

The Accidental Species: Misunderstandings of Human Evolution
by Henry Gee.
The University of Chicago Press, 2013.

I have to start this review by admitting that, although we haven't been in touch for many years, I consider Henry Gee to be a friend, and in addition, on the back of his previous books, notably *Jacob's Ladder*, I consider him to be a scientific writer of rare quality and clarity.

In *The Accidental Species*, Gee sets out to demolish one of the most egregious human assumptions – that we are the crown of creation. This arrogant view manifests itself in a variety of ways, not least in the scientific obsession to discover a definitive link between an earlier hominid/primate and ourselves.

Henry Gee mounts his magnificent rebuttal in eleven masterful chapters: *An Unexpected Party*, *All about Evolution*, *Losing It*, *The Beowulf Effect*, *Shadows of the Past*, *The Human Error*, *The Way We Walk*, *The Dog and the Atlatl*, *A Cleverness of Crows*, *The Things We Say*, *The Way We Think*.

Using various examples Gee clarifies erroneous assumptions about Darwin and evolution, and annihilates the arguments advanced by religious fundamentalists who seek to demolish Darwin's thinking on the basis of the fact that subsequent scientific discoveries show that the great man did not get things 100% correct.

His bigger mission, and one that should be applauded, is to clarify exactly what Darwin and the thesis of Evolution are all about, and to correct misconceptions based on partial knowledge. He also seeks to demonstrate that, again contrary to widespread but misguided thinking, the sense that the evolution of species follows a clear and uninterrupted path, with no part played by chance and circumstance, is patently incorrect.

Gee writes with vigour and humour, as well as scientific rigour, making *The Accidental Species* a delight to read, a treasure trove of information, and a series of excellent arguments to enrage religious fundamentalists!

Bravo!

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