

A Reply to Andya Primanda

H A R U N Y A H Y A

Andya Primanda, an Indonesian Muslim paleontologist, has recently been criticizing books and articles posted on the website harunyahya.com which reject the theory of evolution. Primanda, who has stated that he believes in God - and so we assume that he believes in the creation - is probably influenced by the Darwinist dogma that dominates the paleoanthropological world. He insistently argues for the theory of evolution and states that he finds the criticisms brought against evolution incorrect. However, as we will see below, Primanda is mistaken in both his belief in the theory of evolution and his criticisms against those who point out the flaws in evolutionary theory.

PRIMANDA'S MISCONCEPTIONS REGARDING *SAHELANTHROPUS*

Primanda's chief contention is against interpretations made concerning a skull found some time ago in Chad that was given the name *Sahelanthropus tchadensis*. In an article on the skull entitled "[New Fossil Discovery Sinks Evolutionary Theories](#)" recently posted on the Harun Yahya website, we stated that the seven-million-year-old *Sahelanthropus tchadensis*, despite its advanced age, was more "human like" compared to the genus *Australopithecus*, which is younger and which has been presented as a primitive ancestor of humans. We wrote that this evidence would pull the evolutionary tree out by its roots.

Primanda, in his [response](#) to us, rejected our interpretation and throughout his article, he claimed that *Sahelanthropus* was more "ape like" than *Australopithecus* in every respect. He wrote:

HY based his statements on the assumption that *Sahelanthropus* displayed 'more human-like attributes' than australopiths (*Australopithecus*, *Paranthropus*, *Ardipithecus*), yet living before them.

However, Primanda ignores an important fact. Those who made this comment on *Sahelanthropus* were the scientists who found this fossil and examined it, and these scientists are also proponents of evolutionary theory. An article published in *Nature* magazine said:

What is remarkable about the chimp sized cranium TM 266-01-060-1 discovered by Brunet *et al.* is **its mosaic nature**. Put simply **from the back it looks like a chimpanzee**, whereas **from the front it could pass for a 1.75-million-year-old advanced australopith**. The hominid features *involve* the structure of the face, and the small, apically worn, canine crowns. Other hominid features are found in the base of the cranium and in the separate jaw fragment. If we accept these as sufficient evidence to classify *S.tchadensis* as a hominid at the base, or stem, of the modern human clade, then it plays havoc with the tidy model of human origins. Quite simply, **a hominid of this age should only just be beginning to show signs of being a hominid**. It certainly should not have the face of a hominid less than one-third of its geological age. Also if it is accepted as a stem hominid, under the tidy model the principle of parsimony dictates that **all creatures with more primitive faces (and that is a very long list) would, perforce, have to be excluded from the ancestry of modern humans**.^{[1](#)}

Briefly, the fossil presents a picture that runs counter to the "evolutionary scheme" which has been imposed on the society for over a century, since Darwin. This contradiction is so striking that the *Nature* writer compares the discovery of this fossil to the Burgess Shale fossils that demonstrate the Cambrian Explosion, which constitutes perhaps the best-known paleontological evidence against Darwin's theory:

The fauna of the Burgess Shale in Canada, which samples a bewildering array of invertebrate groups some 500 million years ago, is a famous example of diversity at the base of an adaptive radiation. Does *S.tchadensis* belong to the African ape equivalent of the Burgess Shale? ^{[2](#)}

The theory of evolution is unable to explain the Cambrian Explosion, the sudden appearance of over 60 animal phyla on our planet. It also fails to explain the origin of humankind. The recently discovered fossil makes this deficiency even more obvious. Primanda is opposed to our revealing this fact, which is a pointless criticism.

Faced with this fact, what Primanda wants to do is to show that *Sahelanthropus*' relatively modern characteristics do not actually exist. He discusses two characteristics, prognathism and foramen magnum position, but his analysis is quite shallow. His examination of prognathism is nothing but superimposing the outlines of *Sahelanthropus* on some hominid fossils, and he himself admits that **"this method of comparison may be flawed"** and that **"the results may not be of high value."**

His explanation of the foramen magnum is a dodge. This is also seen in his illustration based on foramen magnum position; when compared to *Australopithecus*, *Sahelanthropus* is more modern. And this confirms what we have been arguing from the very beginning, that is that *Sahelanthropus*, despite being older than *Australopithecus*, had more modern features, and therefore an evolutionary chart based on these features cannot be formed. Primanda made a show of responding to this statement in writing, "*Sahelanthropus* falls nicely in an intermediate position, between ape and human positions," but this misses the point entirely. The point is the comparison between *Sahelanthropus* and *Australopithecus*.

