

“Only by *disputing the interpretation of quasar redshifts* as a cosmological distance indicator can this conclusion be avoided [emphasis added].”⁵ The conclusion he was talking about is Arp’s ejection of quasars from the active cores of relatively nearby galaxies.

Green elephants

I sent the weblink to this article to the amateur astronomer/professional physicist and author Hilton Ratcliffe⁶ to get his comment and he replied, “It’s the old green elephant story—if it doesn’t fit the model, then a green elephant caused it. Not falsifiable.”⁷ He is quite correct, as the ‘not-so-wacky’ solution suggested uses circular reasoning—the big bang theory is true, quasars are at their cosmological distances—therefore it is massive black holes eclipsing the quasars that mitigate against us observing time dilation in their light variations. But this by their own admission introduces other big problems, including too much dark matter in the universe due these black holes.

Ratcliffe’s green elephants are starting to sound like a good explanation.

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Australopithecus sediba—no human ancestor

Peter Line

The media has once more been abuzz about a new alleged ‘apeman’, *Australopithecus sediba*, found in a cave at Malapa, near Sterkfontein in the vicinity of Johannesburg, South Africa.¹ Not surprisingly, those interpreting these fossils do so with the presumption that evolution is true. Yet there is considerable disagreement over these fossils and their alleged role in human evolution. It also becomes clear that the discoverer, Lee Berger, does not exactly endear himself to many of his fellow paleoanthropologists. As one newspaper stated:

“Renowned University of California paleoanthropologist Tim White savaged Berger on the release of his subsequent book, *The Official Field Guide to the Cradle of Humankind*, calling it ‘in many ways worse than useless, given the astonishing density of errors and misleading statements’. He added that it showed a disturbing ‘pattern of fabrication’.

“White wrote in the *South African Journal of Science*. ‘Berger’s rise to prominence signals a new era: one of smoke and mirrors, in which style triumphs over substance. In his short career, Berger has not in fact found very much but shows a remarkable ability to inject himself, via funding and publicity, into discoveries made by others.’ In case anyone missed the point, White branded Berger an enthusiastically ambitious but inexperienced American ‘more fascinated with fame and fortune than with serious science’.”²

In the world of paleoanthropology, Tim White is definitely no lightweight³, so it makes one feel even warier than usual about this particular find.

The fossil find consists of a nearly complete skull (see illustration) and

a partial postcranial skeleton of a juvenile male (MH1), estimated to be 11 to 12 years old, as well as maxillary (upper) teeth, a partial mandible (lower jaw), and a partial postcranial skeleton⁴ of an adult female (MH2).^{1,5} Bones from at least two other individuals have also been found, including an infant and adult female, but these finds have yet to be published.⁶ The authors of the study assigned the fossils to the genus *Australopithecus*, and believe that the “age and overall morphology of *Au. sediba* imply that it most likely descended from *Au. africanus*, and appears more derived toward *Homo* than do *Au. afarensis*, *Au. garhi*, and *Au. africanus*.”⁷

Australopithecus, not Homo

Note that creationists regard all ‘australopiths’ as extinct ape-like creatures that had nothing to do with human evolution.⁸ Evolutionists have created many more genera of alleged hominids outside the genus *Homo* in addition to the original genus *Australopithecus*, and all these supposed hominids are sometimes informally referred to as ‘australopiths’, regardless of the genus they have been placed in.⁹ Hence, collectively they are referred to as australopiths. The term ‘australopithecine’ refers specifically to members of the genus *Australopithecus*.

There are certainly good reasons why *Australopithecus sediba* belongs in the genus *Australopithecus*, and not *Homo*. Its estimated cranial capacity of 420 cm³ is in the ape/australopithecine range, as is the maximum estimated height of 1.3 meters and the relatively long arms.¹⁰

In his weblog John Hawks points out similarities between the *Australopithecus sediba* cranium and that of *Australopithecus africanus* crania (Sts 71 and Sts 52) from Sterkfontein, and states that “it’s my impression that the postcrania of the Malapa skeletons fit within *A. africanus*.”¹¹

As reported by Kate Wong, Fred Spoor “observes that whereas it has *Australopithecus*-like brain size and molar shape, it calls to mind *Homo* in

its brain case shape and molar size.”¹¹ Wong also mentions the flatter face of *Australopithecus sediba* as being a characteristic of *Homo*.¹²

Homo habilis ‘wastebasket’

The above contrary opinions may well be resolved if *Australopithecus sediba* is a small-brained specimen of the type evolutionists have often classified as *Homo habilis*. (This is commonly regarded as an invalid or ‘phantom’ taxon¹³ whose members by and large should be put into the genus *Australopithecus*) There has always been some ambiguity surrounding the status of some of the *Homo habilis* specimens, particularly as there were few bones below the head that could be attributed unambiguously to *Homo habilis*.¹² Some evolutionary experts have suggested transferring the specimens in *Homo habilis* to the genus *Australopithecus*, whilst others have pointed out *Homo erectus* resemblances in some of the fossil skulls.¹³ Given this, and without reliably associated postcranial bones to help clarify the nature of *Homo habilis*, the species has pretty much been in limbo, being described as a ‘wastebasket’ or dumping ground for difficult-to-classify fossils.¹³

