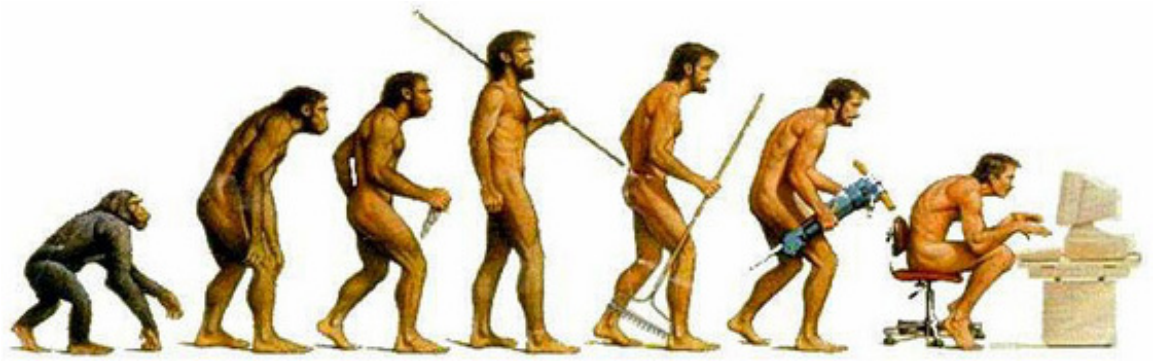
Are we at the peak of our evolution?

A Reflection



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The Question:

Have we hit the peak of our evolution as humans? Such a short question with such a complex answer cannot be concluded without looking into the future. However, this question in itself brings to light many different questions that can be answered. With this reflection, I will try to bring to light a possible pattern in which to base a hypothesis. First we must look at our past, our present, our biology and our environment to bring a possible answer to whether or not we have adapted to the point where we will either stop, continue, or decline on the evolutionary scale. This question takes all aspects of anthropology into one ultimate question that has been asked ever since we developed scientific theory. Is this as good as it gets for us?

Evolution dissected:

evolution
[ev-*uh*-**loo**-sh*uh* n *or, esp. British,* ee-v*uh*-] SpellSyllables
noun
1. any process of formation or growth; development:
the evolution of a language; the evolution of the airplane.
2. a product of such development; something evolved :
The exploration of space is the evolution of decades of research.
3. *Biology.* change in the gene pool of a population from generation to generation by such processes as mutation, natural selection, and genetic drift.
4. a process of gradual, peaceful, progressive change or development, as in social or economic structure or institutions.

The definition of evolution has many different meanings that have the same overall idea of change, progress, growth and development (changing for the better.) Throughout the 'Short History of the World' class, we have discussed evolution on all these levels, whether it be in the biology of humanity's evolution from Homo Erectus or the evolution of society from god king worship to free thinking. As

sentient beings, humans are the only organisms capable of changing its own genetic evolution based on the current evolution of its society. With these variables for our future in account, some of the important ways that humans have evolved will be taken into account.

Genetic Evolution (Humans):

When Hominids first began the progression of evolving into modern Homo Sapiens roughly 7 million years ago, different species began appearing more and more like the modern humans. These hominids went through many physiological changes, such as increased brain size, reduced hair, and reduced jaw sizes until they completely changed into the people we see today. It is difficult to say why this happened, but natural selection and genetic mutation had to have played the largest part. These land based apes had to adapt to their surroundings, and intelligence became the best route for them to accomplish this. Between increased brain size and cooking their food to save energy, these early humans were able to settle into areas and become stationary. From this point, they are now, for all intents and purposes, modern humans. Genetic evolution is almost completely to where we are today. A few thousand years is not a lot of time for evolution to be noticed, but the key factor with this point is that natural selection is now less relevant to human evolution. Working in groups in a settled area, humans are no longer bound by the survival of the fittest. The old and infirm can be taken care of, and weaker humans can still reproduce as much as their stronger or smarter kin. If natural selection is a major factor in evolution, this may have slowed down humanity's genetic change dramatically.

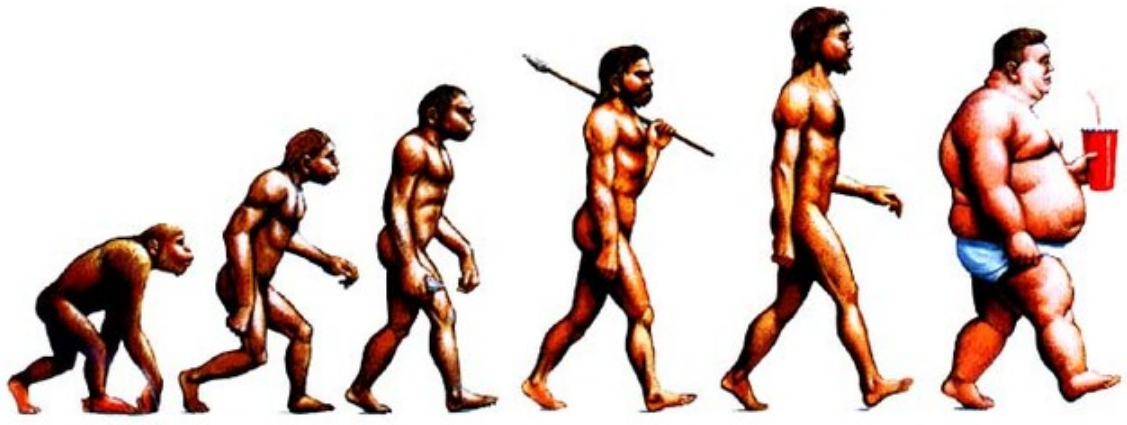
Social Evolution (People):

