Preface

The first four papers in this volume were delivered at an open meeting held at the Academy's premises on 28 April 2000. The second four were delivered at a meeting limited to invited discussants which was held on the following day at the premises of the Novartis Foundation. My own concluding paper was added subsequently when I found that I had more to say than could be accommodated within an editorial introduction; it presents no original findings of any kind, but I hope that if nothing else it may help other sociologists to recognize the relevance to their own theoretical concerns of the issues raised in the volume as a whole.

The speakers and discussants were all chosen with a view to promoting discussion between archaeologists and other behavioural scientists sharing a common evolutionary perspective. My impression is that a number of them found it easier and more rewarding to communicate across disciplinary boundaries than they had initially expected. But at all events, the meetings confirmed the extent to which a thorough understanding of the critical early stages of human sociocultural evolution requires the collaboration of a range of disciplines, each of which has its own distinctive contribution to make.

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