THE DISCUSSION ON *AUSTRALOPITHECUS*

At this point, Primanda refers to our explanation of *Australopithecus* and criticizes the work of Zuckerman, Oxnard and Spoor. He also wrote that Spoor's studies have changed. It's a fact that the locomotion of *Australopithecus* is a contradictory issue. The common view is that members of this genus were arboreal, and that they used their two feet when they walked on the ground. It's accepted that the usage of these two feet was not like that of humans, but was in fact quite different, and constituted a much more bent mode of locomotion as compared to humans.

What would it prove if *Australopithecus* was moving more erectly than the apes that exist today? Today the world has a rich variety of ape species, and it's no great leap to assume that this variety was even greater in the past and that this also applies to their mode of locomotion. What's key here is that an evolutionary arrangement cannot be put together among these ape types.

There is yet an even more important point which puts the theory of evolution into a big quandary regarding its scenario about the origin of man and other species: **The mechanisms that would allegedly turn this scenario into reality are wholly imaginary.** If you examine the evolutionist account, it says that these creatures got used to walking after they came down from the trees, and their skeletons became more erect since they had to assume a straighter posture when they walked across the savannah. Their hands were empty so they used their hands, and this led their brains to develop. This sounds like **a fairy tale based on Lamarckian logic**, such as the evolution of the body according to emerging needs and the inheritance of acquired traits. But that's just how this is foisted on the public. (Needless to say, Lamarckism is utter sophistry). When we probe this account more closely, we see that the only possible mechanism behind this fairy tale is the natural selection-mutation dyad. However, all experiments and observations show that these mechanisms do not provide an increase in genetic information.

Looking at this evolutionary account together with natural selection and the mutation mechanism suffices to demonstrate that this is nonsense. The *Australopithecus* which was trying to stand erect on the savannah must have had such a mutation so he would gain a straighter skeleton, a balance mechanism needed for this skeleton, a foramen magnum and a muscle mechanism, and he mustn't have suffered any ill effects from this mutation. (However, this is impossible because of the pleiotropic effect.) Moreover, this imaginary mutant must have been superior to other mutants of his species only because he was able to see higher parts of the tall grasses, and he must have reproduced and started a new species. All other physical and mental characteristics that make us human must have been created through such random mutations; all these transformations must have taken place through these accidental mutations. This is nothing but a dream, or in the words of Henry Gee, the editor of *Nature*, a **"bedtime story."**³ On the other hand, famous French biologist Pierre-Paul Grasse once said, **"There is no law against daydreaming, but science must not indulge in it."**⁴

Therefore Primanda, in the article mentioned earlier, has no basis other than Darwinist prejudice for criticizing our view that *Australopithecus* was a unique ape genus unrelated to human beings which later became extinct.

DISCUSSIONS ON BUSHES AND PRIMANDA'S CONTRADICTION

Primanda bases his views on imaginary evidence, and he presents contradictory criticism against us. One of his criticisms is that Bernard Wood's view of the evolution of man looks like a bush rather than a ladder. Primanda

writes:

HY failed on two counts:

- 1) As shown before, *Sahelanthropus* does not show more humanlike characteristics than australopithecines;
- 2) 'The evolutionist scheme', 'the ladder from ape to man' is a strawman.

The prevailing scientific view is currently shifting to another perspective. HY quotes Bernard Wood, which said that '...human evolutionary history was a ladder in the 1960s...but it looks like a bush now'. As a matter of fact, this change of evolutionary thought was due to the ever-expanding human fossil record, with new and unexpected discoveries pouring in every few years.

