

# Human Ethology Newsletter

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VOLUME 6, ISSUE 3

ISSN 0739-2036

SEPTEMBER 1991

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*Published by the International Society for Human Ethology*

## FROM THE EDITOR

Most of you have received the Membership Directory prepared by Frans Plooiij. It contains much information about each member and, I'm sure you'll agree, is very well done and will be highly useful. If you do not receive your copy within a month and yet are a paid-up member, please let me know and I will send you a copy.

Regrettably but inevitably, there are delays in updating the membership list. If you pay your dues but the next newsletter still asks for them, please forgive us. If, however, the following newsletter still asks for payment, feel free to write me a nasty note.

Concerning the content of the newsletter, the Memoirs have been interrupted pending receipt of new ones. Suggestions for contributors are welcome.

Current Literature now includes most or all of the contents of *Human Nature*, as well as more primatology citations. Owing to space limitations (a newsletter of more than 12 pages costs more to mail), abstracts will seldom be included. However, readers are encouraged to send the references to their own or others' works for inclusion. Especially welcome are citations from non-North American journals, which are not covered by *Current Contents*, the publication from which Bob Adams gleans most of the entries. Please include an English translation of the title.

When contributing any material to the newsletter, please provide complete citations for any published works to which you refer. Also, please send a copy of the disk, if you used one, as well as the manuscript.

Extra copies of the June issue are available on request for promoting the Society. Either send the

names and addresses of people to receive sample copies, or else tell me how many copies to send to you for distribution. These extra copies resulted from a printer's error, namely the mangling of some of the photos demonstrating laser printing of videotape.

Eibl and I attended the International Ethological Conference in Kyoto, along with a few other ISHE members. There were several sessions on human ethology, about 20 presentations in all. About 1000 ethologists attended; one-third were Japanese.

Coinciding with that conference, in late August, was the convention of the Human Behavior and Evolution Society at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Martin Daly of McMaster is the new president of EHBS.

## SOCIETY NEWS

### CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The terms of the Secretary and the Membership Chair are up this year. Please submit the names of nominees to Glenn Weisfeld by November 15. The December issue will contain the ballot.

## FORUM

### Thoughts on the State of Human Ethology and Sociobiology

By: Wade C. Mackey, 9713 Saigon Drive, El Paso,  
TX 79925, USA.

Most American social scientists are, even yet, unwilling or reluctant to give much credence to this "human instincts" business. *Tabula rasa*, as a tacit paradigm, undergirds most of their discussions. I am not too sure why our ethological perspective is ignored or distorted and then summarily dismissed, but it is. See, for example, Kammeyer (1990), which avers that "the existence of universal, inborn, human characteristics is extremely dubious" (p. 67) since "no one has actually isolated a gene" (p. 69) for a behavior such as the capacity for love. Komblum (1987) blithely defines sociobiology as "the hypothesis that all human behavior is determined by genetic factors" (p. 688).

Most of the good folks who contribute to the HEN are true believers. But, sad upon sad, we are a definite non-majority of the (U.S.) social science types. Moreover, as I read the American (pop) culture, the *tabula rasa* orientation is the effective premise from whence behavior is interpreted. Television "talk shows" plus the public school system(s) seem to give no real credence to "human nature".

At base, I am curious about a number of (maybe) interlocking points.

1. Paul Ekman, I'll aver, has the best actual evidence that *tabula rasa* is a deficient paradigm. Without Ekman's facial expressions data, we, noble true believers that we are, really don't have an empirical data base to support our elegant theories. To quell the *tabula rasa*-ites, we are in a clear and present need of cross-cultural data: a necessary, if not sufficient, requirement. Well, Ekman has same. But now note!!! Crawford et al. (1987), Chagnon and Irons (1979), and Barkow (1989) do not mention Ekman. The, arguably, best -- perhaps only -- data base which supports our entire paradigm is not mentioned in three major surveys of our discipline.

Is the reason that Ekman is avoided somehow interwoven with the sociologists', anthropologists' and psychologists' tendency to avoid or ignore or even trivialize us?

2. As a corollary, the current outcry about the latest drop in the SAT (Standardized Achievement Test) scores has not, and I bet will not, mention either Jenck's work on "cognitive abilities" (genes and parents control the bulk of the variance; schools play with about 5-10% of the variance) or Hanushek's work: increased funding has a negligible impact on school achievement.

