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Paleoanthropology: the future of the past. E. DELSON, New York Consortium in Evolutionary Primatology, Lehman College and the Graduate School, City University of New York and the American Museum of Natural History,

Paleoanthropology is alive and well, as a quick scan of the science media will inform you: two new species of ever older human ancestors described in the last year, and one of them placed unsteadily in its own genus; ever younger Neandertals and Mousterian tools, but older harpoons. Does this very activity bode well for the future, or are we in for an interval of internecine combat or somnolent decay?

Before presenting my clearly personal views, a reasonable definition of paleoanthropology may be useful. The term originally was restricted to aspects of Paleolithic archeology or (sometimes) human paleontology, but about thirty years ago, mainly as a result of Clark Howell's *Early Man* Time-Life volume, it took on its current far broader meaning. It is among the most integrative of disciplines, incorporating human (and other primate) paleontology and its attendant descriptive and functional musculoskeletal morphology; Paleolithic archeology; the geochronology, stratigraphy and taphonomy of fossiliferous sites; paleontology of site contents as guides to age and paleoenvironments; evolutionary, systematic, archeological and other theory.

This very breadth leads paleoanthropologists into contact if not conflict with such hot topics in "general" biology as: the definition and meaning of species, especially in the fossil record; the use and abuse of cladistic (and phenetic) approaches to phylogeny reconstruction, the integration of data from molecular and genetic studies (and, in some cases, the broadening of the molecular biologists' perspective!). Our intersection with primatology gives rise to models of early human lifeways, as well as redefinition of the Order Primates and interpretations of the origin of speech capability. Some of the most productive chronometric methods in use today were developed in part to date the roots of our lineage(s).

Clearly, I am optimistic about having enough work "left" for paleoanthropology to do. There are still many areas of conflict, in terms (for example) of systematic methodology, "ancestor-hunting" vs. cladistifying, and the potential benefits of new technologies. But as long as there are likely to be more fossils or tool patches over the next hill and students to dream up new ways of getting them to yield different answers, it will never be too late for early humans.