

Professor James Henderson Scott - the biophilosopher of craniofacial biology

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In 1960 while I was a postgraduate student in Boston, James Scott of Queen's University Belfast visited the U.S.A. and, in addition to giving a lecture at the annual meeting of the American Association of Orthodontists in Washington D.C., he visited the Forsyth Dental Infirmary in Boston. It was an exciting experience to attend the lecture of the charismatic Dr. Scott, a challenging and, at times, a sarcastic teacher.

His lecture and the range of the following discussion was for me the initiation of a lasting admiration and an inspiration as a novice of craniofacial research. Moreover, that very occasion in the New World atmosphere was a source of pride for a visiting European student.

Rather than being an experimentalist, James Scott could be characterised as a prominent representative of comparative zoologists. More explicitly, he examined and observed the craniofacial structures of various animals and then, by deduction, formulated hypotheses on the mechanisms generating, controlling and directing craniofacial morphogenesis.

The treatises of James Scott were and are still very readable and informative and have an admirably lucid philosophical touch. His research has been widely cited and discussed in writings on mechanisms of craniofacial skeletal growth. In the main they have proven to be beyond dispute.

In the history and among the various frameworks constituting the principles of craniofacial development and growth, the hypotheses of Dr. James Scott will have a permanent and respected position.