

BEING HUMAN – INTRODUCTION (to the book)

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What does it mean to be human? Some things are evident, others not. We cannot survive and thrive without acquiring food, warding off predators, having sex, nurturing children, helping each other out, and utilizing technology. Our species has gone from stone tools to smart phones, from superstition to science, from illiteracy to Shakespeare, from bows and arrows to Hiroshima. Homo sapiens are built on innovation and barbarism, cooperation and discord, benevolence and indifference. How did genius and duplicity, expertise and exploitation emerge from inside us to so alter life and death on this planet? Being human, for good and ill, includes becoming increasingly transformational.

Homo sapiens are social, sensual, shrewd, intelligent, imaginative, and hungry with ideas, passions, and beliefs. We are intensely collaborative and can be paradoxical and perplexing. Love is bestowed on our children, disputes are often adeptly resolved, and we specialize in violence from slaughtering animals to acts of vengeance and genocide. Humans are a kind and killing species.

“What a chimera is man!,....What a monster,” Blaise Pascal writes, “what a chaos, what a contradiction, what a prodigy!” (Pascal, 1989, 212). We are one of several of the genus Homo, but the others have vanished. Humans are highly social bipedal primates who gather in a multitude of groups and must establish intragroup relations and ways of dealing with other societies. The long childhood of our offspring dictate that all human cultures must socially organize themselves so that children are nurtured and thrive. Our attributes for surviving include an advanced cerebral cortex, language, a unique emotional endowment, and being ingenious. This is a description of some basics common to being human. Over time, though we have set our minds to certain complicated tasks then use our resolve and resourcefulness to find remarkable solutions. The conditions of being human have gone through a dramatic metamorphosis. These are miraculous accomplishments, full of sound and fury, mutuality and hostility, inventiveness and annihilation. To address what being human entails, we must look at our condition and endowment plus the full past of Homo sapiens, a history that has altered life in unforeseen ways.

Earth is now in the midst of the sixth extinction, with many species dying at a rapid rate. The main cause of the extensive loss of life is human activity. Geology has been so altered by us that many scientists are saying this is the Anthropocene Age. In the year one thousand, Homo sapiens and their domesticated animals occupied

two percent of the mammal biomass, now we and our creatures account for ninety percent of it (Ackerman, 2014, 11).

To understand our impact on the planet, among other things, our psychological states need to be examined. Philosopher John Dewey declares: "man's house is divided within itself, against itself" (Dewey, 1922, 28). Montaigne writes: "we are, I know not how, double within ourselves, with the result that we do not believe what we believe, and we cannot rid ourselves of what we condemn" (Montaigne, 1943 [1578-1580], 570). As well as often being self-conflicted, we are deeply tied to fellow human beings, and this too gets complicated. John C. Calhoun maintains that we are "created for the social state," and so "feel what affects others." Yet a man feels "more intensely what affects him directly than what affects him indirectly through others" (Calhoun, 1953 [1853], 4). We can be both self-centered and form deep bonds with cherished others and exhibit empathy, caring, loyalty, mutuality, generosity, and bountiful love.

Another aspect of our sociality, psychologist Steven Pinker says, is that each society divides into in-groups and out-groups (Pinker, 2002, 39). *Homo sapiens* may bestow favors on insiders and do dreadful things to human outliers. German philosopher Johann Fichte says, "man's most cruel enemy is man" (Fichte, 1987 [1799]. 83). Psychologically we are a self-divided species who internally can both affirm and turn against ourselves; we can be torn between loving, hating, and being a stranger to ourselves. Externally, parallel relationships occur. We seek select others with whom to bond, others against whom we direct our fury, and there are others who are foreigners to us and we are indifferent to what happens to them. Our emotions of love, hate, and lack of care are manifest first in internal dialogue, we both affirm and doubt what we believe and cannot rid ourselves of what we condemn, and then amongst others we can both love and hate those with whom we positively identify, and also despise those whom we stereotype and scapegoat, and treat still others as if they are not part of the same world in which humans struggle and flourish. These emotional self-divisions and being strangers to ourselves and others is found in our deep empathy, our extraordinary hostility, and our lack of care. They are also evident in our patterns of killing others and our self-murder. The complex emotional and advanced cognitive capacities with which humans are endowed lead us to glory and destruction over and over again from childhood to death and from the Pleistocene to the Anthropocene ages.

Our mental characteristics include an ability to intensely concentrate on problems, to reflect, imagine, create, find solutions. The ability within culture to think, innovate, and implement has helped us to refigure human existence. Our tendencies to be cooperative, conniving competitive, caring, civilized, barbaric,

and narcissistic can be found in internal dialogues, intimate relationships, and international affairs. Homo sapiens are wondrous and double-sided.

DIVERSE APPROACHES TO BEING HUMAN

To me, the above describes some of our core characteristics, and is a start in an inquiry about what it is to be human. There are astounding and terrifying aspects within our history. Understanding our contradictions and evolution is a herculean task. Some may investigate paths about being human related to these concerns about the intersection of our character and evolution, but not everyone.

Not surprisingly, others stress different aspects of our existence as paramount. There are those who select a particular characteristic or two they maintain are crucial. This may be our large brain, language, symbolism, intellectual powers, sociality, natural selection, culture, or being collaborative breeders. There is often intense dialogue between various perspectives, at other times not. Scholars also may talk past each other or ignore pertinent findings and viewpoints. Clearly, there are multiple and divergent ideas on what is most central to being human. In the contemporary West, in addition to diverse perspectives, there are often contrasting views on what it is to be human between the natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities.

