

BOOK REVIEW ARTICLE

**Evolutionary Origins:
Pathways of the Human Predicament**

Kevin Lamb
Washington, D.C.

**The Inevitable Domination by Man:
An Evolutionary Detective Story**

Seymour W. Itzkoff
Paideia Publishers, Ashfield, MA. 2000

Few scientific controversies are as enduring and contentious as the evolutionary track of human origins. From microbes to mammals to man, the course and direction of evolutionary development has given rise to theories and counter theories over the progressive continuity of selection, adaptation, and time-line of evolutionary change, which continues to divide anthropologists and paleontologists into rival camps. Seymour Itzkoff, the author of fifteen books, including a multi-volume series on the evolutionary origins of intelligence, comprehensively analyzes several unresolved crucial issues in this disputed area. Itzkoff provides a number of insightful observations in this up-to-date guide for those educated laymen who wish to obtain a comprehensive overview of animal evolution, and particularly of what happened in human prehistory. Indeed, those who are bewildered by the Out-of-Africa debate will benefit from this careful examination of the physical evidence.

The book is in a sense the culmination of the author's career of published findings on the all-important subject of human evolution, so vital to an understanding of humankind in its present predicament – an over-crowded and severely degraded world, which is exponentially deteriorating. In his Foreword, author Itzkoff explains the forces that have shaped his intellectual quest:

In 1971 *Ernst Cassirer: Scientific Knowledge and the Concept of Man*, was published. It was the first of my two books on Cassirer. It was a study in the neo-Kantian tradition of the theory of knowledge, specifically dealing with the conundrum that this great 20'h-century Kantian addressed in his attempt to locate the broader cultural and biological sources for the symbolic forms of knowledge. Cassirer's

concern was to understand the historical/evolutionary position of the symbolic forms in the panorama of human progress. Human knowledge and communication seemed to be unique expressions in the biological world of signs. We humans are biological creatures. The selective function of animal communication has been consistent along a vast spectrum of time. Yet the motivations that undergirded the symbolic forms of knowledge seemed to be inconsistent with this biological heritage.

My hesitant solution focused on the great orthoselective transformation that had seemingly produced the sapient brain. Human knowledge indeed seemed to derive from no overt survivalistic yearnings. At the same time, we could not place its sources in a higher "metaphysical" reality. We seemed to be *sui generis* compared to the shared needs of rats, chimpanzees, and algae. Yet we were products of the same ultimate bio-physical forces that created these other companions along the road.

My next exploration of this concern with the significance of human evolution was expressed in a four-volume series of books on the evolution of human intelligence, published between 1983-1990. This series confronted what to me had become a clear challenge to the universalistic civilizational vision of the neo-Kantians – the variability of human intelligence and its cultural products. How could we explain from the standpoint of human evolution this variability in individual capabilities and such great social differences? My conclusion: the variability was real, a product of a human species that was by no means homogeneous in its *hegira* forward in time and upward in corticalization from its root primate origins.

In *The Inevitable Domination by Man*, Itzkoff puts forth a evolutionary model for the coming of highly intelligent humans, which begins with the early sexually reproducing eukaryote cell, originating at least 1.5 - 2 billion years ago. The existence of an evolutionary environment of instability and change propelled a variety of ever more intelligent creatures into a positive adaptive and selective stance with nature. As such, Itzkoff argues that a highly intelligent creature dominating the Earth's surface was inevitable given the perdurance of our bio-chemical environment. He favors a traditional neo-Darwinian process of gradual evolutionary change in which the ancestors of humans long differentiated themselves from other mammal and primate lines, *contra* humans as "third chimpanzees". Cytogenetic evidence (pp. 128-131) harmonizes with recent DNA analysis to indicate only 30,000 genes in man, rather than 100,000 as formerly believed, as compared

with the 15,000-20,000 genes in some primitive but specialized worms. The line of vertebrates leading to humans clearly separated and matured at an earlier stage in evolution than has hitherto been supposed. The strength of the argument that high intelligence and truly modern humans arose in the north far beyond what existed in the tropical zone of primate life is strongly buttressed by the wider evolutionary model developed in this book.

Because of the heavy political overtones associated with anything that explains the origins and diversity of the living peoples of the world, popular representation of the Out-of-Africa argument has been conducted in a frequently misleading and at times distorted manner. While few would question the evidence which points to man's primate having evolved in tropical climates, polemicists have sought to argue that what they euphemistically call "modern man" evolved as a virtually single sub-species in Africa (some even suggesting sub-Saharan Africa) and that only minimal evolutionary adaptations occurred amongst those populations which moved out of Africa. Indeed, some polemicists, motivated more by politics than by science, proceed to over-emphasize the biological similarities between those races whose more recent evolutionary history has been in temperate climates and those that have remained more closely adapted to sub-Saharan tropical environments. The fact that a major genetic division separates populations of Caucasoid and Mongoloid characteristics from those of sub-Saharan or Negroid character is seldom mentioned outside of academe.