By genetically evolving to the point where humans are smart enough to *adapt* their surroundings and not have to adapt *to* their surroundings, humans no longer had as big an issue with being removed from the gene pool before being able

to reproduce. Other than skin colour adapting to levels of sunlight and other minor changes to appearance, humans have remained the same until today. Our global society today is now a free place where environment is less depended on for our ability to survive than just a place to thrive. We no longer need to adapt to better suit our surroundings genetically; we now create our surroundings.

Our societies are still ever changing, meaning we still wish to improve and thrive more and more. Our technology now carries our weight while we enjoy the fruits of life more and more. We evolve our wants through the use of our own ingenuity. Humans have become people: individuals with individual thoughts outside basic instincts and a constant need to evolve in different ways. Whether it be evolving the society we live in or evolving our own minds, change is still happening day by day to what makes us human.

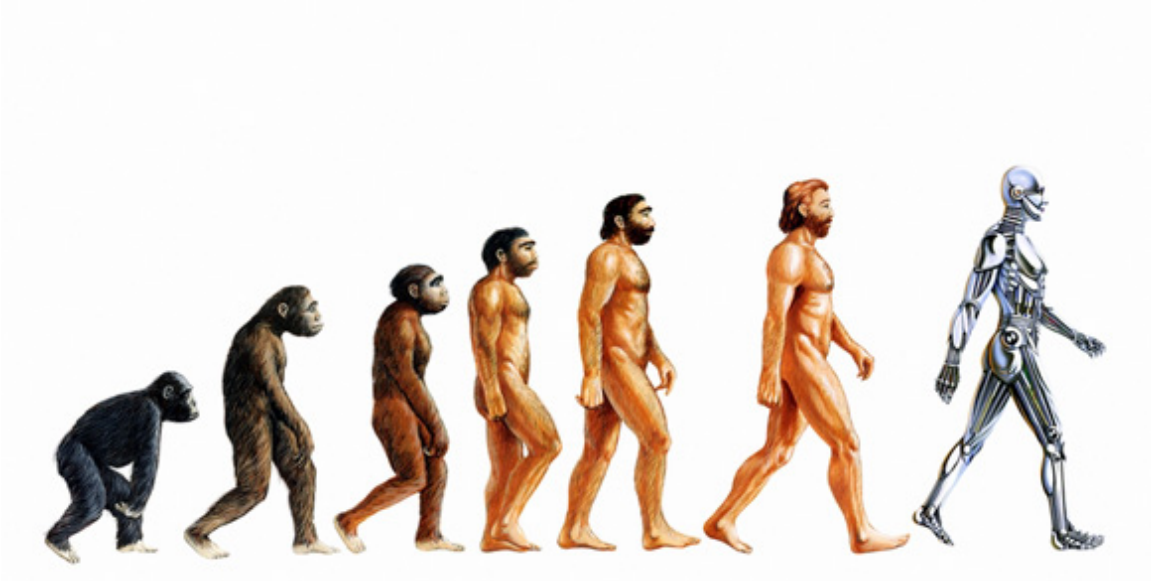
Present Day Evolution:



How people behave and adapt are nearly exclusively to how the people around us act and behave. Our need to survive still exists in fighting famine, disease and humanity's stain. We do so by using technology more and more. We have become a single hive mind – a collective global mind brought together by science and technology – and yet we retain our individual thoughts. We are able to take up causes against repression of others. We have new genetic engineering and technology in medicine to help combat disease, and we have even gone so far as to

evolve other organisms for better farming to meet our ever-increasing food demand. This is not a trend but an upward climb towards a “Utopia.” So even as we remain the same as humans beings, our consciousness is evolving at a rate that can be seen year by year or even month by month rather than centuries of the same thinking.

Our Future:



As time progresses, we will become more and more reliant and enabled by technology. Humans are just now getting into the world of cybernetics; something that could only be described to early humans as “Becoming the hammer you swing.” Smart phones, pacemakers, and microchip implants are just the beginning of how we plan to integrate ourselves into the tools we use.

Globalization and further mixing of different people and cultures will create a larger and larger population of mixed ethnicities. The offspring of mixing all these cultures we see today are the future human: a people who see our similarities more than our differences.

My Hypothesis:

Are we at the peak of our evolution? Answering simply, kind of. If evolution is defined by changing to adapt to our surroundings, I believe we have far surpassed evolution and moved on to a new level of "provolution." We have evolved to the point where we no longer need to be changed genetically. We have large brains, vocal cords and opposable thumbs. We are where we need to be as a species. From this point on, we adapt how we choose, change where we see change is fit, and ultimately chase the goal to become gods ourselves. From here, nature has the back seat while we continue to grow in power beyond that of normal biological beings. With these kind of strengths given to use by millions of years of evolution, we have indeed reached our peak, but we are building another mountain to climb right next to us. The only time where we will need to evolve again is when an earth-changing event such as a meteor or super volcano destroys our climate. Then we will see how truly evolved we have become.

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