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The Human Enigma

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE INDICATES HUMAN BEINGS ARE AN
UNIQUE SPECIES THAT IS FAR SUPERIOR TO ANY SPECIES
EXISTING TODAY OR IN THE PAST

The Human Enigma

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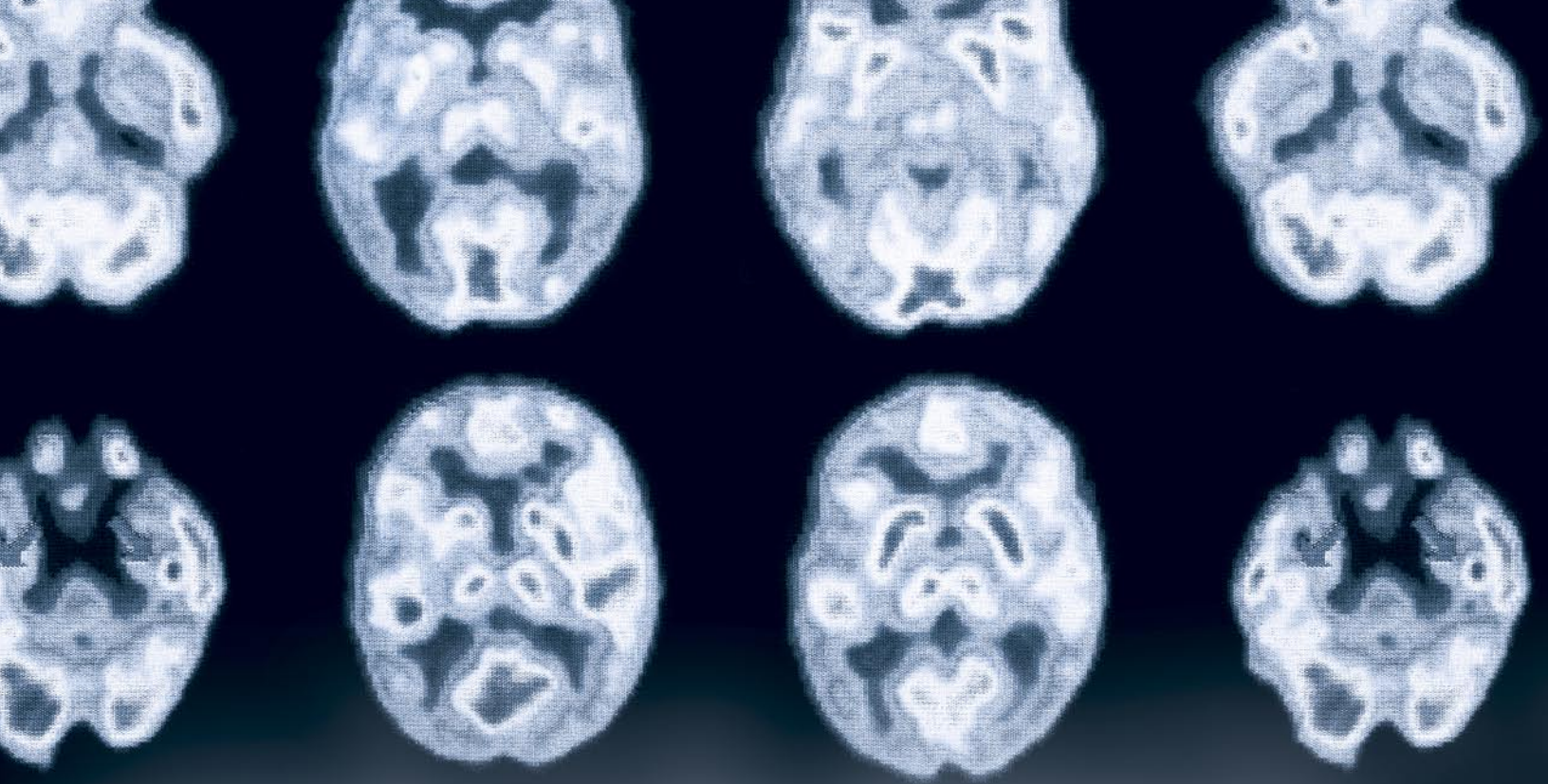
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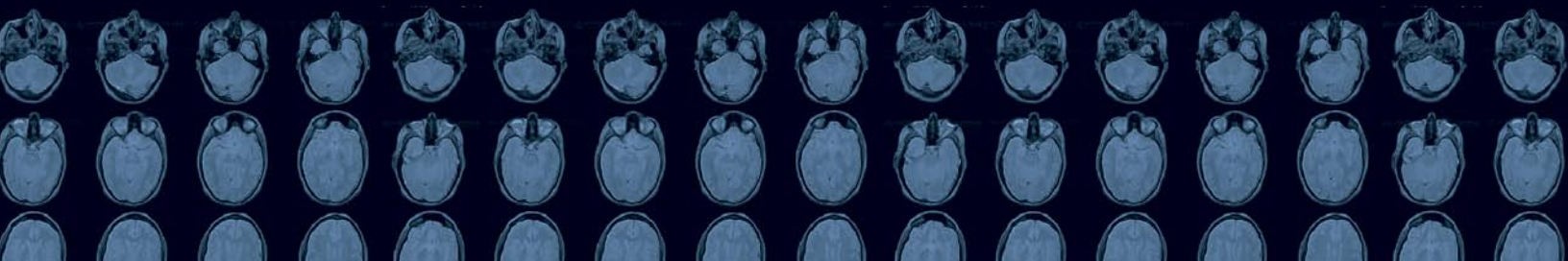
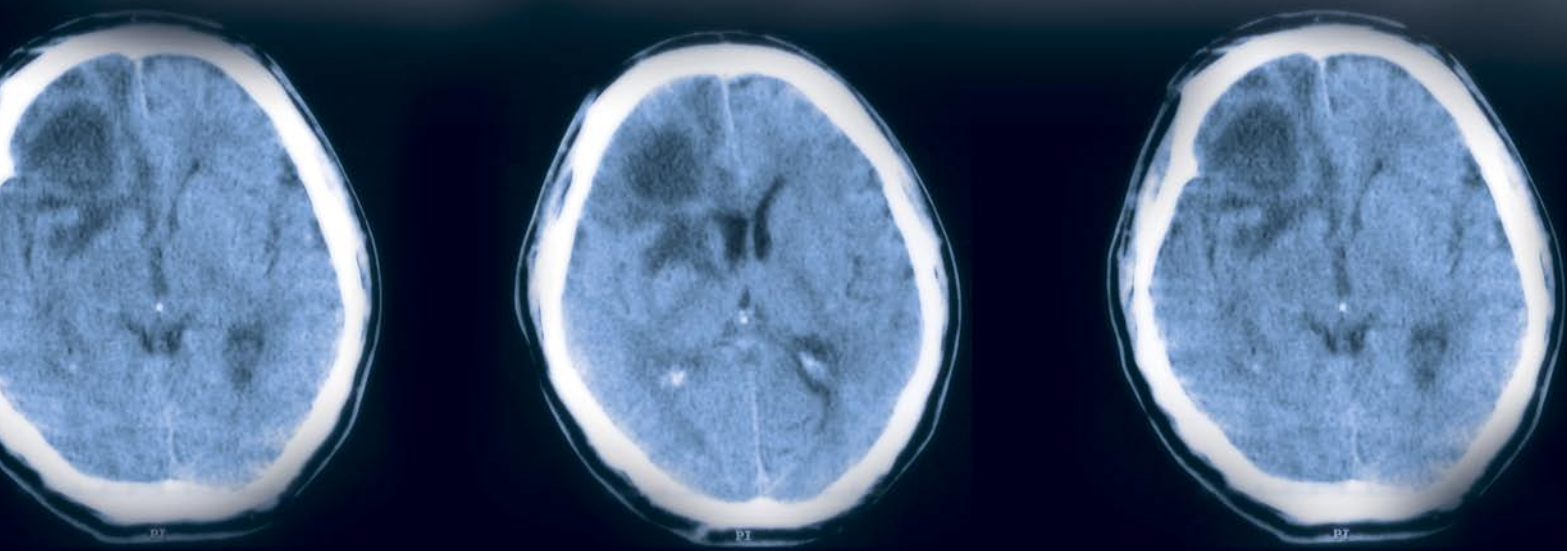
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Larry Chapman

