

3.1 Human Beings & Being Human: What it is to be human?

- **Kluckhohn:** "Anthropology holds up a great mirror to man and lets him look at himself in his infinite variety."
- ❑ Anthropology helps to answer questions such as:
 - What are the commonalities among humans worldwide? (
 - What are the variations among humans worldwide
 - Why do these commonalties and variations exist in the first place? (In other words why aren't all human cultures the same?)
 - How does humanity change through time? (Is it still evolving, and if so, how?)
 - Where has Humanity been, and what can that show us about where

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❑ The answers rely on key anthropological concepts of:

- 1. Comparative approach (cultural relativism)** and
- 2. Evolution.**

- ❑ The comparative approach, which is also known as cultural relativism, entails that cultures shouldn't be compared one another for the sake of saying one is better than the other.
- ❑ Instead cultures should be compared in order to understand how and why they differ and share commonalties each other.
- ❑ **The comparative approach or cultural relativism** encourages us not to make moral judgments about different kinds of humanity, and it examines cultures on their own and from the perspective of their unique history and origin.

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- ❑ **Evolution:** By studying evolution, the change of species through time, anthropologists tend to treat humanity as one of the biological species in the animal kingdom.
- ❑ Evolutionism allows us to address the aforementioned fundamental questions regarding our distant origin, current stage of growth, forms of adaptation, and predict future direction of development
- ❑ In this respect, **human biology** and **culture** have evolved over millions of years and they will continue to evolve together. Human biology affects human culture; and similarly, human culture affects human biology.
- ❑ One example of this is that the brain size of humans has become larger over millions of years of evolution, and this is considered biological change. Whereas, the change in human brain has brought cultural changes in terms of increased intelligence, language and even the

3.1.1. The bio-cultural animal?

- ❑ Humanity evolves both as a result of biological factors and cultural factors. For this reason, anthropologists call it **bio-cultural evolution**.
- ❑ Although humans survive by using both their biology and cultural information, all other animals survive mainly through their biology and by relying on instinct rather than such cultural information.
- ❑ Paleo-anthropologists are concerned with understanding how cultural, non cultural, and bio-cultural evolutionary factors shaped humanity through time.
- ❑ From the anthropological perspective, **humanity** is the most common term we to use refer to human beings.
- ❑ Humanity stands for the human species, a group of life forms with the following characteristics:
 - Bipedalism (walking on two legs);
 - Relatively small teeth for primates of our size;
 - Relatively large brains for primates of our size;
 - Using modern language to communicate ideas; and
 - Using complex sets of ideas called culture to survive.

3.2 Origin of the Modern Human Species: Homo sapiens

3.2.1 Cosmology Vs. Evolutionism and Paleo-anthropology

❑ Theories concerning the evolution of life date back to the ancient Greeks. But it was only during the 19th century that the first comprehensive theories of evolution were developed.

❑ They were made possible through discoveries in many different areas. The acceptance of evolutionary theory is based on research in many fields.

❑ Indeed, the value of evolutionary theory is its utility as a unifying explanation for a wide variety of phenomena. Before examining the scientific basis for our understanding of evolution, it is useful to consider other explanations of human origins.

Cosmological Views:

- ***Cosmologies*** are conceptual frameworks that present the universe (the *cosmos*) as an orderly system. They often include answers to these basic questions about *human origins* and ***the place of human kind in the universe***, usually considered the most sacred of all cosmological conceptions.
- Cosmologies account for the ways in which ***supernatural beings or forces formed human beings and the planet we live on.***
- These beliefs are transmitted from generation to generation through ritual, education, laws, art, and language.

Evolutionary and Paleo-anthropological Perspectives on Human Origin:

- Evolution refers to a process and gradual change in specie over time. In fact, evolution is used to describe the **cumulative effects** of three independent facts. Importantly, these attributes of evolution can be observed in nature every day. They are:
 - **Replication:** The fact that life forms have offspring;
 - **Variation:** The fact that each offspring is slightly different from its parents, and its siblings; and
 - **Selection:** The fact that not all offspring survive, and those that do tend to be the ones best suited to their environment.

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- ❑ The scientific explanation of human origin and the concept of evolution are attributed to a series of discoveries of early modern period and the works of handful of scientists in the physical/natural sciences.
- ❑ One of the prominent persons in relation to this development is **Charles Darwin** (1809-1882), a British Naturalist of the period. Charles Darwin is known for his theory of **natural selection** in the evolution of species and the idea of **survival of the fittest**.

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- ❑ Today, anthropologists have countless amount of data, much of it based on studies of DNA, the molecule that shapes all Earth life, to back the claims Darwin made in 1859. In doing so, anthropologists study humanity as a biological phenomenon by raising questions such as:
 - ✓ What species are we most and least like?
 - ✓ Where and when did we first appear?
 - ✓ What were our ancestors like?
 - ✓ Can we learn about human behavior from the behavior of our nearest relatives, the chimpanzees and gorillas?
 - ✓ Is our species still evolving? How do modern human genetics, population growth, and other current issues play out from a biological perspective?

