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Obituary, John Philippe Rushton, 1943–2012

John Philippe (Phil) Rushton was born in 1943 in Bournemouth, England, where his father was a building contractor. He graduated in psychology at Birkbeck College, University of London, in 1970, and he obtained his Ph.D. at the London School of Economics in 1973 for work on the development of altruism in children. He emigrated to Canada and held positions at the universities of York (1974–76), and Toronto (1976–77), and at the University of Western Ontario, where he remained for the rest of his life.

For the next ten or so years Phil continued to work on the development of altruism in children. He carried out a number of experiments and observations and showed that altruism, defined as the propensity to help others, is present in three to five year old children in their play. He found that children's altruism is influenced by the example of their parents who behave altruistically, for example by giving to others. He viewed altruism in the context of social learning theory, such that children learn to be altruistic through the adoption of their parents and teachers as role models. He published his conclusions in his first book *Altruism, Socialisation and Society* (Rushton, 1980).

Shortly after this publication, Phil became dissatisfied with the social learning theory of altruism and began to formulate the first of his three innovative theories. The first of these was the genetic similarity theory that was based on a sociobiological model that stated that people typically behave altruistically only to their own genetic in-group, while being indifferent or hostile to genetically different out-groups (Rushton, 1989). He noted that there are consistent individual differences and that some children do not develop altruistic behaviour so readily as others. He suspected that there are likely genetic differences in the propensity to develop altruistic behaviour. He investigated this in 1983 during a sabbatical year spent with Hans Eysenck in London, where he used the London twin sample to estimate the heritability of altruism, and also of the related personality traits of nurturance, empathy, aggressiveness and assertiveness. He found that all these traits have heritabilities of between 50 and 60%. Furthermore, he found that the environmental factors affecting the development of altruism were not parental role models or socialisation techniques, but influences unique to each twin or what are technically termed non-shared environment.

In the early 1980s Phil began to formulate the second and most important of his three innovative theories. This was his theory of race differences in *r–K* life history, first published as a paper (Rushton, 1985) and then in his book *Race, Evolution and Behavior* (Rushton, 1995). The theory was drawn from biology, in which species are categorized on a continuum running from *r* strategists to *K* strategists; *r* strategists have large numbers of offspring and invest relatively little in them, while *K* strategists have fewer offspring and invest heavily in them by feeding and protecting them during infancy and until they are old enough to look after themselves. Fish, amphibians and reptiles are *r* strategists with large numbers of offspring and minimum investment, while mammals are *K* strategists with fewer offspring and greater investment. The *K* strategy is particularly strongly evolved in monkeys, apes and humans. Species that are *K* strategists have a syndrome of characteristics of which the most important are larger brain size, higher intelligence, longer gestation, and a slower rate of maturation in infancy and childhood.

Phil applied the *r–K* life history theory to the three major races of *Homo sapiens*: Mongoloids (Northeast Asians), Caucasoids (Europeans, South Asians and North Africans), and Negroids (sub-Saharan Africans). His theory is that Mongoloids are the most *K* evolved and Negroids the least *K* evolved, while Caucasoids fall intermediate between the two although closer to Mongoloids. He supported his theory by documenting that the three races differ on over 60 coevolved sets of morphological, physiological, developmental, psychological and behavioural traits including brain size, intelligence, sexual behaviour, length of gestation, rate of maturation in infancy and longevity. His theoretical explanation for these differences was that when people migrated out of Africa into Europe and Northeast Asia they encountered colder environments that exerted selection for more *K* evolved life history strategies.

Phil's *r–K* life history theory was the most important of his three innovative theories and the one for which he will be most remembered. It was a paradigm shift comparable to that of Copernicus, Galileo and Charles Darwin in which the ideologically accepted theory of the time was challenged and replaced. The huge range of different kinds of data explained in this theory makes it unique in psychology and comparable

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to Darwin's *Origin of Species* for its integration of so many different phenomena into a unifying theoretical framework.

From 1995 Phil worked largely on intelligence. He published papers documenting the low IQs obtained by black university students in South Africa and by Roma in Serbia, the 4 IQ point advantage of men over women, and the absence of any decline in the IQ difference between blacks and whites in the United States that were first recorded in 1918.

In 2008 Phil took up the third of his three innovative theories. This was the problem of the dimensional structure of personality. Hitherto, there was a consensus that personality consisted of several independent traits. Phil worked on the theory that there is a general factor of personality similar to *g* in intelligence. In the next three years he published a dozen or so papers demonstrating that this is the case (Rushton & Irwing, 2011).

In 2012, the journal *Personality and Individual Differences* devoted a whole issue in honour of Phil's many contributions in which eleven of his friends contributed papers on his work on a wide range of issues. The first of these is Helmuth Nyborg's *In conversation with J. Philippe Rushton*, in which Phil responds to questions about his life and work. This is followed by Art Jensen (*Rushton's contribution to the study of mental ability*), Jan te Nijenhuis (*The Flynn effect, group differences, and g loadings*), Heiner Rindermann (*African cognitive ability: Research, results, divergences and recommendations*), Donald Templer (*Rushton: The great theoretician and his contribution to personality*), Yoon-Mi Hur (*J.P. Rushton's contribution to the study of altruism*), Aurelio Jose Figueredo (*The measurement of human life history strategy*), Richard Lynn (*An examination of Rushton's theory of differences in penis length and circumference and r–K life history theory in 113 populations*), Helmuth Nyborg (*Migratory selection for inversely related covariant T-, and IQ-Nexus traits: Testing the IQ/T-Geo-Climatic-Origin theory by the General Trait Covariance model*), Gerhard Meisenberg and Michael Woodley (*Global behavioral variation: A test of differential-K*), and Michael Woodley (*A Jensen effect on dysgenic fertility: An analysis involving the National Longitudinal Study of Youth*).

In terms of his own behaviour, Phil showed altruism in his treatment of fellow researchers, with whom he worked very productively. His intellect was very sharp, able to take in detailed arguments and the broad sweep of theory: an unusual combination. In terms of personality he was sociable, tolerant, cooperative, and steadfast. In other words: a gentleman.

Phil had exactly the right combination of characteristics required for innovative work, consisting of high intelligence, a sceptical attitude towards the consensus, the creative ability and motivation to formulate an alternative, and the integrity to publish what he concluded was the truth despite the attacks that would inevitably follow. In these respects he resembled Thomas Malthus, whose memorial in Bath Abbey records that he "was one of the best men and truest philosophers of any age or country raised by native dignity of mind above the misrepresentations of the ignorant and the neglect of the great. He lived a life devoted to the pursuit and communication of truth supported by a calm but firm conviction of the usefulness of his labours, content with the approbation of the wise and good. His writings will be a lasting monument of the extent and correctness of his understanding. The spotless integrity of his principles, the equity and candour of his nature, his sweetness of temper, urbanity of manners, tenderness of heart, and his benevolence are the recollections of his family and friends."

In mid-2012 Phil's health deteriorated from complications arising from Addison's disease. It was from these that he died on 2 October 2012. He is survived by his son Stephen, daughter Katherine Vanderzwet, grand-daughters Jasmine and Aundreia, and great-grand-daughter Paige.

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