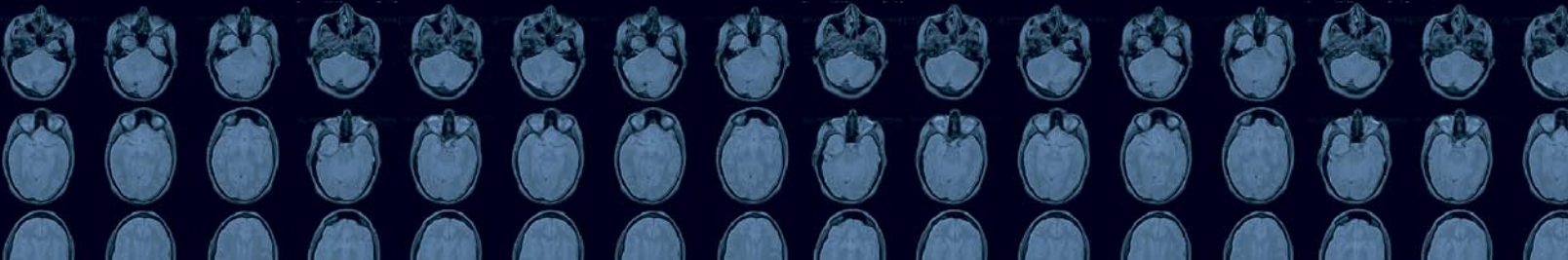
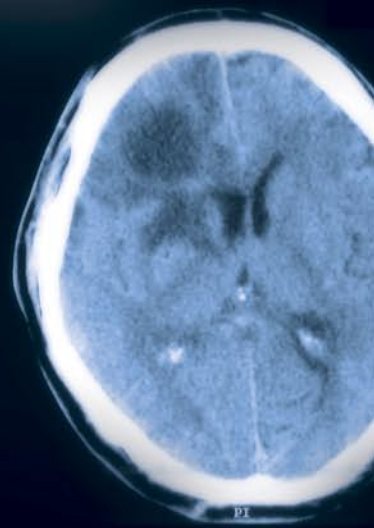
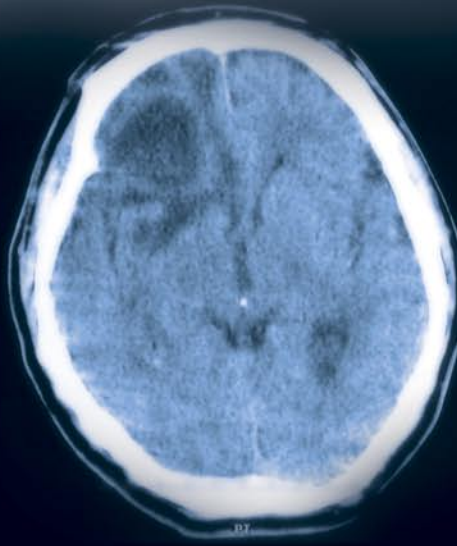
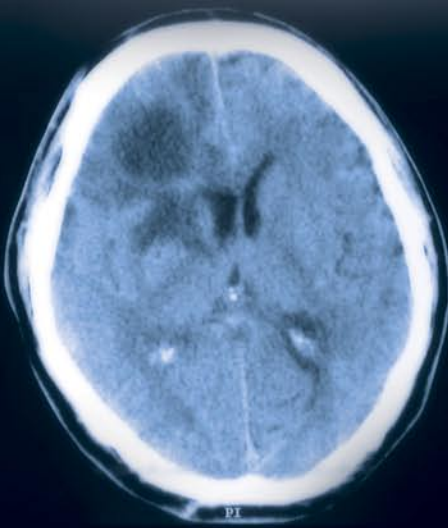


