

# 2025 CONFERENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

## Keynote: Lauren Errington and Antone Martinho-Truswell

### **Distancing: The evolutionary advantage of flight and how much is too much in human relationships?**

Dr Bowen described the use of emotional distance in relationships as the most universal mechanism adopted to manage the degree of intensity in a relationship. Separating ourselves either by internally distancing or physical distancing, or both, is one approach almost all of us use to some degree or another as a way of trying to preserve as much self-identity and autonomy as possible in relationships. There are hundreds of different combinations of the internal mechanisms and physical distance movements in relationships which are employed as the emotional system uses this mechanism to regulate itself.

In this joint keynote session, Lauren Errington will share the platform with Dr Antone Martinho-Truswell, a behavioural ecologist from the University of Sydney, to consider the idea of flight in natural species and how this can help us think about the natural adaptation of distance in human relationships.

Lauren will share observations from her engagement with Bowen Theory and her clinical practice about the way distance is used as a regulatory mechanism in the functioning of relationships, asking the question – when might this help or hinder relationship processes?

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How did an unremarkable group of primates from one corner of Africa evolve the extraordinary cognitive tools that allowed it to envelope the planet, bending nature and other species to its will? Any why hasn't any other species come close?

Dr Antone Martinho-Truswell will explore how evolutionary pressures and uncommon traits interlock to create virtuous cyclers that push species to extreme outcomes – including humans' unparalleled intelligence and birds' extraordinary lifespans. No trait evolves in isolation, so along the way, learn why birds are unusually resistant to viruses, why humans have absurdly long feet, and why animal intelligence broke all the rules of evolution when it first emerged.



### Speaker Bio:

Lauren Errington is the Executive Director of the Family Systems Institute and a Mental Health Social Worker and Clinical Family Therapist and Supervisor at the Family Systems Practice. She has over 15 years of experience in clinical practice in mental health and counselling settings, in Sydney, Canberra and Scotland. Lauren has published several articles in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* and most recently has been a co-editor for a special issue of this journal on Bowen Family Systems Theory.

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### Speaker Bio:

Antone Martinho-Truswell is a scientist, commentator, and author interested in how evolutionary biology and culture interact. He is a member of the Sydney Policy Lab and research affiliate of the School of Life and Environmental Sciences at the University of Sydney. He was previously Fellow in Biology at Magdalen College, Oxford. His debut book, *The Parrot in the Mirror: how evolving to be like birds made us human* (OUP, 2022) explored the evolutionary history of humanity through a comparative lens, and his upcoming book *Darwin's Swindlers: on the trail of the rare species defying extinction* (Profile Books, forthcoming),

chronicles the beneficial effects of insularity on the evolution of unique and extraordinary life forms. He is a regular contributor to *Aeon*, *Psyche*, and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and explores the cultural side of biological topics on his substack, [The Village Green](#).