

'distributed' mind evolve? Clive Gamble opposes an early date for the emergence of modern language and cognition and also a late one, explaining that 'what characterizes the debate is that all its participants are wedded to the same concept of the internal mind that stops at the skin'. In place of such 'internalism', he recommends 'concepts of personhood' which attribute 'agency' to 'objects', an approach which allows us to discern 'mind' in any artefact and date the key processes and transitions more or less any time we like.

Gamble dwells on a uniquely human psychological adaptation – 'the love-struck gaze'. How, he asks, did our evolving ancestors manage to preserve monogamous fidelity while living in multi-male, multi-female groups? Why didn't people cheat with one another's partners, provoking jealousies, violence, and chaos? Terrence Deacon's solution was the invention of wedding rings as public certificates of marital ownership, such items emerging as the world's first symbols. Gamble invokes hand-axes in preference to wedding rings. Producing a symmetrical biface presupposes sustained and focused attention – 'the Acheulean gaze, if you like'. 'When applied to human sexual partners', Gamble continues, 'this gaze produced novel pair-bonded arrangements'. Such is Gamble's riposte to Dunbar's careful application of the principles of behavioural ecology to the problem of explaining the establishment of pair-bonds. All that painstaking work of forcing rival hypotheses into conflict isn't really necessary. When spouses began looking lovingly into one another's eyes, according to Gamble, their 'love-struck gaze' sufficed to protect the vital bond.

If there is a message in this book, it is that all is topsy-turvy. Behavioural ecology is turned on its head. Darwinian constraints apply only to non-human primates, being mysteriously suspended from the moment human evolution starts. In the hominin case, brains are 'cultural artefacts', artefacts in turn are 'persons', material culture is biology – and the laws of gravity are defied. What exactly happened to turn the world upside down? When, where, and how were our ancestors able so radically to exempt themselves from all causal laws, all material constraints? Claims as provocative as these surely need some documentation. One might have expected a focus on the relevant archaeological time-frame for the emergence of symbolism, notably the African Middle Stone Age. So it comes as a shock to discover this volume extending its coverage to the Viking era, to the Neolithic – and indeed to

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This volume is the culminating publication of the British Academy's seven-year centenary research project, 'Lucy-to-Language: The Archaeology of the Social Brain'. A collaboration between archaeologists and psychologists from five universities, the project was launched in 2003 and completed in 2010. Held in London in September 2008, 'Social Brain, Distributed Mind' was a two-day conference aimed at collating the results; this volume's twenty-two chapters are the published proceedings.

The editors begin by distinguishing 'social brain' from 'distributed mind'. 'Brain' is confined within the skull; 'mind' knows no such boundaries, stretching between multiple brains, bodies, and artefacts. When did such

just about every period *except* the most obviously relevant one! How can a research programme entitled 'Lucy-to-Language' possibly sidestep the impressive archaeological evidence for the world's first art, the world's first pigments and personal ornaments, the world's first symbolically structured sexual division of labour? Look up 'Middle Stone Age' in the index and you're referred to page 268 – a blank page. Of the two chapters by Middle Stone Age specialists, one is Yonas Beyene's conscientious excavation report on the Herto Member, documenting the *absence* of evidence for symbolism at that particular site; the other is Larry Barham's discussion of composite hafted tools, allegedly taking us 'beyond' mere pigments and shell bead jewellery – artefacts nowadays acknowledged as the indisputable signature of the Middle Stone Age transition to symbolic culture. It's as if the effort to avoid thinking about sexual selection, female strategies, or cosmetics meant studiously avoiding any archaeological evidence which might conceivably connote such topics, no matter how indirectly.

The British Academy's seven-year project might have got somewhere had Dunbar's original breakthrough – his pioneering work in testing models from behavioural ecology in the light of fossil and archaeological data – been followed through. Instead, too many of his archaeological collaborators in this volume prefer to indulge in poetic metaphors, attributing 'agency', 'personhood', and so forth, to whichever inanimate objects they happen to dig up. A focus is surely needed. As Alan Barnard observes in chapter 12, 'Human nature is within us all, but more precisely embedded within some forms of social structure than others'. It's not that Africa's egalitarian hunter-gatherer populations 'are in any sense primitive, but rather that the rest of us are, through our social condition, in a sense deviant: we have lost part of that aspect of human nature that defines post-symbolic but pre-political sociality'. A collaborative British Academy focus on *that* aspect of our nature would seem long overdue.

CHRIS KNIGHT Comenius University