

Lucy the hairy hominid, and origin of human nudity

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Ideas supposedly explaining how and why our alleged hominid ancestors lost their fur are all bald claims.



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Lucy (*Australopithecus afarensis*) is without doubt one of the most famous fossil hominids (alleged human ancestors) of all. If asked to picture her, most people would call to mind a hairy, strong-armed, tree-dwelling creature, capable of walking on two feet and ape-like.

It is over 50 years since the discovery of Lucy's fossil remains by Donald Johanson and his team. For evolutionists, she certainly hasn't aged well.¹ Some scientists are even questioning whether she was in fact clothed in thick brownish fur, as popularly depicted in museum exhibits and magazine illustrations. They argue that she was naked (without fur), based on a combination of evolutionary reasoning about nudity and genetics studies.²

An evolutionary tale has it that, due to the nuisance of lice, "our immediate ancestors lost most of their body fur 3 to 4 million years ago."

Hairy human forefathers?

Compared to apes, human beings are almost hairless—though some are more hirsute (hairy) than others. Over the years, various authors have advanced evolutionary stories to explain this. For example, from the 1970s onwards, science writer Elaine Morgan popularized her ‘aquatic ape hypothesis’. She proposed that our hominid ancestors spent more and more time in the water. So, they evolved layers of subcutaneous fat (insulation against the cold) and lost their fur to make them more streamlined.³ Her ideas built upon similar proposals by marine biologist Alister Hardy in 1930. Morgan’s book on the subject was widely read, and she and others have continued to defend the idea. But it has never been accepted by mainstream anthropologists.

Another evolutionary tale has it that, due to the nuisance of lice, “our immediate ancestors lost most of their body fur 3 to 4 million years ago and did not don clothing until 83,000 to 170,000 years ago.”⁴ In this scenario, our alleged early human ancestors went about naked for 2.5 million years. They apparently did so shamelessly because this was well before the time that they would have developed any moral faculties (so it is claimed).

It is obviously true that infestation with lice results in irritation and a lot of time wasted scratching. And furry skin gives these critters many more places to hide. Worse, louse bites can lead to bacterial infection, or even disease if the lice are carriers of an infectious organism. Left unchecked, lice certainly make life distinctly uncomfortable and unpleasant for any hairy (or feathered) creature.

However, mutual grooming (below) is observed across the whole range of primate species, and this is well known to enhance the social dynamics of the group. Grooming would seem to be by far the better solution for tackling such pests. Therefore, the idea that australopithecines gradually lost hair because lice were a nuisance and a cause of disease, enough for selection to favour hairlessness, is unconvincing.

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We should not forget that fur has its advantages, not least on the open, semi-arid African savannah where several australopithecine fossils have been found. It can help an animal stay cool in the excessive heat and prevent the risk of sunburn of bare skin. Hair obviously insulates a mammal when it gets cold, which it can do in such inland areas at night. It also helps prevent abrasion and may be used for concealment and camouflage. All in all, one would hazard a guess that these hapless hairless hominids would have been far happier to be hirsute, lice or no lice!

Many unwarranted assumptions are involved in such ideas, not least that *A. afarensis* (e.g., Lucy) is presumed to be ancestral to human beings (though some evolutionary paleoanthropologists don't think so). Then there is the *assumed* evolutionary 'age' of Lucy's kind (3.9–2.9 million years ago), the very period during which the lice are said to have been causing such discomfort. The dating of such fossils is far from the exact science it is often portrayed to be. Fossils are often 'redated' when theory conflicts with age-dating results.⁵

The proposal that “going fur-less reduced the impact of lice and other parasites”⁶ in our ancestors also fails to explain why most of us still have a full head of hair. Not to mention the persistence of hairiness in other places. Pagel's argument that head hair was maintained for protection against the sun is weak. For instance, how does it explain the clear demarcation line between our head hair and face and neck? Moreover, the assertion that, despite the lice challenge, our ancestors kept pubic hair because of the secreted hormones associated with it, is very unconvincing.⁶

