

ANTH 205-010

**ANTHROPOLOGY AND HUMAN
NATURE**

**DR. KENNETH ACKERMAN
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

SYLLABUS-FALL 2008

Anthropology 205 - Anthropology and Human Nature

In formal terms the study of human nature has traditionally been the province of philosophy. In informal terms concern and speculation about human nature is almost certainly older than philosophy, older even than religion, though it is probably in religious texts, especially those that deal with origins, that we encounter the earliest efforts to systematize the results of such speculation. Since all peoples have such texts - some oral, some written - we may surmise that our own nature may be among the very earliest of humankind's non-bodily concerns, perhaps as ancient as the conscious discovery of otherness: otherness as between humans and non-humans; otherness as between one human group and another, somehow different, human group. The social sciences, and anthropology especially, are late-comers to such speculation.

Anthropology can be defined as the comparative study of humankind, of its similarities and differences, in all times and places. It is distinguished not only by its effort to describe humankind in all its variety but also by its more problematic attempt to account for those similarities and differences that define us. Yet the student would be hard-pressed to find a contemporary textbook in anthropology that had much, if anything, to say about human nature. It has been suggested that we have made so much of the differences we have discovered between human groups that we despair of finding a common core that extends beyond those dispositions that we share with much of the rest of animal life on the one hand, and those broad generalities that seem to define us as a form of animal on the other: Such generalities as speech, symbolic culture, and kinship. In spite of this apparent reluctance to give systematic attention to human nature within the main body of anthropological theorizing, it has also been asserted that there are literally hundreds of human behavioral universals - body decoration and division of labor, for example - whose universality must in some way be a function of what humans share in common as species. There exists, that is, a substantive comparative base upon which to structure speculation and, perhaps, to achieve some understanding of our nature. That doing so, that anthropology's doing so, may have some significance for humankind was pointedly asserted by Donald Brown in Human Universals.

Anthropological ideas are relevant to the whole of humanity: not merely in the sense that they refer to the whole of humanity but in the sense that they may well affect the whole of humanity. Because they have a near-monopoly on studying humanity as a whole, anthropologists serve - more than anyone else - as intellectual brokers between all its peoples. What anthropologists have to say about humanity has incalculable consequences for the peoples they study and for the public they report to. As Goldschmidt puts it, the influence of anthropology "on the moral philosophy of our time (has been) out of all proportion to the numerical and fiscal strength of the discipline." Consequently, innumerable aspects of public policy are shaped by the view of

humanity that anthropology helps to create. (154)

With respect to human nature, at the very least, such a grandiose generalization may well be justified. Since all of humankind operates some model or other of human nature, ill-informed though such models mostly are, humankind would presumably be better served by knowing what was so than by knowing what was not so.

Unfortunately this course does not promise to tell you what is so. What it does promise is to introduce you to the speculation. It is neither a science nor a social science course, though it draws upon both; it is, rather, a humanities course, satisfying the College of Arts and Science criteria for such courses. The course is constructed on three quite simple propositions, examined in turn. The propositions are taken from an anthropologist, Ralph Linton: Each of us is like all other people, like some other people, and like no other person.

Divisions of the course

There are three parts to the course which examine, in succession, the meaning of each of Linton's propositions. The choices of emphasis in each of the three parts are not asserted to be the only possible choices, but it is asserted that they are important and appropriate to the task at hand. It is intended that they should further your understanding. The general approach taken in the course, insofar as it can be achieved, is objectivistic and naturalistic. The approach assumes that humankind is the chance and, cosmically speaking, momentary byproduct of forces operating in nature on all forms of life, and thus no more inevitable or predictable in its appearance than basalt, begonia, brontosaurus or butterfly. It further assumes that we share our substance with the universe. In this approach your agreement is neither required nor expected. It is merely required and expected that you know what you have been taught. That is true in any class.

Information on the divisions of the course is laid out in such a fashion that the syllabus can be referred to throughout as a guide to where you are and where you're going. When and/or if you find yourself confused about why you're hearing what you're hearing, reading what you're reading, seeing what you're seeing, or being asked what you're being asked, consult the syllabus. If you are still confused, come and see me.

Part I

Each of us is like all other people.

1st Midterm - 2 October 2008

Assigned readings: (Most assigned readings not in books will be found by downloading from the course site)

1. Significant Others - Craig Stanford

Stanford is a biological anthropologist whose specialty is primatology - the behavioral study of our closest living natural kin: monkeys and apes. He describes the pleasures and trials of the field study of the closest of these kin, the chimpanzee, in chapter 12: 'In the Field.' You may find it a useful beginning.

As Stanford states in the preface - an overview you should also read - 'To understand human nature you must understand the apes.' It is a contention with which I agree and one on which the first proposition of the course - Each of us is like all other people - is founded. Though I share his Darwinian view that the primary questions to be asked of any systematic behavior in any animal - including, of course, Homo sapiens - are the adaptive roles/functions served by those behaviors and the possible possible/probable genetic foundations underlying them, I remain skeptical about the degree to which we are yet able to interpret accurately such functions and such foundations. Nonetheless, the essential premise - referred to here as the naturalistic perspective - that human life, like all of life, must find workable solutions to the imperatives of life (e.g. food, sex, protection, etc.) and that these solutions are achieved through potentially discoverable processes (natural selection, sexual selection, mutation, etc.) is our organizing perspective. Because we share so much of our DNA with chimpanzees (98.4% is the current estimate) and because, as Stanford points out in his final chapters, the surviving 'natural' populations of these and other apes are likely to be extinct before the end of the present century, the closely observed examination of their behavior in which he and others engage may represent our last opportunity to discover the natural foundations of human behavior. It may be an understatement to say that as we have come to 'know them' better - and allowing for all the limitations imposed on knowing by things of which we may remain forever ignorant - the once unbridgeable chasm that seemed to separate us has narrowed enough to allow considerable vision across the divide. But we'll let you decide that.

The book has an introduction and fourteen chapters. You are assigned the introduction and preface and nine of those chapters. The Introduction and chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 12 (already noted above) should be read for the first third of the course and chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 for the second.

In the Introduction he defines five cherished myths about which it may be said that you've probably heard of few of them and that he could as easily have listed twenty-five. 1. Clumsy biped 2. Savanna model 3. Hunters vs.

scavengers (2 and 3 are partially covered in a film: In search of human origins) 4. Promiscuous males/monogamous females 5. Monolithic paleolithic.

Chapter 1. Apes from Mars and Venus discusses the degree to which behavioral differences between chimpanzees and bonobos, especially sexual ones, are recognizable in natural settings. While the distinctions are important ones for the interpretation of continuity/discontinuity between apes and hominids - bonobo sexuality having been described as much more like hominid sexuality than is chimpanzee sexuality - the apparent fact that captive bonobo populations do behave sexually in ways more reminiscent of hominid sexuality does support the view that the behavioral repertoire of bonobos is different from that of chimpanzees. (It should also be noted that many of his chapters are adapted from articles published at various times and a close reading will show that elsewhere in the book he seems to support the difference rather than the similarity. I will give more emphasis to the differences since these have been documented by other scholars, most notably Frans deWaal.) In other respects Stanford agrees that females play a very different organizing role among bonobos than they do among chimpanzees.

Chapter 2. You are what you eat deals with dietary differences between and among chimpanzees, highland and lowland gorillas, and bonobos - and, to a lesser extent, with sexual behavior. Since diet and sex are primary adaptive determinants some of the most important arguments for ape-human continuities are founded on these strategies.

