

Re: Look humans really are aquatic!

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From: Algis Kuliukas (*algis_at_RiverApes.com*)

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Jason Eshleman wrote:

> In article <1104246816.110822.186020@f14g2000cwb.googlegroups.com>,

> Algis Kuliukas <algis@RiverApes.com> wrote:

>>

>> Su Solomon wrote:

>

> [snip]

>>> You are an obsessive in search of a holy grail that does not exist.

>>

>> I'm obsessive only in seeing that this perfectly plausible idea gets

>> treated with some scientific rigour instead of being subject to a

>> diatribe childish, sneering ridicule by people who couldn't even tell

>> you what the damned thing is.

>

> You do not appear to be imposing the scientific rigour you are paying lip

> service to. The "damned thing" still isn't a coherent hypothesis, at

> least not as you've phrased it and its proponents have allowed it to be

> such a mess for a long time now, content instead to sell books and argue

> prejudice.

Rubbish. I've returned to academia so that I *can* treat it with some scientific rigour. I had to do that because it seems no-one from within the field was going to encourage a single one of their students to do so. Since doing so I received a distinction for my masters at UCL and I won the students first prize at the ASHB conference. So there are clearly people in academia who think I'm doing something more than paying "lip service".

For 44 years the hypothesis was left unambiguously undefined, true. I have criticised its proponents for that. I have tried to define it so that, for the first time, people are not left to define it in their own personal way and reject or support it based on that private

interpretation.

I note that rather than agree to that definition or help clarify it, your contribution is to object and to obfuscate so that we make no progress here. That way, you can continue to pretend that it is ridiculous pseudoscience. That way, you can continue to support the character assassination of person who has spent over thirty years of her life trying to get scientists to even open their eyes to this painfully simple idea.

> >Did you get to see the text of my ASHB talk yet? It won first prize, so
> >I don't think they understood it as pseudoscience, Su. Have you
> >considered that, maybe, you're just wrong about this? Or have you just
> >decided that anything that supports the AAH just **must** be a load of
> >crap?
>
> "The AAH" as you present it doesn't exist because it's not a hypothesis.

Rubbish.

Hypothesis: A tentative assumption that is made for the purpose of empirical scientific testing. A hypothesis becomes a theory when repeated testing and evidence suggests the hypothesis has a strong chance of being correct.

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, to a large extent, as adaptations to moving (wading, swimming and/or diving) better through various aquatic media and from greater feeding on resources that might be procured from such habitats.

It makes a testable prediction: many of the physical differences between humans and our ape cousins can be explained as adaptations to moving through water.

Each of these differences needs treating in a more detailed way. I'm looking at bipedalism. I make three predictions about the wading hypothesis:

- 1) Extant apes should be more bipedal in shallow water than in any other substrate.
- 2) The paleohabitats of the earliest bipeds should be conducive to wading constituting a significant part of their locomotor repertoire.
- 3) The postcranial anatomy of the earliest bipedal hominins from the fossil record should be consistent with specialisations likely to have resulted from wading.

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And I'm testing each of these with four threads of my PhD study.

Bipedalism from wading is just one of the predictions made by the AAH, other differences (e.g. nakedness from drag reduction in swimming, increased adiposity from increased buoyancy in water) would need to be treated separately in a similar way. I could make specific similar predictions for those components which could also be tested. It's all good science, Jason, no matter how much you might dislike the way it's leading.

The AAH, as I have defined it, ***IS CLEARLY*** a testable hypothesis, no matter how much you want to pretend that it isn't.

Furthermore, I'd claim it is the ***only*** testable hypothesis about a major model of human evolution as far as I know. Where, in the mish-mash bunch of disparate ideas that constitutes the orthodox paradigm, is there any alternative hypothesis on human evolution which is as clearly and unambiguously defined? Where are the testable predictions for that?... suddenly the rules change, don't they Jason. Oops.

Maybe the orthodox paradigm is too vague. Let's take something more specific. How about the energy efficiency argument for bipedalism. Where is ***that*** 'hypothesis' defined in a way that is at least as rigorous and unambiguous as I have done so for the wading hypothesis? Who wrote out its testable predictions? Where can I find it in the scientific literature? Who has set out to test its predictions in a as clearly laid out way as I have?

Don't tell me... crap science doesn't justify more crap science. But hold on. ***I'M*** the one who ***HAS*** defined it, the one who ***HAS*** laid out it's predictions, the one who ***IS*** trying to test them. My science isn't crap, it's the 'science' to back up the orthodox paradigm that's crap.

