

PROF. TAMÁS DAVID-BARRETT

09.09. 14:00-15:30

***Natural
history of
science:
group-think
in its natural
habitat***

The human is an odd ape. We are a clever, community-loving primate that, as if in a science fiction movie, somehow ended up with giant neurone computers on top of our necks. Even more bizarrely, we regularly pass on patterns from one head to the next using pressure waves in our planet's atmosphere. Wow. And often, these patterns are represented in a book or on a screen, so that neurone patterns are passed on between long-dead conspecifics and us. No whale, bee, or chimp can do this. There is no other being that comes near.

Our amazingness does not end there. As far as we know, and let's stop here for a second and admire that we can know this, we are the only beings in the universe that thinks that there is such a thing as the universe. We even have a shared mental model about it. Your universe and my universe are likely to be shockingly similar to each other. How is this possible? How did this incredible, verging on the miraculous happen?

This talk will tell the natural history of thinking about the world, the evolutionary story of knowing something on the topic of what is out there. In the ultimate navel-gazing exercise, we will tell what science knows about scientific thinking, not as a philosophical abstraction, but rather a behavioural phenomenon. Glorified group-think in lab coats, but one that still somehow works.

PTE-BTK

Vargha-Damján
Conference Hall



Portrait of Tamas by Nusrat Durrani. Photograph

Prof. Tamás David-Barrett

SHORT BIO

Tamas David-Barrett is an evolutionary behavioural scientist, whose research asks what traits allow humans to live in large and culturally complex societies. He is especially interested in the architecture of social networks, and the evolutionary origins of social network building traits. Tamas's structural micro-foundation theory offers a new understanding of human societies, and brings biological and social science models under a shared umbrella. Currently, Tamás is based in Oxford where he teaches at Trinity College. He was educated in London, Cambridge, Jerusalem, and Budapest. Before becoming an academic, he ran a research consultancy and worked all around the planet. He recently finished his book, *Matriocracy: The Science of Gender Rules*. He is the host of the State of Species annual lecture, and is currently working on a new book: *How to Think Scientifically*, which tells the natural history of social and scientific truths.