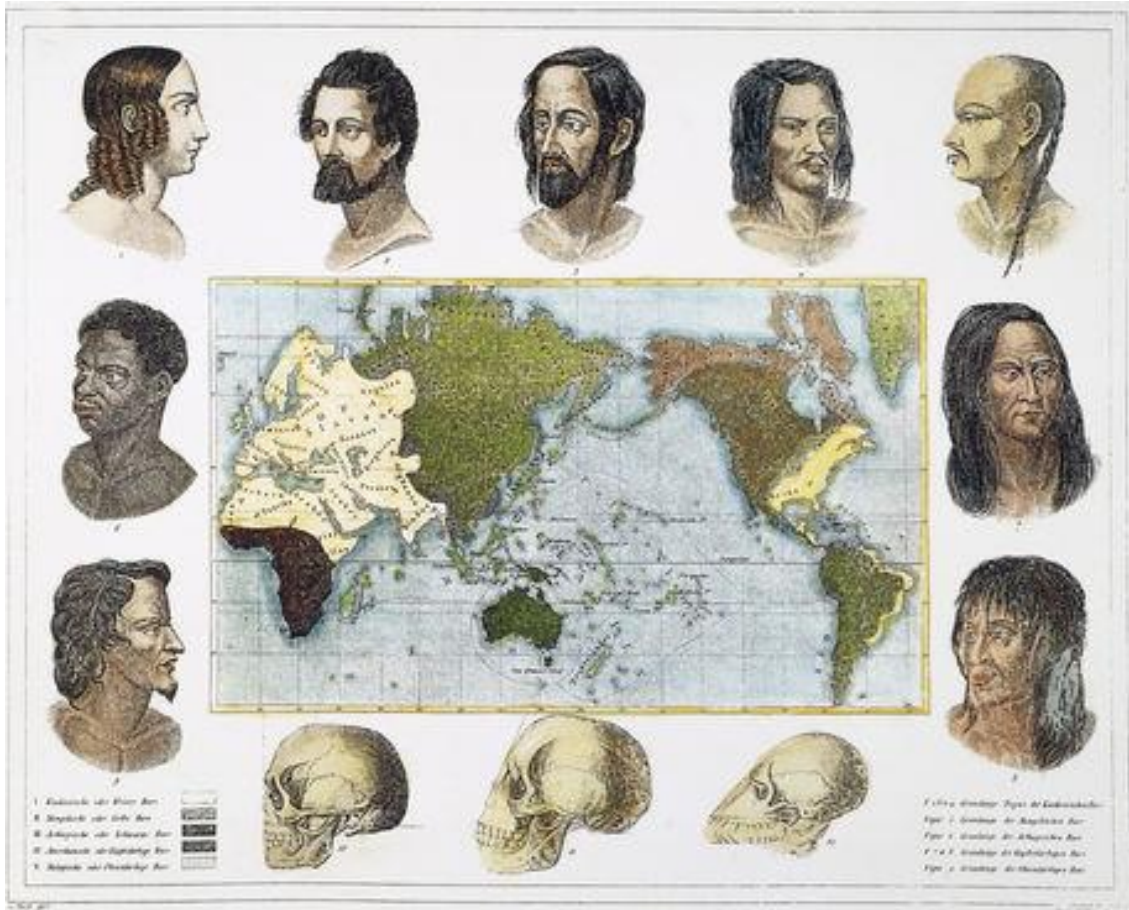


## 19th Century Anthropology

### The theory of progressive development or socio-cultural evolution

**Key terms:** unilineal and multilinear evolution; linear interpretation of history; developmental stages; primitive; civilized; directional change; teleological or progressive change; social Darwinism; relativism.



### Introduction

Specific theories of social or cultural evolution often attempt to explain differences between coeval societies, by positing **that different societies have reached different stages of development.** Although such theories typically provide models for understanding the relationship between technologies, social structure, or values of a society, they vary as to the extent to which they describe specific mechanisms of variation and change.

