

Adam Cohen  
Hi Leda,

I'm so sorry to hear about the passing of John. In baseball, they talk about the "inner circle" of the Hall of Fame, the best among the Hall of Famers. If cognitive science had a Hall of Fame, John would be inner circle.

It's hard to talk about his influence on my thinking without talking about you as well, but I'll just say that when I first read "The Psychological Foundations of Culture" and "Beyond Intuition and Instinct Blindness" in grad school, it totally restructured my thinking about mind and behavior. The only other time that's happened to me, before or since, was when I was at Rutgers and was first introduced to the idea that thinking could be formalized as information processing. Both times I felt like I was emerging from Plato's Cave and seeing a deeper level and richer version of reality:

thoughts and behavior <----- computational mechanisms (Rutgers) <----- evolved function  
(UCSB)

I can't be the only cognitive scientist who came from a non-evolutionary background and was unsatisfied with the informal methods that people used to generate hypotheses. John (and his frequent writing partner) provided the answer for me, first through articles and then later, seeing the fruits of a principled method in action week-to-week, in lab group.

So few people locate the parts of idea space that yield radically new and important thoughts. It felt like John was always mining those areas, as if he had the master map to the best intellectual treasures. But to describe it that way would be to cheat him of the fact that he made his way around by drawing on a first-rate intellect and seemingly bottomless store of knowledge.

Although I didn't know John the way other grad students who came through CEP did, I can attest that his impact was no less.

Hope you're doing OK, and I will keep you and Nike in my thoughts.

Best,  
Adam