

S.A.

3. The liminal phase is the transition phase in the rite of passage. It is almost a state of nonbeing. An important characteristic is the participants are not considered to "be" anything or to be a part of the society. Before, they had yet to experience the rite, and after they will be changed, but during, they are nothing.

4. In the GCB, all species that exist have always existed, and they can be placed on a line from least complex being to God. Linnaeus developed a classification system where species belonged to various classes. This was a hierarchical model with levels (tree-like)

S.A. missing one?

Essay

6. Deductive reasoning is arguably the most well known approach to science. Many people associate science with testing hypotheses in the lab. ~~But~~ In the science of Anthropology, however, inductive reasoning reigns supreme.

Many scientists attempt to determine how we are like our ancestors and our common relatives. We saw in class that researchers at the Max Planck Institute attempted to answer this question through deductive methods by carrying out controlled procedures

Really really  
nicely articulated  
difference in the  
methods. showing  
examples.

on human infants and chimpanzees, and comparing the results. Across Europe, in a small cave in Gibraltar, Mouallam witnessed anthropologists attempting to answer the same question, but with an inductive approach. These <sup>1</sup>archaeologists spend day after day ~~tot~~ uncovering parts of this cave, revealing the lives of the Neanderthals that sheltered there.

Empirical evidence included hearths, glue, dyes, bones, the "hashtag" and many many other bits of data.

From these, anthropologists can infer ways in which H. sapiens are like H. neanderthals. (or not like) But yes.

Scientists can use both methods to ask whether

H. sapiens are the only species to possess or understand language, and therefore, symbolic thought. In psychological experiments at the MIT, scientists attempted to teach apes sign language. They would test whether the apes were learning anything.

Ultimately, not much came from these studies, and it is well accepted that apes do not possess the cognitive abilities necessary for true language.

Meanwhile, in anthropology, ~~archaeologists~~ <sup>paleoanthropologists</sup> are <sup>2</sup> busy collecting the remains of H. heidelbergensis, ergaster, etc. Their skeletons are examined for peripheral equipment needed for spoken language. According to Tattersal, Neanderthals possessed the peripheral structures, and a fairly large brain. So, language could be possible. But, Tattersal further

contains that there is a lack of empirical evidence illustrating symbolic thought in these species. From this data, scientists hypothesize that peripheral language structures were likely an exaptation. This is how inductive reasoning works: empirical evidence generates hypotheses.

Once an idea has already been proposed, a hypothesis about the human condition made, an experiment can be carried out to test it. Geneticists, psychologists, and many others make use of this method. But we have seen in this course that anthropology exploits inductive reasoning: gathering empirical evidence, and inferring their meaning in an attempt to understand the human condition. I like how you offer a genuine appreciation of both methods, and their diff. limits/possibilities. A

8. The argument that the brain is plastic states that the brain can change based on the external environment, regardless of the internal genetic code. To support this, Gibson discusses how poverty and starvation can actually change the structure of the brain. We saw additional evidence in class when The Batman told us his story his brain adjusted to his blindness, allowing him to use auditory cues to create a "visual" construction of the world around him.

The idea of brain plasticity and epigenesis creates

7. Anthropology as a discipline has had a rocky history. Thankfully, we are becoming more willing to acknowledge the faults of our past, which the article is riddled with. This past kind of thinking shows an ethnocentric and biased point of view, ✓ good which allowed atrocities like genocides and the Holocaust to ✓ Summary happen.

When first reading through this passage, I was struck by the tone which was denoted by phrases like "horribly jostled" "endured the discomfort" and "savage aspects". These phrases show how real the Great Chain of Being used to be to good anthropologists in reducing and colonizing certain "lesser people". By ranking these less-advanced people on the GCB, conquests could be seen as helping them achieve modernity. Quests like the one detailed in the passage could be used by anthropologists and given to rulers as "evidence" supporting future conquests, good- which only proliferated the system. colonialism/imperialism

I also noticed that this passage talks about "savages",

and ferocious Indians, showing how they viewed people along this continuum of the GCB. From a modern point of view, we now try to use Boas's idea of cultural relativism and acknowledge that all people/groups are unique and can only be studied in their own context (without comparisons or rankings to other groups). We now also use Malinowski's idea of functionalism, which means that aspects of a society cannot be separated out from one another. I found this to NOT be seen in the passage with how the authors reduce the society to their "Hindoo faith" as the root of their issues. Without taking into account their politics and other factors of cultures, statements like this are no longer acceptable.