For an interdisciplinary studies conference presentation in 2014, I wrote a paper comparing books on what it means to be human by biologist Edward O. Wilson, literary critic Terry Eagleton, and psychologist Richard Gross. All three were one-sided. They primarily stayed within the parameters of their own specialty and related fields and perspective. Each spoke as if they were encompassing the whole terrain when they were only discussing parts. At first, I thought of stressing their individual and collective incompleteness, but that would just be the proverbial pot critiquing the kettle. This recognition of partiality stopped me in my tracks. Not only do many who write about being human do so from a limited number of outlooks and subject areas, they usually either do not perceive or do not find relevant that they are leaving out much of what other important scholars say.

Among those who have sought to be comprehensive are Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and Edward O. Wilson. The contemporary Harvard biologist, though he does call for consilience and the unity of knowledge, holds reductionism as the paramount standard and so undercuts non-reductionist approaches whether they be in the humanities, natural sciences, or social sciences. As many prominent researchers addressing being human are centered within certain disciplines and outlooks while downplaying others, then it is inevitable they will be incomplete. The obvious

irony is that in examining what it means to be human, if a writer is not seeking all that is pertinent, he or she cannot do justice to the topic.

In "a world with nuclear weapons and ecological problems that cross all national borders," writes historian David Christian, "we desperately need to see humanity as a whole" (Christian, 2011,8). Agreed, but how do we get there? In this age of specialization, becoming a "Renaissance Man" is beyond the capabilities of most all of us. There are pitfalls in seeking an inclusive overview of being human. Still, we need to know what the whole entails.

For my concerns with our character and evolution to make sense they need to be placed within a list of all the topics necessary to fully cover what being human entails. Despite my own limitations, I have taken it upon myself to try to find out what are all the needed subjects. For how can we adequately address the question of what it means to be human without working to develop a comprehensive overview of the subject matter?

TOWARDS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY VISION

Since the development of multiple academic disciplines, sub-disciplines, and interdisciplines the rigor and inventiveness of academia have been amazing. We have so much greater specific knowledge than humankind has ever before possessed. The knowledge keeps multiplying and giving us much more factual material about what it means to be human.

From the millennium on there has been a mini-surge of interest in being human, yet no one has thought to develop a complete interdisciplinary overview. A number of contemporary scholars have approached if not reached the ideal of being comprehensive¹. Of course, since we became literate writing about our essence has been a focus in religion, philosophy, the arts, etc.

What it is to be human is a subject matter in itself, as distinct in its own way as are history and physics. It is hard to believe that in a period when there are so many

¹ These efforts can be found in philosopher Joseph Margolis's human characteristics, the categorical imperatives of philosopher P. M. S. Hacker, Edward O. Wilson's defining traits of human nature, anthropologist Brian Morris's saying humans are a species being, a self, and a social creature, Bruno Latour's modes of existence, political scientist Larry Arnhart's twenty universal natural human desires, the efforts of some anthropologists to enumerate human universals, the nine themes listed on the beinghuman.org website, and the Smithsonian's delineation of human traits.

fields and subfields that being human, this most central question, has not become an established academic specialty.

Some will say that this is too vast an area to investigate; others that we hardly know ourselves. Sociologist Christian Smith says, “of the many mysteries of the universe, we humans are perhaps the most mysterious of all to ourselves” (Smith, 2010, 1). Post humanists and transhumanists likely find the study of being human to be antiquated. To some, the idea of the human is itself a historical creation rather than a given reality, or that as we change from time to time and place to place the questions surrounding human being cannot be given a coherent answer (Frierson, 2013, 212). Sociologist John H. Evans writes. “‘What it means to be human’ is a strong contender for the title of the deepest morass in academic life...there is not agreement about how to ask the question, let alone on the answer” (Evans, 2016, 4-5).

There are ways though to address what being human entails. Homo sapiens are one species, not many; there is much we have in common, and there are cultural universals. Furthermore, the recent mini-trend of interest in being human extends to college courses, articles in prestigious journals and many books. These efforts mostly look through the lenses of the natural and social sciences. As indispensable as these findings are they often involve moving some basics of human existence from center stage into the wings.

COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW

Can we overcome the morass? Hopefully, but certainly there are significant challenges. These include that Homo sapiens both share a great number of characteristics at the same time as our species is remarkably diverse. There are also multiple academic specialties with overlapping and divergent methodologies, standards and perspectives. To get beyond the labyrinth we need to find ways of examining the diversity to see what may be common. and we have to incorporate the relevant findings and outlooks of the various academic specialties. Developing a comprehensive overview of all that should be included in studying being human is a start. How do we get there? It makes sense to begin by showing what humans share, then we can proceed to other pertinent areas.

To me, the following seven overarching subjects can lead to formulating a comprehensive view of our species. They are (1) the human condition (2) the human endowment (3) cultural universals and diversity (4) historic and cultural evolution (5) comparison with closely related species (6) having a self (7) belief systems and ideologies. At times, there is overlap between them, yet these seven categories aim at a full overview. Following the review of what is to be included

in these seven areas, there can be a more informed return to the issues surrounding our character and evolution.

There are various terms in use to characterize the search for what it means to be human. In discussing what humans share from David Hume through biologist Edward O. Wilson and philosopher P. M. S. Hacker, the term human nature has been favored. This concept has been used in a variety of incompatible ways and has had many detractors, especially among anthropologists, some of whom contrast nature and culture. The endless controversies this engenders are best sidestepped.

The human sciences are also a term used to describe being human. It is more inclusive than the social sciences, as it can incorporate the natural sciences and humanities. Still, not all of the arts and humanities ought to be described as sciences. Anthropology is often described as the science of being human, yet as an academic discipline in the English-speaking world it looks less at the whole of humanity than our diverse parts. Philosophical anthropology has the potential for being fully comprehensive, but as of yet has not been sufficiently interdisciplinary.

