

## ANTH 102: Humans are cultural animals

**Instructor:** Jim Moore [jjmoore@ucsd.edu](mailto:jjmoore@ucsd.edu), 534-5572 SSB 276  
**TA:** Aaron Gidding [agidding@ucsd.edu](mailto:agidding@ucsd.edu) SSB 283

**Lectures:** MWF 1-1:50 Center Hall 313

**Sections:** W 3, F 9, WLH 2115 [Not required]

**OH:** **Moore:** T 1-2, Th 11-12 or by appt.  
**Gidding:** F 10-12

**Course website:** <http://weber.ucsd.edu/~jmoore/courses>

## ANTH 102: Humans are cultural animals

**TEXT:** DS Wilson, *Evolution for Everyone* (Groundworks)  
E Angeloni, *Physical Anthropology 09/10* (Groundworks)

**Articles:** Course website

**Grading:**

**Midterms** (40 points each). Must have *prior* permission or *emergency* medical excuse to miss either.

**Final** (50 points).

**Discussion questions** (10 points, as indicated on syllabus)

**Paper** (Only if popular demand)

**Course website:** <http://weber.ucsd.edu/~jmoore/courses>

ANBI 159  
Winter 2006

PLEASE COMMENT ON THE FOLLOWING

Instructor (if more than one, please specify which instructor when commenting):

He is very laid back & I think it's awesome that he lectures barefoot. It shows how snotty our culture can be about professionalism. He is very knowledgeable & has a broad range of experience with what he talks about

PLEASE COMMENT ON THE FOLLOWING

Instructor (if more than one, please specify which instructor when commenting):

I hate that he lectures BAREFOOT! So unprofessional and gross. His slides are too wordy and hard to take notes on. **that's why they on web...**

Whatever I do/cover, some will like it and some won't. If you don't ask questions, provide feedback, I'll never know ...

## Course goal:

Biological perspective can make important contributions to understanding humans ...

(non-controversial)

Controversy enters:

... in fact, no human phenomenon can be fully understood without it.

that *not* a trivial statement

“Nothing in biology makes sense except in light of evolution” (Dobzhansky)

Most important goal is *way of thinking about humans and our place in the world.*

## How DO we think about ourselves in the world?

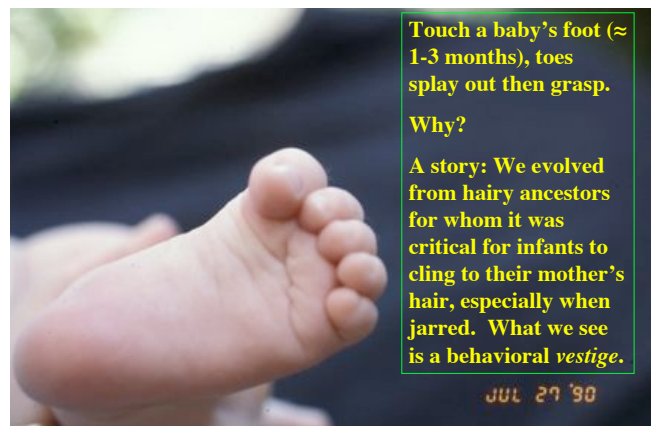
Western civilization is pervaded with dualism: good/bad, black/white, nature/nurture, created/evolved, human/animal.

Tendency has been to equate nature ~ animal ~ **bad**; nurture ~ human ~ civilized ~ **good**.

Result is Biological (Physical) Anthropology, which studies nature/animal aspects of *Homo sapiens*, has acquired some negative freight.

Some of it is justified, some (I think) not. To sort it out, need to understand both power of origin stories, and the history of origin stories told by biological anthropologists (and wannabes).

## Not only “the big questions” ...



Touch a baby's foot ( $\approx$  1-3 months), toes splay out then grasp.

Why?

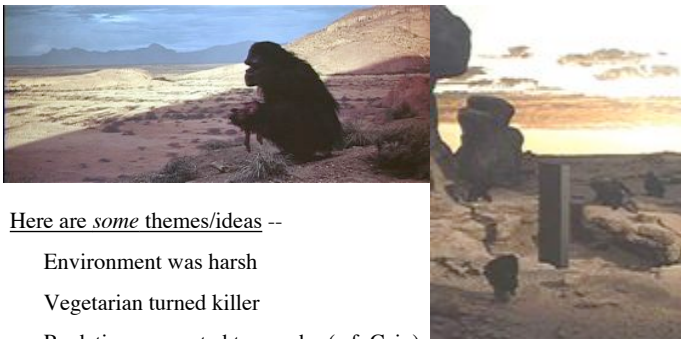
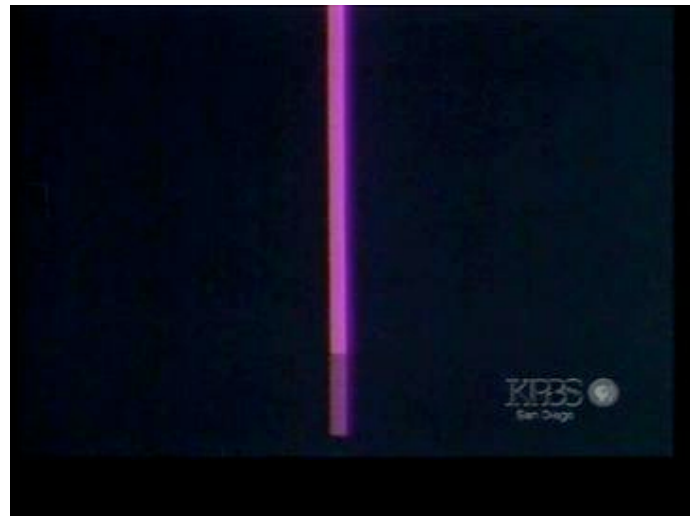
A story: We evolved from hairy ancestors for whom it was critical for infants to cling to their mother's hair, especially when jarred. What we see is a behavioral *vestige*.