This kind of thinking shows an ethnocentric and reductionist point of view which has been used to justify things like the Holocaust. For example, eugenics is based on the idea that humans can be ranked, meaning there are "naturally" people who are lesser. By thinking this way, eugenics can misuse science to produce science-ism, thus supporting the killing of Jews and homosexuals in the Holocaust. This kind of flawed logic has since been more closely acknowledged by anthropologists as shown by the AAA letter to Trump.

(A+)

## Outline

Passage shows clash of civilization

- People view this society more negatively than their own

- 'Ferocious'

- Since this was from 1872, this way of thinking was common

- Before cultural relativism was prominent

- Much like what many Americans think of Middle Eastern countries

- We must apply cultural relativism + ethnography to ~~view~~ gain a better understanding of MFCulture

7.

This passage from Jules Verne's

Around the World in Eighty Days highlights the

kind of biased thinking that we have discussed

in this course. Particularly, it is an example

of the clash of civilization or white man's

burden, where the British would think of their

society as superior to other societies across

the world. The description of the Indian

people as 'ferocious' people underlines this sentiment

of superiority (especially since this was written

in 1872, when this way of thinking was genuinely

accepted). This way of thinking was prominent

before cultural relativism came about, but it

can still be seen today through American opinion

towards Middle Eastern countries and Islam as

a religion

biased  
for + rally  
the issue  
it's racist,  
imperialist  
ideology.

→  
This is a  
comment  
to the  
historical  
context.

Was  
Compelling  
Argument

Just like Verne does with the Indians in the passage, many Americans, including the current president, view middle eastern society as a whole to be inferior to American society.

Many people characterize the Muslim people as a whole as violent, dangerous people who are a threat to humanity. Not only is this issue serious because it represents an inaccurate and generalized way of thinking, but it also is not an effective way to analyze humanity from an anthropological standpoint. As Geertz discussed in his 1966 reading, culture and humanity developed together. However, they developed in separate ways throughout different parts of the world, and this has helped shape the difference in cultures in different countries and on different continents. Just because American civilization is different than Middle Eastern culture does not mean the practices of the Middle East are wrong or inferior and more important to the discussion of cultural bias, it is highly inaccurate to view the Middle East and Muslims as a whole as violent. For this reason, it is important to apply cultural relativism and ethnography to Middle Eastern countries so that we can have a better anthropological understanding of cultures.

Much like the thinking in Verne's passage, this biased, prejudiced way of thinking about

other cultures is dangerous and intellectually limiting. By applying cultural relativism and ethnography to societies in the middle east, Americans can gain a better understanding of this culture like anthropologists did in the 20th century (of other the one succeeding the time when Vernes book was written.

Well put. A

## Outline

### Batman example

- Developed way of travelling despite defect
- Calls into question behavioural genetics
  - We are not our genes necessarily
    - eye cancer
    - No way to see this could have been genes

8. The issue of plasticity is a fascinating part of our human studies. The idea is that people's traits transform according to their environment. A prime example of behavioural plasticity is the batman example we learned in class, and it calls into question behavioural



# Essays

#8

Outline: Discuss the argument that the brain is plastic

- ↳ too many neurons to be controlled by genes
- ↳ deaf people
- ↳ blind
- ↳ No EEA
- ↳ epigenesis
- ↳ Behavioral Genetics - "We are our genes?"

The idea of neural and behavioral plasticity is basically that humans, on a fundamental and developmental level, gain most of their behaviors as learned + environmentally affected traits, and this is evidenced by observations of the blind + amputees, as well as historical evidence.

The brain, even in its structure, responds to developmental

stimuli. Unlike most other creatures, humans have few ingrained/  
inherent instincts. Observed societies employ a huge range of different  
food acquisition methods. This shows that human behavior is  
very flexible. This naturally leads to the fact that historically,  
human ancestors had no real consistent environment around  
which they adapted, which contradicts the fundamental premise of  
evolutionary psychology.

Evidence for the plasticity of the brain comes from  
Soren observing the ~~instincts~~ disabled people. The part of the  
brain that is reserved for visual functions is instead, in those  
who cannot see, repurposed and used often for auditory systems.  
In ~~some~~ societies where there aren't different words for "blue" and  
"green", individuals are less able to distinguish the various shades of the colors  
from each other, further supports the distinct specialization of the brain.