In reviewing the evidence for the African Eve theory, Itzkoff expounds upon several well-established critiques of the inferential arguments that Allan Wilson and his colleagues articulated over computer generated models of the dating of mitochondria DNA. Such arguments conflict with the scientific evidence from the fossil record, and Itzkoff points to a number of illogical conjectures in the Out-of-Africa theory. For examples, he cites one critique from Dawkins and de Duve on the shortcomings of this computer generated model:

One point is clear. The method used to construct the original tree was flawed. Other trees rooted at different times and in different geographical locations can be constructed from the same data.... It is highly unlikely that Eve could be more than 500,000 years old, 200,000 is a possibility.... It certainly does not mean that the whole of humankind is derived from a single couple or even that there may have been something special about eve.... If eve lived 200,000 years ago, she may have had 4,999 female cogeners, in which

case the survival of her line was due to chance and has no special meaning.... Perhaps a more probably alternative is that the present human race originates from a highly inbred population.

Much of the confusion over the African Eve concept arises from the loose use of the term "modern humans." Indeed, there is much confusion in scholarly writings and vast terminological confusion in popularizing and polemical works. Itzkoff avoids this by arguing with justification that the first truly "modern" humans known to paleontologists were the Cro-Magnons, who might quite reasonably be seen as the ancestors of modern Europeans. But the Cro-Magnons extended beyond the borders of Europe, and their descendants spread out in successive waves of migration across Asia, and even back into Africa. There is still sound reason to argue that in these areas of colonization they may have admixed with older populations, and so created the vast array of diverse peoples or races that the world knows today.

Of course, this theory runs contrary to the scenario proposed by most of the African Eve, Out-of-Africa proponents, who see what they call "modern man" as having attained modernity on the African continent, and then migrated from thence around the rest of the world, replacing, without interbreeding with, the more primitive *Homo erectus* and Neanderthaloid species that were already occupying much of Asia and Australasia in a truly vast, racist genocide. Their theory assumes group selection *in extremis*. Itzkoff reconsiders the evidence in dispassionately cogent terms. The idea that Africa was most probably the original homeland of our earliest forebears is not questioned but, he argues, there can be no doubt that Cro-Magnons, Caucasoids and Mongoloids attained their present characteristics in the much colder Eurasian region.

The factual evidence, whether from a Eur-Asian "Garden of Eden" perspective or multi-regional position, argues for the full *Homo sapiens sapiens* realization of brain growth and cortical power to have first devolved upon the Eur-Asian Cro-Magnids. The positively selective cognitive impact of this morphology was demonstrated by its rapid if often deadly diffusion amongst all the ethnicities and races of humans around the world. This revolution in morphology and behavior is ongoing.

His survey concludes that the evidence indicates that Cro-Magnons or Cro-Magnon-like populations achieved their superior level of mental

evolution in Western Eurasia, then migrated eastward to intermingle with remnants of older Asian populations to give us the modern Mongoloid-type populations of China, Korea and Japan. Thus he writes:

The first Chinese dynasty, the Shang, is traditionally characterized by the Chinese themselves as governed by a red-haired, green-eyed people, possibly of Persian origin (much like characterizations of the original Mongol leadership, at 1200 A.D), who arrived on horse in the Yellow River Valley, at about 2,000 B.C. Shortly after, literacy was developed, the Chinese civilization thence taking its own uniquely developed Oriental route. Early dynastic iconography in China hints at the Caucasoid roots of this aristocracy, gradually to be largely effaced by a dominant modern Mongoloid phenotype.

Unfortunately, Itzkoff does not explore the origin of the Asian Negritoes, though there is a substantial likelihood that these may be descended from an early migration by African Negroid elements across southern, tropical Asia, never moving into the colder northern hinterland, and so retaining their tropical Negroid adaptations.

He continues:

High intelligence speaks to the issue of individuals and populations having the capacity to express themselves symbolically in abstract structures of thought, whether they be in the arts, political and legal institutions, philosophy, science and technology, religion and ethics. Here we can refer to a traditional psychological construct, the "g" factor of general intelligence, now universally applied to evaluate individual potential for higher educational training.

And again:

There can be no question today but that the evidence from pre-history, as well as recorded history, argues for this general correlation in the capacity to build civilizational institutions, then expressed in powerfully aggressive and expansive genetic and cultural dynamics. Even given the examples of relatively uncouth tribal peoples, Goths, Arabs, onools destrovino, rich if decade civilizations it is clear at these peoples were exemplifying their cultural potential in these military skills.

