tions, including economic development, the extent of higher education, and the level of urbanization. He rejects each in turn as insufficient. Differences in performance, he finds, are most closely correlated to the degree of civic involvement. And, surprisingly, that correlation depends on traditions of civic consciousness and civic practices that have endured for a thousand years.

In the 11th century, the north and the south of Italy set out on divergent paths of development. In the north, communal republics such as Florence and Bologna addressed their public needs through collaboration among citizens. Civic groups—trade guilds, neighborhood associations, parishes whose members swore oaths of mutual assistance—extended horizontally through the community. In the autocratic south, by contrast, rulers in places such as Sicily strengthened feudal arrangements of fiefs, hierarchy, and dependency. These two traditions have persisted for a millennium, through plague and war and technological advance. Unlike southern politics, which too often produced isolation, suspicion, and economic stagnation, northern politics fostered civic engagement and successful cooperation—"social capital," as Putnam calls it. It is this capital, he argues, accumulated over time, that makes democracy work.

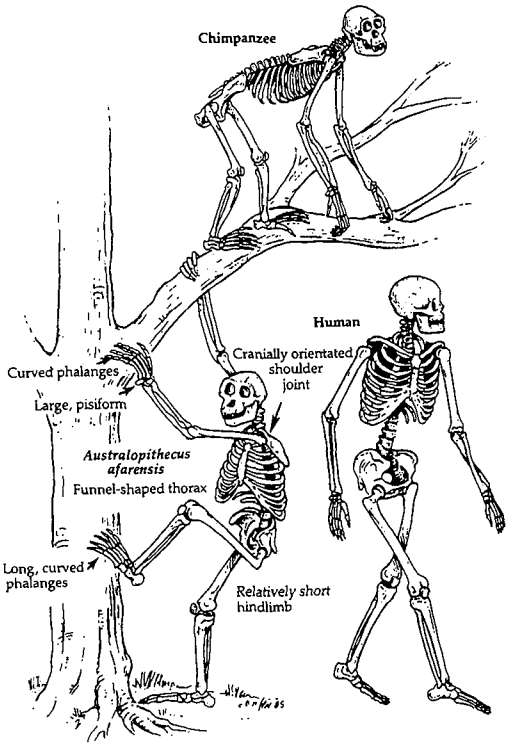
Does the Italian south hold lessons for the Third World and the former communist lands as they move uncertainly toward self-government? Putnam thinks so. "Palermo," he writes of the Sicilian capital locked in its spiral of inefficiency, stagnation, and lawlessness, "may represent the future of Moscow." Putnam counsels against despair, however. He points out that even the least effective regional governments appear to have had some salutary effect on political life. Some readers may not be reassured. Beneath the composed professorial surface of the book, they may hear less a call to community than a half-voiced cry of surrender.

Science & Technology

TOUCHED WITH FIRE: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament. *By Kay Redfield Jamison. Free Press. 370 pp. $24.95*

"We of the craft are all crazy. . . . all are more or less touched." Thus Lord Byron on poets. Even in his day, it was hardly a novel idea. Since antiquity, artistic creativity has been linked to "a fine madness." But with recent advances in genetics, neuroscience, and psychopharmacology, the hard evidence is in. And the old characterization of the artistic temperament as alternating between feverish energy and darker moods is now the clinical definition of manic-depressive illness.

Even though most artists are probably not manic depressive (or vice versa), the disease is known to occur far more often among artists and their families: Byron, van Gogh, Melville, Burns, Coleridge, and Virginia Woolf all had manic depression running through their family histories. Jamison, a professor of psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins Medical School and co-author of the standard text *Manic-Depressive Illness*, notes that science may soon identify the exact gene or combination of genes responsible for the illness. Yet every advance in medical knowledge creates thorny ethical issues. Although Jamison endorses medical treatment—indeed, treating manic depression psychiatrically without medication would generally be considered malpractice—she recognizes that drugs such as lithium, valproate, and carbamzepine often leave artists



with a dispirited blandness and no desire to write, paint, or compose. Many artists have responded as did the painter Edvard Munch, who resisted medical treatment when he was hospitalized for psychiatric illness: "It would destroy my art," he insisted. "I want to keep those sufferings."

Along with the promise of newer medicines that may eliminate the worst side effects is the prospect that, by the year 2000, there may be prenatal testing for the manic-depressive gene—and the possibility of aborting a fetus at high risk for the disease. Twenty years ago, in his psychiatric study of Edgar Allan Poe, John Robertson asked, "Who could, or would, breed for . . . a club-footed Byron, a scrofulous Keats, or a soul-obsessed Poe?" Such idle speculations, Jamison writes, may demand real decisions tomorrow.

ORIGINS RECONSIDERED: In Search of What Makes Us Human. *By Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin. Doubleday. 375 pp. $25*

How far back can you trace your family tree? A million years? Three million years? The answer you give will embroil you in the fiercest controversy in paleoanthropology today.

In *Origins Reconsidered*, Leakey, director of the Kenya Wildlife Service and a leading paleoanthropologist, has written (with science writer Lewin) an entertaining introduction to a discipline that studies early primates and, by extension, what makes us human. To explain human origins, Leakey draws on disciplines as diverse as geology, archaeology, primatology, comparative anatomy, molecular biology, and psychology. But it is clear that in his heart Leakey is a *bone man*—most at home hunkered down over a table of fossils at Kenya's Lake Turkana. There, he says, "in the arid sediments around that magnificent lake, answers were to be pieced together that went beyond the questions normally asked in science."

No point in paleoanthropology is more in contention than when to date the origins of the human race. Leakey's long-time antagonist (and one-time friend) Donald Johanson, discovered in Ethiopia a small, three-million-year-old fossil skeleton that Johanson believes is the earliest-known representative of our species. The implications Johanson drew from this skeleton (dubbed "Lucy") are, first, that all humans are descended from a single branch, and, second, that what distinguishes human beings is bipedality. Leakey, however, finds "Lucy" still too apelike, and asserts that a human Rubicon was crossed only with "Turkana boy," a 1.6-million-year-old skeleton he himself discovered in 1984. Had Turkana boy survived into adulthood, he would have stood over six feet tall, his physique molded by a life of hunting and tool use. By dating humankind's emergence from this much later specimen, Leakey can describe a human species that at its origins was less violent and characterized by cooperation and a more complex social life. "At the real beginning," he says, "was the burgeoning of compassion, morality, and conscious awareness that today we cherish as marks of humanity."

If cooperation marks the human species, one would be hard-pressed to find it among paleoanthropologists today. Recalling his entry into the field years ago, Leakey writes: "If I'd known then what bitter academic and personal