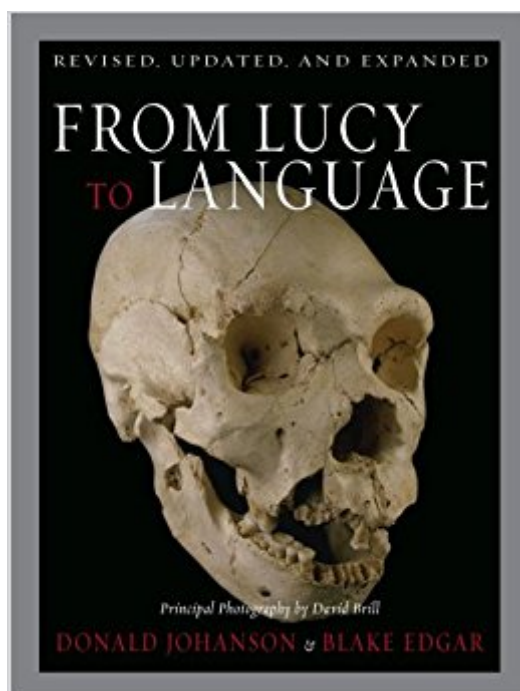


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From Lucy To Language: Revised, Updated, And Expanded



Synopsis

In 1974 in a remote region of Ethiopia, Donald Johanson, then one of America's most promising young paleoanthropologists, discovered "Lucy", the oldest, best preserved skeleton of any erect-walking human ever found. This discovery prompted a complete reevaluation of previous evidence for human origins. In the years since this dramatic discovery Johanson has continued to scour East Africa's Great Rift Valley for the earliest evidence of human origins. In 1975 this team unearthed the "First Family", an unparalleled fossil assemblage of 13 individuals dating back to 3.2 million years ago; and in 1986 at the Rift's most famous location, Olduvai Gorge, this same team discovered a 1.8 million-year-old partial adult skeleton that necessitated a reassessment of the earliest members of our own genus *Homo*. Johanson's fieldwork continues unabated and recently more fossil members of Lucy's family have been found, including the 1992 discovery of the oldest, most complete skull of her species, with future research now planned for 1996 in the virtually unexplored regions of the most northern extension of the Rift Valley in Eritrea.

From Lucy to Language is a summing up of this remarkable career and a stunning documentary of human life through time on Earth. It is a combination of the vital experience of field work and the intellectual rigor of primary research. It is the fusion of two great writing talents: Johanson and Blake Edgar, an accomplished science writer, editor of the California Academy of Sciences' *Pacific Discovery*, and co-author of Johanson's last book, *Ancestors*. *From Lucy to Language* is one of the greatest stories ever told, bracketing the timeline between bipedalism and human language. Part I addresses the central issues facing anyone seeking to decipher the mystery of human origins. In this section the authors provide answers to the basics -- "What are our closest living relatives?" -- tackle the controversial -- "What is race?" -- and contemplate the imponderables -- "Why did consciousness evolve?"

From Lucy to Language is an encounter with the evidence. Early human fossils are hunted, discovered, identified, excavated, collected, preserved, labeled, cleaned, reconstructed, drawn, fondled, photographed, cast, compared, measured, revered, pondered, published, and argued over endlessly. Fossils like Lucy have become a talisman of sorts, promising to reveal the deepest secrets of our existence. In Part II the authors profile over fifty of the most significant early human fossils ever found. Each specimen is displayed in color and at actual size, most of them in multiple views. With them the authors present the cultural accoutrements associated with the fossils: stone tools which evidence increasing sophistication over time, the earliest stone, clay, and ivory art objects, and the culminating achievement of the dawn of human consciousness -- the magnificent rock and cave paintings of Europe, Africa, Australia, and the Americas. In the end *From Lucy to Language* is a reminder and a challenge. Like no species before us, we now seem poised to control

vast parts of the planet and its life. We possess the power to influence, if not govern, evolution. For that reason, we must not forget our link to the natural world and our debt to natural selection. We need to "think deep", to add a dose of geologic time and evolutionary history to our perspective of who we are, where we came from, and where we are headed. This is the most poignant lesson this book has to offer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Since the original edition was published in 1996, paleoanthropologists have made several important finds. Among them are *Sahelanthropus tchadensis*, a seven-million-year-old specimen uncovered in Chad that has features that are part ape, part hominid, and *Homo floresiensis*, diminutive people who apparently were not *Homo sapiens* and who lived on the Indonesian island of Flores as recently as 13,000 years ago. Johanson, director of the Institute of Human Origins and best known for his discovery of the "Lucy" skeleton, and Edgar, a writer and an editor at the University of California Press, present other new finds and add updates throughout the book. With more spectacular photographs by David Brill, most of them depicting specimens at actual size, the new tome is even more awe-inspiring than the earlier version. Editors of *Scientific American*

In paleoanthropology, single discoveries can dramatically alter the field. The past decade has been no exception and justifies this revision of Johanson and Edgar's 1996 photographic showcase of the essential physical evidence of human origins. For example, a find in Indonesia indicates that *Homo erectus* persisted there a scant 18 millennia ago, and excavations in Chad have pushed back the

origin of the hominid line to nearly 7 million years ago. Half this album consists of full-page images, with explanations appearing on opposing pages, of such fossils. The new discoveries accompany the classics of the field, such as the australopithecine Johanson whimsically named Lucy, and overall acquaint viewers with mysteries raised or allayed by an individual fossil's anatomy.