THE HUMAN





ENIGMA



Scientific evidence indicates human beings are a unique to any species existing today or in the past.

In the movie, *Planet of the Apes*, Astronaut Leo Davidson is on a routine reconnaissance space mission in the year 2029, when suddenly his pod cruiser is thrust through a wormhole. Not knowing where they were, or how many years had advanced, he and his crew crash-land their cruiser on a strange planet that appears devoid of life. Suddenly they encounter an advanced tribe of intelligent talking apes who rule over a remnant of mute humans. Davidson's other crew members are killed by their brutal rulers, but he escapes to a desolate area called the Forbidden Zone, an area the apes greatly fear.

In the end, Davidson discovers that he has actually landed on Earth in the year 3978. And the Forbidden Zone is the desert-like remains from an ancient nuclear holocaust that wiped out humanity. A remnant of the Statue of Liberty is discovered in the dust, along with other reminders of a civilization that once was.

LOOK!

A HUMAN BEING

The fossil trail has revealed creatures that seem to resemble apes, but have some human-like features. These members of the ape family that scientists call hominids are clearly not human, but evolutionists believe they eventually became us. Evolutionists begin with the premise that life is merely one large family tree (or bush).

They are looking for a trail of fossils that confirm Darwin's theory of macroevolution of our species. However, if evidence show that *Homo sapiens* appeared suddenly with qualities and traits distinct from all other forms of life, the possibility that we have been designed becomes apparent.

like a solid argument for human ancestry unravels when the facts are made clear. Henry Gee, the chief science writer for *Nature* writes, "The intervals of time that separate fossils are so huge that we cannot say anything definite about their possible connection through ancestry and descent."¹

The problem is that paleoanthropologists are attempting to fill in an enormous puzzle with only a few fragments of bones and teeth that according to Gee, could be "fitted into a small box."² One of the most renowned evolutionists of the twentieth century, Stephen Jay Gould agrees with the difficulty, stating, "Most hominid fossils, even though they serve as a basis for endless speculation and elaborate storytelling, are fragments of jaws and scraps of skulls."³

The primary message is clear: human warfare and self-destruction enabled apes to evolve as the dominant species. But there is another, more subtle message: humans and apes are linked by an evolutionary family tree. Although the movie is humorous and entertaining, the message reflects the Darwinian paradigm that we are merely accidental beings in a chance world.

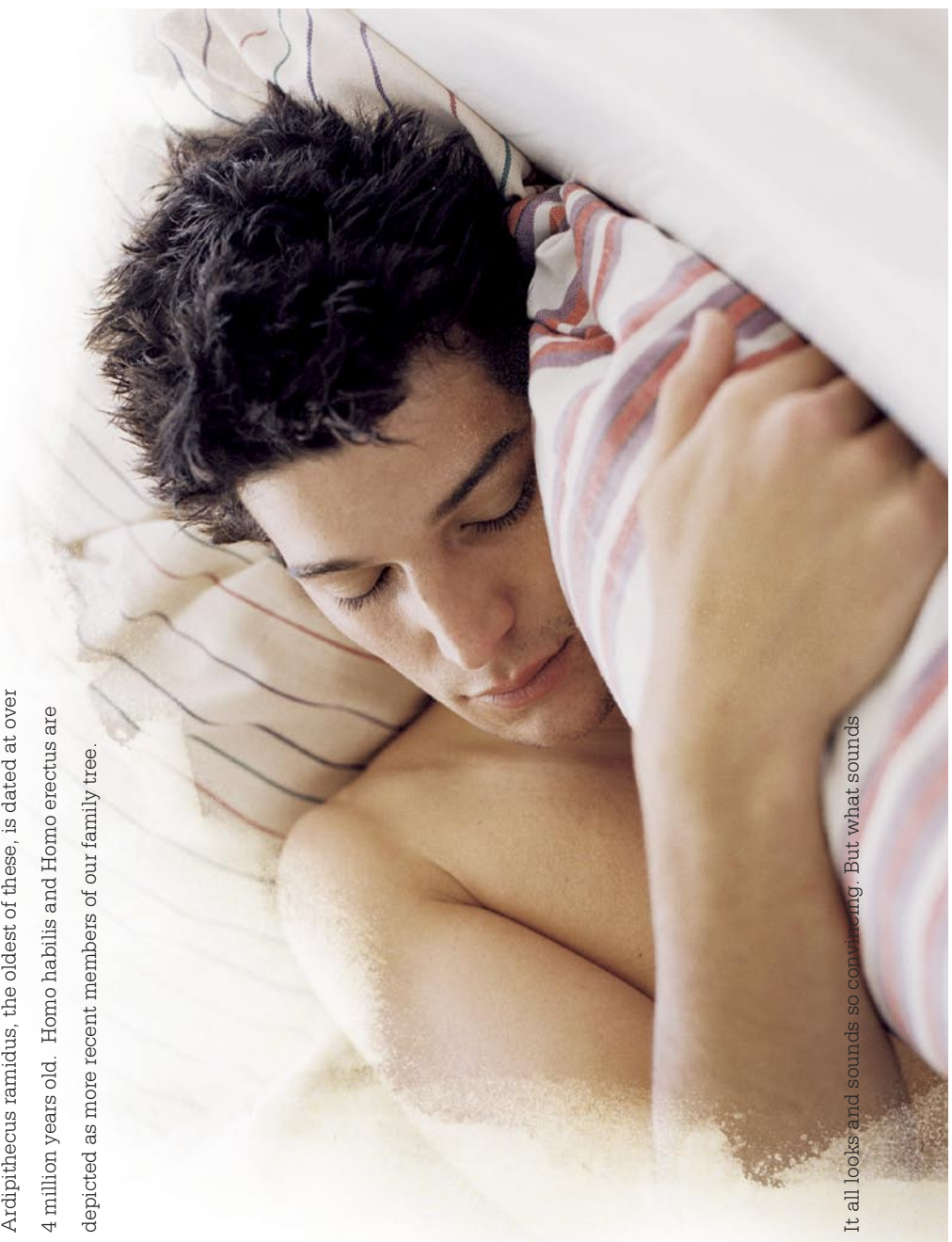
Actually, the entire Darwinian paradigm revolves around the theme that man is not unique, but rather just the end-product of a long evolutionary chain. The argument goes; that since we have bodies similar to apes, and since we share much of the same DNA, we must be related to them. Materialists cite this as proof that Darwin was right about us descending from lower forms of life.

