

Psychogenic Therapy: An Evolutionary Approach to Meme-Genes Conflicts

João Carlos Holland de Barcellos*

São Paulo, Brazil

Abstract

This article presents Psychogenic Therapy, or the psychogenist approach, as a theoretical proposal for psychological intervention aimed at reducing conflicts between genetically based instinctive predispositions and culturally acquired belief systems. Such conflicts, termed meme-gene conflicts, arise when internalized norms and values oppose behavioral tendencies evolutionarily shaped to maximize genetic preservation, both of the individual and of relatives who share part of their genetic material, in accordance with the concept of inclusive fitness. The proposed therapeutic approach consists of identifying and reevaluating internalized memetic systems that produce persistent psychological distress, seeking greater consonance between biological predispositions and contemporary sociocultural demands. The model suggests integration between evolutionary psychology and psychotherapeutic practice, offering a theoretical framework for understanding modern psychological conflicts.

Keywords: Psychotherapy, Evolutionary psychology, Culture, Memes, Social adaptation, Inclusive fitness

Introduction

Human psychological well-being results from the interaction between inherited biological factors and culturally acquired experiences throughout life. Systems of beliefs, moral norms, and social values are often internalized during childhood and adolescence, periods in which critical reasoning capacities are still developing.

This process may lead individuals to adopt cultural patterns that later conflict with evolutionarily shaped instinctive behavioural predispositions. Such incompatibilities may generate persistent psychological distress, manifesting as internal tensions, anxiety, or identity conflicts.

The present work proposes a conceptual model termed Psychogenic Therapy, intended to understand and mitigate conflicts arising from the interaction between biological inheritance and cultural conditioning.

Evolutionary Foundations of Human Behavior

Evolutionary psychology proposes that many aspects of human behavior derive from adaptations shaped throughout the evolutionary history of the species.¹ These adaptations correspond to cognitive and emotional predispositions influencing preferences, motivations, and behavioral responses.

Genetic preservation does not depend solely on individual reproduction. Inclusive fitness theory² demonstrates that genes may also propagate through the reproductive success of genetically related individuals. Consequently, behavioral tendencies such as parental care, familial cooperation, and formation of social bonds possess deep evolutionary roots.

Wilson³ and Lumsden and Wilson⁴ suggest that such predispositions operate through epigenetic rules that guide the interaction between genetic inheritance and cultural learning.

However, modern cultural contexts may introduce normative systems that come into tension with these predispositions, generating internal psychological conflicts.

Meme-Genes Conflicts

The concept of meme, introduced by Dawkins,⁵ refers to culturally transmitted units such as ideas, values, and behavioral patterns. When internalized memetic systems conflict with genetically grounded instinctive predispositions, psychological tensions may arise, here termed meme-gene conflicts.

Such conflicts may occur when cultural norms repress relevant instinctive impulses or when natural impulses clash with internalized moral values, generating guilt, anxiety, or psychological distress.

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*Corresponding author: João Carlos Holland de Barcellos, DTSibi, Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil

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Additionally, certain cultural environments may discourage behaviors linked to family cooperation, formation of affective bonds, or desired reproduction, intensifying tensions between social expectations and evolutionary predispositions.

Human adaptation therefore requires ongoing negotiation between cultural demands and biological tendencies.

Proposal of Psychogenic Therapy

Psychogenic Therapy proposes that part of contemporary psychological suffering results from incompatibilities between instinctive predispositions and internalized cultural systems. The therapeutic objective consists of identifying such conflicts and assisting individuals in reorganizing priorities and beliefs in ways more compatible with their psychological and social needs.

This approach does not imply biological determinism but recognizes that evolutionary predispositions influence fundamental human motivations, such as social belonging, formation of emotional bonds, and pursuit of social recognition.⁶

The proposed therapeutic process involves:

- Identifying internalized beliefs and values that generate distress
- Evaluating conflicts between cultural demands and personal predispositions
- Reorganizing individual goals and expectations
- Reducing internal tensions associated with conflicts between culture and instinct

Motivational Imbalances

Another source of psychological suffering may arise when certain adaptive goals are pursued disproportionately at the expense of other relevant dimensions of human life.

Examples include exclusive dedication to professional career advancement, excessive pursuit of economic status, extreme focus on physical appearance, or parenthood without adequate support conditions. Such imbalances may generate personal frustration and social conflicts.

The psychogenist approach seeks to identify these imbalances and promote greater harmony among different dimensions of individual life.

Role of the Therapist

Within this framework, the therapist acts as a facilitator in identifying internal conflicts between cultural values and personal predispositions, assisting in the reorganization of priorities and expectations.

The objective is to promote greater consonance between social demands, individual dispositions, and personal life projects, thereby reducing persistent internal tensions.

Conclusion

Psychogenic Therapy constitutes a theoretical proposal integrating concepts from evolutionary psychology and cultural psychology to understand psychological conflicts resulting from the interaction between biological inheritance and cultural conditioning.

Although conceptual in nature, the model suggests possibilities for future empirical investigation and potential clinical applications, contributing to interdisciplinary discussions on mental health and social adaptation in contemporary societies.

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Conflicts of Interest

Regarding the publication of this article, the author declares that he has no conflicts of interest.

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