JUL 27 '90

1st, a brief summary for those who haven't seen it...



The opening of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) presents a story about how we got to be who we are. What is that story?



Here are *some* themes/ideas --

- Environment was harsh
- Vegetarian turned killer
- Predation connected to murder (c.f. Cain)
- Bipedalism connected to tool use
- Something happened...* (a giant slab from Jupiter transformed 'us')



It's an origin story. It has some elements in common with Genesis, some with paleoanthropology, and some are uniquely its own.

*Every culture has some sort of origin story.*

Origin stories are a particular kind of "hero myth", with a traditional structure:

- Prologue:** Hero just getting along,
- Change:** when something happens
- Journey:** that pushes the hero out,
- Test:** where s/he faces a challenge.
- Donor intervenes:** Help comes unexpectedly,
- Transformation:** changing the hero some way.
- Test again:** There is another challenge,
- Triumph:** in which the hero validates the donor by using the change to succeed.

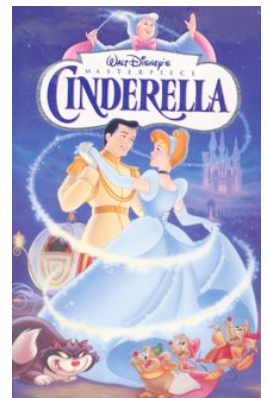
As shown in the intro to *2001: a Space Odyssey...*



"Evolution's been good to you, Sid."  
"Evolution's been good to you, Sid."

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# So, what?

OK, origin stories are found everywhere, and tend to follow a formula... Is this *important*?

A good story has *power*, and power can be used...



Some of the players (just FYI)

Wolfram Sievers  
Wewelsburg Castle

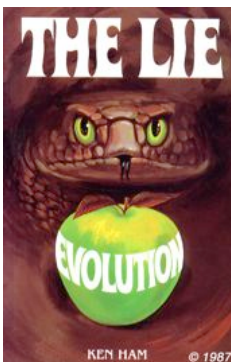
Himmler sought to legitimize Nazism by a story connecting it, via the German people, to the source of all knowledge and beauty - Atlantis.

*Hitler's Search for the Holy Grail 4.5m*

Atlanteans doing good things,  
but the 3<sup>rd</sup> moon crashes into Earth,  
forcing them on a 'journey' to survive,  
during which they tested by ice age and all that,  
and are transformed into the Aryan race,  
which triumphs over adversity in the 1st/2nd Reichs,  
but is challenged again by the loss of WWI and the Treaty of Versailles,  
however rebounds and gloriously triumphs again in the 3rd Reich.

No "donor" in the story, but pretty close to formula

Another example of origins being used to promote doctrine



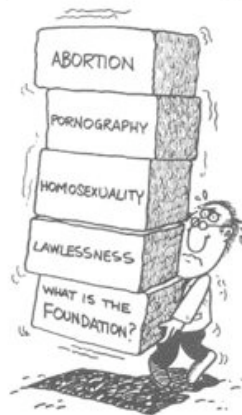
To bring the issue of "what do our origin stories mean to us" into a more modern context, here are some examples from a creationist book.

I'm not picking on creationism, only on this particular book... Also, a fair number of people feel that belief in evolution might lead to moral decay, and just because *this book* isn't convincing (to me...) does not "prove them wrong". The point is **ONLY** to show that such stories can have power, here, today.

Ken Ham's basic thesis is that our moral standards must derive from some underlying foundation. His is Genesis.

THE LIE OF EVOLUTION

PROBLEMS FACING SOCIETY



Whether or not you agree with his list of problems (and this is only a partial set), we can all sympathize with the notion that this is not a perfect world...

He presents his argument in diagrams. To him, Genesis is the foundation, origin, basis, of the Bible; thus, it is the foundation of Christianity, which is the foundation of moral rules.

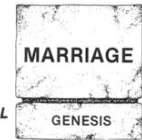


If the foundation crumbles, the structure falls. And the alternative foundation, evolution, doesn't work.



Christianity teaches many rules about how to live; if Christianity has no foundation, then neither (according to Ham) do those rules.

There aren't many naked people on the streets of New Delhi, and Hindus get married, so there may be some hyperbole here...



