

yesterday.¹³ Or have we missed seeing them? Have we been so eager to find support for the theory that humans descended from monkeys that we have actually been listing upright-walking fossil apes as our ancestors? Have we been stealing our "would-be" ancestors from the apes?

It has been assumed that the apes came down from the trees, began to walk upright, and developed into humans. But if apes can come down from trees and adapt to upright walking, they can certainly climb back up into the trees where they would be much safer from lions and saber-toothed cats. Furthermore, the trees were not only safer, but contained desirable food to eat. The search for a free lunch would provide a powerful incentive to return to a life in the trees. But this is evolutionary speculation. What about the fossil record?

One of the problems that has puzzled anthropologists is that the fossils of *A. robustus* overlap in time with *Homo habilis*. Moreover, the fossil finds of *A. africanus* come close to this time overlap. All three hominids may have coexisted during some period in ancient history just as chimpanzees, gorillas, and humans coexist today.

Perhaps we have been interpreting the fossils incorrectly. Maybe the missing record of the fossil apes has been there all along. Perhaps our preconceived conventional wisdom has prevented us from seeing the early hominid creatures as fossil apes.

Look back for a minute at Figure 10.6. Study the reconstruction of the australopithecine hominid. What do you see? Can you visualize the ancestor of a man, or the ancestor of a chimpanzee and a gorilla?

The possibilities that Gribbin and Cherfas suggest in their book *The Monkey Puzzle* are:

- *Australopithecus africanus* is the fossil ancestor of the chimpanzee.
- *Australopithecus robustus* is the fossil ancestor of the gorilla.
- *Ramapithecus* is the fossil ancestor of the orangutan.

This suggestion by Gribbin and Cherfas, which may be called the "missing links for apes" hypothesis, does not violate the charts of human ancestry drawn by either Johanson or Leakey (see figures 10.10 and 10.11).

Not only is their hypothesis consistent with the fossil record, it is also consistent with the time periods proposed by Sarich and Wilson in their dating by the genetic molecular clock. Moreover, David Pilbeam's new fossil evidence that *Ramapithecus* is most likely the ancestor