Chapter 3. Let us prey concerns meat eating and hunting among different of the apes, the extent to which hunting can be interpreted as coordinated, differences between chimps and bonobos and between highland and lowland gorillas. There is also a peripheral discussion relating exclusively to hominids, centering on the antiquity and importance of cooking foods.

Chapter 4. The Handmaid's Tale returns to sexual behavior, now with the emphasis on sexual selection, sexual politics/strategies, and the importance of female selection in primates generally, including humans.

Chapter 12. In the Field is, as noted, a description of the process.

You are encouraged, in reading the introduction and first four chapters, to give your attention to continuities, to adaptation, and to behavioral flexibility.

2. "The Universal People" by Donald Brown

Universals are alluded to in the second paragraph of this syllabus. This chapter from Human Universals is a summary exposition of our current understanding of the extent of universals found among humankind. Each cultural universal presents the study of humankind with an empirical problem: If universal, why? That is, we ask what it is in the nature of the animal itself, or in its invariant condition, that will give rise, everywhere, to the same behavioral phenomena. Some answers are seemingly self-evident or, worse, tautological--only human have language, speech is a defining characteristic of humans. Other answers are less, or not at all, self-evident.

It is important to understand that what is universal to human cultures

need not be universal to human individuals--some items will be characteristic of cultures, others of both cultures and individuals.

3. The Downside of Upright - Jennifer Ackerman (no kin)

A brief overview of the evolutionary processes and purposes served in the hominoid/hominid shift to upright posture and some consequences that follow therefrom.

4. The Forbidden Experiment by Roger Shattuck

The book describes the five and one-half year effort by a French physician, Itard, to confer what might be called 'humanness' on the Wild Boy of Aveyron called, by Itard, Victor. You are encouraged to read the book as a vehicle for considering the essential characteristics of humanness and thus the criteria you would apply in recognizing it. Such questions follow logically from the works by Stanford and Brown. Note, for example, the following discussion of 'persons':

What is a person? At first thought, such a question may seem absurd, flippant, even impertinent. ...yet in fact the term person, like many other words the meaning of which we ordinarily take for granted, implicitly carries a number of assumptions, generally unrecognized, of what members - at least most members - of the human species are like, or are conceived to be like in societies where the term person or its cognates are used. Paul McReynolds, Halcyon, 1991.

Human is, of course, one of its cognates. What you will be asked to do is to make explicit those 'implicit' assumptions with Victor as a sort of test case. Read the book with the understanding that you will be expected to state the criteria on the basis of which Victor does or does not fit your assumptions about humanness.

5. Ishmael Daniel Quinn (Bookstore)

Ishmael is a didactic novel structured primarily as a 'conversation' between a man and a gorilla (NB It is NOT about language learning in non-human primates.) I found, on reading it, so many similarities between the gorilla's perspective and the perspective taken throughout this course, that I thought many of you might find it helpful. In talking about foraging I give little if

any attention to the Taker-Leaver contrast emphasized by Quinn's gorilla. And though there will be no questions from Ishmael on the first exam, I recommend that you read it early. It WILL relate to - and an essay questions WILL be asked from it in - the second part of the course.

It may be useful, in reading Quinn, to consider the following from a NYT review of A Quest for Life, Ian McHarg's autobiography. McHarg is described as the 'most influential landscape architect of our time.'

A clue to the source of his passion is the oddly repetitious way he quotes, maybe half a dozen times in the book, the same passage from Genesis. It never fails to make him fighting mad. The first time it occurs, McHarg is reading scripture at age 16: 'God made man in his own image, made he him.' Did that mean that the acts of man to man had a moral content, were sacramental? But what then of the acts of man to nature; were these only secular? Next, I considered, 'Ye shall have dominion...over all life.' This was not my instinctive reaction. Did I wish to exert dominion over golden eagles, salmon, trout, deer, hedgehogs? No indeed. But worse was to come. 'Ye shall multiply and subdue the earth.' MULTIPLY. To reproduce seemed reasonable, but to subjugate was only a terrible magnification of dominion, murder, rape and pillage. I rejected this categorically.'

...whatever happened, young Ian McHarg...chose a career as a kind of secular minister, a minister whose energy derived from his personal rebellion against the Bible. Of the human species---'who shall have dominion'--he writes with a reformationist zeal and with the poetic power of a born orator. ... 'We are the bullies of the earth: strong, foul, coarse, greedy, careless, indifferent to others, laying waste as we proceed, leaving wounds, welts, lesions, suppurations on the earth body, increasingly engulfed in our own ordure and, finally, abysmally ignorant of the way the world works, crowing our superiority over all life.'

Films: (Films are part of the substantive content of the course; questions will be taken from them.)

1. "Life in the Trees"

A brief overview of the several major kinds of primates other than humans: prosimians, New World monkeys, Old World monkeys, and apes. The film is a supplement to lectures on primates.

2. The Search for Human Origins

One part from a series of films made by Donald Johanson, the co-discoverer of Lucy - the most complete australopithecine skeletal remains yet found - which attempts to reconstruct the distinctive life strategies of one of our earliest hominid ancestors. Since a major part of the emphasis in the first part of the course is on the relationship of the nutritional imperative to the evolution of the primates/hominids, the film provides a useful visualization of those connections.

3. "Chimps, numbers, cognition - surprise! This will and will not speak for itself - nothing, of course, speaks for itself.

Lecture Topics: general

1. Our place in nature

The organizing presumption is that if humankind has a nature, its origin is natural and is potentially discoverable in nature. Thus, emphasis is on continuity. The naturalistic perspective assumes that humans are products of the same processes (natural selection, sexual selection, mutation, etc.) and subject to the same imperatives (nutritional, reproductive, protective) as all other forms of life. Therefore the sources of our nature are to be discovered in the effects of those processes over time and in the particular solutions to the imperatives arrived at by successive forms of non-human primates and of hominids: australopithecines, *Homo erectus*, *Homo sapiens neanderthal*, *Homo sapiens sapiens*. (These matters are treated in much greater detail in several biological anthropology courses.)

Like all species, humans are also distinguished by specializations that differentiate us to greater or lesser degree from other forms of our order. In most, if not all, instances it should be possible to discover antecedents to human specializations in the structures and behaviors of our nearest relatives. For that reason greatest attention is given to various field and laboratory studies of chimpanzees.

(FOR YOUR INFORMATION ONLY)
Classification of recent primates

Order Primates

Suborder Anthropoidea

Infraorder Platyrrhini

Superfamily Ceboidea (New World monkeys)

Family Cebidae (e.g. squirrel monkeys, capuchin)

Family Callitrichidae (e.g. marmoset)

Infraorder Catarrhini

Superfamily Cercopithecoidea (Old World monkeys)

Family Cercopithecidae (e.g. macaque, guenon)

Family Colobidae (e. g. langur, colobus monkey)

Superfamily Hominoidea (apes and humans)

Family Hominidae (e.g. modern humans,
Australopithecines)

Family Pongidae (e.g. chimpanzee, gorilla, orangutan)

Family Hylobatidae (e. g. gibbon, siamang)

Sub-topics: The nature of facts; the Great Chain of Being; a biochemical family tree of the primates; the nature of primates; chimpanzee behavior; human specializations; the nature of the evidence.