**Early socio-cultural evolution theories** —the theories of **Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer and Lewis Henry Morgan**—developed simultaneously with, but independently of, Charles Darwin's works and were popular from the late 19th century to the end of World War I. **These 19th-century unilineal evolution theories claimed that societies start out in a primitive state and gradually become more civilized over time, and equated the culture and technology of Western civilization with progress.** Some forms of early socio-cultural evolution theories (mainly unilineal ones) have led to much criticized theories like **social Darwinism, and scientific racism, used in the past**

to justify existing policies of colonialism and slavery, and to justify new policies such as eugenics.

Most 19th-century and some 20th-century approaches aimed to provide models for the evolution of humankind as a single entity. However, most 20th-century approaches, such as multilinear evolution, focused on changes specific to individual societies. Moreover, they rejected directional change (i.e. orthogenetic, teleological or progressive change). Most archaeologists work within the framework of multilinear evolution. (From: Wikipedia, *Socio-cultural evolution, Introduction*)

## Anthropology and evolutionism

Modern anthropology began to take shape before the middle of the 19th century because of a series of innovations in the Western world. The last great phase of the discovery of the world had begun at the end of the 18th century. At the same time, political and intellectual revolutions had facilitated the questioning of certain religious dogmas, thus opening the way to the discussion of hitherto half-forbidden subjects. The 19th century, therefore, soon saw a revival of interest in and study of the origin of man, the unity or plurality of the human species, and the fixity or mutability of animal species. Thus, the science of anthropology developed as an outgrowth of contemporary studies of the classification of human races; of the comparative characteristics of human anatomy; of the history of human settlements; of the classification of languages and the comparison of grammars; of the comparison between primitive and ancient societies; and of the historical development of man's economy and industry. Finally, about 1840, a principle for the study of human facts was proposed: the concept of evolution. This was even before Charles Darwin had published his celebrated *Origin of Species* (1859). This concept, arising in strong debates, provided the starting point for anthropology.



Almost to the end of the 19th century, evolutionism determined the complexion of the new science. A major task of cultural anthropology was thought to be that of classifying different societies and cultures and defining the phases and states through which all human groups pass—the linear interpretation of history. Some groups progress more slowly, some faster, as they advance from the simple to the complex, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, from the irrational to the rational. It suffices to quote an American anthropologist, Lewis Henry Morgan: *As it is undeniable that portions of the human family have existed in a state of savagery, other portions in a state of barbarism, and still other portions in a state of civilization, it*

seems equally so that these three distinct conditions are connected with each other in a natural as well as necessary sequence of progress (Ancient Society, 1877). Other quotations from a Scotsman, John F. MacLennan, or an Englishman, Edward B. Tylor, would take the same position.

Cultural anthropology, then, set out to analyze the totality of human culture in time and space. But by assuming a linear conception of history, it too often neglected the discontinuities and interferences of concrete history. Morgan, and particularly Tylor, however, sometimes felt the necessity of introducing the concept of the “**diffusion**,” or spread, of cultural characteristics from one people to another—thus suggesting that characteristics could develop independently and converge and that a people could leap over “stages” of evolution by borrowing knowledge from others. **Moreover, because it based itself on a theory that all mankind had a similar psychic outlook or that something called “human nature” was universal**, anthropology also failed to take into account the fact that the same cultural trait can mean different things depending on the society in which it is found.

At the same time, in the second half of the 19th century another kind of evolutionism developed, that of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Partly independent of anthropological evolutionism (Marx’s *Critique of Political Economy* dates from 1859), partly linked to it (Engels’ most important work appeared after Morgan’s *Ancient Society* and made use of it), **the Marxist theory laid stress on the causes of human evolution**. A society was defined by its mode of production, on which its political, juridical, and ideological superstructures were allegedly based. These superstructures continued to exist after the mode of production had changed; and in the conflict that followed, this contradiction opened the way to a new type of society. Numerous anthropologists have taken the Marxist analysis into account, even if only to retain its historical view and to reject its economic determinism.

