



The Artificial Ape: How Technology Changed the Course of Human Evolution (MacSci)

Timothy Taylor

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A breakthrough theory that tools and technology are the real drivers of human evolution

Although humans are one of the great apes, along with chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans, we are remarkably different from them. Unlike our cousins who subsist on raw food, spend their days and nights outdoors, and wear a thick coat of hair, humans are entirely dependent on artificial things, such as clothing, shelter, and the use of tools, and would die in nature without them. Yet, despite our status as the weakest ape, we are the masters of this planet. Given these inherent deficits, how did humans come out on top?

In this fascinating new account of our origins, leading archaeologist Timothy Taylor proposes a new way of thinking about human evolution through our relationship with objects. Drawing on the latest fossil evidence, Taylor argues that at each step of our species' development, humans made choices that caused us to assume greater control of our evolution. Our appropriation of objects allowed us to walk upright, lose our body hair, and grow significantly larger brains. As we push the frontiers of scientific technology, creating prosthetics, intelligent implants, and artificially modified genes, we continue a process that started in the prehistoric past, when we first began to extend our powers through objects.

Weaving together lively discussions of major discoveries of human skeletons and artifacts with a reexamination of Darwin's theory of evolution, Taylor takes us on an exciting and challenging journey that begins to answer the fundamental question about our existence: what makes humans unique, and what does that mean for our future?

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