3. Similarly, Patterson's work on child-rearing (raising kids generates heavy duty psychological stress on Mom--and Dad too, if he gets involved) is ignored in the literature when it comes both to parenting and to shrinking birthrates.

I am not clever enough to find the common denominator of these three observations, but it seems that if people find an idea unpleasant, they don't refute it, they ignore it...rather successfully. We, human ethologists, may be people first and anything else a distant second.

Part of van den Berghe's theses in "Why most sociologists don't (and won't) think evolutionarily" (19 ) was that we ethologist-types bear a message nobody much wants to hear. Does Ekman's omission, and again he gives us our only large caliber artillery, reflect a reality that we don't want to hear us?

So, any criticism of us, our methods or our paradigm is of interest to me. My intuition tells me that some Rubicon is being approached, but we tap dance around it rather than (even attempting to) cross it. Over and beyond the cheap shots from the Stephen J. Goulds et al., there must be serious, thoughtful responses to our paradigm which are justifiable and amenable. Or are we, if we go beyond antinomial analogues and intimation, purveyors of an unpleasant message?

Editor's Note: Do readers agree that too little progress is being made by evolutionists? Any ideas on why this is so, if it is? On the impact of Ekman's work? On practical steps to take in correcting the manifold misrepresentations of our approach in the social science literature?

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Kinsey, *Sex and Fraud*, edited by J.A. Reisman, E. W. Eichel, J.H. Court and J.G. Muir. Huntington House, POB 53788, Lafayette, LA 70505 USA, 1990.

Reviewed by Brian A. Gladue  
82115 Snowhill Ct., Westerville, OH 43081, USA.

I was astounded by the book review of *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud* (March 1991). I wasn't sure whether the reviewer (George Kocan) was reviewing a book by Reisman et al. or merely stating his own sociopolitical views about sexuality, and his apparent dislike for Kinsey and sex researchers in general. This is extremely unfortunate, since his review runs the risk of painting the book as a fanatical anti-sex research polemic. And it may well be such a book (Reisman, a Department of Justice contractee, has been in the thick of sex education and research controversies before). But at the very least, from statements made by Kocan in his review, it would appear that he is not only unfamiliar with research conducted by Kinsey and colleagues, but is probably uninformed about the scientific study of human sexual behavior in general. Kocan's essay reminds me of the early years of the anti-sociobiology movement, wherein many writers were extraordinarily critical of ethology and sociobiology applied to humans, yet had not read the books nor familiarized themselves with the field or the scientists about which they had so much to say.

Among other things, Kinsey did consider potential evolutionary psychological principles associated with human behavior, and suggested many hypotheses for future testing and evaluation. Further, Kinsey NEVER concluded that homosexual men made up 10% of the male population, nor have his conclusions become gospel: sexologists have been testing Kinsey's hypotheses and findings for

over thirty years now. Some of his findings have been substantiated, others have been rejected. The ongoing empirical testing of ideas regarding human sexuality has followed the scientific method, not "wishful thinking" about tribal behavior. Blaming inaccurate AIDS case estimates from the 1980s on Kinsey's homosexuality data is incredible. And Kocan's claim that Kinsey is somehow responsible after his death for resources being misallocated to AIDS treatment and research would be even more ludicrous, were it not for the tragic fact that the pandemic spread of AIDS worldwide (case rate now in the tens of millions) will be staggering in years to come and is clearly not a "homosexual" disease. Kocan seems to be taking the position of some 19th century American social theorists and politicians who wished the populace to remain ignorant of reproduction and sexuality "for their own good".

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*The Folk Biology of the Tobelo People: A Study in Folk Classification*, by Paul Michael Taylor. Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology, Number 34, 1990, 187 pp. Smithsonian Institution Press, 470 L'Enfant Plaza, Washington, DC, USA (Free while supplies last).

Reviewed by Ben G. Blount  
Dept. of Anthropology, University of Georgia,  
Athens, GA 30602, USA.

The Tobelo are a West Papuan-speaking population of approximately 25,000 individuals. They live on Halmahera Island, Maluku, Indonesia, located approximately half-way between the Phillipines and New Guinea, and they have a subsistence economy based on local staple crops (manioc, bananas and sago), non-staple cultivated or tended plant foods, forest hunting (wild pig and deer), forest gathering and fishing. The Tobelo have intensive local familiarity with the coasts and jungles of the region and of the biotic forms found there. They also have a rich system of folk biological classification, based on cultural presumptions that any plant or animal has, or once had, a correct name and that the names were given at some time in the past by the ancestral elders.