Prior to the discovery of *sediba*, the general evolutionary view was that the australopithecines evolved into *Homo habilis*, with the latter in turn evolving into *Homo erectus*. This may or may not change. From a creation point of view, if the postcranial skeleton of *Australopithecus sediba* is representative of the other specimens labeled *Homo habilis*, and if (as seems likely) the postcranium of *A. sediba* is australopithecine-like, then this adds weight to the notion that most of the specimens attributed to *Homo habilis* were also australopithecine-type apes.¹⁴

Coxal bones of the pelvis

One newspaper quoted Berger as saying that *A. sediba* had “ape-like arms, primitive wrists and short but powerful curved fingers, yet

surprisingly a pelvis that is clearly evolved for walking on the ground in very much the way we do”, and that they “could still climb trees, that is very clear with these long arms, but they were competent walking bipeds.”¹⁵ So this creature apparently had an upper body designed for climbing trees, which implies, even from an evolutionist perspective, that this was a major feature of its lifestyle, in line with today’s tree-dwelling apes. However, the main bone of contention is what is considered by the authors to be the advanced (or derived) features present in the coxal bones (*os coxae*) of the pelvis, which were partially preserved, and discussed in more detail in the paper (including an MH1 composite comparison).¹⁶

One problem with interpreting functional aspects of features in the pelvic and lower limb bones in the australopithecines is that there is a tendency to “assume *a priori* that the muscles were in a close to human pattern”,¹⁷ and not an ape-like organization. Also, without being able to directly examine the various coxal bones from the different alleged hominid species, it is hard to assess the significance of the claims of “Homo-like morphology compared to other australopithecines” for the MH1 coxal bones.⁷ In Michael Balter’s commentary in *Science* he writes:

“But others are unconvinced by the *Homo* argument. The characteristics shared by *A. sediba* and *Homo* are few and could be due to normal variation among australopithecines or because of the boy’s juvenile status, argues Tim White, a paleoanthropologist at the University of California, Berkeley. These characters change as a hominin grows, and the features of a young australopithecine could mimic



Juvenile skull of specimen MH1, which is representative of the newly designated species *Australopithecus sediba* (from Balter, ref. 19).

those of ancient adult humans. He and others, such as Ron Clarke of Witwatersrand, think the new fossils might represent a late-surviving version of *A. africanus* [not generally considered a human ancestor anymore] or a closely related sister species to it.”¹⁸

Bipedality different from that of humans

Anthropologist Bernard Wood thinks that “*A. sediba*’s arms are too long—too apelike—and the species isn’t as well adapted for upright walking as some scientists expect the direct ancestor to the first humans to be.”²⁰ Note, too, that even if some australopithecines, such as *A. sediba*, did walk upright, that would not be proof they were on their way to becoming human. In fact, according to evolutionist authority Charles Oxnard, certain features (humeri, ankle bones, and metacarpals) of the australopithecines “clearly differ more from humans and African apes, than do these two living groups from each other. The australopithecines are unique.”²¹ He further states on the same page that “though bipedal, it is likely that their bipedality was mechanically different from that of humans. Though terrestrial, it is further likely that these fossils were accomplished arborealists [i.e. suited to living in the trees].”

And important research by evolutionist Fred Spoor, using CAT scans on the portions of fossil skulls housing the organs of balance, indicated that the australopithecines he studied did *not* walk habitually upright, supporting Oxnard's claim that this was not upright walking as humans do.²² This contradicts the confident claims of many evolutionists who argue from, for example, australopithecine pelvic anatomy.

Actually, a type of bipedal ability existed in other extinct apes, such as *Oreopithecus bambolii*, presumably not considered a human precursor because its evolutionary age ('7 to 9 million years') was too early, and because it was found in Italy, unsuitable as the cradle for 'early apemen'.²³ According to Henry Gee, "this creature is thought to have become bipedal independently and was only distantly related to hominids".²⁴ It is difficult enough to imagine apes evolving a form of bipedal locomotion once, let alone that it happened independently two or more times. It seems evolution can be accommodated to almost any scenario, and as such seems more of a belief system than science.

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The Heart Mountain slide becomes more catastrophic

Michael J. Oard

The Heart Mountain Detachment northeast of Yellowstone National Park, in the northwest United States, is a slide of an enormous block of limestone about 500 m thick and about 1,100 km² in area.^{1,2} The block of limestone slid southeast down what is believed to be a 2° slope, although the slope is actually toward the southwest today. The block broke up into 50 large fragments and slid more than 60 km, covering an area of about 3,400 km².

Most of the blocks were subsequently covered by more than 1,500 m of Absaroka volcanic breccias, a deposit that represents hundreds of volcanic flows that now cover a large area of eastern and northern Yellowstone Park as well as outside the park from near Dubois, Wyoming, to Bozeman, Montana. The upper surface of the Absaroka Volcanics exhibits a flat planation surface,³ and the extensive deposit has been dissected with valleys over 1,000 m deep carved into it. The Absaroka Volcanics are also the same formation in which the so-called 'fossil forests' with multiple levels of vertical tree trunks are exposed at many locations.⁴

A few blocks slid over the valley-fill sedimentary rocks in the Bighorn Basin and are now perched more than 300 m above the general level of the surface of the Bighorn Basin. Heart Mountain, just north of Cody, Wyoming, is the classic remnant of the slide. All this activity is supposed to have happened in the Eocene of the early Cenozoic era of the uniformitarian timescale.

A much more catastrophic slide

Uniformitarian scientists have been arguing for years whether the Heart Mountain Detachment moved