So what? In the midst of criticizing us, Primanda repeats exactly the facts that we had already stated. **Yes, the evolutionary account no longer looks like a "tree" but rather a "bush," and this is because the evidence unearthed fits neither the 150-year-old Darwinist tree of life nor any evolutionary arrangement.** Primanda and others are still trying to cobble together an "evolutionary hypothesis" from this bush, but in the end we have this concrete truth: The fossils do not support Darwinism. The evolutionist community thought that the more fossils they found, the stronger evolutionary theory would become, but in fact it was the other way around. Niles Eldredge from Harvard University, one of the United States' leading paleontologists, and Ian Tattersall from the American Museum of Natural History once wrote:

It is a myth that the evolutionary histories of living things are essentially a matter of discovery. If this were true, one could confidently expect that as more hominid fossils were found the story of human evolution would become clearer. Whereas if anything, the opposite has occurred. [5](#)

One point here especially deserves underlining: replacing the "tree" with a "bush" is not the result of evidence, but rather of a lack of evidence. Yes, many fossils have been found but these constitute evidence against the theory of evolution. The only way out for the evolutionists was to come up with a "bush" model to replace the tree so as to be able to depict this chaos. **The bush model is nothing but an excuse conjured up to explain away the body of fossil evidence which contradicts Darwinism.**

If you believe blindly in evolutionary theory, you would try to interpret every new finding so as to support this theory. Marxists who believe blindly in Marxism sought refuge in excuses such as Leninism when the promised revolution failed to take place. Prejudiced people can always come up with an artificial explanation to every problem. An unprejudiced person, however, can easily see the real situation: the concrete data do not fit this theory.

ALLEGATIONS OF A DISTORTION OF GEE

One of Primanda's criticisms was that *Nature* magazine's editor Henry Gee had been misquoted by us:

HY also misquoted Henry Gee, which said that 'The idea of the missing link ... is now completely untenable.'

This allegation is completely unfounded. Below we reproduce one of Gee's lengthier explanations in order to dispel any doubts on this matter:

A seven-million-year-old skull found in a central African desert is probably the most important discovery in the search for human origins in living memory - since Raymond Dart announced the "ape man" *Australopithecus africanus* in 1925. Yet its initial effect may be to confuse rather than enlighten. **Whatever the outcome, the skull shows, once and for all, that the old idea of a "missing link" is bunk...**

Why is Toumai so important? First, it is the earliest known credible vestige of a hominid - a member of the group of creatures more closely related to human beings than to any other animals. It also doubles the antiquity of the earliest known skull: the previous recordholder, from Kenya, is around 3.3m years old.

Second, it has dropped straight into the most crucial, but least known, part of the story of human evolution. It is suspected that the last common ancestor of humans and our closest living relatives, the chimpanzees, lived around 7m years ago. **We know this not from direct fossil evidence,** but from studying the small differences in

the otherwise similar genes of humans and chimps, and estimating the time needed for these differences to accrue.

Looking at the fossil evidence itself, we see a huge and frustrating gap. Ten million years ago, the world was full of apes, but there is no agreement about which of these stand closest to the evolution of humans. In any case, a distinct lineage leading to humans, as distinct from chimps, would not have existed back then...

So what does Toumaï look like? It is a **mixture of primitive and disconcertingly advanced traits**. The braincase has the same size and shape as a chimpanzee. The face, though, is where the interest lies. Rather than having a projecting snout with large canine teeth, the face is flat and the teeth are very small and human-like. Strangest of all are the enormous brow-ridges. These are usually associated with our own genus Homo, and are not otherwise seen in anything older than about 2m years...

People and advertising copywriters **tend to see human evolution as a line stretching from apes to man**, into which one can fit new-found fossils as easily as links in a chain. **Even modern anthropologists fall into this trap**, accepting a certain bushiness in the human family tree between 3m and 2m years ago - when the genus Homo first emerged - but thinking of human evolution before then as, essentially, linear. Wood thinks it was bushiness all the way down. Recent research to put tabs on how much we really know of the past supports this view, suggesting that we have direct evidence of only 7% of all the primate species that ever lived.

This means three things. **First, that we tend to look at those few tips of the bush we know about, connect them with lines, and make them into a linear sequence of ancestors and descendants that never was. But it should now be quite plain that the very idea of the missing link, always shaky, is now completely untenable.** [6](#)

Briefly, Gee is saying that the model for human evolution comes "**not from direct fossil evidence**," that there is "**a huge and frustrating gap**" in the fossil record, and that therefore the view of the "missing link" is also "**completely untenable**." This is what we have been saying from the beginning. Therefore Primanda's allegation that Gee was misquoted is entirely unfair.

