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WHERE did we come from? Are we the product of a Divine Creation? Did we evolve through natural selection? Or is there another possible answer?

Introduction

In November 1859, Charles Darwin published a most dangerous idea - that all living things had evolved through a process of natural selection. Although there was almost no mention of mankind in Darwin's treatise, the implications were unavoidable and led to a more radical change in human self-perception than anything before it in recorded history. In one blow, Darwin had relegated us from divinely-created beings to apes - the culmination of evolution by the impersonal mechanism of natural selection.

But are the scientists right in applying the theory of evolution to the strange two-legged hominid known as 'man'? Charles Darwin himself was strangely quiet on this point but his co-discoverer Alfred Wallace was less reluctant to express his views. Wallace himself was adamant that 'some intelligent power has guided or determined the development of man.'

One hundred years of science have failed to prove Alfred Wallace wrong. Anthropologists have failed miserably to produce fossil evidence of man's 'missing link' with the apes and there has been a growing recognition of the complexity of organs such as the human brain. Such are the problems with the application of Darwinism to mankind that Stephen Jay Gould - America's evolutionist laureate - has described human evolution as an 'awesome improbability'.

In Search of the Missing Link

Speciation - the separation of one species into two different species - is defined as the point where two groups within the same species are no longer able to inter-breed. The British scientist Richard Dawkins has described the separation quite poetically as 'the long goodbye'.

The search for the missing link between man and the apes is the search for the earliest hominid - the upright, bipedal ape who waved 'a long goodbye' to his four-legged friends.

I will now attempt to briefly summarise what is known about human evolution.

According to the experts, the rivers of human genes and chimpanzee genes split from a common ancestral source some time between 5 and 7 million years ago, whilst the river of gorilla genes is generally thought to have branched off slightly earlier. In order for this speciation to occur, three populations of common ape ancestors (the future gorillas, chimpanzees and hominids) had to become geographically separated and thereafter subject to genetic drift, influenced by their different environments.

The search for the missing link has turned up a number of fossil contenders, dating from around 4 million years ago, but the picture remains very incomplete and the sample size is too small to draw any statistically valid conclusions. There are, however, three contenders

for the prize of the first fully bipedal hominid, all discovered in the East African Rift valley which slashes through Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania.

The first contender, discovered in the Afar province of Ethiopia in 1974, is named Lucy, although her more scientific name is *Australopithecus Afarensis*. Lucy is estimated to have lived between 3.6-3.2 million years ago. Unfortunately her skeleton was only 40 per cent complete and this has resulted in controversy regarding whether she was a true biped and whether in fact 'she' might even have been a 'he'.

The second contender is *Australopithecus Ramidus*, a 4.4 million year old pygmy chimpanzee-like creature, discovered at Aramis in Ethiopia by Professor Timothy White in 1994. Despite a 70 per cent complete skeleton, it has again not been possible to prove categorically whether it had two or four legs.

The third contender, dated between 4.1-3.9 million years old, is the *Australopithecus Anamensis*, discovered at Lake Turkana in Kenya by Dr Meave Leakey in August 1995. A shinbone from *Anamensis* has been used to back up the claim that it walked on two feet.

The evidence of our oldest ancestors is confusing because they do not seem to be closely related to each other. Furthermore, the inexplicable lack of fossil evidence for the preceding 10 million years has made it impossible to confirm the exact separation date of these early hominids from the four-legged apes. It is also important to emphasise that many of these finds have skulls more like chimpanzees than men. They may be the first apes that walked but, as of 4 million years ago, we are still a long way from anything that looked even remotely human.

Moving forward in time, we find evidence of several types of early man which are equally confusing. We have the 1.8 million year old appropriately named *Robustus*, the 2.5 million year old and more lightly built *Africanus*, and the 1.5 to 2 million year old *Advanced Australopithecus*. The latter, as the name suggests, is more man-like than the others and is sometimes referred to as 'near-man' or *Homo habilis* ('handy man'). It is generally agreed that *Homo habilis* was the first truly man-like being which could walk efficiently and use very rough stone tools. The fossil evidence does not reveal whether rudimentary speech had developed at this stage.