DIALECTIC HUMANISM

To me, this project should be called dialectic humanism, a term borrowed from Erich Fromm. He sees this humanism as a “paradoxical blend of relentless criticism, uncompromising realism, and rational faith” (1964, 14-15). My alternative conception is to examine what it means to be human from the dialogue between many disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. It is clear that there are diverse and conflicting views on what being human entails. A dialectic can be developed between them. As much as is possible there will be an effort to interconnect the multiple findings and perspectives that cross disciplines and outlooks. The complex issues surrounding being human are way beyond the competency of any single discipline, entail being comprehensive, and require integration of an immense amount of material. Interdisciplinary Allen Repko writes about problems that are "fundamental and complex" questions that require "sophisticated analysis from so many disciplines." One of these "complex questions," he writes, is what "does it mean to be human" (Repko, 2012, 85).

Striving to understand the full spectrum of human activities and concerns is an integral part of comprehending what it is to be human. Within dialectic humanism there is a relevant statement from the Roman dramatist Terence that is sometimes translated as “I am human and nothing of which is human is alien to me” (Terence, *The Self-Tormentor*). We should employ an empathic phenomenology to seek what motivates fellow humans, including such monsters as Hitler and Stalin.

Certainly, making sense of barbaric mass killers is one part of examining being human. Thomas Hardy writes, "if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst" (Hardy, 1995, 32). Yes, and as well, a way to the worst requires fully understanding the better, and what is in between. A goal then of this endeavor is to incorporate an empathic phenomenology into an interdisciplinary dialectic humanism. The first step on this journey though is to delineate all the subject areas and topics needed for a comprehensive overview of the subject matter integral to understanding what it means to be human.

Human Condition

I begin with that simple yet complex question: what as a species do we share in common? This will include, among other things, our condition, endowment, and universals. The human condition concerns what are the factors to which we need to adapt once being thrown into the world. Some conditions are part of the environment and some come from within our biology. Our condition is about what we inevitably have to adjust to rather than what assists us in successfully surviving. At times, it is not easy to distinguish between the condition of being human, our endowments, other categories, as some may fit into more than one category.

First, there is the environment. Humans are animate substances embedded in a bounteous, inviting, and terrifying world. There are a multitude of species before us, competition for survival, variations in climate, natural disasters, diseases, and above are the sky, moon, sun, and stars. Plenty and scarcity are both present in the environment and present opportunities and challenges to earthly creatures. We are situated on a planet within a solar system that is part of one galaxy among many.

Second, we are not self-sufficient animals. As manna is not falling from the skies, we, like all animals, must obtain food to live. And like other creatures, to get the sustenance needed to keep us alive, we end the lives of other animals and plants.

Third, non-human predators wish to ingest us for their dinner, and human predators may engage in violence, homicide and war. The human condition is not one where safety, security and survival are assured. We must find what in ourselves and the environment can satiate our needs and protect us from danger. To obtain nourishment and prevent being slaughtered, killing has been a constant from our origins until the present day.

Fourth, mortality is integral to life on this planet. Every human dies; whether by natural causes after a long life, by a fatal illness before their time, being killed in

an accident, getting murdered, committing suicide. Being human is a terminable disease.

A fifth condition is the individual life-cycle: conception, birth, development, adulthood, aging, demise. In the panorama of human existence, while some are in decline, others are flourishing.

Sixth, as with other animals, our species is basically divided into male and female. There are anatomical differences between the sexes. Males are born with a penis and females with a vagina, women can bear children and men cannot. These sexual differences have a basis in biology and may overlap and differ from the social creations of gender. Occasionally, there are intersex humans.

A seventh human condition is sexuality: we are embodied beings who engage in sexual intercourse and other sexual and sensual activities. These experiences can arouse intense, intimate, ecstatic, contradictory emotions, and lead to conceiving a child.

Eighth, is that our children are dependent for a greater length of time than that of any other species. To survive and prosper infants and children need to receive care and sustenance from older caregivers. Attachment develops between babies, parents, kin, and others who watch over the youngest amongst us.

The long childhood connects to a ninth condition, family. This is the venue through which children are usually raised. As anthropologist Robin Fox tells us "no society so far has managed to dispense with an irreducible minimum of kinship-based social relationships" (Fox, 1967, 16). The diverse forms of kinship are often manifested in multi-generational family ties, often including marriage and parenting. Deep and enduring emotional connections evolve between family members. Clearly, family is a biocultural phenomenon.

Tenth is human sociality. Rebekka Klein entitles her book, *Sociality as the Human Condition*. Sociality is both a condition and an endowment. From conception to death, humans exist in an interpersonal world. We not only function side by side with other Homo sapiens but develop relationships, friendships, rivalries, social roles, collaborations, plus have emotions of love and hate and everything in between towards our fellow human beings. We are social to our core. I will expound on human sociality at greater length in the next section.

Sleep is an eleventh condition. Our bodies need rest, so we sleep.

These then are the human conditions that I have been able to discern, though there may be others I have missed.

Human Endowment

All species bring to the table certain attributes that help them adjust to the environment and enhance their chances of survival. *Homo sapiens* are endowed by their creator, if there is such a being, with certain inalienable responses, characteristics, traits, and abilities that shape how we respond to the world into which we are thrown. Some of these endowments have existed as long as our species has, some have been inherited from those species who preceded us, some have developed after *Homo sapiens* first emerged. When exactly some endowments first appeared is debated. Here are human endowments and how they have helped us.

First, *Homo sapiens* are a sensual species. Our capacity to see, hear, taste, smell, and touch are biological givens that orient us in the world

Being bipedal is a second endowment. Hominids have walked upright well over a million years (Smithsonian, 2017). Over time, this led to various physiological changes in our species, including a foot that enhanced our capability to stand up, and thumbs that gave us "the ability to perform the finest motor-coordinated tasks...of all living creatures." That we stand on two feet facilitated our making tools that helped us survive among creatures that were bigger and stronger than us. In addition, "bipedalism actually made speech mechanically possible" (Gazzaniga, 2008, p. 44-45).

