

Of course the fossils of the genus Australopithecus are sufficient evidence that this group existed as a race of apes, or close relatives of the apes. But, even at the present time (1988) there is intense controversy among paleontologists and anthropologists as to how (by what lines of descent) these animals could be the ancestors of man. Some of these scholars are saying that the australopithecines probably developed into some of the more modern ape-like primates, but not into genus Homo. After all, no clearly human artifacts (tools, pottery, art, etc.) have ever been found associated with australopithecine skeletal remains. Nevertheless, many science and history teachers still keep insisting that all members of genus Homo--and thus all modern humans--evolved from the ancient ape-like genus Australopithecus.

Two of the most currently discussed theoretical ancestors of modern man are Australopithecus afarensis (nicknamed "Lucy"), and Homo habilis. (The genus Homo (man) belongs to the zoological Order Primates, of Family Hominidae (as shown at top of p. 84). The genus and species names are always underlined.) The fossil remains of both Homo habilis and Australopithecus afarensis were found in eastern Africa. The first skull of Homo habilis was discovered by Louis Leakey in 1960, and a few other partial specimens have been found since. The "Lucy" skeleton was discovered by Donald Johanson in 1974, in Africa, but no clearly human artifacts were found either with it or with H. habilis remains. The H. habilis skulls have more human-like characteristics than any Australopithecus ones, but it is still doubtful that it was proper to assign them to genus Homo. (We should remember that actual scientific research does not announce any definite conclusions until very clear data and evidence are found.) Evolutionary anthropologists have intensely wished that they could discover definitely human artifacts with the fossil bones of H. habilis. This would be strong evidence that H. habilis was actually human; and then, by evolutionary interpretation, they could assume that these early humans had evolved from members of the genus Australopithecus, there in Africa. However, the nearest thing to artifacts that has been found with the H. habilis fossils is some so-called "pebble tools" (natural or slightly modified rocks which have shapes such that they could have been used as crude pounding or chopping implements if they were in the hands of apes or humans). (From the article "Fossil Man," by Eric Delson, in vol. 5 of the McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science and Technology, 1982, p. 677-678.)

The oldest type of fossil primate which can be definitely classified as human (belonging to genus Homo) is Homo erectus. A good number of skulls and other skeletal parts belonging to this species have been found during the past 65 years--most of them in Java and China. During the past 35 years this type has been found also in Africa (W. E. LeGros Clark, The Fossil Evidence for Human Evolution, University of Chicago Press, 1964, p. 112-113; and Roger Lewin, Bones of Contention, Simon and Schuster, 1987, p. 226-227 and Plate 'F' on p. 223). Anatomically, the Homo erectus people were very similar to some of the present-day races of mankind. In China, the skeletal parts were found in definite association with large numbers of especially chipped stone and bone tools, and with domestic hearths where they had used fire to cook their food (W. E. LeGros Clark, 1964, p. 111.). Actually, we have no real reason for supposing that the Homo erectus race was essentially different from or inferior to the Neanderthal race, which has to be recognized as fully human (Homo sapiens).

As for the dates of the oldest fossils of <sup>real</sup> human beings (apparently Homo erectus), various aspects of evolutionary bias have caused anthropologists and paleoanthropologists to assume that they are between 1 and 2 million years old. However, this is difficult to demonstrate. So far as the dating evidence is concerned, it could be that they are not greatly older than Neanderthal Man, who is known mainly from the many Neanderthal fossil remains of between 35,000 and 75,000 years ago in Europe. The dating methods used on the Homo erectus fossils in Java and China were very crude and imprecise. In Java the dating was done mainly by trying to determine which