

Re: What is the Aquatic theory?

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From: Rick Wagler (*taxidea3_at_shaw.ca*)

Date: 09/12/04

Date: 12 Sep 2004 09:40:43 -0700

algis@RiverApes.com (Algis Kuliukas) wrote in message

news:<77a70442.0409020122.5456dd51@posting.google.com>...

> "Rick Wagler" <taxidea3@shaw.ca> wrote in message news:<q7dZc.291163\$gE.117190@pd7tw3no>...

> > "Algis Kuliukas" <algis@RiverApes.com> wrote in message

> > news:77a70442.0408301904.62fda4e9@posting.google.com...

> > > "Rick Wagler" <taxidea3@shaw.ca> wrote in message

> [..]

> > > > So Morgan, even after nearly 30 years of writing about it, wasn't

> "really

> > > > even at the stage to be able to define the hypothesis"?! That's

> > > > astounding.

> > >

> > > I agree. But if you read her books you'll see that she does never

> > > actually define it.

> >

> > Then what's the point?? And especially given Elaine's endless

> > claims to have a 'theory' that deserved equal consideration with

> > the work of genuine scientists this observation of yours is the most

> > damning criticism of EM work that I've seen.

>

> The point was to try to get people to think about it, to discuss it

> and to investigate it. I'm doing that. I'm doing it because,

> apparently every professional paleoanthropology departmental gead just

> knew it was a load of crap and wasn't worth looking at, even though –

> truth be known – they couldn't even tell you what it was. The fact

> that I'm doing what Elaine Morgan has expected PAs to do is hardly a

> damning criticism of her contribution. I admire her more than most

> people who have written about human evolution.

>

Apparently so. I think she's a nice person to. But in order to do

what she intended – get a new viewpoint established – she had to do

something she is manifestly incapable of doing – present a genuinely

provocative critique of prevailing theories and present new ideas and

concepts in a challenging way. Whales are naked and so are we just

doesn't cut it.

> > Her works are merely all about trying to get

> > > people with open minds (a very rare phenomenon in paleoanthropology

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>>> *when it comes to the outrageous idea that our ancestors might have
>>> actually gone in the water sometimes, it seems) interested in this
>>> thing.*

>>

>> *A chatty 'critique' with very poor research and no substantive
>> position to put forth? I'm sorry, Algis, either you were abducted
>> by space aliens or you weren't. What's the point of timid half
>> measures like this.*

>

> *The "very poor research" is, what exactly? The four tiny errors on
> Jim Moore's masquerading one-sided web site? Four tiny errors out of
> hundreds of citations and claims. You could find as many errors in any
> popular science book if you were obsessed enough to try to find them.
> Do you have any others?*

>

Your characterization of the quality of Elaine's research is bogus. The great overarching error of her work is that it represents a conclusion in search of evidence. This is why the substantial – not trivial – misreadings of sources are so blatant and so damaging. What Jim has pointed out are not minor factual errors as you claim but substantial examples of her methodology. But since your hypothesis is precisely the same kind of enterprise it is, of course, only to be expected that you can't see this. As for citations and claims the first are few and far between and one cannot identify the source for most of her claims. Your attempted rejoinder to Jim that he does not give precise page references to a clearly identified article does not clear up the mess Elaine has made but merely indicates that you don't appreciate the problem.

> *'No substantive position?' – really, Rick – it must be you who's been
> abducted by aliens. The very substantive position is the beauty at
> which a whole host of ape-human differences are explained away with
> consummate ease – we moved through water more than they did.*

>

And your evidence is? BRING ON THE WHALES!! The AAT 'evidence' has been examined in detail on this group and it is flummery. But that's just my opinion.

>> *That's why it's not as rigorously researched as Jim Moore would
>>> like.*

>>

>> *Nonsense. It's not rigorously researched because she couldn't
>> do it. Jim's website contains ample evidence of this. This doesn't
>> make Elaine a bad person but if you are going to make the demands
>> she did for a hearing from the field you have to put on a better
>> show than this*

>

> *'Ample evidence' – FOUR FRIGGING TWISTS OF TINY ERRORS?*

>

See above.