2. Process: how our hominoid ancestors might have lived

Foremost among the mammalian strategies leading to speciation are the nutritional ones, as the book by Stanford implies. The distinctive nutritional strategy that is understood to have distinguished the genus *Homo* from other apes is referred to as mixed foraging (also 'hunting and gathering'). Over 99% of the time that hominids have occupied the earth their exclusive nutritional strategy has been mixed foraging. In a symposium originally labeled *Man the Hunter* the two organizers, S. Washburn and C. Lancaster, asserted the following in their summary arguments:

"In a very real sense, our intellect, interests, emotions and basic social life; all are products of the success of the (foraging) adaptation." (the authors, in fact, said "hunting adaptation" through neither would have disagreed with the change.) After brief discussion of the successive forms of hominids emphasis will be given to the distinctive characteristics of proto human and human foragers.

If only as a reminder of the importance of solutions to the nutritional imperative in the structuring of animal ways of life, consider the following from Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom:

Underlying the rich symbolic universe that food and eating always represent ... there is the animal reality of our living existence. It is not separate from our humanity, but it is an integral part of it. Only because most of us eat plentifully and frequently and have not known intense hunger may we sometimes too easily forget the astonishing, at times terrifying, importance of food and eating. That becomes clear as soon as we give the subject of food a moment's serious thought. Without at least minimal access to food and water, we die. Except for the structurally determined irritability of all living matter and the organism's built-in drive to reproduce [other `imperatives'], nothing defines our nature as living creatures more dramatically than our ingestion.

...Food is something we talk about, think about, conceptualize. But we more than abstract it and desire it--we really must consume it to stay alive. ... Yet eating can also excite deep ambivalence because the act of eating seems so animal.

Sidney Mintz pp. 4-5

Sub-topics: The hominids; foraging as a way of life; the nature of the evidence.

Key terms

naturalistic perspective; foraging (small - microband/macrobond, nomadic, egalitarian, generalized reciprocity, acephalous, familistic, animistic: these traits of foraging will be defined in Part II) universals; specializations

Exam questions

Several types of questions are included in all exams; included are multiple choice and true-false with which you should be familiar. There will also be matching questions (e.g. authors with their ideas), fill-in questions (in which you are asked to complete precisely one or more key phrases; these will be phrases which, on the basis of repetition alone, you will have had adequate opportunity to learn precisely), short answer (in which you will be asked to do two things: define and/or explain a key term and place the term in the context created by the part of the course and the approach to human nature covered in that part, e.g.: Great Chain of Being), and one essay question.

IT IS USEFUL TO HIGHLIGHT IN YOUR NOTES ANYTHING THAT IS WRITTEN ON THE BOARD, SINCE QUESTIONS TEND TO BE ORGANIZED AROUND THESE MATTERS.

Examinations will be returned and discussed in detail. AFTER WHICH THEY MUST

BE RETURNED; some questions from the first two exams will be included VERBATIM on the final.

PART II - Each of us is like some other people
SECOND EXAM: 6 November 2008

Assigned readings: Other than the chapters from Stanford, most of the readings in this part of the course have to do with myth though the initial lectures will concern language and culture. Culture, language and myth are primary components in the structuring of human ways of life; the 'some other people' whom we are like are those with whom we share language, culture and myth. Since a people's knowledge and their culture are synonymous, and since most human knowledge is mythological, reliance on myth in pursuit of an understanding of culture seems appropriate.

1. (Stanford) Chapter 7. Got Culture? Stanford - perhaps with some exaggeration to make his point - argues here against those cultural anthropologists who conclude that culture is an exclusively human possession. While a distinction will be made between 'generic culture' and symbolic culture (generic: learned, accumulated, transmitted social traditions), this is the position taken in this course as well. (A recent article summarizing over thirty-five years of fieldwork with orangutans reaches a similar conclusion concerning 'generic culture' and orangs.)

Chapter 8. 'Machiavelli's uncle was a monkey' is concerned with ape intelligence and the utilization of that intelligence in short and long-term intraspecies interactions. Pages 130-137 include a useful discussion of the nature of science as it is applied in primate studies and an equally useful discussion of/attack on evolutionary psychology.

Chapter 9. 'The nature of nurture' deals with what is commonly called the nature-nurture controversy as it applies to the interpretation of the foundations of primate behavior - monkey, ape and human. This chapter, more than the others, gives attention to kin selection and its strategies. (He does this without once citing the name of E. O. Wilson though there are several citations of R. L. Trivers.)

Chapter 10. 'The Silliest Debate' (and therefore a candidate for 'Cherished Myths') seeks continuities among forms of communication found in primates. Stanford has given much more extensive attention to continuity between animal systems of communication and human language than he does here; nonetheless this is a useful examination of the argument for substantial

antecedents to 'language' in non-human primate (and other) systems of communication.

2. "Maintenance of meaning and motivation" from "Some Cultural Imperatives" by John Bennett and Melvin Tumi

The authors argue that maintaining meaning and motivation is essential, in a cultural context, to performance of the other activities (see article's first paragraph) necessary to cultural continuity. Since all of the other 'activities' have analogues in the behavior of other animals it is 'knowledge' that transforms their satisfaction into culture. As the authors state, "...humans act in terms of their conception of what is..." While culture has

many definitions the one we will use comes from Ward Goodenough: Culture consists of standards for deciding what is, standards for deciding what can be, standards for deciding how one feels about it, standards for deciding what to do about it, and standards for deciding how to go about doing it.

3. The Denial of Death by Ernest Becker.
"Introduction" and all of Part I (to page 92)

While Becker's book will be considered in lectures almost exclusively in Part III of the course, there is much in these early chapters on the individual's relationship to culture. Becker contends that "culture is the compromise with life that makes human life possible" and you will be expected to understand what he means. Because the book is somewhat difficult, beginning the reading early may be useful when we come to the last part of the course.

4. "Introduction" to Primal Myths by Barbara Sproul

Creation myths represent but one category of mythology, though an important one when considering human nature. Many of a culture's most significant conceptions of human nature are to be discovered in its myths of origin. Though there are many definitions of myth the one most useful to consideration of relationships between myth and culture is taken from Elizabeth Janeway: "any belief or subject of belief whose truth or reality is accepted uncritically." And while Sproul is largely concerned with creation myths, much of her early discussion of myth in general would apply as well to this more encompassing definition. Since we will be considering a number of specific connections between origin myths as a class of myths and cultural conceptions of human nature, you should pay particular attention to the distinction she makes between relative and absolute reality and to the roles of facts and metaphors in the structuring of myths.

5. "Genesis" I-XI (This reading can be readily secured from your own or an acquaintance's Old Testament, Bible, etc.)

Genesis contains the primary and most familiar myths of origin of those societies/religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) that regard one or another part of what Christians call "The Old Testament" as a sacred text. The first eleven chapters constitute a prehistory - as opposed to a history - of humankind; they can be regarded as a mature and coherent source of propositions about human nature, of the kind of creature that the creating god made when it created Adam and Eve. We will look at it as a theory of human nature. (But see Quinn on origins of the Adam story.)

6. "The myth of the Great Father" an Aranda (Australian Aboriginal) myth from Primal Myths

A myth of origin taken from a foraging society with a different set of "facts" and different conceptions of human nature. Genesis and the Myth of the Great Father will be compared in terms of certain universal themes found in creation mythologies as well as with regard to Sproul's distinction between relative and absolute realities.

7. "The Dreaming" W.E.H. Stanner

(While written some years ago Stanner's discussion of the Aboriginal worldview continues to be very highly regarded.) Connections between myth and everyday life (i.e. the rest of culture) are particularly well illustrated by scholarly discussions of the Australian Aboriginal concept known as "The Dreaming." Thus the reading unites several different subject matters that run through the course: foraging society, the nature of culture, and the nature and function of myth. The definition of symbolic culture given earlier in the syllabus can usefully be applied when reading Stanner. Aboriginal standards for deciding what is and what can be are clearly different from the standards of people whose origin myth is Genesis.

