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FROM SURVIVAL TO STEREOTYPES: THE EVOLUTIONARY BASIS OF IMPLICIT BIAS

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Aim. The aim of the study is to evaluate the evolutionary origins of implicit bias by contrasting theories that posit bias as a specific evolutionary adaptation with theories that view bias as a by-product of general cognitive processes.

Methods. A literature review was conducted using PubMed, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar, supplemented by PhilPapers and the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Search included combinations of keywords related to evolutionary theory, cognitive architecture, implicit bias, and social cognition.

Results. Implicit biases are automatic associations that happen without conscious awareness. They influence how people see the world and how they behave, and they often lead to discrimination. Because biases are common and hard to change, some researchers think they may have evolved as part of human psychology. There are two main ways to explain the origins of implicit biases. The first, domain-specific approaches, suggest that these biases are evolved adaptations. In the past, they may have helped people deal with recurring problems such as avoiding disease, detecting danger, or protecting resources. The second, domain-general perspective, argues that implicit biases are by-products of basic mental processes like learning from experience, grouping things into categories, and making predictions. These processes can lead to biased thinking, especially in environments where social biases already exist. Adaptationists are often criticized for assuming purpose without enough direct evidence, while domain-general explanations may not fully account for why some biases are so strong and appear across cultures.

Conclusions. This review introduces domain-specific and domain-general approaches to implicit bias. It suggests that a plausible explanation may lie in integrative frameworks from contemporary cognitive science, such as predictive processing and allostasis, which view bias as emerging from general learning systems shaped by both evolutionary pressures and environmental influences.

Keywords. Implicit bias, evolutionary psychology, domain-specificity, domain-general, predictive processing.