During this same period, especially toward the end of the 19th century, the tales of missionaries, traders, and travelling adventurers included an abundance of miscellaneous information that was collected in such works as Sir James Frazer’s *Golden Bough* (1890) and Ernest Crawley’s *Mystic Rose* (1902). These rather encyclopaedic collections of customs, religious and magical practices, and other curious data were read with relish by the intellectual community; the theories that accompanied the collections were equally appreciated by **evolutionary-minded anthropologists**, as the theories were meant **to establish an evolutionary sequence of magical, religious, and scientific thought**, using the data as evidence.

By the beginning of the 20th century, many cultural anthropologists had already begun to turn toward what might be called **a more pluralistic viewpoint**. To account for the variety of societies and cultures and the broadening of the differences that separated them, they suggested taking the total circumstances of each human group into account by considering the whole of its history, the contacts that it had had with other groups, and the favourable or unfavourable circumstances that had weighed on its development. Such a view was distinguished by a marked **relativism**: **each culture represented an original development**, conditioned as much by its social as by its geographical environment and by the manner in which it used and enriched the cultural materials that came to it from neighbours or others (through “diffusion”) or from its own creativity (through “invention” and “adaptation”).

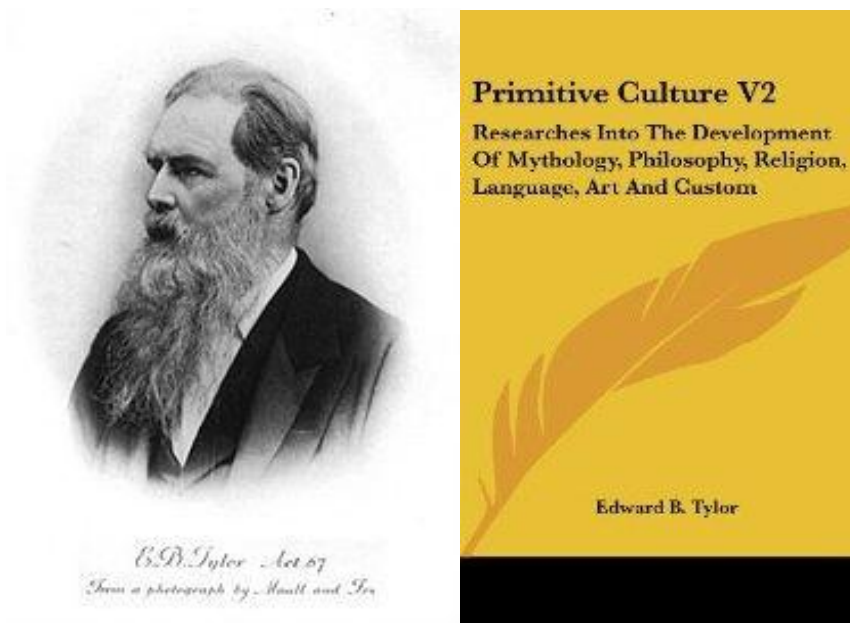
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## Two Key Profiles

Sir Edward B. Tylor / Lewis Henry Morgan

### Sir Edward Burnett Tylor,

(Born Oct. 2, 1832, London—died Jan. 2, 1917, Wellington, Somerset, Eng.), **English anthropologist**, regarded as the founder of cultural anthropology. His most important work, **Primitive Culture (1871)**, influenced in part by Darwin's theory of biological evolution, developed the theory of an evolutionary, progressive relationship from primitive to modern cultures.



Tylor was knighted in 1912. He is best known today for providing, in this book, one of the earliest and clearest definitions of culture, one that is widely accepted and used by contemporary anthropologists. ***Culture, he said, is ...that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.***

Still young and after finishing an expedition to Mexico that lasted for six months, he published the experiences of his Mexican expedition in his first book, **Anahuac; or, Mexico and the Mexicans Ancient and Modern (1861)**. Although mainly a well-conceived travelogue, Anahuac contains elements that characterize Tylor's later work when he had become a full-fledged anthropologist: a firm grasp on **factual data**, a **sense of cultural differences**, and a curious combination of **empirical methods** with occasional **hints of the superiority of a 19th-century Englishman in judging other cultures**.