3.3 The Kinds of Humanity: Human Physical Variation

- ❑ Why and how did variations in human color, shape and other physical characteristics come about, and
- ❑ What do they mean for humanity as a species?
- ❑ The answer comes from the study of human biology by physical anthropologists.

3.3.1. Racial types- anthropological perspectives

- ❑ Not all human beings look the same, so humans have spent some time putting people of different colors, body shapes, and so on into different categories sometimes called races.
- ❑ Unfortunately, this tendency has had some very bad consequences for millions of human beings over the centuries.
- ❑ Biologically speaking, a **race** is a group of organisms of the same species that share similar physical (and genetic) attributes and specific geographic regions.
- ❑ In short, they're subdivisions of a single species- meaning they can mate and have offspring that are healthy enough to have their own offspring-exhibiting some characteristics reflecting their geographical origins.

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- ❑ Just like any other living thing, human beings adapt to their environments through an evolutionary process.
- ❑ **Adaptation** is can be understood as a process (behavioral and/or biological) that increases the likelihood of survival for an organism. An adaptation can be a mutation that confers an advantage.
- ❑ For example, a frog that has better-camouflaged skin than its siblings has a lower chance of being snapped up by a fish, and therefore a stronger chance to survive and have offspring that will carry the gene for better-adapted camouflage.
- ❑ In humans, adaptations include complex behavior, such as making tools. These behaviors aren't passed on genetically but rather culturally.

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- ❑ Biological adaptations aren't instantaneous.
- ❑ They take place over the span of generations, so an African moving to Europe won't evolve lighter skin, nor will a European travelling to Africa evolve darker skin (except for some tanning).

3.3.2. What Anthropologists can say for sure about Human Races?

- ❑ So do human races exist? Very strictly speaking, yes. *Homo sapiens* does feature geographically based differences within the species.
- ❑ However, you must consider two very important points.
- ❑ First, these genetic differences don't mean a lot, biologically.
- ❑ Because all healthy humans can mate and have healthy offspring, we're all in *Homo sapiens*, biologically speaking.
- ❑ Don't let anyone tell you different. Not only is it inaccurate to say "the female species" when talking about significant sex differences between males and females, but it's also inaccurate to say "the African race" or the "European race" when speaking of deep differences in these peoples.

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- ❑ Second — and most important — is that cultural behavior isn't genetically linked to those geographical differences.
- ❑ This disconnect is one of anthropology's most important discoveries and lessons for humanity.
- ❑ People from Scandinavia aren't reserved — or whatever other behavioral trait you may apply to them — because it's in their genes to be so. It's not. Most of human behavior isn't biologically determined or filtered in through the natural environment — most of it is culturally learned.
- ❑ An infant from Japan can be raised in the Kalahari of Southern Africa and won't automatically remove his shoes when going into a home unless his culture specifically teaches him to do so. Like any human can acquire any language, any infant can acquire any culture; it's culture that really drives behavior, not the genes.

Home Reading Assignments

3.4 Human Races: the History of Racial Typing:

3.5 The Grand Illusion: Race, Turns out, is Arbitrary

3.6. Why is everyone Different? Human Cultural Diversity/Variation

3.7. Culture area and cultural contact in Ethiopia

- ❑ Put simply culture areas refers to a cluster of related cultures occupying a certain geographical region.
- ❑ In anthropology the concept of culture area has been used beginning from the 1920s where Alfred Kroeber and his contemporaries were interested in examining the concentration of cultural traits in a given geographic area.
- ❑ In the context of Ethiopia, we may come up with different culture areas in relation to subsistence. These are:
 - ✓ plough culture,
 - ✓ *Enset* culture area,
 - ✓ pastoral societies culture area.

Plough culture area:

- ❑ Plough culture area represents those parts of the country where agriculture is predominantly the means by which subsistence is eked out.
- ❑ Most of highland and central parts of the country serves as the backbone of the economy is considered a plough culture.
- ❑ The area often called plough culture has been a subject of anthropological inquires over the past seven decades starting from the 1950s.
- ❑ Some of the ethnographers who studied the area that we call plough culture are Donald Levine, Allen Hobben, Fredrick Gamst and Jack Bauer.

Enset culture area:

- ❑ *Enset* culture area, on the other hand, covers a vast region in the southern part of country.
- ❑ *Enset* cultivating regions of the present day SNNPRS such as the Guraghe, Sidama and Gedeo areas constitute *enset* culture area.
- ❑ In this region, *enset* serves as a staple diet to the people who make use the plant in a wide variety of forms for a

Pastoral culture area:

- ❑ Pastoral culture area is found in the low land areas covering a large section of the Afar in the northwest, Somali in the southeast and Borena of southern of Ethiopia.
- ❑ As opposed to the above the cases, inhabitants of the pastoral culture area rely significantly on their herds and cattle for a living.
- ❑ Mobility of people and herds is a major characteristic feature of the people occupying the pastoral culture area.