Shame and attempts to nullify nudity

How is this relevant to Christians? Well, all theories about the evolution of mostly hairless (nude) human beings from hairy ape-like ancestors are completely contrary to the biblical account of our history. The very last verse of the creation account says of Adam and Eve, our first parents, “the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” ([Genesis 2:25](#)). In their original state as sinless, perfectly created beings, nakedness would never have been marred by illicit sexual feelings or lust. Their nudity was no occasion for shame. Tragically, this state of affairs did not last long. A drastic change occurred when they rebelled against their Maker, choosing instead to act on the lies of the serpent ([Genesis 3:1–6](#)). He who deceived Eve ([2 Corinthians 11:3](#)) is none other than “that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world” ([Revelation 12:9](#)).

If wearing clothes was merely a matter of temperature regulation, what would prevent most of us 'going native' as temperatures soar in mid-summer? Or in perfectly temperature-regulated office buildings?

In that moment, “the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths” ([Genesis 3:7](#)). While the

common idea that the original sin was sexual is an unbiblical myth (Adam and Eve were husband and wife from the beginning, commanded to be fruitful), sin taints and pollutes everything. God knew that from then on, going forward, human nudity would be complicated and spoilt by lust. So “the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them” ([Genesis 3:21](#)).

To put it straightforwardly, the main reason why we wear clothes is not because it is sometimes necessary to keep warm, but because of human sin. If it was merely a matter of temperature regulation, what would prevent most of us ‘going native’ as temperatures soar in mid-summer? Or in perfectly temperature-regulated office buildings? Instead, modesty and thoughtfulness in the way we dress help mitigate against lustful thoughts; see e.g., [Matthew 5:28](#) and compare [1 Corinthians 8:9](#), [Galatians 5:13](#).

Professor Daniel Fessler is an evolutionary anthropologist at University of California, Los Angeles. In a BBC documentary released in 2009, he explored why humans have smooth, generally hairless skin.⁷ Fessler says: “The human body is a supreme sexual advertisement ... Nudity is a threat to the basic social contract, because it is an invitation to defection ... Shame encourages us to stay faithful to our partners and share the responsibility of bringing up our children.”⁴ One does not have to subscribe to evolution to see the point of this statement. However, evolutionists have a hard time explaining how or why our supposed hominid ancestors evolved a sense of shame. The problem is made more acute by the fact that many other anthropologists have almost made a virtue out of our ancestors’ promiscuity. Those who spread their seed far and wide supposedly passed on far more of their genes to the next generation (they are the ‘fittest’ in evolutionary speak).