Tylor developed the concept of progressive development. After Anahuac, Tylor published three major works. Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization (1865), which immediately established his reputation as a leading anthropologist, elaborated **the thesis that cultures past and present, civilized and primitive, must be studied as parts of a single history of human thought**. "The



past,” he wrote, “is continually needed to explain the present, and the whole to explain the past.” Tylor’s fame, however, is based chiefly upon the publication of **Primitive Culture**. In it he again traced **a progressive development from a savage to a civilized state** and pictured primitive man as an early philosopher applying his reason to explain events in the human and natural world that were beyond his control, even though his scientific ignorance produced erroneous explanations. Tylor identified, for example, the earliest form of religious belief as “**animism**,” a belief in spiritual beings, arrived at, he assumed, by primitive attempts to explain the difference between the living body and the corpse and the separation of soul and body in dreams.

Primitive Culture also elaborated upon a theme that became a central concept in his work: the relation of primitive cultures to modern populations. By long experience of the course of human society, the principle of development in culture has become so ingrained in our philosophy that ethnologists, of whatever school, hardly doubt but that, whether by progress or degradation, **savagery and civilization are connected as lower and higher stages of one formation.**

Thus, “culture” should be studied not only in the artistic and spiritual achievements of civilizations but in man’s technological and moral accomplishments made at all stages of his development. Tylor noted how customs and beliefs from a distant, primitive past seemed to have lived on into the modern world, and he became well-known for his examination of such “**survivals**,” a concept that he introduced. His evolutionary view of human development was endorsed by most of his colleagues and, of course, by **Charles Darwin**, who had established biological evolution as the key to the emergence of the human species.

In the late 19th-century political and theological controversy over the question whether all the races of mankind belonged physically and mentally to a single species, Tylor was a powerful advocate of the physical and psychological unity of all mankind. On this question, as in all anthropological disputes, he based his position on respect for empirical evidence, which he hoped would bring the standards and procedures of the natural sciences to the study of humanity. His last book, ***Anthropology, an Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization (1881)***, is an excellent summary of what was, late in the 19th century, known and thought in that field. Like all Tylor’s work, it conveys a vast quantity of information in a lucid and energetic style.

Tylor was made a fellow of the Royal Society in 1871 and given a doctorate of civil law at the University of Oxford in 1875. Eight years later he returned to Oxford to give lectures and stayed there as keeper of the university’s museum, becoming reader in anthropology in 1884 and the first professor of anthropology in 1896. He was also elected the first Gifford lecturer at Aberdeen University in 1888. He retired from active life in 1909 and died in 1917.

[Brian Vincent Street](#)