Films

1. "The Baka"

One convenient way of coming to recognize the nature and functions of culture for humankind is to see it in operation. The Baka is a film about foragers. (It will also be seen to be about culture and The Universal People)

Lecture Topics: general

1. Culture as the human way of life

It is arguable that all creatures have culture, if culture is equated with environmentally acquired knowledge, or shared learning. What distinguishes

human culture from that of other creatures, and makes of culture the specialized adaptive niche of the primate *Homo sapiens sapiens*, is that human culture is mediated by symbols (symbol: a thing the value or meaning of which is bestowed by those who use it), that is, by language. Symbols have made possible the creation, accumulation and transmission of infinitely greater quantities of knowledge in the species as a whole than are found in other animals. But symbols are not reality; they constitute the labels we confer on those aspects of reality of which we become or are made aware, as well as our sense of the relationships among those aspects.

The following excerpt is taken from the appropriately (for my purpose) titled essay by Clifford Geertz: 'The impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man' (pp 112-114)

...There is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture. Men without culture would not be the clever savages of Golding's *Lord of the Flies* thrown back upon the cruel wisdom of their animal instincts; nor would they be the nature's noblemen of Enlightenment primitivism or even, as classical anthropological theory would imply, intrinsically talented apes who had somehow failed to find themselves. They would be unworkable monstrosities with very few useful instincts, fewer recognizable sentiments, and no intellect: mental basket cases. As our central nervous system - and most particularly its crowning curse and glory, the neocortex - grew up in great part in interaction with culture, it is incapable of directing our behavior or organizing our experience without the guidance provided by systems of significant symbols. What happened to us in the Ice Age is that we were obliged to abandon the regularity and precision of detailed genetic control over our conduct for the flexibility and adaptability of a more generalized, though of course no less real, genetic control over it. To supply the additional information necessary to be able to act, we were forced, in turn, to rely more and more heavily on cultural sources - the accumulated fund of significant symbols. Such symbols are thus not mere expressions, instrumentalities, or correlates of our biological, psychological, and social existence; they are prerequisites of it. Without men, no culture, certainly; but equally, and more significantly, without culture, no men.

We are, in sum, incomplete and unfinished animals who complete and finish ourselves through culture - and not through culture in general but through highly particular forms of it...

We live, as one writer has neatly put it, in an information gap. Between what our body tells us and what we have to know in order to function, there is a vacuum we must fill ourselves, and we fill it with information (or misinformation) provided by our culture. The boundary between what is innately controlled and what is culturally controlled in human behavior is an ill defined and wavering one. ... Between the basic ground plans for our life that our genes lay down (the capacity to speak or to smile) and the precise behavior we in fact execute ... lies a complex set of significant symbols under whose direction we transform the first into the second, the ground plans into the activity.

We will approach symbolic culture through definition (see Syllabus, page 11) and illustration. The primary behavioral manifestation of shared culture is our capacity to predict and to 'understand' one another's actions as well as the products of those actions (standards for deciding how to go about doing it; also, recipes). Thus we will look at some behavioral predictions found in a classroom. We will then consider two contrasting theories concerning the relationships between cultural knowledge and individual behavior (replication of uniformity and organization of diversity).

2. Uses of myth

Myth will be treated in one of its meanings as synonymous with symbolic culture; in another, as an aspect of culture. By examining specific mythologies (Genesis, "The Myth of the Great Father") we will discover connections in the interplay between and among myth, culture and behavior. At this point a distinction will also be made between human nature and the human condition or, at any rate, aspects of the human condition. Finally, we will look at the recurrent themes found in myths of creation and at ways in which these themes can be interpreted as evidence of a universal human effort to transform nature and our nature (relative reality) into 'realities' taken to be transcendent (absolute reality).

The following somewhat lengthy quotation is included because of the economy with which it discusses key relationships between and among language, culture and myth. It was written by Roy Rappaport for the volume *Assessing Cultural Anthropology* edited by Robert Borofsky (pp156-7).

"It conforms to this account to say that language is central to human adaptation, but it is clear that such a statement is inadequate or even misleading as a characterization of the relationship of language to language user. If people act, and can only act, in terms of meanings they or their ancestors have conceived, they are as much in the service of those conceptions as those conceptions are parts of their adaptations. There is, that is to say, an inversion or partial inversion, in the course of human evolution, of the relationship of the adaptive apparatus to the adapting species. The capacity that is central to human adaptation gives rise to concepts, like God, Heaven, and Hell, that come to possess those who have conceived them. To argue that all such concepts or the actions they inform enhance the survival and reproduction of the organisms who maintain them is not credible.

That the implications of these suggestions may be obvious does not make

them any less profound. First, if the metaphor of inversion (surely a simplification) is at all apt, the extent to which concepts like inclusive fitness and kin selection account for cultural phenomena is rather limited. Second, and related, whatever the case may be among other species, group selection (selection for perpetuation of traits tending to contribute to the survival of the groups in which they occur but negatively to the survival of the particular individuals in possession of them) is not only possible among humans but of great importance to humanity's evolution. All that is needed to make group selection possible is a device that leads individuals to separate their conceptions of well-being or advantage from biological survival. Notions like God, Heaven, Hell, heroism, honor, shame, fatherland, and democracy, encoded in procedures of enculturation representing them as factual, natural, public, sacred (and therefore, compelling), have dominated every culture of which we possess ethnographic or historical knowledge. In more general terms, that is to say that if adaptive systems can be characterized as systems that operate (consciously or unconsciously) to preserve the truth value of certain propositions about themselves in the face of disturbances tending to falsify them, then it is appropriate to propose that the favored propositions in human systems are about such conceptions as God, Honor, Freedom, and the Good. That their preservation has often required great or even ultimate sacrifice on the parts of individuals hardly needs saying. Postulates concerning the unitary or trinary nature of God are among those for which countless individuals have sacrificed their lives, as are such

mundane slogans as "Death before dishonor" or "Better dead than red."

A final implication: we approach here a generally unrecognized evolutionary law or rule, possibly the evolutionary equivalent of the old adage about the nonexistence of free lunches: every evolutionary advance sets new problems as it responds to and ameliorates earlier ones, and language was no exception.

We have been led from a celebration of language to the contemplation of its vices. In addition to the unprecedented possibility of contradiction between the preservation of symbolic constructions and the survival of organisms that imagined them into existence, two other problems are intrinsic to language's very gifts. First, when a sign is only conventionally related to what it signifies as in Pierce's sense of symbol, the sign can occur in the absence of the signified and events can occur without being signaled. The same conventional relationship which permits discourse to escape from the here and now also facilitates lying. If humans are not the world's first or only liars they are the world's foremost liars. Second, language makes the conception of alternatives to prevailing conditions and customs unavoidable.

The very capacity that enhances flexibility presents a continuing challenge to prevailing social and conceptual orders. The dark side of enhanced flexibility is increased possibility for disorder. It is of interest that Buber took lie and alternative to be the grounds of all evil. Be this as it may, if there are to be any words at all it may be necessary to establish what may be called THE WORD; the "True Word" to stand against the dissolving power of lying words and of many words, of falsehood and babel.

The first question we face is close to the one asked by Hans Kung in the first paragraph of his massive *Does God Exist?*

And since the emergence of modern, rational man there has been an almost desperate struggle with the problem of human certainty. Where, we wonder, is there a rocklike, unshakable certainty on which all human certainty could be built?