Around 1.5 million years ago *Homo erectus* appeared on the scene. This hominid had a considerably larger brain-box (cranium) than its predecessors and started to design and use more sophisticated stone tools. A wide spread of fossils indicates that *Homo erectus* groups left Africa and spread across China, Australasia and Europe between 1,000,000-700,000 years ago but, for unknown reasons, disappeared altogether around 300,000-200,000 years ago. There is little doubt, by a process of elimination, that this is the line from which *Homo sapiens* descended.

The missing link, however, remains a mystery. In 1995, The Sunday Times summarised the evolutionary evidence as follows:

The scientists themselves are confused. A series of recent discoveries has forced them to tear up the simplistic charts on which they blithely used to draw linkages... the classic family tree delineating man's descent from the apes, familiar to us at school, has given way to the concept of genetic islands. The bridgework between them is anyone's guess.

As to the various contenders speculated as mankind's ancestor, The Sunday Times stated:

Their relationships to one another remain clouded in mystery and nobody has conclusively identified any of them as the early hominid that gave rise to *Homo sapiens*.

In summary, the evidence discovered to date is so sparse that a few more sensational finds will still leave the scientists clutching at straws. Consequently mankind's evolutionary history is likely to remain shrouded in mystery for the foreseeable future.

The Miracle of Man

Today, four out of ten Americans find it difficult to believe that humans are related to the apes. Why is this so? Compare yourself to a chimpanzee. Man is intelligent, naked and highly sexual - a species apart from his alleged primate relatives.

This may be an intuitive observation but it is actually supported by scientific study. In 1911, the anthropologist Sir Arthur Keith listed the anatomical characteristics peculiar to each of the primate species, calling them 'generic characters' which set each apart from the others. His results were as follows: gorilla 75; chimpanzee 109; orang-utan 113; gibbon 116; man 312. Keith thus showed scientifically that mankind was nearly three times more distinctive than any other ape.

Another scientist to take this approach was the British zoologist Desmond Morris. In his book, *The Naked Ape*, Desmond Morris highlighted the amazing mystery of mankind's 'missing hair':

Functionally, we are stark naked and our skin is fully exposed to the outside world. This state of affairs still has to be explained, regardless of how many tiny hairs we can count under a magnifying lens.

Desmond Morris contrasted *Homo sapiens* with 4,237 species of mammals, the vast majority of which were hairy or partly haired. The only non-hairy species were those which lived underground (and thus kept warm without hair), species which were aquatic (and benefited from streamlining), and armoured species such as the armadillo (where hair would clearly be superfluous). Morris commented:

The naked ape [man] stands alone, marked off by his nudity from all the thousands of hairy, shaggy or furry land-dwelling mammalian species... if the hair has to go, then clearly there must be a powerful reason for abolishing it.

Darwinism has yet to produce a satisfactory answer as to how and why man lost his hair. Many imaginative theories have been suggested, but so far no-one has come up with a really acceptable explanation. The one conclusion that can perhaps be drawn, based on the principle of graduated change, is that man spent a long time evolving, either in a very hot environment or in water.

Another unique feature of mankind may provide us with a clue to the loss of body hair. That feature is sexuality. The subject was covered in juicy detail by Desmond Morris, who highlighted unique human features such as extended foreplay, extended copulation and the orgasm. One particular anomaly is that the human female is always 'in heat', yet she can only conceive for a few days each month.

As another scientist, Jared Diamond, has pointed out, this is an evolutionary enigma that cannot be explained by natural selection:

The most hotly debated problem in the evolution of human reproduction is to explain why we nevertheless ended up with concealed ovulation, and what good all our mistimed copulations do us.

Many scientists have commented also on the anomaly of the male penis, which is by far the largest erect penis of any living primate. The geneticist Steve Jones has noted it as a mystery which is 'unanswered by science', a point which is echoed by Jared Diamond:

... we descend to a glaring failure: the inability of twentieth-century science to formulate an adequate Theory of Penis Length... astonishing as it seems, important functions of the human penis remain obscure.

Desmond Morris described man as 'the sexiest primate alive', but why did evolution grant us such a bountiful gift? The whole human body seems to be perfectly designed for sexual excitement and pair bonding. Morris saw elements of this plan in the enlarged breasts of the female, the sensitive ear lobes and lips, and a vaginal angle that encouraged intimate face to face copulation. He also highlighted our abundance of scent-producing glands, our unique facial mobility and our unique ability to produce copious tears - all features which strengthened the exclusive emotional pair-bonding between male and female.