It is not the purpose of this brief article to speculate on how life and the various species originated. A superintelligent designer could have created life in a number of different ways, either using natural laws, or transcending them. In fact, some scientists such as Simon Conway Morris, and Richard G. Colling, believe in designed evolution, where all of nature was intricately and ingeniously planned to eventually create you and me. The issue we address here is what leading scientists have discovered about our origins. In other words, what does the evidence reveal about our species---are we simply advanced apes, or are we unique and distinct? If the latter is true, it would certainly add credence to the argument that we have been designed.

So have paleoanthropologists been able to bridge the chasm between what they call hominids and us, proving an evolutionary link?

We've all seen museum exhibits depicting slightly erect ape-like creatures that presumably became us. These exhibits and drawings in biology textbooks imply that there is solid fossil evidence to back up the claim that such fossils have been discovered. In fact, paleoanthropologists have uncovered pieces of bones and skull fragments from a variety of primates they consider human ancestors. *Ardipithecus ramidus*, the oldest of these, is dated at over 4 million years old. *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus* are depicted as more recent members of our family tree.

Gould is not alone. Harvard zoologist Richard Lewontin also acknowledges: "when we consider the remote past, before the origin of the actual species *Homo sapiens*, we are faced with a fragmentary and disconnected fossil record."⁴ Yet, these fragments of jaws and scraps of skulls, no matter how sparse and disconnected, have revealed some insightful clues about the uniqueness of our species. Let's dig deeper.



It all looks and sounds so convincing. But what sounds

The first thing that strikes one as odd about *Homo sapiens* is their appearance on the stage of history. Despite the transitional drawings found in textbooks, intelligent, laptop-carrying man seems to have shown up rather abruptly.

Although small fragments of hominid bones have been discovered, there is a huge jump from such creatures to our own species. Naturalist Ian Tattersall (curator at the American Museum of Natural History) remarks in his book *The Fossil Trail*: “Something extraordinary, if totally fortuitous, happened with the birth of our species.”⁵ Tattersall is referring to the suddenness with which humans appear in the fossil record.

Biologists are unable to explain why our species appeared so suddenly. Professor John Maynard Smith, Emeritus of Biology at the University of Sussex writes, “Something very puzzling happened. . . . The fossil evidence is patchy, but it seems that hominids suddenly developed brains that, in terms of size, were much like ours.”⁶ In other words, the jump from hominids to humans is unexplainable. No links have been discovered.

Most hominids had small, ape-like brains and no capacity for language. Then, suddenly in the fossil record, man appears with several unique features, including an enlarged brain capacity. Why are there no clear-cut links between hominids without language capacity and *Homo sapiens*?

SPEAKING OF SPEAKING...

The ability to speak distinguishes man from all apes and hominids. Although human beings have both the hardware and the software for language, hominids didn't. They didn't even come close.

According to noted evolutionist Ernst Mayr, humans have the ability to conceptualize, resulting in the development of art, literature, mathematics, and science. Hominids and all other animals lack this unique human quality, and are only able to communicate by giving and receiving signals.⁷



But even if man suddenly developed the ability to speak, what evolutionary advantage brought about the change? This presents a huge problem for those who argue against a designer.

As he traces the history of our species, evolutionist Steve Olson spells out the problem. “Of course, language could not have come from nowhere. To speak, early humans needed particular vocal and neural mechanisms. But here a notorious problem arises. Any adaptations produced by evolution are useful only in the present, not in some vaguely defined future.”⁸

In other words, for human speech to work, the brain structure, the tongue, the larynx, the vocal cords, and many other parts all need to be fully developed.

