

Human Uniqueness vis á vis Chimpanzees

“We do not have the same reproductive biology. Our teeth develop more slowly after birth than chimpanzees’ teeth do, and our young are born profoundly helpless and require prolonged maternal care. Our brains are larger and continue to develop long after birth, forming neurons and connections at a rapid rate. In fact, new neurons continue to form even into adulthood. Our musculature is weaker, with smaller bone insertion points. Our thyroid hormone metabolism differs. We get AIDs and malaria and chimpanzees don’t. Our immune systems differ. Our diets differ, and our intestines reflect that difference. We shed tears; chimpanzees don’t. We can swim and have a diving reflex, but chimpanzees can’t swim. We have chins; chimpanzees do not.

We walk and run upright. Our feet are different—ours are designed for walking and chimpanzees’ for climbing. Our necks are longer, and the skull is set on top of the spine for balance and to be able to look forward. Our rib cages move freely from side to side to accommodate our gait, and expand to allow deep breathing during running. Our shoulders are designed for throwing, while chimpanzees’ are designed for climbing. Our pelvis and hips are oriented so as to permit upright walking. Our legs angle in so that our feet are underneath us. Our inner ear canals are oriented differently to increase our sense of balance. Our hands are designed for tool use, not for knuckle walking. We have a poorer sense of smell but a greater tactile sensitivity in our fingertips. We have greater fine motor control, and our thumbs can touch the far side of our hands.

Finally, there are all the cultural and behavioral differences. We plan. We think about the past and the

future. We make intentional decisions. We can delay gratification for long periods. We engage in long-range trade. Adults play. We dance. We make music. We have language and communicate symbolically, and we write novels and poetry. We have mathematics and art. We domesticate animals and engage in agriculture. We wear clothing. We engage in hospitality. We control fire and we measure time. We practice religion, and bury the dead. We have empathy for others, and altruism on a scale unknown in the animal world. We care for the infirm and the elderly.

...But we see nothing like the human scale of behavior in chimpanzees. Our culture is exceptional, even unique, by any standard of the animal kingdom. It is orders of magnitude more sophisticated than anything chimpanzees do.

...But in order for our common descent from an ape-like ancestor by purely natural means to be true, many of these features had to arise at the same time in a coordinated fashion, meaning some number of mutations also had to happen at the same time. For example, an enlarged brain would require changes to the jaw and teeth as well as to the brain case.”

From Gauger, Hössjer, and Reeves, “Evidence for Human Uniqueness” in *Theistic Evolution, a Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*, ed. by Moreland, Meyer, Shaw, Gauger, and Grudem, (Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2017), pp. 491-493