More evidence *Australopithecus* was an extinct ape

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Australopithecus has been hailed as a key missing link between man and apes since the 1920s, despite a large amount of data that shows it is a unique, extinct ape.[1,2] Sir Solly Zuckerman, a British anatomist, discovered that very few scientists wanted to hear that *Australopithecus* was not a missing link. Despite the addition of several new 'species', *Australopithecus* is still fitted into the scheme of supposed human evolution.[3]

Accumulating evidence that *Australopithecus* was an ape

More and more evidence is accumulating that *Australopithecus* is nothing more than an extinct ape. It has been claimed that *A. afarensis* (the species that the famous fossil specimen Lucy belongs to) walked upright, but there is morphological evidence that Lucy was a knuckle-walker, like present-day apes.[4,5] Lucy also had the brains, jaws, limbs, and inner ears of an ape.[6] A recent analysis of the teeth of *A. bahrelghazali* revealed that this 'species' fed mainly on grasses and sedges, a type of flowering plant,[7] which seems to be more an animal diet and not one evolving towards humans. Others have found evidence that *A. afarensis*, as well as *Ardipithecus ramidus*, is an ape.[8]

Lucy was a tree-climber

The idea that Lucy walked upright and was on its way to becoming human has been dealt yet another blow. The shoulder blade of a new *A. afarensis* was recently discovered, and the ape-like scapula showed that Lucy scaled trees.[9] Although the specimen was from a juvenile, the results still apply to the adults. Some have argued that the ape-like scapula was because Lucy was small, but the new result argues it is because Lucy really did inhabit the trees.[10]

Has this discovery caused paleoanthropologists to reclassify Lucy out of the 'human family tree'? The answer is no. They have simply claimed Lucy both walked upright and was a tree dweller at the same time, or that the tree climbing abilities were evolutionary 'left-overs' that continued for awhile as Lucy 'evolved' to walking on the ground.[11] An accompanying perspective article to the research reported in *Science* concludes:

"The shoulder bones of a juvenile australopith resemble those of extant apes, suggesting that tree climbing continued to be important for these bipedal early human ancestors."[12] So, it looks like *Australopithecus*, especially *A. afarensis*, will remain as a missing link despite its overwhelming ape-like features, including knuckle-walking and tree climbing abilities. Otherwise, evolutionists would be left with a huge intellectual vacuum in their paradigm, and this I am sure would be strongly distasteful. The words of Sir Solly Zuckerman still ring true:

> "So much glamour still attaches to the theme of the missing-link, and to man's relationships with the animal world, that it may always be difficult to exorcise from the comparative study of Primates, living and fossil, the kind of myths which the unaided eye is able to conjure out of a well of wishful thinking."[13]

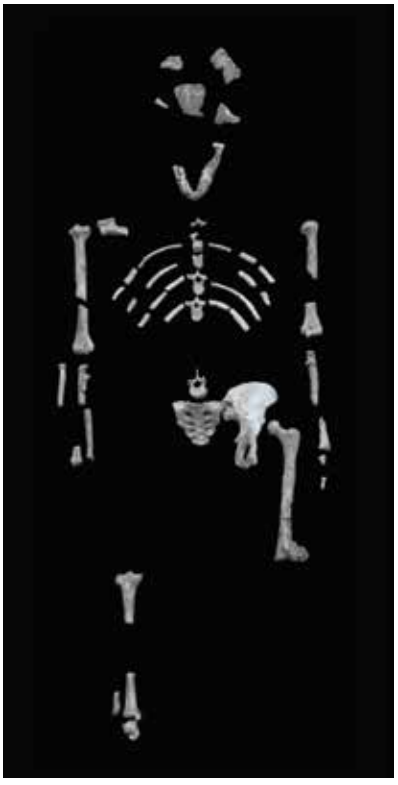

Photo: National Museum of Natural History (France)

Figure 1. Lucy, *Australopithicus afarensis*, found in the 1970s in the Afar region of Ethiopia.

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