I would modify Kung's question only by dropping the terms "modern" and "rational." Modern rational man may be faced with the breakdown of ancient means for establishing certainty but that is another matter."

Key terms

culture; symbol; myth; maintenance of meaning and motivation; relative and absolute reality; human condition; functions of myth; replication of uniformity and organization of diversity; prediction; themes of creation mythologies (mental processes; transforming actions; procreation; order from chaos; divine sacrifice - IF THESE ARE NOT DISCUSSED IN CLASS THEY WILL NOT BE ASKED ON THE EXAM); individuality within finitude

PART III - Each of us is like no other person.

FINAL EXAM: (After December 11 - Time as yet unknown)

Assigned readings: All of the readings in the final part of the course are concerned with those processes that give rise to, maintain and express the uniqueness of the person. Uniqueness - also sovereignty, ego, individuality, etc. - is taken to be an aspect both of human nature and of the human condition.

1. The Denial of Death by Ernest Becker. Chapters 3, 7, 8, and 11.

Becker, whose book - in spite of its title - is about heroism, operates from a disarmingly simple pivotal premise: humans, having acquired a self, want to feel good about that self, want to discover value in that self, want to achieve in life a kind of 'cosmic significance.' Wanting to feel good about ourselves is a byproduct of our 'existential paradox': 'individuality within finitude.' The quest for the heroic, collective and/or individual, is the strategy by means of which we seek to resolve the paradox.

His primary focus in chapter 7 is on the psychological mechanism - transference - by which we acquire and subsequently, often many times in our lives, refashion our selves. While the term transference is taken directly from psychoanalysis, Becker's use of the term - and its use in the course - is much broader. It is especially important in the human effort to balance

what he calls 'the twin ontological motives', Agape and Eros. The final chapter is principally concerned with the condition of the individual in complex industrial societies that offer few culturally reinforced occasions for discovering heroism collectively and for whom, therefore, the pathways to cosmic significance are far more problematic and more frequently egoistic than for individuals in what we think of as traditional societies.

2. excerpts from "The Loss of the Creature" from The Message in the Bottle by Walker Percy

If transference is an ongoing dynamic in human relationships, individuality is always at risk. One example of that risk is what Percy refers to as the surrender of sovereignty, in this instance to experts whose claim to greater knowledge in complex societies may be such as to induce the individual to succumb in matters not only of knowledge but of taste. Sovereignty is thus a special instance of uniqueness.

3. excerpts from Father and Son by Edmund Gosse

This is an extraordinary document, an autobiography that captures in memory an individual's discovery of selfhood. Gosse's childhood was one of extreme isolation from direct influences on his character formation other than those of his parents, especially his father. Because of that isolation and the time it lasted Gosse was able to recall the precise moment when he began the process of breaking from the primary transference relationship with his father.

4. "Our Deepest Desires" pp. 199-203 of The Forbidden Experiment by Roger Shattuck

In addition to his history of the response to and the study of Victor, Shattuck seeks to wrest a larger philosophical meaning from the enterprise: this is found in his conclusion. It is recalled to your attention because there is a striking correspondence between those 'deepest desires' and what Becker calls the 'twin ontological motives.'

5. "Examples of transference" the Autobiography of Malcolm X

These were selected to exemplify what Becker calls 'the spell cast by persons,' and thus the psychological mechanism of transference. What makes this example extraordinary is that the transference relationship between Malcolm X and Elijah Mohammed was ruptured during the time when Malcolm X was dictating his autobiography to Alex Haley; he reflects, in these selections, on the consuming power of his connection to his leader. The transformation is so dramatic that, shortly thereafter--and before his assassination--he changes his name and his persona.

Film Confessions of a Hitler Youth (Alfons Heck)

The film illustrates many of the processes discussed in the final part of the course: surrender of sovereignty; the Agape motive; transference; 'the spell cast by persons'; and revitalization (see below).
(On Hitler, see quotations at end of syllabus.)

Lecture topic: general

1. Individuality is not normally the business of the disciplines that seek to be the sciences of the social behavior of humankind.

Again, Clifford Geertz, from *The Interpretation of Culture*:

"If we want to discover what man amounts to, we can only find it in what men are - and what men are, above all other things, is various. It is in understanding that variousness...that we shall come to construct a concept of human nature that, more than a statistical shadow and less than a primitivist dream, has both substance and truth.

Becoming human is becoming individual and we become individual under the guidance of cultural patterns...which give form, order, point, and direction to our lives....(But) we must...descend into detail, past the misleading tags, past the metaphysical types, past the empty similarities to grasp firmly the essential character of not only the various cultures but the various sorts of individuals within each culture, if we wish to encounter humanity face to face."

It will be argued that it is precisely our uniqueness that confounds all efforts to systematize an understanding of our human nature. It will also be argued that individuality is a natural byproduct of our evolutionary history and of our development of symbolically mediated culture. In what is a narrow application of Freudian terminology, ego (selfhood) balances the conflicting demands of id (evolutionarily acquired animal nature) and superego (culturally acquired 'restrictions'). The terminology also matches the three organizing clauses ('each of us is like...') for the three parts of the course.

A number of the readings and the film bear directly on a topic that is not otherwise explicitly treated in readings, but that will be considered extensively in lectures. Revitalization is 'a deliberate organized effort on the part of some members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture (identity) through a process of multiple innovations.' Revitalization movements occur when individuals are 'unable to achieve reliable satisfaction of values deemed essential to well being and self respect.' (Both quotations: A. F. C. Wallace.) In other words (Becker's), such movements occur when people no longer feel good about themselves. While all such movements are, by definition, social, adherence to them is a function of individual perception; that is, of personal assessment of well being and self respect. Thus, the phenomenon of revitalization, though otherwise extraordinary in its occurrence, unites many of the themes considered in the final part of the course.

The course concludes with a set of orderly contrasts between the appeals of

culture and selfhood.

Key terms

heroism; myth; transference; individuality; 'twin ontological motives'; sovereignty; 'individuality within finitude'; revitalization; avocation

A few examples of the enduring importance of heroism in human social orders - heroism being the strategy, according to Becker, by means of which we seek to 'deny death' - are cited below from issues of the NYT Book Review.

The first, taken from a review of Houdini!!! by Kenneth Silverman (review by Teller), emphasizes individual heroics:

"Why is Houdini still a part of our world, while other turn of the century superstars seem ancient history? Mr Silverman calls Houdini 'an icon of modernity, inseparable from skyscrapers, headlines, biplanes, radio, automobile tires, submarines' -- the symbols of the new age of technology. ... His broad daylight, no-nonsense approach spoke - and still speaks - to the ever-growing scientific sophistication of the 20th century. Houdini was unique, Mr. Silverman writes: 'scholar, inventor, aviator, freak, bibliophile, publicity mill, film producer, psychic investigator, handcuff king. On fire to make his individuality count and last, to impress his color and energy on the void, he achieved afterlife as a fabulous archetypal being.'"

NYT Book Review 15 Dec 96 p. 15

The second example is addressed to everyday heroism, to the pathways cleared by various cultures for heroics. It is meant to demonstrate the proposition that collective strategies tend to shape individual ones. In an essay on variations in the Cinderella plot, Joan Gould notes that 'more than 500 versions of the Cinderella story have been catalogued in Europe alone, a few with a hero in the place of a heroine.'

"In the Grimm Brothers version, the Ash Girl asks her father to bring her a hazel twig, which she plants on her mother's grave and waters three times a day with her tears. The twig grows into a tree that harbors a white bird, which throws down whatever she asks for. The farmyard cinderella has the power to get what she wants without her stepmother's permission, but in fairy tales as in life, nothing comes to us until we are strong enough to take it.

