

## ANNOTATED IMAGE

# Raymond Arthur Dart's Academic Versatility

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Raymond Arthur Dart (1893–1988) was an Australian-born, South African scientist and medical educator.<sup>1,2</sup> Born in Toowong, a suburb in Brisbane, Dart obtained his degrees at the Universities of Queensland (B.Sc., 1914; M.Sc., 1916) and Sydney (Ch.M., MB, 1917; MD, 1927). After serving as a captain in the Australian Medical Corps (1918–1919), he took a position as a Senior Demonstrator in the Department of Anatomy at the University College London (UCL). In January 1923, Dart moved to South Africa, where he was appointed Head of the Department of Anatomy at the newly established University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (Wits). He kept this position until his retirement in 1958. During his 35 years of service, Dart transformed Wits' small anatomy unit into one of country's biggest departments, internationally recognized for high standards of teaching and research. He also served as Dean of the Medical School from 1925 to 1943, longer than anyone else at Wits before or after him.

Dart is now primarily remembered for his contribution to human evolution studies, as his interpretation of the famous Taung fossil as a representative of the new hominid species *Australopithecus africanus*,<sup>3</sup> according to many authors, marks the birth of modern paleoanthropology.<sup>4</sup> However, it should not be forgotten that Dart was a multifaceted scientist who made significant contributions to a variety of disciplines including auxology, human variation studies, primatology, human and comparative anatomy, neuroscience, rehabilitation, medical education, and archaeology. In addition, he was an inspiring anatomy teacher and a competent academic administrator. This versatility was also transferred to the department he headed, where he started numerous new courses and encouraged research in different disciplines of anatomy and related sciences.

Sir Grafton Elliot Smith (1871–1937), a fellow Australian, was a key figure in influencing Dart to develop such an

attitude of multiple interests and engagements.<sup>5</sup> Smith headed the Department of Anatomy at UCL while Dart was working there and exerted a strong influence upon his young colleague. Dart, in turn, influenced one of his mentees—Phillip Tobias (1925–2012), another distinguished South African scientist, who would succeed Dart as the Head of the Department of Anatomy at Wits—in a similar manner. Tobias exhibited the same multitude of scholarly interests that extended across science, medicine and humanities.<sup>6</sup>

During his days at Wits, Dart's academic versatility was well known and appreciated by fellow academics, students and general public. It was perhaps best captured in a cartoon (Figure 1) produced by South African artist Fred Thomas. The cartoon depicts Dart as a manyhanded, godlike creature (each hand representing one of his specialties), who dominates over the University's Medical School. This image or-



Figure 1: A cartoon by Fred Thomas depicting Raymond Dart's versatility as a manyhanded creature, with each hand representing one of his specialties (Image courtesy of the School of Anatomical Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand).

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namented Dart's office and, subsequent to his retirement, the office of his successor Phillip Tobias.

Indefatigable and dedicated scientist, Dart remained active in research and education long after his retirement. He died in Johannesburg and was survived by his wife and two children.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author reports no conflict of interest.

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