We possess language. This third endowment has greatly enhanced our lives. Having "grammatical language...allows people to share acquired knowledge, negotiate agreements, and otherwise interact regularly in social contexts" (Avisé and Ayala, 2010, 207). There is substantial disagreement about whether language first emerged in a prior hominid group, or appeared some time while humans were hunters and foragers.

Our particular brain made our capacity for language possible. *Homo erectus* had brains near the size of *Homo sapiens* about 500,000 years ago (Hawks, 2013). For it is "our enlarged cerebral cortex" that "separates modern humans from other primates" (Goodman and Sterner, 2010, 55). This is a fourth endowment. Much of what directly follows in this endowment section are characteristics that flow from the human brain.

Our cognitive uniqueness is accompanied by the human form of emotionality, a fifth endowment. Antonio Damasio maintains that "consciousness and emotion are *not* separable" (Damasio, 1999, 16). Emotions in their current forms probably appeared when the modern brain developed. Certain researchers have found the

same emotions wherever our species appears.² Our emotionality is helpful in sensing when danger is near, in enhancing our sociality, in stimulating the caring between mother and infant, as well as others. Our emotions may assist and/or detract from our well-being

Memory is a sixth endowment. This is the mental capacity to store information and impressions then recall and remember them. Memories can be acutely accurate or faulty. Some of us have much better memories than others. The deterioration of memory in dementia and Alzheimer's undermines the very integrity of our personhood. These failures show how crucial the capacity to store and retrieve information is to our ability to be fully human.

Dreaming is a seventh endowment. While we sleep, our unconscious is active producing dreams that are imaginative, vivid, emotional, with a sequence of often disconnected narratives. When we awake, many of us remember our nocturnal adventures. Human cultures give a variety of significances to dreams.

An eighth endowment is imagination. Our playful minds lead us to all sorts of mental images, which can be expanded into ideas and plans. It all starts with the free associations arising from our cognitive-emotional capacities. These imaginings can be enjoyable in themselves and be a prelude to creativity.

The ability to speak, dream, imagine have all contributed to a ninth human endowment: creativity. We utilize our imagination to invent and find new ideas and products. Creativity and cultural development go hand in hand. We are capable of abstract thought, imagination, ideas, and innovation. Our practical and artistic creativity, and ability to find new solutions and inventions has ebbed and flowed over human history, but over time has enabled us to transform our existence, and that of this planet.

Accompanying our technological, cognitive, and artistic inventiveness is a search for the reasons why things happen. This tenth endowment of trying to find causes, of being curious, wondrous, and developing theories as to the reasons for phenomenon is a central human preoccupation. It has led to a belief that there is a

² Psychologist Paul Ekman finds the following seven human emotions to be universal: fear, sadness, anger, surprise, disgust, contempt, and happiness (Ekman, 2003, 58). Neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp and Lucy Biven list fear/anxiety, seeking, rage, lust, care, panic/grief. And play as basic affective systems (Panksepp and Biven, 2012, xi). Antonio Damasio mentions social emotions such as jealousy, guilt, and pride and background emotions "such as well-being or malaise, calm or tension (Damasio, 1999, 51).

supernatural power beyond the laws of nature. Philosophy too grows out of this curiosity, as do art and science.

All this is entwined with the eleventh human endowment of culture, which grows out of our living together in groups and societies. Culture are the social forms, material traits and group practices, which are passed down with alterations from generation to generation.

A twelfth endowment is that humans separate those with whom we identify from those we castigate. As psychologists Elizabeth Spelke and Katherine Kinzler write, "every human community" includes "cooperation, reciprocity, and group cohesion," plus a "predisposition to categorize oneself and other humans into groups." This includes showing a "preference for the in-group, or *us*, over the out-group, or *them*." The us vs. them tendency can be seen in infants as early as three months (Spelke and Kinzler, 2007, 91-92). "The emotional preference for 'us' and hostility to 'them,'" write psychologist Keith Oatley and colleagues, "is indeed a candidate for a biologically inherited human universal" (Oatley, et al, 2006, p. 250).

Us vs. them is clearly a manifestation of our extraordinary sociality. The paradox of being human is our capacity for distrust and enmity, of dividing into ins and outs and yet we are collaborative, cooperative, and caring. As well as us vs. them is us and them, where we can collaborate with those whom we also distrust and diminish.

Our complex sociality is beyond what other mammals are capable. Economists Ernst Fehr and Urs Fischbacher write, "Human societies represent a spectacular outlier with respect to all other animal species because they are based on large-scale cooperation among genetically unrelated individuals. In most animal societies, cooperation is either orders of magnitude less developed compared with humans, or it is based on substantial genetic relatedness" (Fehr and Fischbacher, 2004, 185). Being human and being social are inextricable.

There is another important aspect to our sociality. Three 21st century authors with human condition in the titles of their books stress humanity's more ominous impulses. Rebekka Klein says that we are "just as capable of hate and hostility as fraternization and social reciprocity." Any characterization of our natures must show "an awareness of its dark side" (Klein, 2011, 203, 3). French philosopher Dominique Janicaud writes that "man is thus confronted with the inhuman: a moral monstrosity in which radical evil is embodied" (Janicaud, 2002, 21). Philosopher John Kekes: "The dark side of our condition reminds us that...the values of the human dimensions are routinely violated, and that evil is prevalent." He says evil "involves depraved, malignant, monstrous actions that violate

universal human values...that breaches the bulwark between civilized life and barbarism"(Kekes, 2010, 114-115). Our condition and endowment connect to the question of our character and behavior. Humans are helpful and empathic, moral and monstrous.

