

Reading Guide 7

Did humans evolve?

This week, we're reading chapter 11 of Wells [2000], Sherwin [2002], and chapters 8–10 of Rogers [2011]. The class discussion will cover Wells and Sherwin. Here are some questions to help organize your reading:

Wells

1. Wells objects to the view that “humans are nothing but animals.” What does he mean by this? What evidence, if any, might be relevant to this issue?
2. Pp. 218–225 are about subjectivity and bias in paleoanthropology. Wells's argument is an example of what is often called the “postmodern critique of science.” The thrust is that objective knowledge is impossible, because we are all trapped within our own biases. Although Wells applies this critique only to paleoanthropology, it is often applied to all of science. Be prepared to discuss it. Is it possible to be objective? How?
3. Pp. 227–228 argues that evolution cannot refute the view that evolution is “goal oriented”—that God plays some role in evolution. Wells argues that Stephen Jay Gould's views on this subject should not be taught in science classes. Would you agree?

Sherwin Each paragraph in this short article is an independent argument. Be prepared to support or oppose each argument. Here are the arguments in summary form:

1. The DNA of humans and chimpanzees is 98% identical, but this is to be expected because we have similar diets.
2. Evolutionists argue among themselves, so we should not trust their conclusions.
3. The DNA of humans varies less than that of gorillas. Shouldn't our DNA “be as plastic as the rest of our ‘ancestors’?”
4. Human DNA is similar not only to that of chimpanzees, but also (to a lesser extent) to that of mice, and also (to a still lesser extent) to that of bananas. This is puzzling, and we should therefore say nothing about “supposed evolutionary relationships until all the facts are in.”

Bibliography

Alan R. Rogers. *The Evidence for Evolution*. University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Frank Sherwin. The rapidly unraveling thread between dna and 'human evolution'. <http://www.icr.org/article/459/296>, 2002.

Jonathan Wells. *Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth?: Why Much of What We Teach About Evolution is Wrong*. Regnery Publishing, 2000.