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- > *So... the Darwin misquote – oh yeah, really terrible that.*
- > *The The Elsnor & Gooden Misquote was the worst but even that hardly*
- > *deflected her general point.*
- > *The Negus quote – from a newgroups chat–line.*
- > *The Denton quote – where it's Moore, not Morgan, doing the twisting.*
- >
- > *See <http://www.riverapes.com/AAH/Arguments/JimMoore/Quotes.htm> for*
- > *details*
- >
- > *And this is your ample evidence from her five books – wow. You're just*
- > *making it up or, actually, following the pied piper Jim Moore.*
- >

I've read two of her books and they are as Jim and many others describe. Very thin reads. A monument to unexamined alternatives. No substantial examination of PA. Refusal to actually come to grips with central concepts such as the nature of savannah environments and on and on. To be blunt I was really surprised at how effervescent these books were. Richard Hoaglund, Ivan Sanderson, Graham Hancock present robust, fully mounted arguments. That they are basically nonsense when they aren't downright insane is beside the point. They know what the game is. Elaine doesn't. Which is why her oft–stated claim to be the only thing on offer was so bogus and why her latter–day recantation is so astonishing.

- > > *They're a series of popular science think pieces, not PhD*
- > > > *theses.*
- > >
- > > *More guff. Popular science pieces are incredibly difficult*
- > > *to write. You have to have a familiarity with the field and*
- > > *be able to write about it without dumbing it down. Walker's*
- > > *"The Wisdom of the Bones" is an excellent example.*
- >
- > *Desmond Morris' Naked Ape is worse than Morgan's worst, and so are*
- > *several others. Craig Stanford's 'Upright' is also pretty poor except*
- > *from a point of view of historical commentary on the subject.*
- >

Well I won't debate Morris but I will say that I rather doubt that Stanford's work is on a par with Elaine's no matter what the shortcomings.

<snip>

- > > *And what is "scrutinising it like a PhD thesis" supposed to mean?*
- > > *You may find out that scrutinizing a PhD thesis involves checking*
- > > *the candidates work for consistency of argument and knowledge*
- > > *of the field. Popular science books – the good ones at any rate – pass*
- > > *this test. Do you think pop science means you don't have to make*
- > > *a sound argument, be careful with sources and understand the concepts*
- > > *they are trying to explain? Pop science that doesn't do this is justifiably*
- > > *scorned.*
- >

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> *The basic arguments were very sound – if one or two examples (like
> ventro–ventro copulation and salt tears) were over extended or not
> checked thoroughly enough. She made a few tiny errors that would have
> been picked up if it was a PhD thesis. That is, obviously, the point I
> was making.*

>
> Again see above. That you say her arguments were very sound is revealing.

> > > *Quoting from the student rag again, Jim?*

> > >

> > *The 'New Scientist'? Hardy had a bundle of connections and
> > a big reputation. He could have given this thing a real good
> > push by putting a decent attempt at a comprehensive argument
> > together. He would have had absolutely no problem finding a
> > publisher. Is the fact that he chose not to an indication of how serious
> > he was about this stuff?*

>

> *Jim was quoting from his Zenith article, I think. He likes to do that
> because it contains the weakest Hardy arguments.*

>

He has responded to the NS piece. Which is the great Hardy piece
of theorizing. I can't imagine how the Zenith article could be weaker
unless he was losing it completely which you seem to hint at.

> *I've spoken to his son about this and he informs me that he was very
> serious about it. He really thought that the fossil evidence was about
> to prove him right. I agree that it a real shame that he didn't write
> that book he had promised.*

>

> > > > *This statement of Algis' is truly astonishing. I don't think
> > > > he would get Elaine Morgan to agree with his characterization
> > > > of the situation.*

> > >

> > > *I think she did, actually. This is what she wrote to me recently on
> > > this subject:*

> > >

> > > *"I have never spelled it out. I think I made it clear that the
> > > mermaid–ish vision some people were attacking was very wide of the
> > > mark.*

> >

> > *What mark? She never spelled it out. It was left to her
> > critics to try and figure out what the f*** she's talking
> > about???? Well MV employs similar....tactics is not the
> > word....*

>

> *Hardy said 'More aquatic' right? He said 'not as aquatic as an otter',
> right?*

And used what as evidence? If you don't understand the consequences
of an argument from analogy it's high time you found out. Or as
Jim helpfully points out it is a genuinely good idea to read an

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article and not just surmise the contents from the title.