As mentioned earlier, accompanying our proclivity for 'us against them' is also 'us and them.' It is a common human occurrence that we can both discriminate against another group, and also collaborate with them. This alternation between cooperation and conflict is a given. As individual as different groups are, they often have relationships with each other, exchange goods and services, in other words commerce is a frequent companion to being human. As with much else the interaction between groups can alternate between being us and them and us vs. them, commerce can turn into conflict, tensions can escalate into combat, two tribes may ally themselves together to war against a third group.

Now we come to a central issue in being human, we are double sided. An individual can be both highly focused and, as Montaigne said be double within him or herself; a family is deeply bonded and contains rivalry and hostility, bands and tribes share common goals and have factions and power struggles. All these things are evident as human social organizations grow, and as commerce, diplomacy, and conflict between different groups and civilizations ensues. An essential task of understanding what it means to be human is to explain how it is that human individuation and human sociality engenders such collaboration, bonding, caring, love, and such fierce competition and wanton brutality.

Universals

There are then conditions and endowments for humans, and some of them are so characteristic of our existence that they are found wherever our species congregates; they are cultural universals. Lists of these practices have been compiled by various anthropologists. In 1945, George Murdock described phenomena which he says "occur, so far as the author's knowledge goes, in every culture known to history or ethnography" (Murdock, 1965, 89). Since then additional lists have appeared in Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox's *The Imperial Animal*, Charles Hockett's *Man's Place in Nature*, and Donald Brown's *Human Universals*. In 2002, psychologist Steven Pinker consulted Brown and in his *The Blank Slate* published, with some modifications of what Brown accumulated, the most extensive list of universals we have. In 2010, anthropologist and physician, Melvin Konner published his own version of universals. German anthropologist, Christoph Antweiler, revisited the subject in an English translation in 2016.

What then is a human universal? Konner found five types: (1) characteristic of every normal adult, such as walking (2) characteristic of the members of a specific class, such as reflexes in babies (3) characteristic of all populations, such as men are generally more aggressive than women (4) characteristic of some people in all cultures, such as depression (5) characteristic of all cultures, such as prohibiting the forbidden (Konner, 2010, 715). In addition, Konner divided his list of close to a hundred universals into ten sub-sets, which are: language, cognitive/perceptual processes, nonverbal communication, social psychology/social cognition, emotions, material culture, social organization, cultural patterns, belief systems, aberrant behavior (Konner, 2010, 716-717). The first four are also human endowments. I have added other universals categories: sexuality and its regulation, creativity, family, gender, hierarchy, violence and killing. Knowing what categories and practices appear in all known cultures shows that as well as diversity, there are many things common in being human. As Konner writes, “the scientific search for societies that have no violence, no gender differences that go beyond childbearing, or no mental illness, or that lack weapons or fire, has been a vain one.” What is remarkable is that these universals “persist in the face of historical and ecological transformation” (Konner, 2010, 714).

History

As well as delineating what is found in every culture humans have changed and evolved. To develop a comprehensive overview of being human. we should know about the full history of how Homo sapiens emerged and survived. For a while, there was no life, and then there was. The genus Homo was non-existent, and then it appeared. There was no language, and eventually talking developed. Art, music, religion, and improved technology were present among hunters and foragers. After agriculture and domesticating animals became prominent, then diverse occupational skills and increased commerce came along. Government and the state followed, as did civilization. Another landmark in the evolution of our species was literacy, not only could we speak but read and write. The printing press was invented. Modern science and advanced technology emerged, along with the modern state, capitalism, and industrialization. which combined to revolutionize what it means to be human.

The changes and evolution of our species continues to accelerate at an extraordinary pace. Though our endowment provided us with amazing potential, for most of our existence Homo sapiens were foraging and hunting nomads. As evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar writes, around 20,000 years ago there is “evidence for deliberate burials, for music and for a life of the mind....Nothing like it had ever been seen in the history of human evolution” (Dunbar, 2004, 6). This

was just the beginning. Evolution gave us the tools to successfully survive and reproduce; it is something beyond these that have led us to change many of the very conditions of our existence.

Any consideration of what it means to be human must examine how humanity has evolved from being confined to Africa to settling most everywhere on Earth, and moving from hunting and collecting food to advanced agriculture and industry, from small settlements to a billion people in a nation, from ignorance to extraordinary knowledge. The progress of human cultures has been regularly accompanied by exploitation and other forms of man's inhumanity to man and other living creatures. The complex history of *Homo sapiens* is indispensable in ascertaining what it means to be human.

Primates

Homo sapiens are not only a separate species but are also primates. We therefore need to be placed within this order. There are over 260 primates. We share over 98% of our DNA with chimpanzees and bonobos. We are similar and different. For instance, both chimpanzees and bonobos have estrus, we do not. They have multiple sexual partners, we often form pair bonds, many of us practice social monogamy, and marriage is present in all but one human culture. Chimpanzees have one form of intragroup lethal violence, humans another, and bonobos rarely kill each other. Who we are as a species can be illuminated when we contrast ourselves with others who share so much of the same DNA.

Being A Self

Each species has a range of personality possibilities within it. *Homo sapiens* are creatures who can develop a high degree of individuality, a distinct self. As our species has evolved, the level of self-actualization has increased dramatically within historical and cultural settings. What then does it mean to be a human self? According to historian Jerrold Seigel, a self is "whatever it is about each of us that distinguishes you or me from others, draws the parts of our existence together, persists through changes, or opens the way to becoming who we might or should be" (Seigel, 2005, 3). We have various temperaments, predispositions, talents, drives, levels of intelligence and creativity, different senses of identity. Some of us have more internal obstacles to self-development, and others push to actualize themselves, and get their discoveries known. All these things are part of what it is to be a self, and all unfold within culture.

Humans both individuate and fit into the societies in which they reside. In some cultures, there are limited opportunities for development; in others, there are multiple paths through which individuals can actualize themselves. What would

have happened to the talents of an Einstein, Beethoven, or Hitler when careers ranged from forager to hunter? The potentials for actualization flows out of whatever sense of self an individual is able to develop within the options accessible in their culture. We cannot understand being human without understanding what being a self includes, and what the possibilities within the self are.

