

The true history of Middle Earth

The Evolution of Human Intelligence: A Theory in Four Parts.

Seymour W. Itzkoff. Paideia Publishers, P.O. Box 343, Ashfield, Mass. 01330

- 1- The Form of Man: The Evolutionary Origins of Human Intelligence. 1983.
336 pp. ISBN 0-913993-01-8. Hardbound. \$18.00.
- 2- Triumph of the Intelligent: The Creation of Homo sapiens sapiens. 1985.
210 pp. ISBN 0-913993-01-8. Hardbound. \$16.00.
- 3- Why Humans Vary in Intelligence. 1987. 392 pp. ISBN 0-913993-09-3.
Hardbound. \$18.00.
- 4- The Making of the Civilized Mind. (apparently not yet published) >299 pp.

Anyone even moderately familiar with the current popular literature on human biological and cultural evolution will not only find these books to be as full of errors as they are of vivid purple prose, but also simply a waste of time. Itzkoff is not even consistent with his errors, some of which are admittedly minor but others of which are serious. A low credibility in his factual history translates to an equally low belief in his interpretation of his fabrication. Amongst the trickles of fact, error, and debatable interpretation, a message does seep through a flowing, colorful prose that strings together an unrivalled number of empty sentences that zigzag eventually to a concrete conclusion. The emergent message fits uncomfortably and thus these books disturb in more ways than one.

The goal is to trace the historical origin of the human mind and examine the consequences of intelligence to the rise and fall of civilizations. According to Itzkoff and in disregard of the concrete fossil and other evidence, real upward progress toward intelligence began about 30 million years ago when protohominids split from the lineages leading to monkeys and apes. They were initially tiny bipedal forest-dwellers that had language and a highly developed social organization based around the nuclear family. (Does this remind you of hobbits?) Intelligence helped them survive the squeezing of their potential living space by their apish cousins. But at last they broke out of the confining forest and successfully claimed the plains as theirs by eliminating their cousins. The survivors retreated to the forest. At least 10 million years ago, the hominids split and 9 million years later Homo eliminated its less brainy relative, the robust australopithecines. The murdering erectines spread out from Africa and established themselves widely throughout the Eurasian continent. After the erectines left, Africa became a backwater to continued evolution toward intelligence, only gaining from a later infusion of genes from the north.

The Neanderthals in northwestern Eurasia were the first experiment in sapience. Itzkoff postulates they either diverged from erectines separately but at the same time as did the Cro-Magnons or they represented a hybrid between erectines and Cro-Magnons. Whatever their origin they were low brows compared to the magnificent Cro-Magnons despite brains of equal size and were extinguished along with surviving erectines as the Cro-Magnons spread south and east, spreading their genes for sapience by miscegenation or replacement. The absence of evidence to support his views and the great amount of evidence against them, seems never to daunt Itzkoff's telling of his story. He proceeds blithely on as though the evidence were favorable. This is not a scientific treatment of the topic; Itzkoff merely takes a wishful reconstruction of human history and proceeds as though it were the case. If one does not accept his history, one has difficulty accepting the conclusions he draws from it. For example, he argues that extreme intelligence was born in the harsh icy realms of the North which challenged humans to their utmost to survive. High death rates and low migration produced small, inbred populations on which intense selective pressures for increasing intelligence could act quickly and successfully. The climatically benign southern areas of the world begat sloth and equally slow growth in intelligence. If wishes were horses, where should we ride? -vcm

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