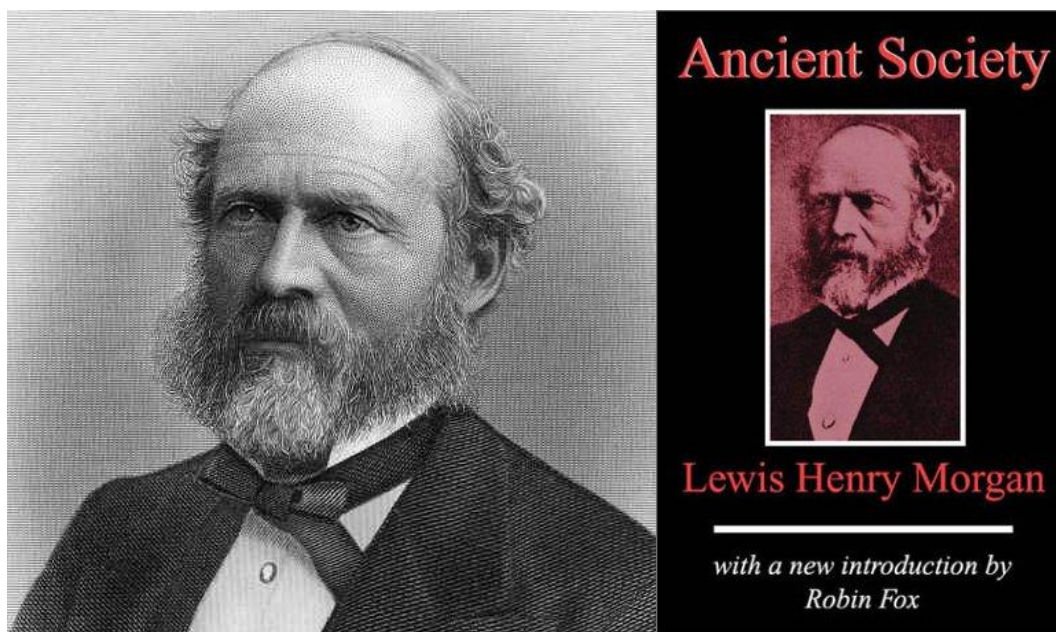
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## Lewis Henry Morgan

(born November 21, 1818, near Aurora, New York, U.S.—died December 17, 1881, Rochester, New York), **American ethnologist and a principal founder of scientific anthropology**, known especially for establishing the study of kinship systems and for his comprehensive theory of social evolution.



An attorney by profession, Morgan practiced law at Rochester (1844–62) and served in the New York State Assembly (1861–68) and Senate (1868–69). In the early 1840s he developed a deep interest in Native Americans and over his lifetime championed their struggles against colonialism and oppression. While making an exhaustive survey of the history, social organization, and material culture of the Iroquois nation, he was adopted by the Seneca tribe (1846), the focus of his particular interest. Results of his observations appeared in **The League of the Ho-dé-no-sau-nee, or Iroquois (1851)**.

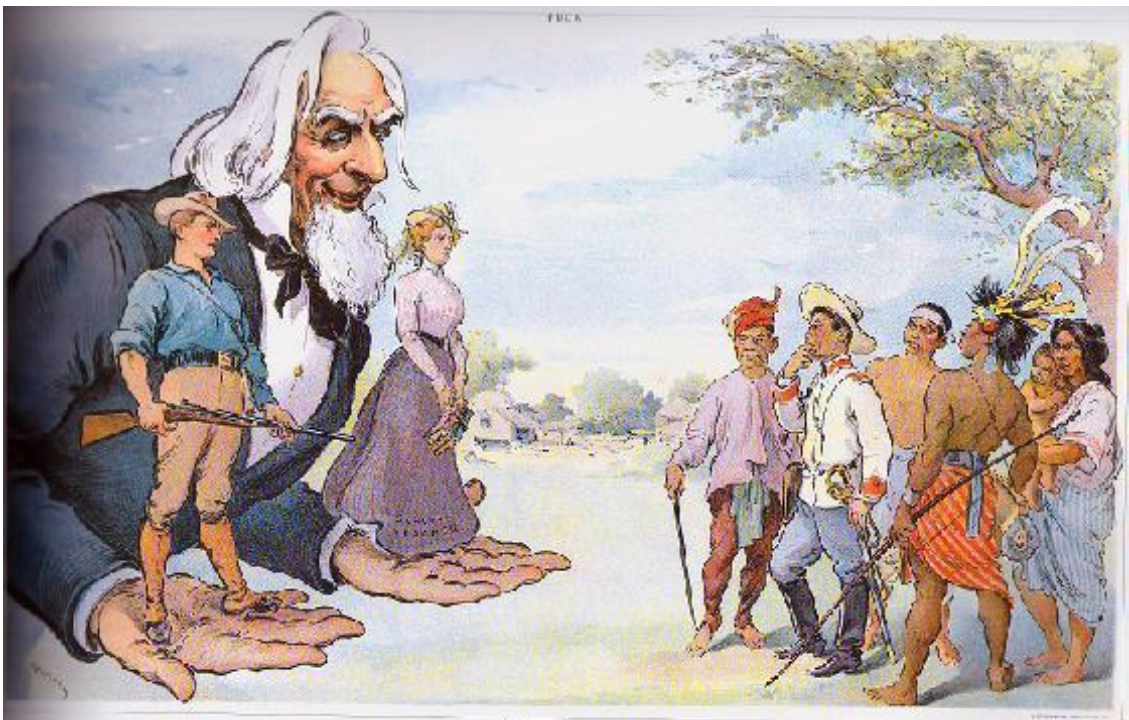
About 1856 Morgan's interest turned to the Seneca way of designating relatives, which differed markedly from Anglo-American convention. Upon discovering virtually identical designations among the Ojibwa of northern Michigan, he conjectured that if the system were also to be found in Asia, the Asiatic origin of the American Indians might be shown. He thereupon embarked on a series of far-flung investigations of the kinship terms used by the people of many other cultures. He gathered his results in his influential pioneer elaboration of kinship, **Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family (1871)**. This work inaugurated the modern anthropological study of kinship systems as the basic organizing principle in most preindustrial societies.