Ideas and Ideology

Though this specific topic is an outgrowth of our cerebral cortex, language capacity, cognitive abilities, emotional endowment, and creativity, it still warrants being a distinct area of study. For wherever human cultures appear we develop notions, schemes, concepts, world views, doctrines, and dogmas. Specific ideas and ideologies are common within and across cultures. Humans try to make sense of the worlds we inhabit, and we attribute causes to natural and/or supernatural forces. It is this combination of perceptions and opinions that cohere into a distinctive world-view that should be called an ideology. Our ideas and perspectives can remain flexible, and open to new inputs, or they can become rigid. Still, ideology is widespread and a pervasive presence in human cultures.

OVERVIEW OF NECESSARY TOPICS

I have sought to delineate the essential categories needed to get a full overview of being human. Now we are in a position to transition from the necessary subjects to a complete list of topics for a comprehensive overview of being human. This list is derived from the seven areas just discussed, from further reflections on these themes, and from what other thinkers have developed. I have conceived of some of the items through multiple sources. If I have derived any of them from another writer, I acknowledge this after the item. This tentative list is a way to begin developing the distinct subject area of what it means to be human.

Under the human condition, the topics include the earthly environment, our place in the cosmos, sexuality and its regulation, life-cycle, long childhood dependency, mortality, predators, gender, attachment, empathy, food, killing, families, sleep.

Our endowment has the following: five senses, brain/mind, language, bipedal, cognition, consciousness, emotions, sub-conscious/unconscious, us vs. them, us and them, dreaming, imagination, spirituality, symbols, sociality, love. Roy Baumeister and Brad Bushman include aggression and attraction (2007). There are also universals, some of which overlap with endowments. The following again are Konner's (2010, 716-717): Language, cognitive/perceptual processes, nonverbal communication, social psychology, emotions, material culture, social

organizations, cultural patterns, belief systems, aberrant behavior. I add: the arts, cultural diversity, world views, work. Edward O. Wilson includes the division of labor between sexes, and bonding between parents and children (Wilson, 1994, 332).

For history and anthropology, my topics include the emergence of Homo sapiens, evolution, Anthropocene Age, sixth extinction, culture, hunter-gatherer life, cooking, commerce, social organization, hierarchy, from foraging to agriculture, emergence of political states, power, history of capitalism, development of literacy, modern science, technology, functioning of political states, international relations, how humans resolve disputes, development of ethics. Edward O. Wilson includes tribalism (Wilson, 1994, 332). Larry Arnhart has friendship, justice as reciprocity, aesthetic pleasure (1998, 29), and Bruno Latour includes law (2013, 488). How humans compare with other primates includes sexuality, inter and intra-group violence, child-rearing, social relations.

On the self, from Gallagher (2011) the following items should be included: self-recognition, self in the brain, embodied self, self-knowledge, identity, self-agency, self-control, multiple selves. From Leary and Tangney (2012) are self-concept, self-regulation, self-worth, self and emotion, the two selves, self with others. P. M. S. Hacker (2013) includes the mind, the person, intentionality, memory, world views, thinking, religion, art/music, philosophy, narrations, ideologies. Baumeister and Bushman include prejudices, beliefs, attitudes (2007).

In considering what we need to know to comprehensively study humanity, the following specific concerns should be addressed. One is to ascertain all the subject areas that should be studied. I have just attempted to do that. Two is to bring in findings from all the pertinent disciplines and perspectives. If done properly, a by-product would be a comprehensive listing of necessary topics. Third is being interdisciplinary in the sense of examining each of the topics incorporating findings from the various disciplines and seeking to synthesize the data and perspectives. Within my limits, that is a primary aim of mine. Four is even more of a challenge than the other three, for in seeking to be integrative conflicting ideological perspectives and disciplinary predilections prevail. While there are many instances where factual information and interdisciplinary integration can override ideology, that will never completely be the case. Controversy and divergent outlooks will remain. There has been both a long-term overlap and divergence between the natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities. Given these recurring tensions, anyone venturing into this mine-field will find opposition from those with allegiances to one set of data and/or perspectives over others.

Not only are there interconnections and tensions between the natural sciences, social science, and humanities, there are different methodologies and knowledge standards between and within disciplines in each of these three academic cultures. For instance, eminent biologist Ernst Mayr described how biology is different from physics and chemistry, and often closer to history (Mayr, 1997). In the social sciences a favored methodology is the survey in political science, and in psychology, it is the experiment. At times, these divergent disciplinary methods of investigation turn up conflicting findings on the same research topic (Iyengar, 1993, 4-5). Similarly, subject areas within the humanities have different outlooks and methods.

This plethora of methodologies and epistemologies creates challenges to synthesizing knowledge. These challenges become acute when dealing with subjects that are intrinsically interdisciplinary, such as what does it mean to be human. There are a variety of ways to integrate diverse findings from often diverging disciplines. Allen Repko has developed a method to achieve integration (Repko, 2012). If one starts with a topic and seeks to recognize the ramifications of this subject, one can seek the relevant information and devise ways of bringing the research together as coherently as possible.

This effort at combining diverse insights into a coherent whole is at the heart of being interdisciplinary. Julie Thompson Klein states that interdisciplinarity is “a synthesis...from two or more disciplines aimed at answering a complex question, solving a complex problem, or producing new knowledge or a product” (Klein, 2012, 286). Rick Szostak finds that interdisciplinarity is needed as “disciplinarians” may “ignore competing theories or methods” and they may “ignore related phenomena that might cast an important light on the issues addressed by the discipline” (Szostak, 2012, 4). This interdisciplinary focus is needed to make sense of the vast topics within what it is to be human, even though divergence and disagreement will still occur. Yet, bringing in all the findings from relevant disciplines provides for a comprehensiveness and full interdisciplinarity generally lacking in efforts to discuss what it means to be human.