In these archaic versions, the good mother of childhood has been replaced by a more negative image, usually a stepmother, who tries to devour the gift the good mother has left for her child. But this is not the way we see our roles in the world today. We transform nature, not the other way around. We don't choose to be indebted to birds and bones, and certainly

don't credit our maturity to the image of a nurturing mother when we consider ourselves." NYT Book Review 22 Dec 96 p. 23

The contrast between Houdinian heroism and Ash Girl heroism are, as Quinn notes in the very different context of Ishmael, paths that reflect their time.

Exam questions

The final examination is about one-third longer than the mid-terms and is cumulative in the sense that questions asked on earlier exams will be asked again on the final. It will be useful to you, therefore, to make careful note of correct answers when the exams are returned and discussed. The essay question for the final will ask you to recapitulate the main points of the course, with emphasis on the final part, in terms of the three organizing clauses: Each of us is like all other people; like some other people; and like no other person.

Grading

Grades are based upon each individual's percentage of the highest score achieved in the class for each of the exams; the highest scores achieved in the class are added together; your scores are added together; and a percentage is derived. If you are above 90% you will have an A; if you are below 60% you will have an F. If you discover that you are doing more poorly than you anticipated you are invited to come to see me during office hours or by appointment. Perhaps you can be helped! (+/- is in use).

When questions arise during the course, feel free to ask them.

From this the poem springs: that we live in a place that is
not our own and, much more, not ourselves
and hard it is in spite of blazoned days.

Wallace Stevens

Everyone, ONCE, ONCE only. Just ONCE and no more. And we
also ONCE. Never again. But this having
been ONCE, although only ONCE, to have
been of the earth seems irrevocable.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Only someone who is ready for everything, who doesn't exclude any experience, even the most incomprehensible, will live the relationship with another person as something alive and will himself sound the depths of his own being.

For if we imagine this being of the individual as a larger or smaller room, it is obvious that most people come to know only one corner of their room, one spot near the window, one narrow strip on which they keep walking back and forth. In this way they have a certain security. And yet how much more human is the dangerous insecurity that drives those prisoners in Poe's stories to feel out the shapes of their horrible dungeons and not be strangers to the unspeakable terror of their cells. We, however, are not prisoners.

As for me, when I avoid...risks, I feel safe and virtuous but perhaps a little cramped. And I suspect that, like many people who watch their diet carefully - despite the lapses - and exercise more or less scrupulously and buckle up religiously, I am a little obsessed with immortality, with the prospect of controlling that which cannot be controlled. I know I am doing the sensible thing - my behavior matches, most of the time, the spectrum of real possibilities. But against what scale of value? I sometimes think that the more reckless among us may have something to teach the careful about the sort of immortality that comes from living fully every day.

Melvin Konner

We become lovers when we see Romeo and Juliet, and Hamlet makes us students. The blood of Duncan is upon our hands, with Timon we rage against the world, and when Lear wanders out upon the heath the terror of madness touches us. Ours is the white sinlessness of Desdomona, and ours, also, the sin of Iago. Art, even the art of fullest scope and widest vision, can never really show us the external world. All that it shows us is our own soul, the one world of which we have any real cognizance... It is Art, and Art only, that reveals us to ourselves.

Oscar Wilde

The salvation of art derives in the best of modern times from a celebration of the triumph of the autonomous self -- as in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony -- and in the worst of times from naming the unspeakable: the strange and feckless movements of the self trying to escape.

Exhilaration comes from naming the unnameable and hearing it named. If Kafka's Metamorphosis is presently a more accurate account of the self than Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, it is the more exhilarating for being so.

The naming of the predicament of the self by art is its reversal. Hence, the salvific effect of art. Through art, the predicament of the self becomes not only speakable, but laughable. Kafka and his friends laughed when he read his stories to them.

Walker Percy

The idea which I have never ceased developing is that finally, everyone is always responsible for what has been made of him--even if he cannot do more than assume this responsibility. I believe that a man can always make something out of what has been made of him. This is the definition I would today give to freedom: the little movement which makes out of a totally conditioned social being a person who does not give back the totality of what he has received from his conditioning.

J. P. Sartre

After all, the mind is such an odd predicament for matter to get into.

I often marvel how something like hydrogen, the simplest atom, forged in some early chaos of the universe, could lead to us and the gorgeous fever we call consciousness. If a mind is just a few pounds of blood, dream and electric, how does it manage to contemplate itself, worry about its soul, do time-and-motion studies, admire the shy hooves of a goat, know that it will die, enjoy all the grand and lesser mayhems of the heart? What is mind, that one can be out of one's? How can a neuron feel compassion? What is a self? Why did automatic, hand-me-down mammals like our ancestors somehow evolve brains with the ability to consider, imagine, project, compare, abstract, think of the future? If an experience of mind is really just the simmering of an easily alterable chemical stew, then what does it mean to know something, to want something, to be?

Diane Ackerman (no relation)

"Hope sucks. People who have hope, they're constantly worried about when it's going to kick in. They don't get to have a good time. On the other hand, a guy gives up hope, he's free to enjoy himself."

George Carlin

(I received this as an e-mail from a former student who wanted it noted that Carlin had more than that to say. In passing it should be noted that Americans continue to be among the earth's most optimistic people. in a recent survey 7 out of 10 of us described themselves as optimistic about the future.)

The paradox of our time is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less. We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, but more problems;

more medicine, but less wellness. We know too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry too quickly, stay up too late, get too tired, read too seldom, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We've learned how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor. We've conquered outer space, but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things. We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul.

We've split the atom, but not our prejudice. We write more, but learn less. We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever, but have less communication. These are the times of fast foods and shallow digestion; tall men, and short character; steep profits, and shallow relationships. These are the times of world peace, but domestic warfare; more leisure, but less fun; more kinds of food, but less nutrition.

These are the days of two incomes, but more divorce; of fancier houses, but broken homes. These are the days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throw-away morality, one night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer to quiet, to kill. It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom; a time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to share this insight, or just hit delete. (While delete isn't feasible in this format, I leave it to you to decide about which of the `buts' and `ands' seem to ring true.)

George Carlin

The most profound mystery of our human experience...is the fact that, though we each exist subjectively, and know the world only through the prism of the self, this `subjectivity' is inaccessible, thus unreal, and mysterious, to others.

Joyce Carol Oates

At this moment, in this act of creation and constant judgment of it as he is creating, like a blind man slowly evolving sight and insight into sight, or like someone trying to measure a dream with a dissolving ruler, the writer cannot amid his creative striving refrain from asking himself - however softly - some agonizing questions. How did I get here and what am I doing? What can I possibly say that will be of interest or use to anyone in this wide, wide world? How can I continue to remain chained, day after day and far into the night, to this chair in a little room at a time when civilization threatens to destroy itself? How can one live his young life at a time when he has imprisoned it to write? How can I remotely begin to invent a drama that will concern us all, in a world that shrieks with drama and tragedy? How can I compete with life for

emotion?

How shall I keep hysteria out of my voice, when 'no thought is permissible,' a critic writes, 'except an extreme thought...emblematic...of concentration camps, alienation, madness, hell, history, and God?'

Why am I writing? Whose salvation or damnation am I creating if not my own? Is there ANYTHING positive to say?

Will I complete this or die first? Who, besides me, cares?

Hysteria, or the new failure of nerves? Hardly: the normal process of creation in abnormal times. One of the triumphs of the contemporary writer, it seems to me, is that he does continue to produce."