You can't even point to a similar body of work for your own pet theory on bipedalism and yet, I'm the one being accused of doing pseudoscience. Your hypocrisy is just astonishing.

> *You continue to present a series of disjointed hypotheses (of various degrees of merit) and insist upon some unity because of some involvement*
> *of water.*

So what? What's the alternative? Why is it that you have a problem when the chief factor was water but not when it was moving in 'more open habitats'? I should remind you that moving through more open habitats (mustn't use the word savannah, must we, because that was a pure invention of Elaine Morgan's) is pretty much the official unified explanation for bipedalism, nakedness, and encephalisation, also separated by millions of years. No problem with that, though, eh?

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Again, suddenly the rules change when the dreaded 'a' factor is invoked. Then, it just has to be pseudoscience.

- > *The general statement that "water acted as an agency of selection" doesn't directly suggest anything in particular and the particulars do not make the general statement any more universal to other*
- > *problems. The urge to unite so much under the single umbrella of water,*
- > *events that may well have occurred millions of years apart and, if influenced by water, involved rather different interactions with it is a*
- > *mania, not science.*

But arguing that uniting the same traits under the umbrella of 'more open habitats' is, presumably, not mania but science, right? Why's that Jason?

If hominids lived in water-side habitats since the mid-Miocene, why is it so manic to assume that aquatic factors might have driven their evolution throughout the duration of that timespan? If the early phases were more in wooded habitats whilst the later phases were more in treeless wetlands and/or coastal habitats, why shouldn't we expect to see at least two distinct phases separated by millions of years apart? If we are espousing a mosaic model of evolution, why cannot a significant number of pieces of that mosaic have been 'more aquatic' ones?

- > *It's the insistence that wading for bipedalism and swimming "better" to cause hairlessness are somehow part of a grand hypothesis ("water did it") that makes it pseudoscience.*

And yet "open spaces did it" is not pseudoscience, it's been the official paradigm for fifty years. Didn't you teach your own students the very same thing? If not, what *did* you teach them?

- > *You've gotten wholly bent out of shape that texts generally ignore it, but*
- > *since you're still completely hung up on the notion that there's an AAH*
- > *(despite the fact that the grand gurus of the field never bothered to actually define it, you seem to want special treatment where undercooked*
- > *vague notions never defined get to go in texts long before they're adequately spelled out. That makes what you're doing appear to be*
- > *pseudoscience. You pass out blame readily, claiming that somehow the*
- > *academic in-crowd was responsible because they ignored a piece in a*
- > *popular magazine and ignored what was a ridiculous vision of mer-apes in*
- > *Morgan's original presentation.*

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They didn't define it but they were trying to get scientists to look at it. I note your attempt to defend 44 years of 'do nothingism' on the fact that Hardy's modest paper 'Was Man More Aquatic in the Past?' was published in New Scientist and the claim that Morgan's first book promoted a "ridiculous vision of mer-apes."

[I'd dispute that, by the way. Here's a quote from that first book: "At the highest point of their period of aquatic adaptation the ancestral hominids, though never as fully marine as the dolphins or sirenians, would probably have been capable of crossing wide stretches of water under their own steam; and without postulating that at such an early stage of their evolution they became boat builders, it is highly possible that they would have been aware of some of the uses of a floating log. [Hardly an argument for a merman]" Morgan (1972:133) – Floating on logs is hardly what we'd expect a mer-ape to do.

Morgan, Elaine (1972). The Descent of Woman. Souvenir Press (London)]

So, didn't they read 'Descent of Woman' very carefully then? Perhaps they just dissed it after a superficial scan through after having had a good laugh about it first in the staff room. Didn't they read any of her other books? Didn't they read Verhaegen's stuff? Or Ellis'? Do they ignore any ideas unless they're published in a top peer reviewed journal by people they know? Doesn't sound good, does it?

It's a simple enough idea, Jason. Anyone can see that there's a huge difference in swimming abilities between humans and chimps and it's standard practice for biologists to assume that differences in abilities of any two species in a particular substrate are due to selection. Standard practice **except**, it seems, when the two species in question are humans and any ape and the substrate is water. Then, it can't be selection. In fact, it must be anything **but** selection.

If you don't see the absurdity of that situation, it makes me wonder how you can be a professional anthropologist.

> *>I bet you don't even know what it is.*

>

> *It isn't anything, at least not as you've presented it. It's an umbrella*

> *of things not necessarily united where confirming one does not confirm the*

> *others and thus aren't part of the same hypothesis.*

Rubbish. See above.

Algis Kuliukas