This grand design could not be imagined unless humans also lost their shaggy coat of hair and so it might seem that the mystery of the missing hair is solved. Unfortunately, it is not that simple, for evolution does not set about achieving grand designs. The Darwinists are strangely silent on what incremental steps were involved, but however it happened it should have taken a long, long time.

There are three other interesting anomalies of 'the naked ape' which are also worthy of note. The first is the appalling ineptitude of the human skin to repair itself. In the context of a move to the open savannah, where bipedal man became a vulnerable target, and in the context of a gradual loss of protective hair, it seems inconceivable that the human skin should have become so fragile relative to our primate cousins.

The second anomaly is the unique lack of penis bone in the male. This is in complete contrast to other mammals, which use the penis bone to copulate at short notice. The deselection of this vital bone would have jeopardised the existence of the human species unless it took place against the background of a long and peaceful environment.

The third anomaly is our eating habits. Whereas most animals will swallow their food instantaneously, we take the luxury of six whole seconds to transport our food from mouth to stomach. This again suggests a long period of peaceful evolution.

The question, which arises, is where this long and peaceful evolution is supposed to have taken place, because it certainly does not fit the scenario which is presented for Homo sapiens. Nor have Darwinists explained adequately how the major changes in human anatomy were achieved in a time frame of only 6 million years...

The Mystery of the Human Brain

The greatest mystery of Homo sapiens is its incredible brain. During the last fifteen years, scientists have used new imaging technologies (such as positron-emission tomography) to discover more about the human brain than ever before. The full extent of the complexity of

its billions of cells has thus become more and more apparent. In addition to the brain's physical complexity, its performance knows no bounds - mathematics and art, abstract thought and conceptualisation and, above all, moral conscience and self-awareness.

Whilst many of the human brain's secrets remain shrouded in mystery, enough has been revealed for National Geographic to have boldly described it as 'the most complex object in the known universe'.

Evolutionists see the brain as nothing more than a set of algorithms, but they are forced to admit that it is so complex and unique that there is no chance of reverse engineering the evolutionary process that created it. The eminent scientist Roger Penrose, for example, commented:

I am a strong believer in the power of natural selection. But I do not see how natural selection, in itself, can evolve algorithms which could have the kind of conscious judgements of the validity of other algorithms that we seem to have.

What does the fossil record tell us about our evolving brain capabilities? The data varies considerably and must be treated with care (since the sample sizes are limited), but the following is a rough guide.

The early hominid Afarensis had around 500cc and Habilis/Australopithecus had around 700cc. Whilst it is by no means certain that one evolved from the other, it is possible to see in these figures the evolutionary effects over two million years of the hominid's new environment.

As we move forward in time to 1.5 million years ago, we find a sudden leap in the cranial capacity of Homo erectus to around 900-1000cc. If we assume, as most anthropologists do, that this was accompanied by an increase in intelligence, it represents a most unlikely macromutation. Alternatively, we might explain this anomaly by viewing erectus as a separate species whose ancestors have not yet been found due to the poor fossil records.

Finally, after surviving 1.2 to 1.3 million years without any apparent change, and having successfully spread out of Africa to China, Australasia and Europe, something extraordinary happened to the Homo erectus hominid. Perhaps due to climatic changes, his population began to dwindle until he eventually died out. And yet, while most Homo erectus were dying, one managed to suddenly transform itself into Homo sapiens, with a vast increase in cranial capacity from 950cc to 1450cc.

Human evolution thus appears like an hourglass, with a narrowing population of Homo erectus leading to possibly one single mutant, whose improved genes emerged into a new era of unprecedented progress. The transformation from failure to success is startling. It is widely accepted that we are the descendants of Homo erectus (who else was there to descend from?) but the sudden changeover defies all known laws of evolution. Hence Stephen Jay Gould's comment about the 'awesome improbability of human evolution'.

Why has Homo sapiens developed intelligence and self-awareness whilst his ape cousins have spent the last 6 million years in evolutionary stagnation? Why has no other creature in the animal kingdom developed an advanced level of intelligence?