Bernard Malamud (The Writer in the Modern World)

"Irony: Do not let yourself be governed by it, especially not in uncreative moments. In creative moments try to make use of it as one more means to grasping life. Cleanly used, it too is clean, and one need not be ashamed of it; and if you feel you are getting too familiar with it, if you fear that growing intimacy with it, then turn to great and serious objects, before which it becomes small and helpless. Seek the depth of things: thither irony never descends--and when you come thus close to the edge of greatness, test out at the same time whether this ironic attitude springs from a necessity of your nature. For under the influence of serious things either it will fall from you (if it is something fortuitous) or else it will (if it really innately belongs to you) strengthen into a stern instrument and take its place with the series of tools with which you will have to shape your art."

Rainer Maria Rilke

"The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. Whoever does not know it can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed."

Albert Einstein

The divide is not between the servants and the served, between the leisured and the workers, but between those who are INTERESTED in the world and its multiplicity of forms and forces, and those who merely subsist, worrying or yawning. ...The world is full of light and life, and the true crime is not to be interested in it.

A. S. Byatt

`They (dolphins) invented psychoanalysis thousands of years ago as a means of passing time

on long migrations. They have complex brains and symbol-systems. But their minds are unlike ours in very important ways. They are all in one piece, so to speak. They lack the structural differentiation of ego, superego, and id. There is no repression. They are fully aware, and accepting, of their most primitive wishes. A conscious will, rather than parent-inculcated discipline, guides their actions. There is no neurosis, no psychosis among them. Psychoanalysis for them is an imaginative poetic exercise in autobiography, rather than a healing art. There are no difficulties of the mind that require healing.

Not quite true, said Howard (a dolphin). There was a school of thought about 20,000 years ago that envied humans. They were called the Original sinners, because they were like the first parents of your human race who, according to some of your legends, envied the gods and suffered for it. They taught that humans were superior because they could do many more things than dolphins. But they despaired and most ended up committing suicide. They were the only neurotics in the long history of porpoises. Our philosophers mostly hold that we live in beauty all the days of our lives, as no human does. Our culture is simply what you might call a commentary on our natural surroundings, whereas human culture is at war with nature. If any race is afflicted, it is yours. You can do much and what you can do, you must do....

Robert Shea/Robert A. Wilson

(The Eye in the Pyramid: Bk I. The Illuminatus Trilogy
pp 213-214 (THIS IS A NOVEL)

`The porpoises do not fear death, they do not avoid suffering, they are not assailed by conflicts between intellect and feeling and they are not worried about being ignorant of things. In other words, they have not decided that they knew the difference between good and evil, and in consequence they do not consider themselves sinners. Understand?

...

`All human beings consider themselves sinners. It's just about the deepest, oldest, and most universal human hangup there is. In fact, it's almost impossible to speak of it in terms that don't confirm it. To say that human beings have a universal hangup, as I just did, is to restate the belief that all men are sinners in different languages. In that sense, the Book of Genesis .. is quite right. To arrive at a cultural turning point where you decide that all human conduct can be classified in one of two categories, good and evil, is what creates sin - plus anxiety, hatred, guilt, depression, all the peculiarly human emotions. And, of course, such a classification is the very antithesis of creativity. To the creative mind there is no right or wrong. Every action is an experiment, and every experiment yields its fruit in knowledge. To the moralist, every action can be judged as right or wrong - and, mind you, in advance - without knowing what its consequences are going to be - depending upon the mental disposition of the actor. Thus the men who burned Giordano Bruno at the stake KNEW they were doing good, even though the consequence of their action was to deprive the world of a great scientist." (same source as above)

`Like most historians, Kershaw ... believes that the condition of the German nation had much to do with Hitler's rise. The national sense of self-pity, after wartime defeat and economic catastrophe, could be whipped into a frenzy, and the erosion of organized religion could place spiritual yearnings where they did not belong, in leadership cults and the like. "The rise from the depths of national degradation to the heights of national greatness seemed for so many to be a near miracle - a work of redemption brought about by the genius of the Fuhrer." If Hitler had one outstanding talent ... it was an unerring sense of other people's weaknesses: their irrational fears, their vanities, their greed and their bloodlust. He was sensitive to these things because he shared them to an extreme

degree.... What he did on a large scale, he did for individuals too....
Hitler ... had the perfect personality for the successful cult leader. He was a malign guru, allowing his followers to project their fantasies onto him. ...there is something particularly revolting about the idea of 20,000 people crammed into Berlin's Sportpalast one night in 1938 bellowing 'Führer command, we will follow!' after listening to Hitler rant hysterically about the need to stop the Czechs from 'exterminating Germandom.'

Ian Buruma NYT Book Review Dec. 10, 2000 review of Hitler 1936-1945
Ian Kershaw

"...in truth, the human being to lack that second skin we call egoism has not yet been born, it lasts much longer than the other one, that bleeds so readily."

Jose Saramago, Blindness

"...Did you know it was Hitler's birthday, he is forty-seven.
I don't consider that an important item of news.
That's because you aren't German, if you were, you'd be less contemptuous.
What else is there of interest.
It says here that Hitler reviewed a parade of thirty-three thousand soldiers in an atmosphere of veneration that was almost sacred, the very words used here, and just to give you an idea, listen to this extract from the speech made by Goebbels to mark the occasion.
Read it to me.
When Hitler speaks, it is as if the vault of the temple were raised over the heads of the German people.
How poetic.
But this is nothing compared to the words of Baldur von Schirach.
Who is this von Schirach, I don't recall the name.
He is the leader of the Reich's Youth Movement.
And what did he have to say.
Hitler is God's gift to Germany, worship for our Führer transcends all differences of creed and allegiance.
Satan himself couldn't have thought up that one, worship for a man uniting what worship for God has divided.
And von Schirach goes further, he declares that if German youth pledges its love for Hitler, who is its god, if German youth strives to serve him loyally, it will obeying the commandment received from the Eternal Father.
Magnificent logic, here we have a god acting on behalf of another god for his own ends, the son as arbiter and judge of the authority of the Father, which makes National Socialism a most holy enterprise.

Jose Saramago The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis

'And Franzen's (Jonathan) calm, passionate critical authority derives not from any special expertise in criminology, neurology or postal science, but rather from the fact that, as a novelist, he is principally concerned with the messy architecture of the self. Novels teach us how to be alone by absorbing us in alternative selves, by momentarily

satisfying our craving to understand, as by osmosis. what it is to be an individual.

A. O. Scott reviewing Franzen's How to be Alone

Who is stronger than hope? Death
Who is stronger than will? Death
Stronger than love? Death
Stronger than life? Death

But who is stronger than death?
Me, evidently.

Ted Hughes Selected Poems 1957-1994

Thus, the great divisions of the last half century and the next half century seem based on the contemplation of Life and Death: when one becomes the other and under whose agency. The advance of our technology is coincidental with the loss of our appetite for ethical questions that ought to attend the implications of these new powers. We have blurred the borders between being and ceasing to be by a technology that can tell us How It Works but not What It Means. Nor do we trust our instincts anymore. If we sense something is Wrong, we are embarrassed to say so, just as we are when we sense it is Right. In the name of diversity, any idea is regarded as worthy as any other; any nonsense is entitled to a forum, a full hearing, and equal time. Reality is customized to fit the person or the situation. There is Your reality and My reality, the truth an They see it, but what is real and true for all of us eludes us. We frame our personal questions in terms of legal and illegal, politically correct or incorrect, function or dysfunction, how it impacts our self-esteem, or puts us in touch with our feelings, or bodes for the next election or millage vote or how the markets will respond. And while business of all sorts can be conducted this way to the relative advantage of all concerned, on the Big Questions, the Existential Concerns, the Life and Death Matters or WHO IS AND WHO ISN'T TO BE, what is called for are our best instincts, our finest intuitions, our clearest intellections and an honesty inspired by our participation, not in a party or a gender or a religion or a special interest or ethnicity, but by our participation in the human race.