Homo sapiens are creatures of contradiction. Humans may live in harmony with neighbors or seek to decimate those they despise; we may treat the natural world with reverence or be rapacious. With both an Anthropocene age and a sixth extinction, humans are the most social and destructive species on the planet. The human condition and endowment reveal the vitality, paradoxes, creativity and brutality within and between us. We remain both a perpetually discontented and a self-actualizing species.

OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

My goal in this ambitious endeavor is to help delineate what has enabled humanity to transform itself, to do so in a way that includes all the topics necessary for a comprehensive portrait of being human, and to focus on the perplexities, accomplishments, and double-sidedness of our character. I organized what to me was a sequence of chapters that could address what has made possible the human journey from the paleolithic era to the 21st century. In a first effort, I was able to include most all the topics listed above in the comprehensive overview. There were a few left over, but on a second try they all fit together into one of the existing chapters. All the topics delineated then find an appropriate spot; I am surprised that everything fell into place.

If the first step in examining being human was getting a comprehensive overview of all the needed topics, a following step is how do we organize all this immense material into a coherent and sensible narrative. There are clearly many different angles to attempt this. A sensible starting point to me is with basics of the human condition: acquiring food and the attachment process between dependent offspring and their caregivers. I have found that each of these basics inextricably lead to other areas. Acquiring the necessary sustenance to survive inevitably brings in that humans kill to get food, and the relationship between babies and adult caregivers involves human emotion and cognition, and the attachment process mostly occurs within families, societies, and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. So, one topic kept leading to others going from the human condition to our endowment and then back again.

To make sense of the immense task of trying to understand being human, there will be two volumes here. The first addresses mostly the human condition and the endowments we have that have enabled us to survive and thrive. The second addresses more the historical and cultural developments that trace our advances with all the accompanying complications and contradictions.

In the first volume, after this introduction, the second chapter will begin with one of the basics of being human: acquiring food. We do so by using violence to end the lives of plants and animals. It turns out our killing takes on a multitude of forms way beyond the need to get sustenance and defend ourselves from attack. Our evolution from the hunting fields to industrialized globalism has occurred while civil and international wars were often waged, where murder is committed, and suicide often occurs. Homo sapiens would not have reached our heights and depths without our increased technologies for slaughtering others. What it is to be human and killing are inseparable. I will seek to understand murder, suicide, and how in wartime both individually and collectively some of the worst aspects of being human are brought forth.

The third chapter addresses attachment, another basic of the human condition connected to our long childhood dependency. While the prior chapter included human cruelty, the prevalence of caring and nurturance is emphasized in the relationship between babies and caregivers. Infants survive and thrive when there is attentiveness to their needs, when they establish bonds with those who nurture them, and when there are decent material conditions.

The human connection with caregivers regularly brings out the milk of human kindness, Yet the attachment process has multiple patterns, some more benevolent than others, and there can be an emotional volatility within attachment relationships. The personalities of the caregivers and the children are integral to the nature of the human bond being formed. There are indications of a strong human self at an early age; it is the mixture of personalities and selves that forge the dynamics of human connections throughout the human life cycle.

Attachment is an emotional, and cognitive phenomenon. To further understand human connections the next chapter focuses on these two human endowments. The wonders of the human brain, and our accompanying cognitive abilities that differentiate *Homo sapiens* from all other existing species. Delineating our cognitive capacities, then is important in understanding the way human selves have developed and the attachment process has unfolded.

Our cognitions and our emotions are also deeply connected. Our emotions both enrich and undermine our well-being. They can lead to peak experiences and dread, depression, despair, and insanity. Our emotions and cognitive responses do much to help us understand both the essential attachment dynamics of childhood and the full range of intimate interpersonal relationships.

The fifth chapter then addresses other components of attachment: families and close relationships. I will connect the love and conflicts present in human beings by showing how they are manifest in family and other emotionally bonding relationships. As long childhood dependency characterizes the human condition, human social groupings are challenged to find ways of protecting and nurturing youngsters. Existing human cultures have some variation of the family, most often with pair bonds or marriage, as the primary instrument by which children are raised (Peoples and Baily, 2017, 43).

The family is the elementary institution of society and exists within larger social groupings. Understanding the family is definitely a multi-disciplinary endeavor. As families serve a sexual function then understanding crucial elements of human sexual relationships with all their ups and downs is a central component of understanding family dynamics. The dynamics of family life have parallel patterns

in other social groupings. Comprehending family life is a good prelude to understanding crucial aspects of all human social phenomenon.

Next, we return to other human endowments and how they have enhanced and complicated our endeavors. Integral to being human are imagination, playfulness, individuation and creativity. After discussing emotional and cognitive closeness and conflict, I turn to what in the human endowment has enabled us to become so remarkably creative, starting with our individuality. The human self is filled with wonders, both positive and negative. How the self has unfolded within culture is integral to understanding how with social advances our species has made the extraordinary journey from hunting and foraging to the Anthropocene Age. This chapter then delineates the components of the human self, and how self-knowledge, self-deception, and self-actualization have mixed together.

The following chapter concerns two other elements of the self and our cognitive-emotional endowments: imagination and thought. It is our musings, fantasies, playfulness, daydreaming that are elements of imagining. In song lyrics, imagination can make a cloudy day sunny or make a bee think of honey, or John Lennon can imagine all people living in peace. Imagination can evolve into thought. This can include reflection, examination, an idea, a hope, a plan. Thoughtfulness includes the process of thinking, critical and otherwise. Along with imagination, thinking and thought are manifestations of our human mental capacities. They can be the prelude to creativity.