Johanson explains numerous technical issues (e.g., dating) while alluding to controversies that can, and have, arisen in paleoanthropological research. Permitting a face-to-face encounter with human ancestors, this work furnishes essential information, an incomparable visual experience, and a mulligan for libraries that missed the first edition. Gilbert Taylor Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

"From Lucy to Language" is somewhat of a misleading title as it covers evidence from before Lucy and the discussion of the development of language is limited. However, it has a better ring to it than "From Sahelanthropus tchadenis to Language" and Lucy is probably one of the best known discoveries. (Donald Johanson by the way being one of the discoverers of Lucy). Overall, this is an excellent introduction to the science of paleoanthropology (the study of ancient humans) and the evidence that has been accumulated on the evolutionary history of modern humans. It is a large format book - a coffee table book size although most people don't leave books on their coffee table with pictures of skulls in them. This large format allows for the often full size photographs of the evidence, which are simply magnificent photographs primarily taken by David Brill. Although I haven't counted them, I would guess there are over 100 pages of these photographs that allow you to see the actual evidence while it is being described in the text. The book is divided into two major sections - the first hundred pages or so is called "Central Issues in Paleoanthropology" and this reviews key concepts and issues in the subject in a series of 48 short sections looking at everything from techniques of paleoanthropology, to problems of evidence to art. This is clearly written for the general reader and does a good job of explaining some difficult and often contentious areas without oversimplification. I liked the way they would use technical terms but explain them and repeat that explanation at various stages throughout the book. However, at one or two points it can become too superficial and more pop-science than serious science and there are a few silly comments like "a prefrontal cortex that is more than 200% smaller than that of the human brain!". Fortunately these moments are rare. The second section is called "Encountering the Evidence" and this presents, over about 150 pages, many of the major finds with a one or two page background on the find and its significance accompanied by a full page (or sometimes two pages) photograph of the actual evidence. To be able to see the evidence in so clear a way helps to understand the difficulties of

collecting evidence, why there are often strong disagreements but at the end shows a strong case that there is a line of evolution that can be demonstrated. In a very contentious and aggressive area of science, Johansen and Edgar, appear to have pulled together a balanced view of the current state of science including the very recent (and definitely contentious) Homo floresiensis find in Indonesia. Clearly Johansen has a view and expresses it but does reference differences of opinion (if only briefly sometimes). Apart from some of the occasional sloppy writing in the first section, two other minor quibbles. In the second section, each find is independently described within a species and the finds seem to be presented in estimated age of the specimen. This may seem to be logical but it does get a little confusing when the actual date of finds are in a different order as the narrative refers to events that you have not yet read about. One recurring and more irritating issue is in the editing. Words are missed out or misspelt and in a couple of the captions on the photograph the text is cut off at one end. A shame for such an otherwise well laid out book. Overall, highly recommended for anyone who wants to learn more about the issues in human evolution and actually see the evidence.

Spectacular book. A must have for any one interested in human evolution, paleontology and anthropology. This is an oversized book making reading a bit cumbersome but well worth the effort. The size of the book allows the very excellent (and abundant) photographs of many fossils to be presented "actual size". Of course, the lead author is Don Johansen, discoverer of Lucy. I could see this book being used in a college level course although I just enjoy reading out of interest.

This is a whopper of a coffee table book 10x12 inches and over an inch thick. There are 288 pages and it comes with a beautiful book jacket. There are dozens of full page full color photographs mostly of skull, jaw and bone fragments. I've never seen better. You might as well be holding the bones in your hands. The paper is the best. The text, though relatively brief, covers the hominids from the pre-Australopithecines through the various Homo species. Also discussed is anatomy, diversity, tools, culture, customs and migrations. The book is particularly helpful if a student wants to make a direct examination of the bones but lacks a physical access to them. Donald Johansen is renowned for being the discoverer of the Australopithecine "Lucy". On P.134 is a photo of the find. I enjoyed reading this book and especially liked the fine color plates on which the book is focused. Anyone interested in paleoarchaeology would be pleased to have this tome in their collection.

I just bought the revised edition and also had the earlier edition so the updates were well needed

since there's been a lot more discoveries since the first edition. The photographs are the best I have come across in a long time it's like being at the site and looking at them in their actual size. Great book overall and very informative.

If you can't have copies of the original skulls, this is close to the same.

This is a fascinating, up to date survey of human evolution presented with lucid and thoroughly researched text. The standard of design and reproduction are also most professional and make it a volume fit to grace the shelves every school and university library. I found it rewarding on all levels. It is also of sufficient weight to whack creationists over the head even if they are unable to understand the content. Jeff Clarke

Fantastic read. Actual size pictures. Donald Johanson what more needs to be said.

This updated book is by one of the top paleoanthropology experts in the world. Anyone studying human origins and the evolution of humans will find this book very useful. For undergraduate and graduate students both.

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