Morgan made many similar comments which made it clear that she
> *wasn't talking about 'full-on aquatics' – it's just the imaginings of*
> *some people that pushed and extended the arguments to such a point*
> *that they could be easily ridiculed and dismissed – what do we call*
> *this... tactic is the word... it's a strawsaw man argument.*

And this prevents her from noting the striking resemblance between the seal's flipper and the human foot? By your account a whole host of differences between modern apes and man are explained by water and then you turn around and claim an involvement with water which produces no such effects in animals which are analogues in behaviour to your wading apes. Or to put it another way your proposed ape waders would not lose their fur. It would, in all likelihood, become thicker. Water enormously increases heat loss. The only reason you make reference to 'nakedness' is because nakedness – of the genuine variety – is only found in profoundly aquatic sea mammals. That's it. There is, otherwise, not the slightest reason to suppose that a wading ape would lose fur.

>
> [Elaine Morgan]
>>> *All I wanted to do was to say: "These are the*
>>> *data that need explaining. Here are some facts about Homo and about*
>>> *other animals.*
>
>> *And this is where it all falls apart as jim ably*
>> *demonstrates*
>
> *Jim twists and exaggerates – anyone could do that with any argument.*
>
>>> *Here is my guess about their possible significance."*
>>> *It's a starting-off point for discussion. I am not an authority, and*
>>> *AAT is not a dogma." Morgan (pers. corr. 2004)*
>>>
>>
>> *Given the demands she continuously made about the status her*
>> *"theory" should have in the field this statemnet is, as I said,*
>> *astonishing.*
>
> *Then I think you misunderstood her, or misrepresent her. She might*
> *have been guilty of over-enthusiasm on ocassion but that is all.*
>

Nonsense. She made explicit claims and demands about the status her theory should have.

>>>> *One of the claims she endlessly repeated*
>>>> *on this ng is that the AAT – specifically her version – was*
>>>> *the only theory "on offer" and that conventional PA had*
>>>> *nothing to offer as a competing theory. Leave aside that*
>>>> *the claim was utter nonsense since PA is full of scenarios*
>>>> *that are more than a match for what EM was putting forth.*

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> > >

> > > *Oh yeah, like which?*

> > >

> > *Start with Aiello and go through to Zihlman.*

>

> *You dodged the question – what is *ONE* competing theory which more*

> *satisfactorily and parsimoniously explains our nakedness, bipedality,*

> *sc fat, ability to swim, etc etc.*

>

Nakedness – thermoregulation

Bipedality – increased foraging ranges brought on by environmental change

SC fat – reproduction and, in modern man, the ability to do it. Greater

opportunity – we're real good at finding stuff to eat and reduced

cost – we are very dangerous prey. In any event the unwillingness

of AAT 'researchers' to address extreme variability in human

fat levels make this argument a non-starter since wet apes actually

refuse to engage the issue.

ability to swim – a modest capability developed by an enormously curious,

adventurous apes. Thinking of a reason to want to do something

and then doing it are the hallmarks of the human story.

That was easy. Got any more?

And, no Paul, I don't know when we stopped sleeping in trees....

> > > *Her point there, which is absolutely right, is that if the official*

> > > *savanna paradigm is now being backed away from (some would even deny*

> > > *that it ever existed) what the hell is it that replaces it?*

> > >

> > *A theory who's major proponent now airily admits was never*

> > *fleshed out and argued in any serious way perhaps?*

>

> *You dodged the question again – I wonder why.*

A lot of things replace it. Its called the interdisciplinary work

that describes in ever greater detail the environments of early

hominins. Yet another major area of research that AAT'ers refuse

to engage with their rock-ribbed reliance on a 'plains, whatever'

– another MV classic – approach to the issue.