When dust comes to dust, the many domains in which creativity within culture is exhibited have helped lead humanity to its more advanced stages. Creativity can be used to foster well-being or invent further weapons of mass-destruction. Understanding creativity as an individual and societal phenomenon is as central to understanding how humans have developed as any other factor.

Our creativity in knowing, expressing, and making warrant a chapter to itself. What has been distinctive about humanity from some undetermined time in the Pleistocene to the present is the human impetus to know, to express, to make the internal external, to put forward ideas that seek to make sense of what happens to us in the world, to express ourselves in artistic objects and activities, to make things including tools, weapons, clothing, paintings, etc. Our creativity and making sense has been manifest in so many forms. It has included religions where we have postulated super natural beings with powers to create good and evil, who can reward and punish. Over time humans have sought parallel powers in ourselves, including leaders seeking dominance in politics and religion who attribute their power to super natural beings.

Our drive for knowledge, to discover, and to express ourselves goes beyond religion to philosophy and ultimately to science. A related drive is for self-expression in dance, music, creating stories and narratives, and painting. Later in our evolution this includes writing, literature, classical music, film, digital art. All these latter are forms of making and expressing. These drives to make sense, to create, and express have taken form in the products we create including tools, clothing, recipes for food, paintings. All these endeavors combine our knowing, self-expression and making.

As individual as this knowing, expressing, making can be they are also often designed to be shared. They are manifestations of our being a social species; we are inseparable from others who are an “us.” Our hunger to know, express, and make has brought our creativity to levels that are incorporated into civilizations and have over time propelled humanity into creative and destructive transformation of human existence. These drives to know, create, express, make, and share are continuing for good and bad at an accelerating, miraculous, wondrous pace.

Most of us have bursts of creativity, while for some creativity can reach a level that may be called genius. These are individuals who reached peaks of creativity and made extraordinary contributions to human life whether it be in the sciences, the arts, business, or government. Individuals who are often called geniuses include Isaac Newton, Leonardo da Vinci, Shakespeare, Einstein, Hitler, Beethoven, Steve Jobs, and more. The stage of civilization and the possibilities of being a genius are intertwined.

As all these human potentialities and actualities unfold within cultures, it is essential then to address the wider social world and the evolution of humanity across space and time. The second volume of *What It Is to Be Human* will emphasize more the social factors in our development as a species, including the psychological and historical.

This second volume will trace humanity from our hunting-gathering roots to the present day, with a focus on the landmarks of our development. It then follows a historical timeline from our beginnings until the present and applies what we learned in the first volume to our evolution as a species. Of course, we begin with what human life was like during the Pleistocene era, which is over 90% of our species existence. The development of agriculture and permanent human settlements dramatically transformed human life. Surpluses and occupational diversity with developing expertise brought new dimensions to human social organizations. The development around 5,000 years ago of civilization and literacy also brought new potentialities, complications and dangers to human existence. Both commerce, cooperation and lethal conflict accompanied these developments.

Civilization included a hierarchical government, often with single rulers, expanded commerce, greater agricultural surpluses, further occupational diversification, technological advances, exploited underclasses, the appearance of larger cities, the arts, military, bureaucracy, and eventually the rise of empires. Here is another significant turning point in our history. We are in many ways still living in the world began with the establishment of civilization.

The emergence of written documents, reading, and literacy appeared soon after civilization was institutionalized. It is difficult to overestimate the impact on being human that spread of reading and writing has had on our evolution as a species. Again, there are potentials that humanity has had for a long time, but it takes some sort of human innovation for these abilities to emerge and flourish.

Another phenomenon altering human prospects is the development of the modern sensibility in the Renaissance and Reformation, which includes rebellion against authority in the Protestant Reformation, commerce, intellectual life, science, family-marriage, liberty, and monarchy. It is the turn against hierarchical and paternal authority in these various domains that has set the stage for the transformation of the West, and then most of the planet. The emergence of modern science, with its focus on experiment, observation, reliability and validity led to extraordinary discoveries that have altered how we experience existence. Europe moved from deference to authority and a preoccupation with the next life, to a combination of deference to and rebellion against authority, while looking to improvement and redemption in this life.

Over time, these modern developments led through science technology, capitalism, and the state to industrialization. We still reside in this era of innovation and expansion, of invention and affluence. How these developments unfolded is essential to the story of the social evolution of the human species. The transformation of human life through the industrial and agricultural revolutions is an ever-expanding wonder.

It is not only technological inventions that have propelled humanity in new directions, but there are also significant contributions from increasing knowledge, commerce, from expanding markets to a managerial revolution in large scale corporations. It is the increased expansion of markets, the knowledge revolution, and the development of modern capitalism that has been an essential element in the success of industrialization. For all the exploitation contained within modern business enterprises, for all the seeking wealth for the capitalist entrepreneurs and managers and keeping wages lower for the workers, it is business that has been essential in facilitating advances. This too is a story that needs to be included in the transformation of being human.

A significant factor in the flourishing of capitalism and technology is the explosion of knowledge and expertise. With the development of modern science, the multiplication of different areas of specialization, research, and invention provides the facts, information, statistics, and data necessary for businesses, governments, academia and so forth necessary for economic and cultural advancement. This knowledge, expertise, and innovation has produced such wonders as the telephone, computers, smart phones, satellites, and rocket ships. Our ever innovative industrial-technological civilization is built on a revolution in knowledge and creativity.

Still, this transformation has been a rough and tumble process. As industrialization proceeded so did the power of the state, the drive for expanded markets, conflicts between competing nations, as imperialism and then globalism developed. Some of the worst horrors in human history have occurred during the period of industrialization.

The second volume includes these topic areas and others to show how human existence has evolved, particularly since the rebellions against authority and new ways of perceiving existence and new institutions and practices led to the accelerated pace of creativity and transformations in human culture from the Renaissance and reformation and after. The last chapter of the second volume will attempt to synthesize the knowledge of what it means to be human. And so, let us begin.

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