The conventional answer is that we stood up, thereby releasing our two arms, and began to use tools. This breakthrough accelerated our learning through a 'feedback' system, which stimulated mental development.

The latest scientific research does confirm that electrochemical processes in the brain can sometimes stimulate the growth of dendrites - the tiny signal receptors which attach to the neurons (nerve cells). Experiments with caged rats have shown greater brain mass developing where the cages are full of toys rather than empty.

But is this answer too simple? The kangaroo, for instance, is extremely dexterous and could have used tools but never did, whilst the animal kingdom is full of species which do use tools but have never become intelligent. Here are some examples. The Egyptian vulture throws stones at ostrich eggs to crack their tough shells. The woodpecker finch in the Galapagos Islands uses twigs or cactus spines in up to five different ways to root out wood-boring insects from rotten trees. The sea otter on the Pacific coast of North America uses a stone as a hammer to dislodge its favourite food, the abalone shellfish, and uses another stone as an anvil to smash open the shellfish.

These are examples of simple tool use, but there is no sign of it leading anywhere. Our nearest relatives, the chimpanzees, also make and use simple tools, but can we really see them evolving intelligence at our level? Why did we acquire a brain which qualifies as 'the most complex object in the known universe', whilst the chimpanzees did not?

Understanding Darwinism

In order to throw down the gauntlet to the evolutionists, it is essential to conduct the fight in their own territory. A basic understanding of state-of-the-art Darwinian thinking is therefore essential.

When Darwin first put forward his theory of evolution by natural selection, he could not possibly have known the mechanism by which it occurred. It was almost one hundred years later, in 1953, that James Watson and Francis Crick discovered that mechanism to be DNA and genetic inheritance. Watson and Crick were the scientists who discovered the double helix structure of the DNA molecule - the chemical which encodes genetic information. Our schoolchildren now understand that every cell in the body contains 23 pairs of chromosomes, onto which are fixed approximately 100,000 genes making up what is known as the human genome. The information contained in these genes is sometimes switched on, to be read, sometimes not, depending on the cell and the tissue (muscle, bone or whatever) which is required to be produced. We also now understand the rules of genetic inheritance, the basic principle of which is that half of the mother's and half of the father's genes are recombined.

How does genetics help us to understand Darwinism? It is now understood that our genes undergo random mutations as they are passed through the generations. Some of these mutations will be bad, some good. Any mutation which gives a survival advantage to the species will by and large, over many many generations, spread through the whole population. This accords with the Darwinian idea of natural selection - a continuous struggle for existence in which those organisms best fitted to their environment are the most likely to survive. By surviving, an organism's genes are more likely, statistically, to be carried into later generations through the process of sexual reproduction.

A common misconception with natural selection is that genes will directly improve in response to their environment, causing optimal adjustments of the organism. It is now accepted that such adaptations are in fact random mutations which happened to suit the

environment and thus survived. In the words of Steve Jones: 'we are the products of evolution, a set of successful mistakes'.

How fast is the process of evolution? The experts all agree with Darwin's basic idea that natural selection is a very slow, continuous process. As one of today's great champions of evolution, Richard Dawkins, has put it: 'nobody thinks that evolution has ever been jumpy enough to invent a whole new fundamental body plan in one step'.

Indeed, the experts think that a big evolutionary jump, known as a macromutation, is extremely unlikely to succeed, since it would probably be harmful to the survival of a species which is already well adapted to its environment.

We are thus left with a process of random genetic drift and the cumulative effects of genetic mutations. But even these minor mutations are thought to be generally harmful. Daniel Dennett neatly illustrates the point by drawing an analogy with a game whereby one tries to improve a classic piece of literature by making a single typographical change. Whilst most changes such as omitted commas or mis-spelled words would have negligible effect, those changes which were visible would in nearly all cases damage the original text. It is rare, though not impossible, for random change to improve the text.

The odds are already stacked against genetic improvement but we must add one further factor. A favourable mutation will only take hold if it occurs in small isolated populations. This was the case on the Galapagos Islands, where Charles Darwin carried out much of his research. Elsewhere, favourable mutations will be lost and diluted within a larger population and scientists admit that the process will be a lot slower.

