

he will have groped around in the rock pools and the shallow water, but gradually he will have started to swim out to greater depths and dive for food. During this process, it is argued, he will have lost his hair like other mammals that have returned to the sea. Only his head, protruding from the surface of the water, would retain the hairy coat to protect him from the direct glare of the sun. Then, later on, when his tools (originally developed for cracking open shells) became sufficiently advanced, he will have spread away from the cradle of the sea-shore and out into the open land spaces as an emerging hunter.

It is held that this theory explains why we are so nimble in the water today, while our closest living relatives, the chimpanzees, are so helpless and quickly drown. It explains our streamlined bodies and even our vertical posture, the latter supposedly having developed as we waded into deeper and deeper water. It clears up a strange feature of our body-hair tracts. Close examination reveals that on our backs the directions of our tiny remnant hairs differ strikingly from those of other apes. In us they point diagonally backwards and inwards towards the spine. This follows the direction of the flow of water prising over a swimming body and indicates that, if the coat of hair was modified before it was lost, then it was modified in exactly the right way to reduce resistance when swimming. It is also pointed out that we are unique amongst all the primates in being the only one to possess a thick layer of sub-cutaneous fat. This is interpreted as the equivalent of the blubber of a whale or seal, a compensatory insulating device. It is stressed that no other explanation has been given for this feature of our anatomy. Even the sensitive nature of our hands is brought into play on the side of the aquatic theory. A reasonably crude hand can, after all, hold a stick or a rock, but it takes a subtle, sensitised hand to feel for food in the water. Perhaps this was the way that the ground ape originally acquired its super-hand, and then passed it on ready-made to the hunting ape. Finally, the aquatic theory needles the traditional fossil-hunters by pointing out that they have been singularly unsuccessful in unearthing the 40