Thomas Lynch The Undertakings 158-159

You're always where you're going. Why else would you be there?

If the devil limited its work to evil beings no one would notice.

I can believe in many things but in no one thing in particular.

A writer is someone who spends years patiently trying to discover the second being inside him, and the world that makes him who he is.... Amid his shadows, he builds a world with words....

If I think back on the books to which I have devoted my life, I am most surprised by those moments when I felt as if the sentences and pages that made me ecstatically happy came not from my own imagination but from another power, which had found me and generously presented them to me.

(It could be added to Pamuk's intent that the second paragraph could stand as much for a reader's response to the written word as for a writer's)

The writer who shuts himself up in a room and goes on a journey inside himself will, over the years, discover literature's eternal rule: he must have the artistry to tell his own stories as if they were other people's stories, and to tell other people's stories as if they were his own, for that is what literature is. ...

A writer talks of things that we all know but do not know that we know.....

Orhan Pamuk

In answer to the open-ended question: What do you believe is true even though you can't prove it? Two answers about consciousness:

1. Donald Hoffman

I believe that consciousness and its contents are all that exists. Space-time, matter and fields never were the fundamental denizens of the universe but have always been, from their beginning, among the humbler contents of consciousness, dependent on it for their very being.

The world of daily experience - the world of tables, chairs, stars and people, with their attendant shapes, smells, feels and sounds - is a species-specific user interface to a realm far more complex, a realm whose essential character is conscious. It is unlikely that the contents of our interface in any way resemble that realm.

Indeed the usefulness of an interface requires, in general, that they do not. For the point of an interface, such as the Windows interface on a computer, is simplification and ease of use. We click icons because this is quicker and less prone to error than editing megabytes of software or toggling voltages in circuits.

Evolutionary pressures dictate that our species-specific interface, this world of our daily experience, should itself be a radical simplification, selected not for the exhaustive depiction of truth but for the mutable pragmatics of survival.

If this is right, if consciousness is fundamental, then we should not be surprised that, despite centuries of effort by the most brilliant of minds, there is as yet no physicalist theory of consciousness, no theory that explains how mindless matter or energy or fields could be, or cause, conscious experience.

2. Nicholas Humphrey

I believe that human consciousness is a conjuring trick, designed to fool us into thinking we are in the presence of an inexplicable mystery. Who is the conjuror and why is s/he doing it? The conjuror is natural selection, and the purpose has been to bolster human self-confidence and self-importance - so as to increase the value we place on our own and other's lives.

From Cryptonomicon Neal Stephenson p269

Basically, if everyone has a vested interest in believing that they understand everything, or even that people are CAPABLE IN PRINCIPLE of understanding it (either because believing this dampens their insecurities about the unpredictable world, or makes

them feel more intelligent than others, or both) then you have an environment in which dopey. Reductionist, simple-minded, pat, glib thinking can circulate, like wheelbarrows filled with inflated currency in the marketplaces of Jakarta.

From Peter Schjeldahl New Yorker 29 Jan 2007 (Mystery Train – reviewing exhibit of works

Of Martin Ramirez at the American Folk Art museum)

(Ramirez) has in common with them (Adolf Wolfi and Henry Darger) an extravagant giftedness. All would have been stars of any art school, had they attended one. That they eluded contact with institutions of fine art owes something to personal disarray and something to chance, in a ratio impossible to gauge. It's a small thing, which makes them hard cases, exceptions proving the existence of a rule – that art, to be recognized as such, requires grounding in both individual biography and common culture, What can we do with and about the rush of pleasure and enchantment that the unlicensed genius of a Ramirez affords? I recommend taking it as a lesson in the limits of how we know what we think we know. Unable to regard such work as part of art's history, we may still have it be part of our own

Examinations are returned within a week of administration and are reviewed in detail. They must be returned in class when the meeting is over. Failure to return your exam will be grounds for failure of the course. Examinations can be reviewed subsequently in my office if and when you wish to see them.

Office	106 Munroe
Office Hours	TR 12:45-1:45; 3:45-4:30; W 1-4 and by appt.
E-mail	ackerman@udel.edu

If you have questions feel free to ask them in or after class. If, after the first exam you did not do as well as you thought you should, make an appointment to see me and we'll try to discover why you didn't and what you might do to correct the problem. Students often do poorly on the first exam and improve thereafter.

Required textbooks and readings

Readings for Human Nature (download from course site)

Significant Others
The Denial of Death
The Forbidden Experiment
Ishmael

Craig Stanford
Ernest Becker
Roger Shattuck
Daniel Quinn

GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS IN ANTHROPOLOGY

The University of Delaware's Board of Trustees, Administration, Faculty and Students have together developed a set of policies and procedures governing the rights and responsibilities of those engaged in the education process. Certain of these policies and procedures apply to the conduct of classes and are clearly explained in the annual STUDENT GUIDE TO POLICIES prepared by the Office of the Dean of Students. In addition there are various pamphlets, such as that titled ACADEMIC HONESTY AND DISHONESTY, which are made available to all students and faculty. It is a responsibility of both students and faculty that they be aware of the content of these publications.

The Department of Anthropology subscribes to these policies and procedures and seeks to remain in conformity with them; it will expect of students that they do the same. While classroom violations are, we believe, relatively rare on the part of both students and faculty, we prefer that the effort at justification for violations not be based upon ignorance of the policies; as we expect to be held to them, we expect students to be as well. The Department therefore recommends that students read, and occasionally review, the policy guides.

As a Department we are especially concerned that students be aware of their rights as well as their responsibilities. Since we expect to hold you to your responsibilities we expect to be held to ours. As members of a faculty and as anthropologists we have both an institutional and disciplinary commitment to just and equitable regard for human differences; differences of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, physical condition and sexual preference. Humor or disparagement directed at individuals or groups merely by virtue of their inclusion in such a category is unacceptable. Where patterns of such humor or disparagement are recognized they should be called to the attention of the faculty member or to the Department Chairperson (Dr. Karen Rosenberg 136 Monroe Hall). All communication with the Chairperson will be held in strict confidence.

While policies regarding disruptive behavior are clearly presented in the STUDENT GUIDE those regarding courtesy are less clear. Courtesy is essential to the unrestricted flow of information and we regard it as a responsibility owed to all parties in the education process: student to teacher, teacher to student, and student to student. Private conversations carried on during class are both discourteous and disruptive, as are early and unannounced exits from class. While individual faculty may establish attendance policies for classes, students are expected to remain in classes they attend unless they are taken ill during class or have indicated at the beginning of class that they will need to leave early. Students who have reason to exit early should find seats as close to the exit as possible.

Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will be handled through the University's judicial process. Students will be held responsible for understanding the appropriate codes. If you have doubts about correct practice you should seek the advise of your instructor before completing assignments. For those anthropology courses that require written, out of class papers the Department strongly advises, and in some courses may require, the use of A MANUAL FOR WRITERS OF TERM PAPERS, THESES, AND DISSERTATIONS, Fourth Edition, by Kate L. Turabian. It is available in the University Bookstore.