If the evolution of a species is a time-consuming process, then the separation of one species into two different species must be seen as an even longer process. Richard Dawkins compares the genes of different species to rivers of genes which flow through time for millions of years. The source of all these rivers is the genetic code which is identical in all animals, plants and bacteria that have ever been studied. The body of the organism soon dies but, through sexual reproduction, acts as a mechanism which the genes can use to travel through time. Those genes which work well with their fellow-genes, and which best assist the survival of the bodies through which they pass, will prevail over many generations.

But what causes the river, or species, to divide into two branches? To quote Richard Dawkins:

The details are controversial, but nobody doubts that the most important ingredient is accidental geographical separation.

As unlikely as it may seem, statistically, for a new species to occur, the fact is that there are today approximately 30 million separate species on Earth and it is estimated that a further 3 billion species may have previously existed and died out. One can only believe this in the context of a cataclysmic history of planet Earth - a view which is becoming increasingly common. Today, however, it is impossible to pinpoint a single example of a species which has recently (within the last half a million years) improved by mutation or divided into two species.

With the exception of viruses evolution appears to be an incredibly slow process. Daniel Dennett recently suggested that a time scale of 100,000 years for the emergence of a new animal species would be regarded as 'sudden'. At the other extreme, the humble horseshoe crab has remained virtually unchanged for 200 million years. The consensus is that the

normal rate of evolution is somewhere in the middle. The famous biologist Thomas Huxley, for example, stated that:

Large changes [in species] occur over tens of millions of years, while really major ones [macro changes] take a hundred million years or so.

In the absence of fossil evidence, we are dealing with extremely theoretical matters. Nevertheless, modern science has managed, in a number of cases, to provide feasible explanations of how a step-by-step evolutionary process can produce what appears to be a perfect organ or organism. The most celebrated case is a computer-simulated evolution of the eye by Nilsson and Pelger. Starting with a simple photocell, which was allowed to undergo random mutations, Nilsson and Pelger's computer generated a feasible development to full camera eye, whereby a smooth gradient of change occurred with an improvement at each intermediate step.

This idea of graded, or incremental, change is central to the modern view of evolution. The key point is that for a mutation to successfully spread through a population, each step will only be as perfect as it needs to be to give a survival edge. Richard Dawkins uses the example of cheetahs and antelopes to demonstrate how this genetic rivalry works; the cheetah seems perfectly designed to maximise deaths among antelopes, whilst the antelope seems equally well-designed to avoid death by cheetah. The result is two species in equilibrium, where the weakest individuals die but both species survive. This principle was first put forward by Alfred Wallace when he stated that: 'nature never over-endows a species beyond the needs of everyday existence'. It is the same situation as the trees in a dense forest, which have over a very long time maximised their height in competition for the light.

A Brain Teaser for Darwin

The human brain at birth is approximately one quarter of its adult size. The need for a large skull to house the fully grown adult brain causes human babies to have extremely large heads at birth (relative to other primates). Passing the baby's head through the birth canal is therefore the major problem of childbirth and causes acute pain to the mother.

To many biologists, gynaecologists and anatomists, it is a mystery why the female did not evolve a larger birth canal. The answer is simple - engineering. Such a change would have required a radical redesign in bone structure - an impossibility within the limits of a body which is designed for bipedal walking. The birth canal is thus the limiting factor to man's cranial capacity.

Language Barriers

Many scientists believe that language is the key to mankind's great leap forward, since it uniquely enables us to communicate and transfer ideas and experiences from one generation to the next. Until recently, this leap forward was associated with the behavioural changes which swept Europe around 40,000 years ago. Then, in 1983, there came the shocking discovery of the 60,000-year-old Neanderthal hyoid bone which proved that Neanderthal could talk.

The origin of human language capability remains a controversial subject and raises more questions than answers. Daniel Dennett sums up the state of confusion:

... work by neuroanatomists and psycholinguists has shown that our brains have features lacking in the brains of our closest surviving relatives, features that play crucial roles in language perception and language production. There is a wide diversity of opinion about when in the last six million years or so our lineage acquired these traits, in what order and why.

Most scientists now believe that *Homo sapiens* had speech from its very beginning. Studies of human mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) suggest that, since speech is widespread today, it must have developed from a genetic mutation in 'mitochondrial Eve' (mtDNA Eve), nearly 200,000 years ago.

