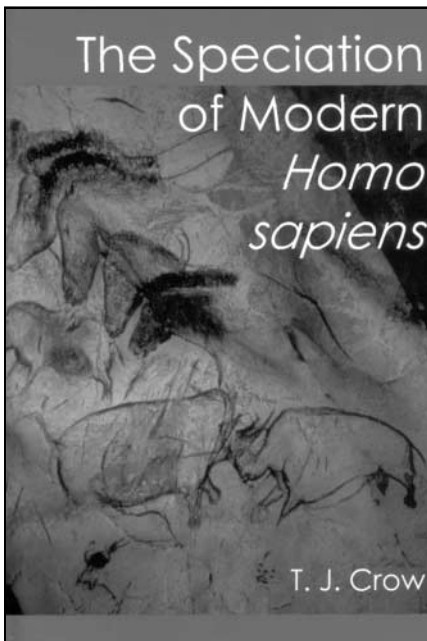


Book reviews

EDITED BY SIDNEY CROWN, FEMI OYEBODE and ROSALIND RAMSAY

The Speciation of Modern *Homo sapiens*

Edited by Tim J. Crow. Oxford: Oxford University Press (for the British Academy). 2002. 265 pp. £29.50 (hb). ISBN 0 197 26246 5



For more than a decade, Tim Crow has contributed to the scientific literature thought-provoking and sometimes provocative ideas on the origins of cerebral asymmetry, language and psychosis. Now, in this edited volume, he has assembled contributions from palaeontology, linguistics and genetics in addressing the question of whether modern humans evolved gradually or quite suddenly. In making a case for the latter, Crow is continuing a long tradition of sometimes heated debate over the exact nature of our descent. Staunch Darwinists, faithful to the principle of gradualist change by natural selection, have, for more than a century, come up against sceptics (from Alfred Russel Wallace – the co-discoverer of the theory – to Stephen Jay Gould), who cite the discontinuities in the fossil and archaeological record, as well as human-specific language, as evidence for saltational or sudden change.

The cornerstones of Crow's hypothesis are: that modern human creativity and reason reflect a recent and sudden departure from the evolutionary trajectory of our hominid ancestors; that syntactic, symbolic language and directional handedness constitute 'our oldest title-deeds as rational beings' (Muller, 1996); and that a mutation on the X and Y chromosomes prior to the migration of our ancestors out of Africa 100 000 years ago was subject to sexual selection and represented the speciation event. These three principles are well-reflected in this volume, with authoritative commentaries on the earliest human fossils and symbolic artefacts, on the differences between animal vocalisations and 'singular' human language and the uniqueness of directional asymmetry, and finally on the sex-linked protocadherin genes as possible candidates for a speciation event.

The arguments Crow has collated are well constructed and heavily referenced and, to the reader unfamiliar with this terrain, almost convincing. However, despite a consensus that the emergence of *Homo sapiens* involved something quite drastic, there are hints of some doubters in the camp. For example, Chris Stringer, of the Natural History Museum, explains the difficulties in defining 'modernity' and how 'modern morphology' and 'modern behaviour' are fluid concepts, whose origins are not necessarily coincident. And in a chapter on laterality, Michael Corballis supports the notion of a laterality gene, but argues that it is located solely on the X chromosome.

In an era in which complex cognitive processes are understood in polygenic terms, it is difficult to imagine that a single gene is responsible for cerebral asymmetry and language. Tim Crow is well accustomed to the sometimes lonely role of pioneer and is not deterred by sceptics. His contribution to modern psychiatry is legend, and for this reason alone, *The Speciation of Modern Homo sapiens* deserves a read. It is different and it is not specifically about psychosis, but it is a challenging and thought-provoking discussion on what it

means to be human – and that is of relevance to us all.

Muller, F. M. (1996) Lectures on Mr Darwin's philosophy of language in *Fraser's Magazine* volumes 7 and 8, 1873. In *The Origin of Language* (ed. R. Harris), pp. 147–233. Bristol: Thoemmes Press.

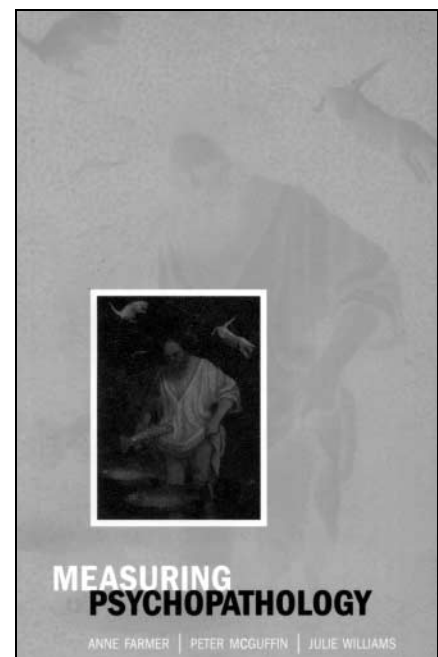
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Measuring Psychopathology

By Anne Farmer, Peter McGuffin & Julie Williams. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2002. 230 pp. £27.50 (pb). ISBN 0 19 263080 6

Measuring Psychopathology is a much more informative and intelligent, and also risky, title for this interesting publication than 'the use of measuring instruments in psychiatry' would have been, and it boldly begs the question: can psychopathology be measured? The authors make a good case, which carries the reader most of the way, for a positive answer. It is thorough, practical and rewards careful reading.

Having defined what psychopathology is, the need for its classification and measurement, and discussed the concept of disease, there is an account of symptoms and signs in psychiatry, covering all areas of the mental state examination. There is



also a useful glimpse at developmental psychopathology.

The chapter on classifications and operational definitions in psychiatry is clear, and there are comments on validity, reliability and the selection of appropriate measuring scales. An excellent and enlightening chapter traces a secure path through the quagmire of diagnostic interviews. This is followed by a brief account of poly-diagnostic approaches, computerised methods and best-estimate diagnoses which gives the reader some help in knowing what these techniques can provide.

Rating scales and questionnaires are covered with clarity and accurate descriptions. In particular, the range of use in different clinical circumstances such as primary care or medically ill subjects is helpful, although I would have welcomed a little more dogmatism from the authors here – which scales are good to use and

which are rubbish? The account of measurements in different subject groups, such as children and adolescents, those with learning disabilities, after childbirth, for cognitive decline in the elderly and those manifesting alcohol and other substance misuse, is informative.

There is a clear chapter on measurement of personality and personality disorder. This is a controversial and highly topical subject, and it benefits from the authors' objective, non-combative style. They combine psychological and psychiatric approaches (necessarily different) admirably.

The concluding chapter is on psychopathology in the 21st century. This stimulated me into pondering whether the time has come for general practitioners to give a certificate 'off work owing to stress', only after administering a standardised instrument. Should the psychiatrist giving

or recommending cognitive-behavioural therapy for depressive symptoms routinely carry out a quantified assessment first? Is there greater scope for measurement in medico-legal reports to demonstrate the presence of psychiatric disorder? I am doubtful whether these questions should yet receive a positive answer. The interpretation of results will remain crucial.

Measuring Psychopathology will enhance the practice of the up-to-date psychiatrist. When the book goes to reprint, which it certainly deserves, I hope that the large number of irritating typographical errors will be eliminated. Apart from this, anankastic criticism, the book is highly recommended.

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