

Hominin and humans essay sample



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Introduction

In the secular science of biology and anthropology, the term Hominin specifically refers to humans used for the purpose of biological classification that creates the ostensive association of the human creature with other members of the hominid family composed of orangutans, gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos. The Hominin is one of the two subdivisions of the hominine family along with the Panini. As a subdivision, science suggests that the Hominin followed a different path of evolution from the Panini (chimpanzee), which overturns the common misconception of evolution that suggests that humans evolve from apes. Instead, humans and apes share a common ancestor that was neither a human or ape. Corollary to which, humans also do not represent a more advance stage of evolution than those of apes. Both humans and apes evolve at similar phases but different ways to diverge into different lineages of hominids.

What makes us Humans?

The essence of humanity or that which makes humans what they are does not rest in the physical and biological attributes of human. Although, one can apparently distinguish a human person through physical traits from other creatures including our closest evolutionary cousins like apes or chimpanzees in particular, it is nevertheless insufficient to rely on the substantial or physical qualities for determining humans which science normally does. As shown and utilized by scientific evolutionary theory, physical identities or the collection of qualities or features of something can at most be utilized for the classification of substances under such kinds or

categories. By this, we can easily identify an animal from a plant or from a rock or a human from an ape. However, human identity does not reside on the physical or corporeal make up alone because it is subject to changes. Physical traits change but despite of these changes, the identity of being human persists. For instance, due to certain illnesses or diseases like elephantiasis and similar physically altering maladies, a human may look like a monster or some kind of different creature. The afflicted person may be labeled as monster, ogre or troll but all the same remains a human.

Our being human lies on our unique rationality that influence our sense of human dignity including respect for others, sense of spirituality which influences our conception of religion and sense of being made for service to which we humans find a sense of fulfillment. The first is captured by our recognition that “ All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”, as contained in Universal Declaration of Human rights. As dictated by our own rationality, the naturally conferred rights of being human is withheld against people who are deemed unfit to carry out their individual rights such as the mentally ill or criminals who exploit their rights that will endanger other people’s lives. The second refers to the ability of humans to intuitively conceive of God or a grand designer or all things. As one atheist one’s said, “ If horses are men, they will conceive of a God that looks like a horse”. This reveals the unique rationality of humans as oppose to other creates to conceive of religion, which is often the basis of spirituality and morality. The third proposition pertains to the human’s unique sense of service to others (family, friends, countrymen or humanity in general) in our pursuit for happiness and fulfillment is uniquely human. The unique rationality of

human is not simply framed within the hedonistic principle of pleasure and pain or primeval instinct (of survival or protecting the young), which makes our behavior unpredictable. Instead, humans also value self sacrifice and are moved by emotional and moral values i. e. love, obsession, respect in conducting themselves and for the service of others to gain fulfillment.

Finally, our unique human rationality can be credited to our advances in agriculture, language, art, music, technology and philosophy, which obviously and significantly differentiate us from other creatures.

Humans vs. Chimpanzees

Advocates of the evolutionary theory adhered that chimps are human's closest evolutionary cousins. Genetically, the human DNA in fact is almost identical with those of the chimpanzees. This may account for the physical resemblance of chimps and humans including height, weight, eating habits and social predilections. The obviously more advanced human brain however allows humans to be progressively different from the chimpanzees. Using the common attributes proposed by scientists, we explore how human brain or rationality made the humans uniquely advanced than their primate cousins.

Chimps are primarily arboreal or living in trees. Humans however have learned to harness trees (using wood) to create shelters or houses on the ground to protect themselves. The dental comb structure of chimps were especially made for strong biting and chewing. Humans learned how to cook their food to make it more easily chewable and digestible. They also learned to make weapons to protect themselves instead of merely relying on their bodies (like teeth for biting) to fight off prey. Chimps are diurnal because

they can function better in light than in darkness. Humans learned how to make fire or discover electricity to create light for them to remain productive during the night. Chimps are estrus while humans can be sexually aroused any time which makes the reproduction and population of humans more rapid. With the advancement of agriculture, biology and culinary arts, humans learned how to mix and match different kinds of food. Instead of relying principally on the anatomical arrangement of their hands for holding things, humans had created tools and other devices that will enhance their force and productivity. While both chimps and humans have stereoscopic vision, humans have recognized that our senses can deceive us, which can cause misperception and misinterpretation of our objective reality. To this end, humans learned the different ways of artistically creating a visual illusion by the distortion of depth perception cues.

Hominin species that is most human

All Hominin species share the features of bipedal locomotion, large brain and dentition features from which modern humans derived their distinctiveness from other hominoids. Among the Hominin species discovered, the Genus Paranthropus can be argued to be closest to being human. One of the first distinct features of the Paranthropus among other early hominin species is their strong reliance on plant materials for food which required a lot of grinding as reflected by their dentition. This heavy reliance on plants for food is one of the principal motivators for this species to learn how to plant and discover agriculture. And agriculture or the systematic production of food and goods through farming is one of the most prominent human developments that resulted to the establishment of human civilizations.

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Another important characteristic of the Genus Paranthropus that makes them closest to human is their high sexual dimorphism or the regular difference in form between similar species of different sex or gender. Sexual dimorphisms provided the stimulus to relegate physically defined roles among the different sexes. Because of the physical weakness of females than males, the female Paranthropus may have been assigned to domestic roles such as the nurturing of children and other homebased functions while male Paranthropus become inclined to searching for food and protection of the family (against predators) because of their natural physical strength. This sexual division of labor may have incited the evolution of socially defined roles and later on labor specializations, which is distinctive in modern human civilization.