The pioneering work of Noam Chomsky has shown that newborn babies inherit genetically an innate and highly advanced language structure. According to Chomsky's widely-acclaimed theory of universal grammar, the child is able to subconsciously flick a few simple switches in order to comprehend and speak the language of its parents, wherever in the world it happens to be born. It is highly significant that Chomsky, the leading world expert in the science of linguistics, cannot see how the human language acquisition system could possibly have evolved by natural selection.

One of the foremost evolutionists, Stephen Jay Gould, acknowledges the difficulties with the evolution of language by effectively admitting that it was a freak or chance development:

The universals of language are so different from anything else in nature, and so quirky in their structure, that origin as a side consequence of the brain's enhanced capacity, rather than as a simple advance in continuity from ancestral grunts and gestures, seems indicated. (emphasis added)

Why did man acquire such a sophisticated language capability? According to Darwinian theory, a few simple grunts would have sufficed for everyday existence, and yet here we are today with more than 26 alphabet sounds and an average vocabulary of 25,000 words.

Moreover, speech capability was not such an easy or obvious target for natural selection. The human ability to talk resides in both the shape and structure of the mouth and throat, as well as in the brain. In adult humans the larynx (voicebox) is situated much lower than in other mammals and the epiglottis (the flap of cartilage at the root of the tongue) is incapable of reaching the top of the roof of the mouth. Thus we cannot breathe and swallow at the same time and are uniquely at risk from choking. This unique combination of features can have only one purpose - to make human speech possible. In all other respects it is an evolutionary disadvantage. Apart from the risk of choking, it causes our teeth to become crowded, so that, prior to the advent of antibiotics, septic impacted molars would often have proved fatal. Just as it is difficult to reverse-engineer the development of the brain and its language acquisition capability, so it is also difficult to reverse engineer the development of speech capability.

Once again, we come back to the mystery of the human brain. We are expected to believe that, within a mere 6 million years, natural selection caused our brains to expand to the

physical limits of the birth canal. That is quite an evolutionary pace. And, at the same time, the brain was to acquire an incredibly efficient design with capabilities light years away from man's needs for everyday existence. In the words of Arthur Koestler:

The neocortex of the hominids evolved in the last half a million years... at an explosive speed, which so far as we know is unprecedented.

And here is the biggest mystery of all. We are not supposed to have become intelligent overnight and evolution is supposed to be very slow. Therefore, if we go back one or two million years we should find a semi-intelligent being, using its newly-found abilities to experiment with primitive writing, basic art, and simple multiplication. But there is nothing, absolutely nothing.

Without exception, all of the evidence shows that hominids continued to use the most basic stone tools for 6 million years despite an increasing cranial capacity. This is very strange and highly contradictory. We deserve a better explanation.

Against All Odds

Back in 1954, it was thought that the hominid leading to mankind split from the apes 30 million years ago, and that we evolved gradually into our present form. That period sets an unbiased benchmark of how long evolution possibly should have taken. Following the discovery that the split occurred only 6 million years ago, evolutionists have been forced to assume a much faster rate of evolution to explain our existence.

The other disconcerting discovery since 1954 is the shockingly slow evolutionary progress made by *Homo erectus* and his predecessors up to around 200,000 years ago.

In summary, the evolutionary graph has changed from a nice straight line into an overnight explosion (Figure 1):

Anthropologists have continually attempted to demonstrate a graded evolution from *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens*, albeit with sharp upward steps. However, their attempts to force the data to meet their preconceptions has been repeatedly exposed by new data.

For example, it was originally believed that anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* (Cro-Magnon man) appeared only 35,000 years ago and had thus descended from Neandertal who had died out at the same time. At that time, one of the most dramatic events in human history appears to have occurred. Cro-Magnon man suddenly arrived in Europe, building shelters, organising himself in clans, wearing skins for clothing, and designing special tools and weapons using wood and bones. It is to this phase of *Homo sapiens* that we attribute the magnificent cave art such as that at Lascaux, France, dated to 27,000 years ago.

But it is now accepted that, despite the behavioural differences, the European Cro-Magnons were no different anatomically from the *Homo sapiens* found in the Middle East 100,000 years ago. Both would be virtually indistinguishable from the population today if dressed in modern clothes. It is also clear that *Homo sapiens* did not descend from Neandertal as was previously thought. Several recent discoveries in Israel have confirmed beyond any doubt that *Homo sapiens* co-existed with Neandertal between 100-90,000 years ago.

