



INTRODUCTION

The Anthropological Quest

Anthropology is the study of humankind in terms of scientific inquiry and logical presentation. It strives for a comprehensive and coherent view of our own species within dynamic nature, organic evolution, and socio-cultural development. The discipline consists of five major, interrelated areas: physical/biological anthropology, archaeology, cultural/social anthropology, linguistics, and applied anthropology. The anthropological quest aims for a better understanding of and proper appreciation for the evolutionary history, sociocultural diversity, and biological unity of humankind. Anthropologists see the human being as a dynamic and complex product of both inherited genetic information and learned social behavior within a cultural milieu; symbolic language as articulate speech distinguishes our species from the great apes.

Genes, fossils, artifacts, monuments, languages, and societies and their cultures are the subject matter of anthropology. The holistic approach is both intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary. It incorporates evidence from geology, paleontology, psychology, and history, among other special sciences. Anthropologists strive to present generalizations about the origin and evolution of our own species from remote

hominid ancestors, as well as ideas about the emergence of social organizations and cultural adaptations. As a result of both research over scores of decades and the convergence of facts and concepts, anthropologists now offer a clearer picture of humankind's natural history and global dominance.

With the human being as its focus, the discipline of anthropology mediates between the natural and social sciences while incorporating the humanities. Its acceptance and use of discoveries in biology, for example, the DNA molecule, and its attention to relevant ideas in the history of philosophy, such as the concepts presented in the writings of Marx and Nietzsche, make anthropology a unique field of study and a rich source for the relevant application of facts,



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concepts, methods, theories, and perspectives. Forensic anthropology, medical anthropology, business anthropology, and advocacy anthropology have emerged as significant areas of applied anthropology in the changing modern human world.

Growing fossil evidence reveals that our remote beginnings started in a very diversified group of hominid species that had, in turn, emerged from earlier fossil apelike forms living in Africa. Over several millions of years, some hominid forms evolved while others became extinct. Clearly, hominid evolution has been an extraordinarily long and incredibly complex process, with only our own species having survived human evolution to the present time. How dearly would one love to have seen our earliest hominid ancestors of the deep, prehistoric past as they struggled to adapt and survive in those precarious environments of the open woodlands and grassy savannahs! Indeed, it is intriguing to speculate on both the overt and covert behavior of these primitive hominids: They gazed at the same stars, experienced drastic habitat changes, and were no doubt perplexed by birth and disease and death.

As with most species, past civilizations—including their languages—have emerged, evolved, flourished, and vanished. The anthropologist is challenged to reconstruct both the material cultures of these societies and the social behaviors of their inhabitants.

Anthropologists also compare and contrast the human animal with the other primates, especially the four great apes: orangutans, gorillas, chimpanzees, and bonobos. One consequence of this research is that we have found our own species to differ from these pongids more in degree than in kind. With fossil evidence that apes, monkeys, and prosimians are our evolutionary kin, human beings may be closer to the four great apes than Huxley, Haeckel, or even Darwin himself could have imagined in the 19th century.

Ongoing advances in science and technology enhance the anthropological quest, particularly in terms of more precise dating techniques, DNA analyses, and computers for cross-cultural studies and linguistic research.

As a youngster growing up on a farm in New York, I developed a lasting love for movies. Films such as *King Kong* (1933), *Mighty Joe Young* (1949), *The Ten Commandments* (1956), *The Thief of Baghdad* (1940), *Quo Vadis* (1951), and *Unknown Island* (1948) introduced me to apes, prehistoric life forms, and ancient

civilizations. Moving images on the silver screen left indelible impressions on my curious imagination.

In secondary school, Charles Darwin's scientific theory of organic evolution was added to my interest in natural history. Then, as a college student at SUNY Geneseo, I took my first courses in anthropology and evolution. On my own, I also discovered the history of philosophy and was fascinated with the ideas of Aristotle and Nietzsche. Since childhood, I have had a philosophical orientation that, as a college student, found delight in reading about the great thinkers in Western culture.

During my 5 years at Geneseo, one highlight was meeting Margaret Mead, complete with her large walking stick, which she no doubt brought with her from some Pacific island. At that time, neither she nor I could have imagined that her inspiring auditorium presentation would contribute, four decades later, to my editing this encyclopedia. Over the years, I have also met Donald C. Johanson, Richard E. F. Leakey, and Jeffrey H. Schwartz, as well as numerous scientists and philosophers. Each of them has played a role in the materialization of this work.