Taylor spent three field seasons among the Tobelo for a total of approximately 40 months, and he completed one of the most comprehensive surveys ever taken of the folk biological knowledge of a human culture. The inventory of floral forms (Appendix 1) included 1,517 lexical terms, and the inventory of faunal forms (Appendix 2) included 825 total terms. The entries for each of the terms included not only the type of referent but etymological information, nomenclatural

information, and the equivalent Latin name. Appendix 4 prides a cross-classification from an alphabetical list of the Latin family and species names.

The thoroughness of Taylor's work is also reflected in the content of the five chapters. He provides a succinct and clear review of major research in folk biological classification, including discussion of the major methodological issues, such as how one identifies a lexeme (essentially the "word" dictionary entry), and how inclusion and exclusion operate to produce a classificatory system. He also demonstrates how the cultural presumptions and linguistic characteristics of the Tobelo language constrain the classifications (e.g., exocentric and endocentric phrasal constructions as names or nominal modifiers).

Since this review is not *per se* about the taxonomy and nomenclature of the Tobelo floral, details of those can be omitted. Of interest, rather, is the question of what, if anything, the study tells us about the ethology of ethnobiology. Basic questions are how do the major classificatory properties of the Tobelo system compare with other folk systems, i.e., do there appear to be common human properties to classification of biotic systems and, given common or widespread features, is there a common human basis for those, e.g., perception of form and shape?

To begin to try to answer those questions, it is first necessary to note that Taylor's study was not a study of the distribution of knowledge among Tobelo individuals. His interest was not in what individual Tobelo know but rather in what the pooling of knowledge produced as a full cultural inventory. Moreover, the study did not address the relationship between humans and their local biological species, or the cultural uses of plants and animals. Cultural usage was not an irrelevant issue, but was taken into account only to the extent that it informed the Tobelo conceptualization of biotic forms and their classification and nomenclature.

Like other studies, especially the extensive research by Berlin, Breedlove, and Raven on Tzeltal Mayan ethnobiology, Taylor found that the Tobelo classification was not only hierarchical but involved numerous levels. He described the Tobelo classification of biotic forms as a system of hierarchically related folk classes having eleven levels. Those included a basic level, six levels above it and four levels below it.

Two points seem relevant here to ethological considerations. One is that folk biological

classifications, like other aspects of human language such as grammar, are fundamentally hierarchical. Moreover, there appears to be a preference for ideal taxonomy. In the Tobelo case, only a very few classes of biotic forms were exceptions to the inclusion/exclusion properties of a taxonomy, and newly observed classes tended to be placed within the taxonomic framework rather than as adjunct or ancillary to it.

The second point is that the levels ascending and descending from the basic level are similar to those of other biotic classifications. The ascending levels contain several covert categories, i.e., a class that is not lexicalized. The Tobelo, like several other folk systems, have no named higher-level "plant" class or named class of "living beings". The "plant" class, however, contains second-level terms for 'tree,' 'vine,' and 'herbaceous weed,' and there are more than 80 basic classes, those being superordinate to the more than 200 terminal, or lowest-level, subclasses. Although differing in detail from other ethnobiological systems, the Tobelo taxonomy provides another example of a human capacity for large, deep, extensive, and systematic classificatory systems.

The Tobelo also provide rich evidence for "basic" level classes and terminology. Basic level terms, across cultures, are generally for generic taxa, and they are the ones used most frequently in natural conversation and to refer to plant and animal types. In English, basic terms would be banana, tomato, dog, horse, etc. The basic level is, as Taylor observes, characteristically wide, shallow, and distinctive, and it is probably universal in ethnobiological classification. Given these observations, several questions can be raised. Are biological systems different from other domains of vocabulary in terms of their linguistic characteristics? Why are basic level terms more numerous than those at other levels, and are there particular perceptual and semantic features that characterize the lexicalized classes at that level?

Answers to those questions are largely speculative at present, but some comments can be made. Firstly, biological systems are not unique in terms of lexical structure. Names, proper and common, are used referentially to "pick out" specific individuals in a given environment and, in each usage, names also designate the class of "objects" to which the individual belongs. In other words, the human capacity for lexical use, both referentially and conceptually, is based on the type or kind of phenomenon, i.e., a class, and biotic forms are no more or less of a class in that regard than are other natural phenomena.

