

Chapter 4

Wisdom as a Mental Tool of the Symbolic Species

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to apply anthropological and cognitive approaches in defining the functional architectures of the brain and mind. Cognition is understood as discovery, awareness, and rediscovery (or updating) of episodes, events, and themes in the permanent process of knowing. Through these approaches, it will be easier to recognize that language has led to the development of the human brain and of advanced mental processes. One of these processes is the

info-communication process, which has transformed with the development of language from the INFOCO 1 system to the INFOCO 6 system, the latter of which will eventually be understood as the future systems. These systems have led to the development of several categories of minds which can be grouped in clusters. Each type of mind is potentially able to deliver a mental course of action referred to as *wisdom processing*, enabling an ultimate mental solution. In this study, wisdom is defined as judgment and choice. The author perceives wisdom¹ as the final stage of cognitive processes reflecting decision making, problem solving, and thinking.

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Figure 1. The evolution of humans



THE EVOLUTION OF MANKIND

The human race evolved from primates living in Africa sixty million years ago. Approximately twenty million years ago, the first terrestrial apes evolved in Africa. Perhaps six to eight million years ago, this group split into two: the modern apes and the hominids. The first hominids are called Australopithecines, or southern apes. Humans and apes evolved directly from this same branch of the super-family *Hominoidea*, and subsequently, humans evolved into the family *Hominidae* and sub-family *Hominae*. While great apes are identified from several East African sites dating 17 to 20 million years ago, Hominid fossils appear 2.5 to 4.5 million years ago. However, their origin is estimated between six and ten million years ago. The Great Apes' evolution ends with the chimpanzees, which are the final "stop" on the evolutionary path, and which gave way to *Homo sapiens* (200,000-60,000). (Figure 1 (Burenhult, 2003).

Further development of humankind was triggered by the relationships among communication, information processing skills (later called information communication or INFOCO System), society, brain, and consciousness. Table 1 illustrates this evolution.

Table 1 indicates that *Homo erectus* (1.8 M–200 K) had quite a large brain (800-1100 cc) and was able to develop intelligence to deal with survival issues such as coping with nature's challenges; this was based on a body language (mimetic skills) as noted in the INFOCO-0 System. This kind of intelligence led to further development of the brain in its size from 1350 cc-1750 cc, and triggered the development of language based on symbols to communicate organized and meaningful information as indicated in the INFOCO-1 System (*Homo simbolis*). This system was able to nurture the development of thematic stories and narratives, which we refer to as myths. The symbols were first presented as pictographs, which led to the development of alphabets and subsequently, to writing. This model is depicted in the

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