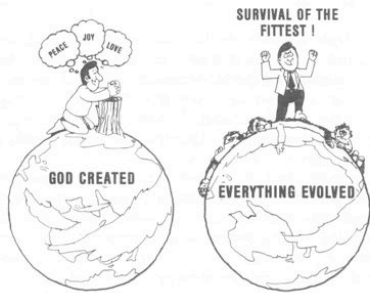
FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

### 5. Business Methods and Evolution

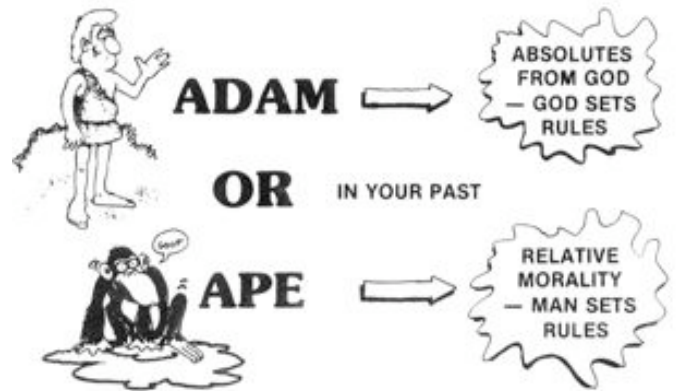
In the last half of the nineteenth century, a widespread philosophy known as "social Darwinism" dominated the thinking of many industrial tycoons of the era. They believed that because evolution was true in the biological sphere, the same methods should apply in the business world: survival of the fittest, elimination of the weak, no love for the poor.

<paragraph snipped>

But in other cases he has a point; "social Darwinism" was more explicit in the 19th century, but it is still around today; post-Enron, hard to argue business methods don't need cleanup.



### 6. Male Chauvinism and Evolution



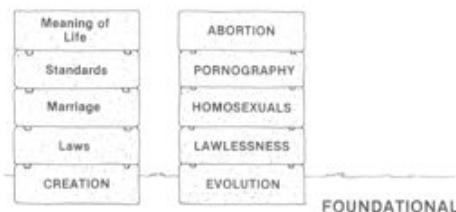
Ham (1987)

Society needs rules, and Ham doesn't have much confidence in us to set them.

### CHAPTER 8

## The Evils of Evolution

The following diagram and comments summarize thus far what has been said.

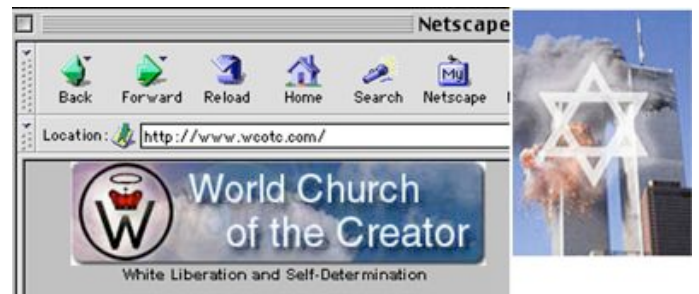


If you accept a belief in God as Creator, then you accept that there are laws, since He is the Lawgiver. God's Law is the reflection of His holy character. He is the Absolute Authority, and we are under total obligation to Him. Laws are not a matter of our opinions but rules given by the One who has the right to impose them upon us

And so we must get our rules from God, based on Genesis.

Republican Whip Tom DeLay has linked teaching evolution with school violence, birth control, and abortion.

NY Times, 6/20/99



Holy Books > White Man's Bible > Chapter XXIX

### White Man's Bible - 29

Who Needs Niggers? or, Elimination of the Black Plague

However, the same foundation has been argued to support other rules, also. This website implies Christianity supports (requires) racism. No 'origin story' has a lock on moral behavior.

## Course conclusion #1

There is no necessary link between what is and what ought to be (naturalistic fallacy).

Related, (probably) any account of history can be used to justify (pretty much) any analysis of how we should behave.

2<sup>o</sup> conclusion: if we're going to study this stuff, need clear, explicit concepts and methods, to avoid misunderstanding and/or deliberate corruption of findings.

## Illustrate some basic tools with a question:

### Are men more aggressive than women?

Define "aggressive" (individual - group/state? physical - verbal? etc)

- On average, do men spend more time/day in aggressive behavior?
- Do men initiate aggressive bouts more often than do women?
- Are the aggressive acts of men more serious/intense/destructive?
- Do the behavioral acts of men include a higher % of aggressive acts than do those of women?
- Is the response to an aggressive act more likely to be aggressive if the recipient is a man?

Assuming for the moment that the answer to some element of original question was "yes",

### WHY are men more aggressive than women?

Niko Tinbergen's "four whys" - *CENTRAL THEME*

Evolutionary (species level; ultimate):

- Function (adaptation): how does the behavior contribute to reproductive success (RS)?
- Phylogeny: The actual history of the trait (why 5 fingers?)

Proximate (individual level):

- Causation (mechanism): what hardware is involved, what triggers its activation?
- Development (ontogeny): how does individual acquire the trait?