Itzkoff properly places emphasis on the extent to which learned patterns of behavior have allowed man to frequently suppress or alter the direct expression of his genetic propensities and innate drives, in contrast to the behavior of other animals. It is interesting, however, that he occasionally speaks of human "freewill" without attempting to define or analyze this popular concept. In the popular mind, freewill is something that allows mankind to act contrary to the principles of scientific causality. It may be that the complexity of the mechanism of human behavior is such that what we call "freewill" is merely the obscure workings of genetically-conditioned impulses intertwined with learned behavior in such complexity that it defies explanation in causal terms, but reflects the fallacies of behaviorism. Regardless of such fine points, however, Itzkoff is quite right in stressing the role of what we conveniently call human "freewill," although we suspect the validity of the popular understanding of freewill as something above and outside causality.

But leaving aside this minor quibble, and admitting that a very broad range of authorities would still defend the possibility of something approximating to the popular concept of "freewill," Itzkoff makes a major contribution to the proper understanding of Man vis-a-vis Nature when he debunks the over-emphasis of so many current theorists on the over-riding power of culture to negate the forces of biology.

As he notes, his book

... is the product of a more detailed investigation into a number of important challenges to our scientific understanding of Homo's place in the evolutionary process and its present bio-cultural significance ... [several] contemporary intellectual trends constitute a threat to our ongoing ability to take our future rationally in hand in the contemporary dynamic of both social and biological change.

The first is the view that we humans, with all of our unprecedented power over life and nature, are the accidental products of 4-plus billion years of evolution on the planet. Such a view would again lay us open to the kinds of 20 th century cultural and political manipulation by those who assert that we have no causally created "human nature."

Itzkoff consequently sees human behavior in this modern world as representing not simply a collaboration between cultural tendencies and the biological influences of the individual, but also often of a conflict between cultural forces and biological propensities developed in our

long prehistory. Ideologies which ignore the realities of our biological limitations are delusional:

High intelligence itself is not enough to discipline the ongoing war of humans against life on our Earth. The need seems to be for both educated and disciplined scientific rationality, the intellectual capacity to ward off those myths and hallucinations that can propel nations, indeed international society itself, into ideological crusades both for and against phantom utopias.

High intelligence, although not by itself a sufficient guarantee of human survival, is nevertheless a necessary endowment if future generations of man are to survive:

... only high, rational, scientifically educated intelligence can provide humankind the evidential options for decision making. Such long range planning by an intellectually and culturally diverse species depends in the first place on the disciplining of those explosively creative and expansive energies that emanate from the brain of *Homo sapiens sapiens*.

One other aspect of interest in Itzkoff's intriguing study relates directly to the title of the book. Mankind has come, inevitably, to dominate our planet and all forms of advanced plant and animal life on the planet. This could well lead to ecological disaster, since man's emotive drives, shaped as they are for survival under primitive conditions, have not yet responded to any rational warnings provided by his intellect. Man's primitive drive toward procreation, combined with the technological supremacy he has achieved over all competing life forms, threatens the environment on which all higher life forms depend. Whether or not man will irreparably damage the balance of the biosphere on which all higher life forms depend, including his own species, is a question which too few, even amongst the more advanced populations of today's world, are prepared to face. This is one of the more important topics explored in Itzkoff's study, as directly implied by the title, and the reviewer only wishes that the author had placed greater emphasis upon this threat. But as a concise exposition of what is known about human origins, and of the need to understand man's biological character as determined by his evolutionary history, this book stands far ahead of the field in terms of explaining the evolutionary role that shaped the current human predicament.

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Roger Pearson, Ph.D.

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BOOK REVIEW ARTICLE

Political Correctness is Corrupting Medicine

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PC, M.D.

Sally Satel

Basic Books, 2000

Sally Satel, the author of *PC, M.D.* is a lecturer at Yale University who has practical experience in working with cocaine addicts. In her practice she has noticed that for success addicts need to want to change (and are often ambivalent about drugs), and need to take responsibility for getting better. A theme of this book is how modern trends for regarding people as members of victimized groups prevents them from taking responsibility for their own health.

This shows up in the discussion of feminist counseling and multicultural counseling. In these, the emphasis is on political action and the status of women or oppressed peoples. The basic problem with the therapies is that there is no evidence that they work. However, there is a major risk of diverting the patient from what he can do to solve his own problems. They also appear to violate the generally agreed ethical standard that the therapist should not thrust his values on the patient.

Likewise, the tale is told of the crack moms of South Carolina. That state tried to get them into treatment using the threat of arrest and imprisonment for child neglect or the delivery of drugs to a minor if they used drugs just prior to delivery, tested positive for drugs more than once during the third trimester, or if they refused treatment for drugs. The goal was to get the women into treatment for their children's sake. From a medical viewpoint the program worked. The number of cocaine positive drug tests among pregnant moms dropped from more than 20 per month to 5 or 6. The program produced the predictable outcry among the civil rights establishments, both among those who disliked the idea of forced testing, and among those charging

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