PRIMANDA'S DOGMATISM

Primanda's dogmatism is even more interesting. Right after his unfounded allegation against us about the Gee quote, he wrote:

Of course there is no such thing as 'the' missing link. Every organism, living or fossil, is a link between those which existed before and those which existed after. Each one is a transitional form; there is not one which can be assigned as the missing link, the turning point, the mark of change from one type to another. Evolutionary change is gradual.

In claiming this, Primanda is changing the definition of "transitional form," or - better put - distorting it. Transitional form, since Darwin, does not refer to existing species, but instead is the name given to theoretical ancestors that are assumed to have lived in the past and are separated from each other by very minor morphological differences. **If every living thing were a transitional form, then Darwin wouldn't have suffered for page after page in *The Origin of the Species* trying to explain why these transitional forms were nowhere to be found.** Paleontologists wouldn't have spent the last 150 years digging up the four corners of the earth in an attempt to find these forms.

In other words, due to the lack of these transitional forms, Primanda finds shelter in a superficial explanation, namely that "every organism is a transitional form." Only a child could believe such an assertion, because reality says just the opposite. In fact, more serious evolutionists admit this fact. For instance, Robert Carroll, a leading authority on evolution, writes:

Although an almost incomprehensible number of species inhabit Earth today, they do not form a continuous spectrum of barely distinguishable intermediates. Instead, nearly all species can be recognized as belonging to a relatively limited number of **clearly distinct major groups**, with very few illustrating intermediate structures or ways of life. [7](#)

THE MOLECULAR MISTAKE

Primanda's other article, titled [An Invitation to the Facts: Response to Chapter 9 of The Evolution Deceit](#)," which he prepared as a response to the chapter of "The Evolution Deceit" dealing with human origins, also contains significant errors.

Those who read the title of this article might be led to think that it presents an extensive response. However, the only claim in it worthy of attention is the assertion that there is a molecular (genetic) similarity between chimpanzees and man. Primanda says that there is a 99 percent similarity and that therefore we can't deny that humans and apes are relatives, which is just where he makes his great mistake: **there is no such genetic similarity**. A scientific finding on this issue that was announced just a few weeks ago revealed that this genetic similarity had been exaggerated and the true figure was actually less than 95 percent. Our article, called "[The 99% Myth Is Dead](#)," lays all this out in detail and in doing so refutes Primanda's allegation of molecular similarity, which apparently is his strongest ammunition.

CONCLUSION

Despite his loyalty towards Darwinism, Primanda says that he is a believing Muslim. We respect that. But we would be remiss not to point out the contradiction between his faith in Islam and Darwinism. He should ask himself: **If he is a believing Muslim, why is he defending a theory which is championed by outright and militant atheists?** If he is a believing Muslim, why is he working to defend this theory, which is the basis for Marxism, Leninism, Maoism, Freudianism, and, most importantly, all materialist philosophy? He shouldn't try to answer these questions by saying that he's doing this for the sake of science, because today the entire world knows that Darwinism is not a scientific theory, but rather a philosophy. It is a philosophy whose very reason for existence is to deny creation and the Creator.

We can only hope that Primanda will be able to tear himself away from the bewitching effects of this philosophy and begin to see things as they really are.

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- (1) Bernard Wood, "Hominid Revelations from Chad", *Nature*, 11 July 2002, p. 134.
 - (2) Bernard Wood, "Hominid Revelations from Chad", *Nature*, 11 July 2002, p. 135.
 - (3) Henry Gee, In Search of Deep Time, New York, The Free Press, 1999, s. 116-117.
 - (4) Pierre-P Grassé, *Evolution of Living Organisms*, Academic Press, New York, 1977, p. 103.
 - (5) Niles Eldredge, Ian Tattersall, The Myths of Human Evolution, p. 126-127
 - (6) "Face Of Yesterday: Henry Gee On The Dramatic Discovery Of A Seven-Million-Year-Old Hominid" *The Guardian*, July 11, 2002.
 - (7) Robert L. Carroll, *Patterns and Processes of Vertebrate Evolution*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 9.