Morgan's kinship study led him to develop his theory of cultural evolution, which was set forth in **Ancient Society, or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization (1877)**. This was among the first major scientific accounts of the origin and evolution of civilization. Morgan posited that advances in social organization arose primarily from changes in food production. **Society had progressed from a hunting-and-gathering stage (which he denoted by the term "savagery") to a stage of settled agriculture ("barbarism") and then on to**

an urban society possessing a more advanced agriculture (“civilization”). He illustrated these **developmental stages** with examples drawn from various cultures. Morgan’s ideas about the development of technology over time have come to be regarded as generally correct in their fundamental aspects. His theory that human social life advanced from an initial stage of promiscuity through various forms of family life that culminated in monogamy has long been held obsolete, however.

Morgan’s emphasis on **the importance of technological change and other purely material factors in cultural and social evolution** attracted the attention of **Karl Marx** and **Friedrich Engels**. That *Ancient Society* came to be regarded by Marxists as a classic was largely the result of the importance that Marx and Engels attached to it, because Morgan’s own social allegiance was to the industrial and commercial middle class and its achievements. For a number of years Morgan remained the dean of American anthropology. Among his other works are *The Indian Journals, 1859–1862* (1959) and, based on his extensive observations of non-human mammals, *The American Beaver and His Works* (1868).

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392246/Lewis-Henry-Morgan> Retrieved on 20.04.2013



“Civilizing the Savages”: Western Imperialism and how it affected the Philippines (1)

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- (1) **In 1898, the Spanish–American War began in Cuba and reached the Philippines.** Aguinaldo declared Philippine independence from Spain in Kawit, Cavite on June 12, 1898 and the **First Philippine Republic** was established the following year. Meanwhile, the islands were ceded by Spain to the United States for US\$20 million in the **1898 Treaty of Paris.** As it became increasingly clear the United States would not recognize the First Philippine Republic, the **Philippine–American War** broke out. It ended with American control over the

islands which were then administered as an insular area. **In 1935, the Philippines was granted Commonwealth status.** Plans for independence over the next decade were interrupted by World War II when the Japanese Empire invaded and established a puppet government. **On July 4, 1946, the Philippines attained its independence.**

**The Treaty of Paris of 1898** was an agreement made in 1898 that resulted in Spain surrendering control of Cuba and ceding Puerto Rico, parts of the West Indies, Guam, and the Philippines to the United States. The cession of the Philippines involved a payment of \$20 million to Spain by the United States. The treaty was signed on December 10, 1898, and ended the Spanish-American War. The Treaty signaled the end of the Spanish Empire in America and the Pacific Ocean and **marked the beginning of an age of United States colonial power.**