The question of why basic level terms are numerous is more opaque. The abundance may reflect conversational constraints on informational content. Dialogue requires that individuals observe quantity maxims, providing information at levels consistent with the need to know within the context of particular conversations. The lexeme is likely a response, perhaps an adaptation, to that need (e.g., if I want a banana, a request for fruit contains too little information and a request for a yellow, slightly curved, partially cylindrical, thick-skinned, "peelable" object to eat, sometimes consumed with cereal, is far too explicit). Lexemes may be intermediate "compromises" with the functional and practical requirements of human sociolinguistic interaction.

The third question, Is there a common perceptual and semantic base to folk biotic lexemes, is of particular interest ethologically. To what extent do humans classify biotic phenomena on the same basis? Not enough is known to give a satisfactory answer, but what is clear is that form alone is insufficient to characterize classifications. Functional requirements may be used, together with, or instead of, features of form. Cultural presumptions (e.g., metaphoric extensions) unique to particular societies may also underlie classes and contrast sets. Semantic criteria, as one would thus expect, do not give a clear picture of common bases other than in very general terms (tall [trees] versus not-tall [herbaceous weeds]). Taylor even presents an argument that in the Tobelo case, semantic criteria are not as useful as morphosyntactic criteria in accounting for lexemic names. The more general point is that the analysis of semantic domains is not separable from an analysis of the society's language and thus ultimately from cultural considerations.

Taylor's work adds significantly to the small but growing data-base of ethnobiological information from which better ethological questions and answers can be expected to come.

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**Sex Differences: Modern Biology and the Unisex Fallacy**, by Yves Christen, translated by Nicholas Davidson. London: Transaction Publishers, 1991, 141 pp. (\$29.95 hdbk). (Originally published in French as *Egalite des sexes*, Paris: Editions du Rochers, 1987.)

Reviewed by Peter LaFrenière  
 Université de Montréal, Ecole de Psycho-Education,  
 C.P. 6128, surcursale A, Montréal, Québec H3C 3J7  
 Canada.

To the extent that contemporary feminism is rooted in the denial of biological realities, as was Simone de Beauvoir's celebrated postulate "one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman", it is destined to play only the antithetical role in the dialectical process of understanding and coming to terms with human nature, female as well as male. The synthesizing role will be played out by writers like Christen who, forsaking the temptations of ideology and propaganda, carry forward the discussion on a broad front, integrating new knowledge as it is uncovered, revising past points of view as needed.

In this recent translation by Nicholas Davidson from the French original *Egalité des sexes*, the reader is asked to step out of the stultifying *zeitgeist* of political correctness and pursue a wide ranging discussion about the nature of the sexes as currently explored in disciplines such as endocrinology, neurophysiology, sexology, psychology, genetics, evolutionary theory and sociobiology. Christen writes in a style designed to appeal to a general audience, and little technical expertise is required to follow the flow of ideas. And flow he does over longstanding debates concerning male and female reproductive strategies, the role of women in politics and science, sex differences in brain structure, sex differentiated forms of pathology, even the function of the female orgasm. While many of the elements of Christen's synthesis will be familiar to human ethologists, it is nevertheless an important work, for which there is no English counterpart with which I am familiar.

Christen's book reflects French sensibilities and philosophical orientations, in a manner that is quite distinct from North American scholarship. For instance, compared with Daly and Wilson's (1978) landmark *Sex, Evolution and Behavior*, Christen's style is not as rigorously academic, but is more engaging and personal, a wide-ranging philosophical discourse liberally punctuated with scientific references. His review of feminist writers places Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* at the heart of this discourse, though he views de Beauvoir's position as one which enjoys current political support, but has lost, forever, scientific support: "After years of being promoted by intellectuals hostile to the political powers, this philosophy increasingly finds itself with political power for its only support" (p. 2).