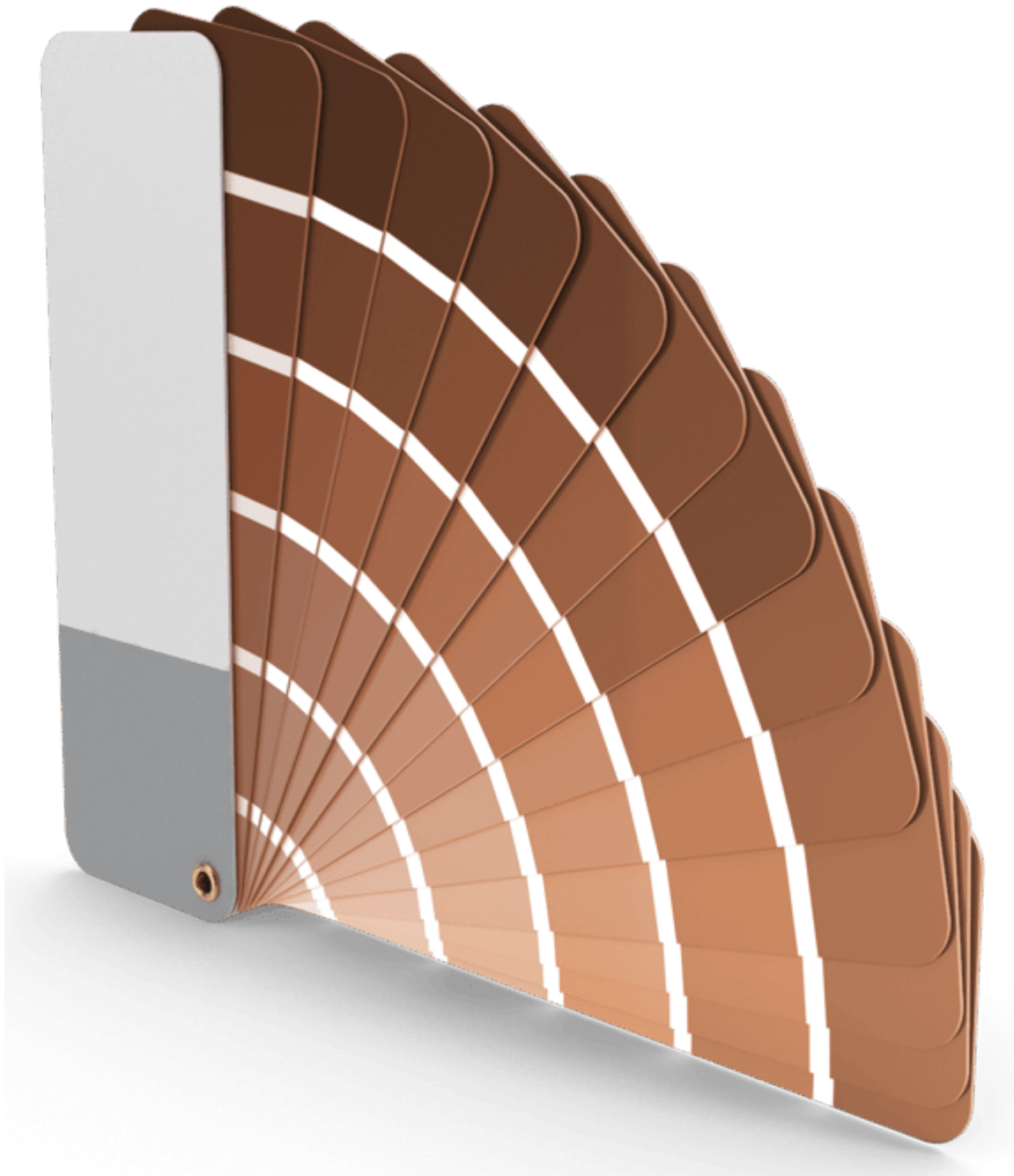
The cure for spiritual nakedness and shame

So much for all the rather pointless and ill-founded evolutionary theories about human hairiness. Regardless of the fur density of Lucy’s kind (the now-extinct *austrolopithecines*) the only reliable account of humanity’s origins is the one God has given us in [Genesis 1–3](#). This tells us all we need to know about our original nakedness, the origin of sin, the beginnings of shame, and why we wear clothes.

Moreover, God’s provision of skin tunics as a covering for Adam and Eve ([Genesis 3:21](#)) is a wonderful picture of atonement. The Hebrew for ‘covering’ and for ‘atonement’ is the same word, *kaphar* כָּפַר. As for the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb, it required the shedding of innocent animal blood. It pictures for us the ultimate sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ millennia later. As [Hebrews 9:22](#) reminds us, “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins”. Christ was crucified and His blood was shed so that those who repent and believe in Him may be forgiven ([Romans 3:25](#)).

What was the colour of Lucy's skin?

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In recent years, many evolutionists have criticized the typical ape-to-human evolution diagrams for, among other things, reflecting/perpetuating cultural bias. This is because they regularly depict the skin of our 'primitive ancestors' as dark, getting progressively lighter, the apex of evolution being a white-skinned Caucasian.

As the paper discussed in the main text (ref. 2) highlights, skin pigmentation in reconstructions and images of our supposed hominid ancestors is not based on any reliable scientific method. Nobody can say definitively how much melanin pigment a creature like, e.g., Lucy possessed. The shade of skin in diagrams and exhibits is therefore

basically guesswork. The paper's authors admit that many aspects of the common images and reconstructions in textbooks are subjective interpretations, depending on where they are thought to fit on the evolutionary family tree.

References and Notes

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