Some biologists have speculated that a mutation occurred allowing an individual to talk. But, according to Olson, such explanations “have always been suspect.” In reality, science cannot explain why we are the only creatures with the ability to speak.

UNIQUELY HUMAN?

Man's sudden appearance has scientists like Harvard scholar Lewontin pouring cold water on claims that a missing link between humans and apes has been discovered: Although he is an evolutionist, Lewontin acknowledges, “Despite the excited and optimistic claims that have been made by some paleontologists, no fossil hominid species can be established as our direct ancestor.”⁹

The sudden appearance of man in the history of our planet has some scientists using the word “miracle.” During an interview with the French science monthly *La Recherche*, Marcel Schutzenberger was asked, “The appearance of human beings—is that a miracle?”

The outspoken French mathematician replied,

Naturally. And here it does seem that there are voices among contemporary biologists—I mean voices other than mine—who might cast doubt on the Darwinian paradigm that has dominated discussion for the past twenty years. Gradualists and saltationists [people

who believe in rapid species change] alike are completely incapable of giving a convincing explanation of the quasi-simultaneous emergence of a number of biological systems that distinguish human beings from the higher primates.

Schutzenberger was referring to several physiological differences between humans and primates for which no transitional fossils have been discovered.

He then concludes the interview with his view that there is no materialistic explanation for the sudden development of man: "The reality is that we are confronted with total conceptual bankruptcy."¹⁰

Even evolutionists like Mayr, who believe we descended from hominids writes: "Man is indeed as unique, as different from all other animals, as had been traditionally claimed by theologians and philosophers."¹¹

Along the same lines, Ian Tattersall remarks on the uniqueness of humanity: "Homo sapiens are as distinctive an entity as exists on the face of the Earth, and should be dignified as such instead of being adulterated with every reasonably large-brained hominid fossil that happened to come along."¹²

Of all hominids, only Neanderthal had a large brain. Yet, Neanderthal was a distinct species according to DNA studies.¹³ And, according to Olson they "seem not to have developed the fluent language that lets us wonder, adapt, and create."¹⁴

“HOMO SAPIENS ARE AS DISTINCTIVE AN ENTITY AS EXISTS ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH, AND SHOULD BE DIGNIFIED AS SUCH INSTEAD OF BEING ADULTERATED WITH EVERY REASONABLY LARGE-BRAINED HOMINID FOSSIL THAT HAPPENED TO COME ALONG.”

IAN TATTERSALL

ONE HUMAN ANCESTOR?

So where did the human race originate, and does DNA confirm the uniqueness of our species? In *Mapping Human History*, Steve Olson traces the history of humankind through mitochondrial DNA analysis. By analyzing human fossils and DNA samples throughout history, new and stunning insights regarding human ancestry have been forthcoming:

1. *Once human beings appeared on the scene, there is no evidence of evolution.*

Olson writes, "With the appearance of modern humans, the large-scale evolution of our species essentially ceased."¹⁵

2. *Human DNA is highly uniform compared with that of other species.* Olson remarks, "What must count as one of the most profound biological insights of all time is the recognition of our remarkable similarity."¹⁶

3. *Modern human beings originated and migrated from one area.* Paleoanthropologist at Cambridge University, Marta Lahr, explains, "The bulk of the chronological and genetic data indicate a single origin of all modern humans."¹⁷

4. *We have all descended from a single person.* Olson pens, "The first time I heard this statement I thought it highly implausible. All 6 billion people on this planet descended from a single ancestor? Yet this is one of those wonderful scientific conclusions that is not only true but *has* to be true."¹⁸

Thus mitochondrial DNA studies have shown that *Homo sapiens* not only arrived suddenly and recently on planet Earth, but have all originated from a single ancestor

What has caused mankind to transcend the animal world and probe space, develop computers, discover DNA, and create art and music? What makes us unique? The answer come down to three pounds of lumpy gray matter floating around in our heads.

THREE POUNDS OF LUMPY GRAY AMAZEMENT

So, what are we to make of the human brain? We generally associate complexity with intelligence. The more complex a building or machine, the more intelligence is required to engineer it. The human brain, for starters, contains 12 billion neuron cells intertwined with 100 trillion connections.