>

> > > *You mean the 'Hominids evolved in a mosaic of slightly more open*

> > > *habitats than chimps live in today but not quite as open as might be*

> > > *characterised as savannah because that's a straw man argument'*

> > > *hypothesis?*

> > >

> > *Your ineptitude is showing again.....*

>

> *If it's inept, tell me in simple, clear terms what the current*

> *orthodox paradigm actually *IS* then.*

>

There are alot of 'orthodox paradigms' I could send you off to the

Friedmann / Bromage collection but since you wouldn't be bothered to

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read it why bother. The field is very active right now with piles of interesting stuff addressing all areas and new fossils regularly coming to light. And go back to my Aiello–Zihlman crack. Every PA at some point comes out with a "What does it all mean" statement of some sort. And they are all much fuller than Elaine's five books and three million internet postings. That's the point.

> > > *How does this miniscule change explain all the differences between humans and chimps and gorillas?*

> >

> > *Miniscule change? You really need to get to grips with some basic ecology. Try looking into the work of Robert Foley for one.*

>

> *If it's not savanna – it's miniscule change. Which is it?*

>

As I said....You really need to get to grips with some basic ecology.

> > > *"The original savannah model – though it did not stand the test of time – was argued in strong and clear terms. We are different from apes, it stated, because they lived in the forest and our ancestors lived on the plains.*

> > > *The new watered–down version suggests that we are different from the apes because their ancestors, perhaps, lived in a different part of the mosaic. Say what you will, it does not have the same ring to it."*

> > > *Morgan (1997:17)*

> > >

> > *It would be nice if EM had actually made a critique of the 'savannah theory' then we'd actually know what she is arguing against. So go ahead, Algis, what's a savannah theory and where can I get some?*

>

> *You know Rick.... hominins left the trees and, for some reason, went out onto the savanna and began moving bipedally because it gave them a more flexible response to the new challenges ahead. Funny how you seem to have some kind of amnesia about this idea – how convenient for you.*

>

> *Others are not so fuzzy minded though.*

>

> *"As the competing savanna hypothesis is no longer tenable since I presented much evidence against it in my Daryll Forde Lecture at University college London in 1995, I believe that scientists have a duty to re–examine these claims, much as Langdon (1997) has done."*
> *Tobias (2002)*

If Tobias is talking about Dart it was basically done by the time the Leakey team at Lake Rudolph and the Coppens/Howells team in the Lower Omo started publishing their findings. This was in the sixties. What Tobias is disposing of in 1995 I have no idea.

>

> *Tobias, Phillip V (2002). Some aspects of the multifaceted dependence of early humanity on water. Nutrition and Health Vol:16 Pages:13–17*

>

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> Or how about this...

>

> "Although the savanna hypothesis has gained recent support, it has
> also been strongly contested. Some authorities advocate a
> contradictory model?the woodland/ forest hypothesis?which argues for
> the importance of closed vegetation in early hominin evolution. Early
> australopiths, according to some interpretations, were closely
> associated with wooded environments, exhibited significant arboreal
> activity, and should be considered adapted to closed habitats (Clarke
> and Tobias, 1995; Berger and Tobias, 1996)." Potts 1998

>

> Potts, Richard (1998). *Environmental Hypotheses of Hominin Evolution*.
> *Yearbook of Physical Anthropology* Vol:41 Pages:93–136

>

> How many more quotes do you want? I've got an ever growing database of
> them.

Keep them coming. The concept EM and other wet apers argue against is Dart's stuff from the 1920's. As for more recent and more sophisticated arguments they avoid like the plague. As an aside I just looked through the recent volume on Lothagam put out by Meave Leakey and there is an interesting article on colobines. Seems that in late Miocene times they were basically terrestrial and ML makes the explicit point that a lot of environmental reconstructions that use colobines to infer forest will have to be revisited.

>

> Don't tell me... it was all invented by Elaine Morgan, right, Rick –
> keep takling the pills.

>

Well you still haven't provided a definition of the savannah theory that the AAT represents the counter to. Tobias and Potts make reference to one. I'll find out what they are talking about in due course. I know better than to expect a definition from a wet aper.

> > > So yes, Elaine was right to say that the AAH was the 'only game in
> > > town' but even that was not defining what the AAH was exactly.
> > > Essentially she was saying that water must have played some role.
> > > Essentially the opposition say: 'no, it didn't'.

