Raymond Arthur Dart Encyclopedia Article

Raymond Arthur Dart

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Raymond Arthur Dart

1893-1988

Australian paleontologist and anthropologist whose discoveries of early hominid fossils led to developments in evolutionary theory. In 1924, while working as a professor of anatomy at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, Dart heard of a fossilized baboon skull found at a nearby limestone quarry, and delved into an exhumation. The young primate, which he named *Australopithecus africanus,* exhibited human-like features, and Dart believed it to be an intermediary between apes and humans. His discovery first met with skepticism by the scientific community, but finally gained acceptance in the 1940s, when more australopithecine remains were found in South Africa, which helped to establish the species as a precursor to man.