The ‘Lucy child’

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A young individual of the same species as the famous ‘Lucy’ has just been unveiled. 1 Found in Dikika, Ethiopia, this specimen is remarkably well preserved. It is of a young female, probably about three years old. The ‘age’ is supposed to be 3.3 Ma. It has taken five years so far to carefully remove much of the skeleton from the sandstone. The job is not complete; there may be years more work to confirm exactly what the foot bones looked like, for instance.

Why it’s important

There was much fuss when ‘Lucy’ (later named Australopithecus afarensis) was originally discovered. At last, evolutionists seemed to have a wonderful ‘ancestor candidate’—one which supposedly walked upright, and had a near-perfect mix of ape and human characteristics.

However, as inevitably happens with ‘apemen’ finds, things started to look different as time went on and as anatomists carefully studied the fossil bones of Lucy and other specimens of her genus, Australopithecus. Several researchers using objective computer techniques (like evolutionist Charles Oxnard) pointed out that the features as a whole were not intermediate at all between apes and humans. They also pointed out that their method of locomotion was not upright in the human manner, either. Furthermore, the fingers and toes of other specimens of Lucy’s kind seemed to be long and curved, like apes that swing in the trees. Their arms were long, like those of tree-climbers. 2

Keen to hang onto their vision of an ‘apeman’, it was argued that these were just evolutionary ‘leftovers’. It became harder to defend, however, when the Lucy skeleton itself was shown to have the same wrist mechanism (that ‘locks’ the wrist for knucklewalking) as do chimps and gorillas. 3 Was this also a leftover? If so, why hadn’t natural selection eliminated this if it was no longer used?


9. Hydrostatic equilibrium means that gravitational force is balanced by outward pressure.

10. It is interesting too that this is called a merger when they say one cluster passed through another. It seems more like an ejection event.

11. Prof. G. Gilmore claims ‘It’s the first clue of what the stuff might be.’ and ‘For the first time ever, we’re dealing with its physics’. Amos, J., Dark matter comes out of the cold, news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/4679220.stm, 30 August 2006; Than, K., Milky Way vs. Andromeda: study settles which is more massive, www.space.com/scienceastronomy/060221_stues_dark_matter.html, 30 August 2006.


13. William of Occam (or Ockham) (1284–1347) was an English philosopher and theologian. Occam’s (or Ockham’s) Razor or the law of parsimony: a problem should be stated in its basic and simplest terms. In science, the simplest theory that fits the facts of a problem is the one that should be selected.


has allowed an even more thorough study of afarensis. However, this has only helped to further discredit the validity of this ‘ancestor candidate’:

- Adjusted for body size, the brain was not significantly larger than an ape’s.
- A complete hyoid bone (associated with the larynx) was found which was utterly chimpanelike. No evidence there of any speech capacity, as some had hoped.
- The one complete fingerbone is curved, like that of a chimp. Curved fingers are designed for grasping in the trees.
- The shoulderblade is gorilla-like—designed for tree-climbing and knucklewalking, not upright gait.
- The organ of balance characteristics in the skull confirm that its locomotion was, like a chimp’s, not habitually upright.

An associated Nature commentary on the article states, diplomatically, of the last three of these that ‘all three lines of evidence suggest that the locomotion of A. afarensis was unlikely to have been restricted to walking on two feet.’ The author, a renowned paleoanthropologist, concedes that this creature’s features are ‘much more ape-like than those of later taxa that are rightly included in our own genus, Homo.’

To the author of the Nature commentary, looking at the ‘Lucy child’ through an evolutionary ‘lens’, this is because it is ‘primitive’, i.e. it hasn’t evolved far enough yet.

It makes far more sense to go with the straightforward understanding of the evidence:

- The reason why this specimen looks so apelike is because it is a member of a (now-extinct) apelike group of creatures, separately created to people and other groups of apes. Indeed, Oxnard long ago argued from multivariate analysis that australopithecines are more distinct from both humans and chimpanzees than these are from each other.

- The reason why it has all those anatomical features associated with non-human locomotion is, quite simply, that it was apelike; apes have non-human locomotion, and no apes are habitual upright walkers.

**Conclusion**

The ‘Lucy child’, then, brings into focus all in one beautiful specimen issues which have individually been apparent and have produced an accumulating weight of evidence against the idea of human ancestry. Commentaries on this specimen seem to have little throwaway lines here and there whose purpose seems to be to reassure us that there was some reason for previous researchers to have thought that afarensis walked upright. And/or that it may have done (something like) this some of the time—as does the living pygmy chimp. But that is not true bipedalism.11

Hopefully, as the remaining anatomical features of the post-cranial skeleton are teased painstakingly out of the rock, we will get even more detailed evidence of what afarensis, and australopithecines in general, looked like. It is highly likely that it will further strengthen the already overwhelming case that the australopithecines were not man’s ancestor. Even some evolutionists agree, incidentally. The problem for the others, one that is probably making it hard for them to let go, is that there is no other candidate in the wings.

**References**


