity to conduct research that applies recent advances in evolutionary theory to problems of human psychopathology. It is associated with the University of Michigan Evolution and Human Behavior Program, a University-wide interdisciplinary research group. The position offers clinical experience with anxiety disorders, but research can be in any area. Board eligible or

certified psychiatrists are welcome to apply. Please send a C.V. and a brief letter that outlines your background and special areas of interest to:

Randolph M. Nesse, M.D.  
Evolution and Psychiatry Program  
Department of Psychiatry, APH 5  
University of Michigan Medical School  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-0705

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## University of Michigan Evolution and Human Behavior Program

Seven faculty members from the Departments of Anthropology, Biology, Natural Resources, Psychology and Psychiatry proposed that the University sponsor a program in evolution and human behavior. The proposal was accepted and generously funded and we now are developing the program. Participants include Richard Alexander, Biology; David Buss, Personality Psychology; Warren Holmes, Psychobiological Psychology; Bobby Low, Natural Resources; Randolph Nesse, Psychiatry; Barbara Smuts, Psychology and Anthropology; and Richard Wrangham, Anthropology. The purpose of the Evolution and Human Behavior Program at the University of Michigan is to facilitate research and teaching and the application of evolutionary theory to human behavior. Current areas of work include the limits of adaptation, standards of evidence for testing of evolutionary hypothesis, reproductive strategies, factors that influence reproductive success, mate selection, the evolutionary functions of the emotions, the origins of capacities for psychopathology, kin recognition, origins and mechanisms of cooperation, intergroup conflict, and group formation. The group sponsors a weekly seminar in which beginning scholars discuss their work and members of the group address current research. Funds are available to support research on graduate training in a variety of departments. The program does not sponsor a separate degree program, but it coordinates programs of study based in several departments. Applications for graduate study or fellowships and requests for additional information should be directed to the Evolution and Human Behavior Program, the University of Michigan, 1072 Rackham Building, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

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## Current Literature

Material for this section should be sent to the outgoing editor, who will continue to compile it. A sentence or two summarizing submissions increases the value of this section to readers.

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## Books

- Calvin, William H., *The River That Flow Uphill: A Journey from the Big Bank to the Big Brain*. MacMillan, 1986. An exposition about evolution, with an emphasis on self-organizing principles, neurobiology and ethology, disguised as a river diary for a float trip through the bottom of the Grand Canyon.
- Gruter, M., & Masters, R. D. (Eds.) (1986). *Ostracism: A Social and Biological Phenomenon*. New York: Elsevier. (Chapters include an empirical account of murder among chimpanzees, processes underlying human politics, neurological and hormonal basis of dominance and bonding, the role of ostracism as a legal process in stateless primitive societies, and contemporary legal issues involving exclusion from sights or access to resources.)
- Olweus, D., Block, J. & Radke-Yarrow, M. (Eds.). (1986). *Development of Antisocial and Prosocial Behavior*. Academic Press.
- Savin-Williams, R. (1987). *Adolescence: An Ethological Perspective*, New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Trevathan, Wanda R. (1987). *Human Birth: An Evolutionary Perspective*. Hawthorne, N.Y.: Aldine de Gruyter. (Covers a broad range of issues including non-human species, the newborn, and mother-infant interactions.)
- Wind, J. & Reynolds, V. (Eds.) (1986). *Essays in Human Sociobiology*, Vol. 2, V.U.B. (Free University of Brussels).

## Articles, Chapters, Papers

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- Attili, G., Hold, B., & Schleidt, M. (1986). Relationships among peers in kindergarten: A cross-cultural perspective. In M. Taub & F. A. King (Eds.), *Current Perspectives in Primate Social Dynamics*. New York: Van Nostrand, pp. 13-30.
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## Bulletin Board

### Postdoctoral Traineeships in Ethology

The Graduate Program in Ethology at the University of Tennessee announces NIH traineeships starting September 1, 1987. Trainees are expected to establish a research program in human or nonhuman ethology focusing on communication (development, genetics, or physiology). A list of faculty, current research interests, and application guidelines are available upon request. Direct inquiries to: Ethology Selection Committee, Biology Consortium, WLS 303, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996. Application deadline: March 1, 1987

### Midwest Animal Behavior Conference

The 1987 Midwest Animal Behavior Conference will be held April 10-12 at Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois. Information and registration forms are available from MABC, Office of Continuing Education, Eastern Illinois U. Charleston, IL 61920, or by phoning 217-581-5114 and asking for Kaylin Johns.

### Human Ethology Abstracts VI is available

HEA VI is available from the Association for the Study of Man-Environment Relations (ASMER), P.O. Box

57, Orangeburg, New York 10962 USA. The single issue is \$6. The complete series of all HE Abstracts and Bibliographies (10 in all) is available for \$22.50. Prices are prepaid and postpaid.

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### XX International Ethological Conference

Madison, WI, August 7-16, 1987. Plenary topics: history of animal behavior in North America; social influences on reproduction; cultural transmission of behavior; communication; group social structure; parent-offspring relationships; behavior genetics at the population level; applications of ethology to animal welfare. Please send inquiries to the Host, Charles Snowdon, Dept. of Psychology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706.

### 1987 ISHE Meeting

The official 1987 meeting of the Society will be with the Animal Behavior Society, from 21 to 26 June at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts. We have requested time on the program for a business meeting and social hour. Registration information is available from Lee Driekamer, Biology Department, Williams College, Williamstown, MA 01276.

### Membership Renewals

If the date on your mailing label is not 1987 or later, it is time to renew. In order to keep the cost of membership and the Newsletter low, separate renewal notices are not mailed.

Please send renewals to Bob Adams, the outgoing editor until changes in the renewal address are announced in the March issue of the Newsletter. It is likely that both European and U.S. addresses will be available in the future.

### Constitution Passes

The Society's Constitution has won adoption by the membership without a dissenting vote.



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**INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR HUMAN ETHOLOGY**  
**Membership and Newsletter**

The ISHE was formed with the goal of promoting ethological perspectives on the study of human behavior. It encourages empirical research that addresses the questions of individual development, environmental, ecological and social processes which elicit and support certain behavior patterns, the function and significance of behavior, and comparative and evolutionary problems. The Society has elected officers and a number of committees, publishes a quarterly Newsletter, collates an annual selection of human ethology abstracts, and meets annually, either independently or in conjunction with the Animal Behavior Society, the International Primatological Society or another major society.

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