The field of behavioral genetics posits that <sup>individual</sup> human  
behaviors can be traced directly back to specific genes. This  
cannot be, for the specific structure of the brain is so  
significantly affected by the environment. The brain is an  
epigenetic organ, and overproduces neurons & synapses during development  
to allow for complexity "without" directly coding it. Additionally,  
there are orders of magnitude more neurons than there are genes,  
and behavioral genetics neglects to account for the pleiotropic  
nature of many genes. Behavioral Geneticists like to research twins,  
but because twins are so often raised in extremely similar environments,  
one cannot distinguish between epigenetic, plastic effects, and supposed genetic  
causes.

The argument for plasticity is convincing in part because it  
helps explain the huge diversity in human behavior & society.

8

Recently, the scientific community has invested much interest into behavioral genetics, despite there being plenty of information to contradict this recent obsession. The idea of behavioral genetics seems rooted more in pseudo science and scientism and can be seen in many click bait science articles attempting to apply or use inherently human centric concepts to explain animal behaviors, like bat's friendship, or dolphins talking.

The concept of behavioral genetics is flawed for the following three reasons; geneticists have come to recognize the concept of pleiotropy, in which a single coded gene can effect numerous presented traits. This makes it extremely difficult to say a single gene can be linked to a single behavior.

Next, we must consider the concept of epigenetics, which recognizes the reality that environment has a huge impact on how certain traits are presented in reality. For example someone can be coded for great eyesight and grow up in an environment with poor lighting and develop poor eyesight.

Additionally, there is evolutionary evidence that we humans have been selected for neuroplasticity. We used to think that

(P)

hunter gatherers had a specific "hunter gatherer" brain. This cannot be the case because no single hunter gatherer environment existed. Instead, the human brain evolved not to be suited to a specific set of problems but to be capable of adapting to a broad range of challenges. Therefore, over time, humans with the most plasticity were more likely to survive a rapidly changing world over time.

Finally, a concrete example of this plasticity is the story we read of the blind man who over time was able to adapt and gain mobility through echo location. This shows that neurons can reallocate and adapt within a brain's single life cycle to heighten one sense if another is lacking. The above reasons are why I find human plasticity convincing.

(A+)

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7) The excerpt from Jules Verne represents the ideas of social evolutionism that dominated the colonial era, represents a kind of reverse-anthropomorphization that was common at the time, and relates to efforts to "civilize" Native Americans <sup>before,</sup> during and after the American Revolutionary War.

At a time when ~~the~~ Charles Darwin's theory of evolution ~~was being~~ <sup>had become</sup> mainstream, ~~many~~ European society was adopting and warping key points of Darwin's theory to explain the superiority of their civilization ~~to~~ <sup>over</sup> that of more "primitive" people around the world. This is today called social evolutionism, or the idea that one race is "better" than another because it has made more technological progress within its environment. This passage uses this kind of thinking to describe the main characters (Britons) as stoic and brave, while describing the people and landscapes around them as "ferocious," "savage," "freakish," and their religion as "horrible." All of this reinforces ideas of European superiority over other races.

Anthropomorphizing is applying human characteristics to animals, but this passage does the opposite - it applies animal characteristics to humans. It makes the natives sound like beasts driven purely by mean instincts, while only the British characters are described as persons. This was common practice for anyone who other races were seen as inferior.

Finally, this scene and its themes are related to the ideas and viewpoints that drove the "civilizing" efforts of American colonists almost a ~~decade~~ century before the book was published. They saw the natives and their culture as being inferior and sub-human, and thus felt an obligation in many cases to bring natives to purpose-built schools and "civilize" them. This kind of hierarchical thinking and

racism dominated relations between the two parties, and also led to incredible amounts of atrocity and violence once relations broke down.

A+

8. Plasticity means the ability to adapt and change in reaction to changes in one's environment or circumstances. Yes, I believe that the argument for human plasticity is convincing and calls into question the program of behavioral genetics because of clear-cut examples of human beings adapting to changes in a way that could not have been genetically programmed.

Human beings are genetically programmed to have eyes and the ability to visually interpret information in the world, yet humans who have lost their sight for a variety of reasons have been able to adapt to such a change. One significant example of this is the capability of the "Pat Man" to use a personally developed system of echolocation to navigate throughout life. Given that his process for doing so is unique to him, ~~one~~ one can thus assume that human beings, while universally genetically programmed to create a visual sense, do not have a genetically programmed ~~the~~ backup system in place. Therefore, it is the brain's plasticity - its ability to adapt to circumstances and change behavior to fit them - that allows the human being to be successful. It is not from something that has been programmed in our genetic code.

Well, what is programmed, arguably is the neural machinery to receive various inputs + produce spatial orientation