To illustrate a number as large as 100 trillion, molecular biologist Michael Denton suggests visualizing a solid forest of trees covering half the United States. If each tree contains one hundred thousand leaves, the connections in a human brain would equal the total number of leaves in the entire forest.

Yet the brain's connections are not mere intersections like those in a highway system, but rather are a highly organized network far exceeding the complexity of all the com-

munication networks on planet Earth.¹⁹ Our memories (one billion trillion bits of them) are not isolated in one section of the brain but instead are intertwined throughout the network. "Each junction has the potential to be part of a memory. So the memory capacity of a human brain is effectively infinite."²⁰ Inside that three pounds of gray matter of yours is enough information to fill 20 million books (19 million if you aren't that bright).

As we examine our universe, nothing else in it even remotely approaches the complexity of the human brain. Stephen Hawking compares the complexity of the human brain with most present-day computers and reveals the overwhelming superiority of our brains: "In comparison with most computers which have one central processing unit, the brain has millions of processing units ... all working at the same time."²¹

Even if communication engineers could apply the most sophisticated engineering techniques known to humanity, the assembly of an object remotely resembling the human brain would require an eternity of time. Even then, they still wouldn't know where to begin.²² The overwhelming processing power takes place within an area of our brains called the cerebral cortex, and it is here where the human enigma is most apparent.



THE

THE MYSTERY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The cerebral cortex is the area of our brains where, mysteriously, “matter is transformed into consciousness.”²³ The cerebral cortex distinguishes human beings from all other animals. “Though the difference between the human genome and that of a chimp is estimated to be less than 1 percent, our cerebral cortex has ten times more neurons.”²⁴ But that is not the total story. Mayr reveals, “The unique character of our brain seems to lie in the existence of many (perhaps as many as forty) different types of neurons...”²⁵ And in spite of the DNA similarities, between humans and chimpanzees, there are still some 40 million differences.²⁶

Additionally, recent studies have shown that chimpanzees lack awareness of their own thoughts, a trait that appears to be uniquely human.²⁷

Awareness of thoughts is something that is beyond our ability to create, even in the most sophisticated software programs. When chess Grandmaster Gary Kasparov was defeated by the IBM supercomputer, Deep Blue, the computer didn’t even realize it had won. Deep Blue lacked this self-awareness we take for granted. It is called consciousness, a mystery that has baffled

philosophers and scientists for centuries. Our awareness, with its manipulation of ideas, actually takes place in the prefrontal cortex.²⁸ It is here that we reason, ponder, imagine, fantasize, and seek answers to why we exist. This prefrontal cortex area in a human makes up a far larger proportion of the cerebral cortex than in any animal, and it is the most complex arrangement of matter in the universe.²⁹

If we could shrink in size and become spectators to the incredible activity in the innermost portion of the cerebral cortex, we might see something resembling a kaleidoscope of fireworks networking in all directions. Yet these electrical impulses are billions of organized patterns that result in our thoughts and imaginations. All of these thoughts intersect with our self-awareness.

While consciousness is at rest during sleep, the brain is still in action. “Even in sleep, the brain is pulsing, throbbing and flashing with the complex business of human life—dreaming, remembering, figuring things out. Our thoughts, visions and fantasies have a physical reality.”³⁰

Nobody really understands consciousness or how we got it. Sir John Maddox, former editor-in-chief of the journal *Nature*, addresses the puzzle of consciousness: “Nobody understands how decisions are made or how imagination is set free. What con-

sciousness consists of, or how it should be defined, is equally puzzling. ... We seem as far from understanding cognitive processes as we were a century ago.”³¹

For years materialists have tried to reduce humans to nothing more than a series of drives and instincts.

However, in reality human consciousness chooses between the instincts, and it is as different and separate from them as the pianist is from the keys he chooses to play on the piano. The consciousness sits over and above our instincts, drives, and desires, and it chooses which it will act upon.³²

Thus, man can choose to disregard his own desire to survive for a higher purpose. Such an act of heroism works counter to Darwin’s survival of the fittest, and is unexplainable by materialists. There seems to be something about consciousness that transcends self-preservation.

Another example of consciousness is the objectivity of the self—you distinguish yourself from your experiences. When stimulated, you distinctly feel that pain or pleasure is happening to you and that you are distinct from the experience causing the pain or pleasure. It is this objective awareness of our own thoughts that appears to be unique to human beings.

HUMAN BEINGS

pelled to postulate the existence of an immaterial mind, even though they might not embrace a belief in life after death.”³³

What process in natural selection could have led to human consciousness? Although evolutionists have taken a stab at it, no one really knows. Neither do scientists have an explanation for human imagination or creativity.