Christen advocates a different kind of feminism, one which is not synonymous with egalitarianism. In the second chapter, he characterizes the careers of three early feminists, Clémence Royer in France, Alice Lee in Britain and Margaret Sanger in the

United States, as validating women, neither minimizing the existence of sex differences, nor attempting to remake woman in the near image of man. In contrast, commenting on latter day feminists, Christen cites Arianna Stassinopoulos (1973) who has written, "in the final analysis the majority of feminists cannot decide whether they want to become men or destroy them" (p. 136). Christen continues, "In reality, it appears that they want to do both at once. This is not only contradictory, but self-destructive. To devalidate the partner one seeks to emulate is to devalidate oneself" (p. 117). By advocating what he calls feminitude (a term which is surely fated to obscurity), Christen proposes that while men and women may be equal, they are by no means equivalent, and much of the book is devoted to understanding how they differ and why. That such a proposition will appear quite tame to some, while controversial to others, is truly a sign of our times.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### LEAKEY PRIZE RECIPIENT ANNOUNCED

The L.S.B. Leakey Foundation for Research Related to Human Origins, Behavior and Survival has announced that Dr. Phillip V. Tobias, Professor of Anatomy at the University of Witwatersrand Medical School in Johannesburg, South Africa, will be the first recipient of the L.S.B. Leakey Prize for Multidisciplinary Research in Ape and Human Evolution. The Prize rewards intellectual achievement and expresses appreciation for research performed with courage and perseverance in the fields of human evolution. It honors a scientist who transcends the boundaries of a single discipline and whose work links widely differing branches of science.

Dr. Tobias is widely known for both field and theoretical studies of hominoid fossils (particularly *Australopithecus boisei* and *Homo habilis*),

cytogenetics, anthropology, brain evolution and paleoneurobiology. He has a deep interest in communicating science to the general public and has also played a leading role in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

The Leakey Prize consists of \$25,000 and a commemorative medallion and scroll. It will be presented to Dr. Tobias at a ceremony on the occasion of the Leakey Foundation's Annual Meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts on October 12, 1991, in conjunction with a symposium in his honor co-sponsored by the Peabody Museum of Harvard University and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

### HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND EVOLUTION SOCIETY ABSTRACT BOOKS

Abstract books for the August 1991 meeting of the Human Behavior and Evolution Society are available for U.S. \$5 from Martin Daly or Margo Wilson, Dept. of Psychology, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario L8S 4K1, Canada. Include full address.

### XXV INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF PSYCHOLOGY

Brussels, 19-24 July 1992. Abstracts due 30 Nov. Contact Paul Eelen, Secretary, Scientific Program Committee, Tiensestraat 102, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium. (Immediately precedes ISHE meeting in Amsterdam.)

### 1992 ABS MEETING

The Animal Behavior Society will hold its 29th annual meeting at Queen's University, Kingston, Canada from 13-18 June 1992. Address inquiries to: L. Ratcliffe or K. Wynne-Edwards, Dept. of Biology, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, K7L 3N6, Canada.

### 1991 ASZ MEETING

The American Society of Zoologists will hold its annual meeting in Atlanta, GA from 27-30 December, 1991. A symposium entitled "Basic Animal Behavior Research in Zoos: A Link with the Wild" is planned. Scheduled speakers include Joan Lockard, Jill Mellen, Deborah Fortman, Jeanne Altmann, Cathy Cox, Leslie Saul, Donald Lindburg, and Cheryl Asa. Oral contributed papers in animal behavior are scheduled for Friday, Dec. 27, Saturday, Dec. 28, and Sunday, Dec. 29. Posters in animal behavior will be shown Sunday morning, Dec. 29. For further information, contact Mary Adams Wiley, American

Society of Zoologists, 104 Sirius Circle, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360 or Cheryl Asa, St. Louis Zoo, Forest Park, St. Louis, MO 63110.

### SYMPOSIUM ON THE BEHAVIOURAL ECOLOGY OF LEARNING

The XVIth Annual Meeting of the Société québécoise pour l'étude biologique du comportement (Quebec Society for the Biological Study of Behaviour) will be held November 1-3 at Concordia University in Montréal, Canada. In addition to contributed papers and posters, the programme will include a special symposium on behavioural ecology of learning with presentations by Dr. A. Kacelnik (University of Oxford), Dr. A. Kamil (University of Massachusetts), Dr. S. Shettleworth (University of Toronto) and Dr. D. Stevens (University of Nebraska). Contributed papers and posters need not address this theme and may be presented in French or English. Send abstracts or requests for further information to Luc-Alain Giraldeau, Dept. of Biology, Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West, Montréal, Québec, Canada H3G 1M8.

### POSITION DESIRED

Boris A. Dashevsky, Ph.D., Researcher/Teacher with expertise and in-depth studies of Comparative Psychology including Animal and Children Cognitive Behavior, Animal Behavior in Captivity, is looking for a position. His address: 1849 Langdon Farm Rd., Apt. 3, Cincinnati, OH 45237.

### CURRENT LITERATURE

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