

# Evolutionary Psychology: Unpacking the Nature vs. Nurture War

Authored by  
**mohammad looti**

June 16, 2026

## RECOMMENDED CITATION

mohammad looti (2026). *Evolutionary Psychology: Unpacking the Nature vs. Nurture War*.  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES. Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=38026>

A basically evolutionary understanding of the foundations of human psychology has been part of psychology since Freud. The relative contribution of biological-hereditary and cultural-environmental factors to human social behavior is the topic of the classic nature versus nurture debate. Early understandings in differences in human behavior as being based in biological differences resulted in ideologies of eugenics and social darwinism. Because of this historical context the development of sociobiology as an attempt to explain social behavior in humans in terms of adaptive history was controversial, even though the principles of adaptationist explanations of behavior were uncontroversial when applied to animal sociality. Similarly, from its inception evolutionary psychology has received a substantial amount of criticism, often taking the form of heated discussions between evolutionary psychologists and some of their critics. Many of the critiques levelled against evolutionary psychology as a whole, apply correctly to some branches of the discipline, but not to others.

Part of the controversy has consisted in each side accusing the other of holding or supporting extreme political viewpoints: Evolutionary psychology has often been accused of supporting right wing politics, whereas critics have been accused of being motivated by Marxist view points. Critics view evolutionary psychology as a form of genetic reductionism and determinism, a common critique being that evolutionary psychology does not address the complexity of individual development and experience and fails to explain the influence of genes on behavior in individual cases.

A frequent critique of the discipline is that the hypotheses of evolutionary psychology are difficult or impossible to adequately test, thus questioning its status as an actual scientific discipline, for example because many current traits probably evolved to serve different functions than they do now. While evolutionary psychology hypotheses are difficult to test, evolutionary psychologists assert that is not impossible. Part of the critique of the scientific base of evolutionary psychology includes a critique of the concept of the Ancestral Adaptive Environment. Some critics have argued that Evolutionary Perspective assumes that human evolution occurred in a uniform environment, and suggest that we know so little about the environment, or probably multiple environments, in which homo sapiens evolved that explaining specific traits as an adaptation to that environment becomes highly speculative.

Another frequent critique against the narrowly defined discipline of evolutionary psychology comes even from other psychologists who work within evolutionary frameworks. This is a critique of the computational and specifically the modular theory of mind, which according to several groups of critics is not well supported, or necessary in order to explain psychological traits as having adapted. Proponents of other models of the mind argue that the computational theory of mind does not fit with our biological reality any more than does a mind shaped entirely by the environment. Even within evolutionary psychology there is discussion about whether to conceptualize the level of modularity of the mind, either as a few generalist modules or as many highly specific modules.

Also the basic theoretical assumptions of the discipline are challenged by its critics. Some theoreticians argue that evolutionary psychology leans on misconceptions of biological and evolutionary theory which affects its claims to scientific validity.

ARABPSYCHOLOGY.COM