What then is our relationship to Neandertal? We are used to seeing artists' impressions based on his known characteristics of clumsy limbs and crude features, but everything else,

such as the liberal body hair, is pure supposition, designed to give us the impression of an evolutionary continuum. Recent discoveries have led to a major reappraisal of Neandertal. In particular, a 60,000-year-old Neandertal's remains were found at Kebara Cave, Mount Carmel in Israel, with an intact hyoid bone, virtually identical to our present-day hyoid. Since this bone makes human speech possible, the scientists were forced to conclude that Neandertal had the capability to speak. And many scientists regard speech as the key to mankind's great leap forward.

Most anthropologists now recognise Neandertal as a fully fledged Homo sapiens, who for a long time was behaviourally equivalent with other Homo sapiens. It is quite possible that Neandertal was as intelligent and human-like as we are today. It has been suggested that his large and crude skull features may have simply been a genetic disorder similar to that of acromegaly.

As a result of the conclusive dating of contemporary Neandertal and Homo sapiens remains, a new theory has emerged suggesting that both must have stemmed from an earlier 'archaic' Homo sapiens. Several fossils have been found, supposedly of this archaic species, which combine different aspects of primitive erectus and modern human anatomy. It is commonly cited in the popular press that these archaics emerged around 300,000 years ago. But it turns out that this is pure supposition based on a small sample size, preconceptions and guesswork.

What are the real facts? In 1989, an advanced seminar was held on The Origins of Modern Human Adaptations, dealing specifically with the archaic-modern interface. Summarising the results of the discussions, Erik Trinkhaus reported that:

The key point of agreement in the course of the seminar was that sometime during the later Pleistocene [the last 1 million years], in a relatively brief period of transition, there was a transformation from archaic to modern humans - a transformation manifested in both culture and biology... the transformation from archaic to modern human witnessed not only the reorganisation of the brain and body and a shift in stone working from a simple, expedient technology to a complex and elegant craft, but also the first appearance of true art and symbolism and the blossoming of formal systems of language.

A further seminar in 1992 also focused on the question of the transition from archaic to modern. One of the papers presented included the following comment:

The timescale of this transition lies beyond the dating range of C14 and therefore has necessitated the employment of a battery of new dating techniques.

The various papers presented at the seminar were published by Aitken, Stringer and Mellars in 1993 and focused particularly on improved chronological dating methods. Significant progress was reported in a diverse range of new dating technologies - uranium-series dating, luminescence dating (thermal or optical) and electron spin resonance (ESR) - but each suffered various limitations in different circumstances. Nevertheless, many reliable datings, based on these methods (rather than radiocarbon, C14) were presented. Significantly, it was reported that all of the fossils of the archaics were poorly dated and could not be vouched by any of the new technologies.

As for the moderns, the earliest definitive and reliable date was cited as 120-110,000 years Before Present (BP) at Qafzeh in Israel. None of the other dates, published by this esteemed

group of scientists, was earlier than 200,000 years BP. The date of the emergence of the moderns could only be guessed at within a huge range from 500-200,000 years BP.

That is the true state of scientific knowledge on the subject. There is no proof that an archaic Homo sapiens existed 300,000 years ago and no proof that Neandertal dates back to 230,000 years ago. The fact of the matter is that Homo sapiens fossils appear suddenly within the last 200,000 years without any clear record of their origins. The Atlas of Ancient Archaeology sums up the situation as follows:

The contemporary history of Homo sapiens (sapiens) remains bafflingly obscure... so little do we know about the approach to one of the great turning points of our global history.

Meanwhile, Roger Lewin, writing in 1984, stated:

The origin of fully modern humans denoted by the subspecies name Homo sapiens (sapiens) remains one of the great puzzles of palaeoanthropology.

Man the Evolutionary Misfit

The appearance of Homo sapiens is more than a baffling puzzle - it is highly improbable, and close to impossible, according to the fundamental principles of Darwinism. Allow me to highlight the scale of these improbabilities.

