

Natural Selection Selects Only Behaviors That Increase Security

Everything we do, all of our normal behavior, is done to increase our security. Presented in the essay “An Evolutionary Theory of Everything,” is the claim that a security paradigm has been able to unlock “fresh insights that revamp present ideas concerning matters as profound and as diverse as human behavior, emotional feelings, belief, attachment theory, moral philosophy, altruism, authority, placebos, culture, and belief in gods.” The new understandings proposed in that essay, which like this essay can be found on my website www.mdjaffe.com, are based on the hypothesis that behaviors will be naturally selected if they increase security. This security hypothesis explaining natural selection differs from the popular survivalist hypothesis explaining natural selection. The reasoning supporting a survivalist hypothesis is explained in “An Evolutionary Theory of Everything” as follows:

Natural selection is based on reproductive success. Genetic traits are naturally selected when they increase in a population because of reproductive success leading to more offspring than would occur without the traits. According to life history theory natural selection can result from any mechanism that increases reproductive success. There are a number of life history characteristics that can change reproductive success. Chief among these is that of increasing the probability of living long enough to reproduce after attaining the age of sexual maturity. If our hominid ancestors lived long enough to reproduce throughout the span of their reproductive years, with everything else being equal, their opportunity for reproductive success would on average be greater than if they had died young and had no or limited opportunity to reproduce. This scenario made it likely that the traits that contribute to prolonging the lives of our

hominid ancestors and of their progeny to and beyond the age of sexual maturity would be naturally selected.

This survivalist hypothesis asserts that genetic traits that are naturally selected are those that prolong survival (increase life expectancy). But it does not explain how prolonging survival is accomplished. A survivalist hypothesis is untenable because prolonging survival is the result of a trait and is not the trait itself. What is needed is a trait that provides a mechanism, such as a behavior, or a structure that enables a behavior, to increase life expectancy. The needed behavior that has been proposed in the essay “An Evolutionary Theory of Everything” is that of taking security (safety) measures to counteract threats to survival.

What needs to be explained more clearly in that essay is that security-seeking behavior is the only known mechanism that is able to counteract threats to survival. No other mechanism for prolonging life expectancy has been discovered. The one way that life expectancy has been and is prolonged is by employing security measures preventatively in order to counteract the threats before the threats kill the subject. The marked increase in life expectancy during the last century, from 47 years to 75 years for white males, was in large measure brought about by improved public health and medical care, which utilized security measures taken against threats to survival. (Therapeutic measures taken against diseases are security measures that increase life expectancy.) That security-seeking behavior is the only recognizable mechanism that is able to increase life expectancy supports the hypothesis that our behavioral traits that natural selection has selected and that we have inherited are those that increase security. As a result, all normal human behavior has security as its goal, a concept that is the very foundation of psychology.