> >

> > So that's it. She made no critique, offered no competing hypothesis
> > but its the only game in town? Ain't science easy! As for what the
> > opposition said no one ever said water played no role. We only try
> > to deal with the arguments of people who say that it did. Stuff like
> > hairlessness. Pointing out that there is absolutely no reason to
> > suppose that living an aquatic lifestyle of some sort should result
> > in hair loss brings out the seals and the whales. And it is the
> > proponents who do this.

>

> She made a huge critique of the existing paradigm – that's exactly
> what she did. Have you ever read any of her books? She never defined
> the AAH, because she just wanted to get it in the public arena.

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>

"She never defined the AAH, because she just wanted to get it in the public arena" ????? Jois ---sig alert! sig alert! Really, Algis, do you not now realize how utterly misconceived her project was. As for the 'huge critique' it escaped my notice entirely sad to say. She made / makes numerous bleats of dyspeptic dissatisfaction but that is not a critique.

> *If you are not saying that water played no role in discriminating between apes and humans then what are you arguing about? But, of course, you *are* arguing against that, aren't you – otherwise what's your problem with wading leading to bipedalism and swimming and dip/sweat cooling leading to nakedness etc?*

>

I have utterly no problem with it. I do not reject any of these a priori in the manner that I reject a priori the notion that some ancient civilization was making monumental carvings on Mars. But I have this thing about wanting to see what argument backs up the proposition. And this is where it collapses.

> *Hypocrite!*

Charge denied....

> > > *I put it to you that this opposition view is totally untenable. The fact that we swim better than chimps is proof enough of that.*

> > >

> > *Proof of what? It's obvious that modern humans have more facility in the water than modern apes but that's not the guts of the case you're trying to make.*

>

> *AAH: The hypothesis that water acted as an agency of selection in human evolution more than the evolution of the apes. Yes I am.*

Right. We have everything from row boats to battleships and apes don't. This explains bipedalism how precisely? If you reduce your proposition to gaseous ephemera the next stage is oblivion. You really need to put something together that's a little more robust than this. MV, to his credit, does. Ditto Hagstrom. Surely you can at least match them. It's not as if they have set the bar impossibly high after all....

>

> > > *That's what I'm saying and she would agree. (see above) So what are you arguing against?*

> > >

> > *A body of arguments made for four decades by AAT proponents. You know bipedal wading, cork-headed infants, tossing coconuts at nesting crocodiles and on and on...*

>

> *Just mock personal incredulity then – and no science.*

>

My personal incredulity is not mock! The last two Kulikisms were shock inducing. And this is the point. You want the 'obvious, reasonable' nature of the vapid proposition to stand as vindication of supporting arguments no matter how daffy they are. This is ass backwards. At the present time we simply have to say that water as an agency for the evolution of the characteristic feature of early hominis was minor at best and probably non-existent.

> > > *So what say you on my definition?:*

> > >

> > > *The Aquatic Ape Hypothesis (AAH):*

> > > *The hypothesis that water has acted as an agent of selection in the*

> > > *evolution of humans more than it has in the evolution of our ape*

> > > *cousins and that, as a result, many of the major physical differences*

> > > *between humans and the other apes may be explained, at least in part,*

> > > *as adaptations to moving (wading, swimming and/or diving) better*

> > > *through various aquatic media.*

> > >

> > > *Elaine Morgan said: "I'll drink to that!"*

> > >

> > *Good for her. Well make your arguments. Oh shit..*

> > *here come the seals and the whales....*

>

> *I try not to use the seals and the whales, Rick, haven't you noticed?*

> *I tend to concentrate on apes and humans.*

>

Then this means you give up your hairlessness arguments. This is what it means.

Really....

> > *And spend an afternoon in the Google archive*

> > *and see what a load of nonsense is Elaine's claim*

> > *to have only been timidly and modestly venturing*

> > *a few mild questions re PA. She was hunting bigger*

> > *game than that. It's not our fault she went hunting*

> > *elephants with a slingshot.*

>

> *Why should I? I've read all of her books – that's what counts. She's*

> *made her case there and she's absolutely right on most of her points.*

>

Well there you go. Now just how is the human foot like the seal's flipper? And why do bad backs in old folks matter from an evolutionary perspective?

Riuck Wagler