In human beings, the ability to simulate alternative future events appears to take place within our subjective consciousness. Oxford zoologist Richard Dawkins admits that nothing in Darwinian evolution accounts for it. Although Dawkins remains an ardent materialist, he writes, “Why this should have happened is to me, the most profound mystery facing modern biology.”³⁴

Even leading evolutionist Stephen J. Gould recognized the inability of natural selection to explain the human brain. Gould admitted, “I don’t know why the brain got large in the first place. It certainly wasn’t so that we could paint pictures or write symbols.”³⁵

DIFFERENT BY DESIGN?

Why did we get these incredibly complex brains with both the hardware and software for language? And according to evolutionists, our brains have remained unchanged. Mayr writes, “What is perhaps most astonishing is the fact that the human brain seems not to have changed one single bit since the first appearance of Homo sapiens....”³⁶ And where did consciousness and acts of heroism come from? There seems to be no evolutionary explanation for any of these unique human qualities.

In his book *What Evolution Is*, Ernst Mayr argues that our species is the only one of over a billion species that resulted in exceptional intelligence.³⁷

So what are we to make of *us*? We create music and art. We dream and imagine. We endeavor to reach the stars, launching space shuttles and peering at the universe through powerful telescopes. And we wonder why we are here on this tiny speck called Earth. The enigma of man seems to point to something or someone beyond ourselves.

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IMPRINTS OF DESIGN ON THE SOUL

While we can speak of the mind and the soul as distinct entities, we are often talking about the same thing. It is the opposite of what we mean by the brain, or the physical processes of intelligence. The nonmaterial aspect of who we are seems to defy reduction to physical processes. A case could be made that consciousness resides within the soul and that the soul itself is really the “I” or “ego” of what I am. But there is a slight distinction between mind and soul.

MIT-trained scientist Gerald Schroeder writes of this distinction. “Consciousness has all the trappings of another nonreducible element of our universe. The conscious mind is not mystical, but it may be metaphysical—meaning out of the physical.”³⁸ In other words, consciousness is not explainable in natural terms and has the transcendent characteristics of a totally different dimension. Perhaps this is why materialists are so baffled by the enigma of consciousness.

While our “mind” seems to refer to all of the mechanisms of consciousness, the “soul” seems to speak of a spiritual or religious impulse that resides within humanity. This spiritual instinct, perhaps the clearest of all indicators of intelligent design, can be seen in some of the following phenomena.

Innately religious. Since the dawn of recorded time, and in every place on the globe, people have been religious. Belief in God, some say, is something that people are taught to believe, but both archeology and sociology would tell us otherwise. People are innately religious, with over 90% of the world’s population believing in some divine power. Wherever you go, people instinctively bow to the heavens. It would seem that religious belief is not something people are reasoned into but something they are persuaded out of.

Oughtness. Have you ever seen a cow that seems disillusioned with life and who thinks she was made for something better? (OK, besides the Chick-fil-A cows.) Unlike cows in the pasture, most humans have a sense that things are not as they should be. A longing for heaven, it has been called. We struggle with circumstances, resent death, complain of evil, and have a general sense that we were made for something better, that things “ought” to be different. Why do we have these thoughts? Why shouldn’t we simply accept life on its own terms?

Morality. When someone commits a terrible crime, doesn’t something inside us scream for justice? Think of the Holocaust or September 11th when terrorists flew airplanes into the World Trade Center buildings, killing nearly 3,000 innocent people.

We all share a common sense of horrible injustice and desire for retribution.

Materialists believe morals come from society, but are unable to explain a moral reformer such as Martin Luther King who applied Christian principles to promote black Americans’ civil rights.

Materialists also struggle to explain how the German culture could justify the genocide of 6 million Jews during the Holocaust of World War 2. Hitler convinced many Germans that eliminating the Jews was a worthy act since he deemed them an inferior race. The butchery, torture, and medical experimentation during this period originated from a culture that for the most part justified such behavior. Yet we intuitively know it was wrong. But why? This inner moral sense of right and wrong cannot be attributed merely to society or culture, but seems to point to something beyond ourselves.

If the elements of consciousness, spirituality, oughtness, and morality are not primarily physical, then materialism will never be able to account for them. But what are they? Could they be imprints from a transcendent designer who has programmed us with an image of his own DNA?