



The Sacred Chain, Chapters 18-20

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Outline

- ❖ Learning to Walk
- ❖ What Walking Does for the Soul
- ❖ Finding Deeper Faith with Helen Keller



Learning to Walk 165-171

“Lucy, a 3.2-million-year-old *Australopithecus afarensis* skeleton, was discovered in 1974 in Hadar, Ethiopia. Her remains, comprising about 40% of her skeleton, have provided significant insights into early human evolution. Reconstructed images and models of Lucy depict her with a combination of ape-like and human-like features, reflecting her bipedal locomotion and small brain size. These reconstructions are based on detailed analyses of her fossilized bones, offering a glimpse into the appearance of one of our ancient ancestors.”

– *ChatGPT 11/17/2024 - 08:51*

Overview of Lucy

- ❖ The narrative surrounding Lucy, a member of the *Australopithecus afarensis* species, shows the ordinary plod of scientific discovery around an ancient predecessor group of modern *Homo Sapiens*.
- ❖ Dating her skeletal finds using radioactive potassium isotopes is a standard practice for remains older than 50,000 years, the limit of carbon 14 dating. Lucy was dated at 3.2 million years ago.

Lucy's Family

- ❖ At another site, a cache of bones dubbed the First Family from 14 other individuals of the same species helped to cement Lucy's origins as one of the earliest to walk on two legs.
- ❖ Bipedal footprints were found near the location and time of the first family cementing the idea.
- ❖ What is your sense of the amalgamation of the story?

What Walking Does for the Soul

172-179

“The kind of behavioral innovations that walking upright helped develop in our ancestors are not just tacked onto otherwise similar organisms. They reordered the kind of life ancient hominins had. Walking upright put us on the path toward the transcendent qualities of the soul. But we’re not quite there. Walking upright led to bigger brains, to hands that were tools that could make other tools, and to cooperation. Collectively, these advances led to something else that was a real game changer: language.”

– *Stump, p. 179*

Narrative Surrounding Development

- ❖ Stump suggests that walking helps him think about things. “Our walking is not just walking; quite often it means something more.” 173
- ❖ He extrapolates to an unknown history of mental development spurred by the liberty of walking.
- ❖ We do more than walk between A and B. We imbue our movement with meaning.

Walking is an Adaptation

- ❖ Walking may be the trigger to bigger brains.
- ❖ “It was not bigger brains that caused us to start experimenting with different body types, ... It was a different body type that allowed the development of bigger brains.” 175
- ❖ “There must have been advantages to standing upright that outweighed the cost.” 176

What are the costs of walking upright?

- ❖ Slower development in infancy
- ❖ A longer time before independent action needing extensive training
- ❖ What other costs are there?

What Affordances Moved Us?

- ❖ Walking freed our hands to make tools.
- ❖ “The use of our hands led to a sense of agency and the self.” 177
- ❖ “Bipedalism also may have given rise to another distinctively human capacity: cooperation.” 176
- ❖ And a cost, how did bipedal mothers and babies survive?

Finding Deeper Faith with Helen Keller 180-188

“The sacred chain, which links who we are today with the evolution of our ancestors, can’t be seen through a microscope. But that doesn’t mean there isn’t something more that emerges from the process of evolution, some added dimension of meaning.”

– *Stump, p. 188*

What Is the Secret of Language

- ❖ Writing transcends the physical reality of its origin.
- ❖ The causal effect of words depends “on what a community of people has taken them to mean.” 181
- ❖ We don’t think about the production of words on a page like a beginner does. What a wonder it must have been to us as children. 182
- ❖ “It is languages that gives us a soul.” 182

What's it like not to have language?

- ❖ What is it like to grow up without language in a community of speakers? Raised by Wolves? Helen Keller?
- ❖ One such child in their teens showed no “human graces or virtues, ... or any of our vices.” 184
- ❖ Another feral child was said by Daniel Defoe to be “a body without a soul.” 184

What's it like not to have language?

- ❖ “Language allows us to see physical reality as something else—that’s what a symbol does.... You have to know the language in order for symbolism to work.” 184
- ❖ The emergence of ratiocination of Helen Keller: (read 185)
- ❖ “Sapiens can talk about entire kinds of entities that they have never seen, touched or smelled.” 186

- ❖ What can we say about the emergence of language in Humans?
- ❖ What is the mechanism by which language permits the extension of us into the Symbolic Species?
- ❖ “It’s defensible to claim that God has taken up the ordinary products of evolution into the divine service of giving us souls.” 188