As a graduate student in anthropology at SUNY University at Buffalo, I did research in human craniometry and enjoyed reading the cultural theorists, particularly the writings of Leslie A. White. The framework of evolution gave meaning and purpose to my many interests, which ranged from astronomy to theology. Again on my own, I discovered that several significant thinkers had been influenced by the writings of Charles Darwin, including the early anthropologists.

During my graduate studies in philosophy, distinguished professor Marvin Farber (1901–1980) understood, encouraged, and appreciated my desire to integrate anthropology, philosophy, and evolutionary thought. Under his guidance, I wrote a dissertation on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. This study prepared me for critically analyzing interpretations of evolution in the world literature. I am forever grateful for Farber's insights, help and wisdom.

My interests in anthropology and related fields have taken me to numerous zoos, museums, institutes, universities, and historic sites from Australia to Russia. My own anthropological quest has been fascinating and enriching: I have walked among the ancient ruins of Egypt, Greece, and Rome; visited Stonehenge, Teotihuacan, and Machu Picchu; mingled with the Inuits of Kotzebue, Maasai of Kenya,

and Aborigines of the Karunga Rain Forest of Australia. In 2003, my discovery of the first fossil bone of an *Allosaurus* at the Wyoming Dinosaur Center was a particularly exciting experience for me.

Twice I visited the Galapagos Islands to experience—to some degree—the wonderment that Darwin must have felt when he first walked among the strange animals that had adapted to this unique archipelago that is seemingly detached from, but actually demonstrates the consequences of, organic evolution.

The year 1959 had been a pivotal point in the history of anthropology. In July, prehistoric archaeologist Mary D. Leakey had discovered the “Zinj” skull in the lower rock strata of Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania, central East Africa. It was the first hominid specimen to be found in this part of the world. *Zinjanthropus boisei* was 1.75 million years old. Even though this species represented a side branch in hominid evolution that became extinct, this remarkable specimen inspired other anthropologists to search for hominid fossils and paleolithic artifacts in central East Africa. Since 1959, scientists and researchers have made other incredible discoveries that shed significant light on the origin, evolution, and diversity of early hominids in Africa.

In 1985, I was fortunate to participate in field research at Koobi Fora in Kenya, Africa. I quickly developed a great respect for the paleoanthropologists and prehistoric archaeologists who spend months or years searching for those fossils and artifacts that offer more and more insights on hominid biocultural evolution. It’s not surprising that some anthropologists are very protective of their rare discoveries.

Another major advance in the middle of the 20th century was the beginning of close-range, long-term studies of the wild apes in their natural habitats. Primate behavior research benefited greatly from such rigorous studies, supplemented by comparative primate genetics research. I have met the three major primatologists of our time: Dian Fossey, Jane Goodall, and Biruté Mary F. Galdikas. Their pioneering field work has made substantial contributions to biological anthropology and pongid psychology.

Planet earth is both a graveyard and museum. The more anthropologists search, the more they find. Surely, there are other fossil hominids to be unearthed and other artifacts to be discovered. Even unknown species of primates and lost civilizations may yet be found in dense jungles.

The value of anthropology lies not only in the indispensable knowledge and sweeping perspective

that it gives to science and philosophy but also in the tolerance that it instills in and the relevance that it has for our converging global species.

Although anthropologists are still interested in the biocultural evolution of humankind, some have turned their attention to solving problems in the modern world. Future anthropologists will likely study human adaptations to living in outer space and perhaps on other worlds.

As I was, millions of people have been introduced to evolution through the 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Its engaging story of transition from ape through human to star child contains ideas and symbols from the writings of Darwin, Freud, and Nietzsche, among others. Stanley Kubrick and Sir Arthur C. Clarke presented both the cosmic perspective and an evolutionary framework in a stunning visual manner that remains compelling and plausible. It is now crucial that our species has the will to evolve, as well as the desire to learn from the wisdom of evolution.

From time to time, I have fantasized how it would be to direct epic films such as *Quo Vadis*. As the editor of the *Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, I come as close as I ever will to directing such a motion picture. This “film” is the human story of our epic journey that has been over five million years in the making. The authors are its actors, and the entries are scene-like contributions that fill these five colorful volumes. Numerous individuals at SAGE have worked on the editing, production, and marketing aspects of this project. I now hope that these pages will result in many readers having a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the biological and cultural aspects of our species. And as films introduced me to anthropology, perhaps this encyclopedia will inspire readers to become a part of the future anthropological quest.

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