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XIV Sociology of the Sciences Seminar

Evolution in Human and Social Sciences

Dubrovnik, May 18-24, 2009

Course Description

"Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution", famous quip and text by Theodosius Dobzhansky from 1973 still holds true. But does it hold for human and social sciences? Until recently, and even today, many social scientists do not think so. Evolution for such scientists serves at best as an analogy, a model for certain branches of knowledge, or at worst as an implausible metaphor by which we should not be carried away all too easily. Does emergence of culture somehow transcend our biological nature? Does it render evolution superfluous, unimportant in human affairs?

Unlike during the earlier times when Darwin's *Origin of Species* was indexed by Vatican, or during the times when the idea of Darwinism in human affairs carried only racist or supremacist overtones, since the times of Dobzhansky, we have witnessed a surge of new theories which use Darwinism in explanations of cultural matters, or as a proper description of human condition. Population genetics and Wilson's Sociobiology was only a start. (In philosophy, evolutionary epistemology was an early flirt with evolutionary theory.) Hamilton's kin selection provided a model of human altruism based on genetic relatedness. Dawkins's *Selfish Gene* was a seminal boost for this kind of thinking. Trivers, with his reciprocity theory, or Axelrod's *Evolution of Cooperation* have shown that this kind of thinking was not only a *meme*, or an extended phenotype of the theory with a proximate validity in some other scientific universe, but rather that it has a potential to provide new solutions to ancient and unsolved Darwinian problems proper (for instance, how cooperation can evolve in spite of individual selfishness and harshness of natural selection.) But these theories also belong to a prehistory (or "classics") of evolutionary thought.

More recently, we witnessed another proliferation of models designed to explain new findings in human and social sciences. Evolutionary psychology, for one, has extended the range of findings and theoretical suppositions in research areas such as mating behaviour, reciprocity, conflict behaviour and it led to new insights. Instead of the Standard Social Science Model, Barkow, Cosmides and Tooby suggested a new model of integration of social and natural sciences, s.c. Integrated Causal Model. It has integrated not only biological, demographic or sociological data, but rather (via game theory) extended its significance to economic behaviour, and cultural anthropology in general. A broad range of "cultural" phenomena have been explained by this model: criminality (Daly & Wilson), rape (Thorndike), food acquiring and sharing, division of labor, aggressiveness, runaway effect, handicaps (Zahavi), gossip (Barkow), to name a few. But its insistence on the adaptation of human mind to Pleistocene environment (which purportedly explain maladapted human traits today), along with its modularity of mind supposition, was not universally accepted. And so, other branches or related knowledge and other explanations of facts emerged. Human behavioural ecology, dual inheritance theory are presently the most vigorous disciplines. What are the human and economic costs of various sexual exchange regimes? Why is the cost-benefit ratio of food acquisition and fertility? In some other disciplines, rather old discussions of human biases and errors have been revived, and given evolutionary (and economic) explanations. A study of human heuristics is also included in the paradigm. Error management theory explains why we systematically err in certain occasions, but how evolution might favor such systematic errors. Memetics, with its claim that the modes of cultural transmission mimic evolutionary principles, is rather vigorous too. Evolutionary approach has recently also been introduced into studies of literature.

This is just a sketch of abundance of research done under the umbrella of evolutionary theory in social sciences. So, can we paraphrase Dobzhansky and say that nothing makes sense in human sciences except in the light of evolution?

The purpose of our seminar this year is twofold. First, it is to provide a forum for exchanges within the common paradigm, and extensions of currently dominating evolutionary approaches. We warmly welcome such contributions. Second, it is to review attacks on the "reductionist" approaches towards human and social sciences. When and why is it wrong to insist on the common ground, and on an

integrated model of science? Have the dangers of biological "misuse" of human nature been removed once and for all? What are the reasons for a still widespread reluctance to use such an integrated model among human and social scientists? What kinds of phenomena were not, or cannot, be incorporated into such a unitary vision of science?

We invite all scholars interested in such topics to make contributions to our seminar. We have set neither an ideological nor a scientific agenda. In short, we warmly welcome you all.

Course Directors

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IUC, conference fees, travelling and accommodation

The Inter University Centre in Dubrovnik, Frana Bulića 1, established in 1971, is a nongovernmental educational institution gathering scholars from all over the world. Presently it hosts 50 conferences and seminars a year. Its aim is to promote cooperation between universities on an international scale, mainly by offering series of courses on a postgraduate level. It is presently supported by more than 240 universities that are members of the IUC. An extensive list of its activities, addresses, mails etc. is available at <http://www.iuc.hr>. The governing bodies of the IUC are available at http://www.iuc.hr/news_details.php?vijest=41.

Travelling. There are several flights from Zagreb to Dubrovnik a day. Flight arrangements via Zagreb to Dubrovnik used to be cheaper than direct flights. Buses from the airport in Dubrovnik drive every half-hour and stop in the vicinity of the IUC. Due to the distance, we do not recommend international bus travel to Dubrovnik.

Costs. The respective universities and scholars should cover all costs. Scholars may try to apply for scholarships and tuitions at their respective universities and institutions. Membership of their universities in the IUC might be of some help. Several national agencies and international institutions, like Open Society Institute, Budapest, Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, Heinrich Boell Stiftung, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Zagreb, Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), and Oesterreichischer Akademischer Austauschdienst have been very helpful in the past.

Fees. According to the guidelines for courses issued by the IUC, "The IUC requires the payment of a small course fee, currently \$50, to be paid by all course participants... For each course a general fee of \$500 should be paid. Course directors are responsible for it." **Due to our long-standing relationship with the Directorate, we have so far been relieved of these dues.**

Accommodation. Participants may be accommodated in several hotels or in private accommodation. Due to the constant raise in prices for bed & breakfast in Dubrovnik Hotels in recent years, a number of participants have informed themselves at <http://www.gulliver.hr> (tel. +385 20 313300) for the private accommodation arrangements. Other useful addresses and phone numbers for accommodation in Dubrovnik:

- turistički informativni centar -Grad, Od sigurate 1	(020) 323 587
- turistički informativni centar -Pile, Branitelja Dubrovnika 7	(020) 427 591
- - ured	(020) 426 253
- turistički informativni centar -Gruž, Obala Stjepana Radića 29	(020) 417 983
- turistički informativni centar-Lapad, Šetalište kralja Zvonimira 25	(020) 437 460
- turistički informativni centar-Kolodvor, Obala pape Ivana Pavla II 44A	(020) 417 851

Among the hotels, the most frequently used one by our participants was Hotel Lero (tel. +385 20 341333); local bus service is used to and from the hotel to IUC. For other hotels see IUC site, phones above, or other agencies at the Internet.

Zagreb, Vienna, Tuebingen January 2008

Please distribute this circular to everybody who might be interested in the seminar.