If we use an ape as the starting point, it is widely agreed that a significant number of big evolutionary jumps are necessary to evolve into a man. It is also widely agreed that mutation is the mechanism by which natural selection works. However, scientists point out that the vast majority of mutations are bad. They also point out that macromutations - mutations which produce big changes - are particularly dangerous to a species and thus unlikely to survive. Furthermore, they accept that even if a positive mutation does take hold in a species, it will do so only in the right circumstances when a small population becomes isolated. In summary, the mutational mechanism must take a long, long time.

It is the combination of these improbable factors and the relatively short period of six million years allowed for man's evolution from the apes, which has caused such discomfort to leading evolutionary scientists such as Roger Penrose, Noam Chomsky and Stephen Jay Gould.

The great power of Darwinism, according to its proponents such as Richard Dawkins, is that, given enough time, natural selection can explain anything and everything. But when it comes to mankind, the lack of evolutionary time becomes a major problem. What are the odds against mankind benefiting from not one but several macromutations in the course of only six million years?

The problem can be looked at another way. One of the central principles of Darwinism is that 'nature never over-endows a species beyond the needs of everyday existence'. So, why was it that, in the complete absence of an intellectual rival, Homo sapiens did acquire a brain which was light years beyond its requirements for everyday existence?

How did the hominid known as Homo erectus transform itself 200,000 years ago into Homo sapiens, with a 50 per cent increase in brain size, together with language capability and a modern anatomy?

According to the orthodox scenario, Homo sapiens emerged suddenly c. 200,000 years ago, and yet made little use of his huge brain for 160,000 years. Then, 40,000 years ago, Homo sapiens seemingly underwent what we might call a transition to modern behaviour. Having

swept northwards, he expanded through most of the globe by 13,000 years ago. After a further 1,000 years he discovered agriculture, 6,000 years later he formed great civilisations with advanced astronomical knowledge, and here we are after another 6,000 years sending space probes into the furthestmost depths of the Solar System.

It is a scenario which seems utterly implausible and flies in the face of our understanding of evolution as a slow and gradual process. Common sense would suggest at least another million years for Homo sapiens to develop from stone tools to using other materials, and perhaps a hundred million years to master such trades as mathematics, engineering and astronomy. We shouldn't even be dreaming of space probes.

Returning to the study of Sir Arthur Keith, mentioned earlier, how do we reconcile his conclusions with the scientific evidence which shows a 98 per cent genetic similarity between man and the chimpanzee? I would now like to turn this ratio around and ask how a 2 per cent difference in DNA can account for the astonishing difference between man and his primate 'cousins'. After all, a dog shares 98 per cent of its genes with a fox, yet the two animals closely resemble each other.

Somehow we must explain how a mere 2 per cent genetic difference can account for so many 'value added' features in mankind - the brain, language, modern anatomy and sexuality - to name but a few.

Furthermore, it is a strange fact that Homo sapiens has only 46 chromosomes compared to 48 in chimpanzees and gorillas. The theory of natural selection has been unable to suggest how the fusing together of two chromosomes - a major structural change - should have come about in such a short time scale.

Clearly everything is not 'hunky dory' with Darwinism. Yes its general principles are of great value in explaining the evolution of animals and specific organs such as the eye, but severe doubts surround its practical application to man.

These doubts have been continually understated for the simple reason that scientists regard Darwinism as the only alternative to the anathema of Creationism. And since Darwinism must therefore be the key to the existence of Homo sapiens, scientists have forced the theory to fit the facts and vice versa.

But might there be another alternative - a scientific rival to Darwinism? Might it be possible that millions of years ago, or perhaps hundreds of thousands of years ago, an intelligent extraterrestrial species migrated to the Earth (perhaps due to the explosion of its home planet - now the Asteroid Belt) and intervened in the course of human evolution? Might such a species have hybridised itself with an existing hominid on Earth? After all, the scientific evidence does seem to suggest that an unknown hand upgraded Homo erectus with a series of deliberate, focused improvements.

Perhaps now is the time to reconsider Darwinism as it applies to mankind. If Darwinism cannot explain the scientific evidence, then it must, like the species, which are its subject matter, adapt or die.

Surely science itself must benefit if we put Darwinism through its paces against a powerful scientific competitor, namely the theory of Interventionism.

Roll on the battle, and may the strongest and fittest theory survive.