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Praeadamitae and Neanderthals Theories on the Origin of Humankind in the 17th and 21st Centuries*

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Abstract

My objective in this paper is to show some parallels between the roles of monogenesis and polygenesis of humankind in the thought of early modernity and in contemporary paleoanthropology. My insights into the history of philosophy: a theory of "praeadamitae" as an argument for the rejection of original sin in Unitarian theology of early modernity and its role in John Locke's theory of state. Conflict between universality and particularity of morals in Voltaire's thought in the mirror of his theory of "praeadamitae". In the last part of my article I demonstrate the disadvantages of the lack of philosophical reflection of contemporary paleoanthropology.

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* This paper is based on two of my previous articles written in Hungarian: "A paleoantropológia (hiányzó) filozófiája" (The (missing) philosophy of paleoanthropology) In: Veress Károly (ed.), *A filozófia alkalmazása – alkalmazott filozófia* (The application of philosophy – applied philosophy), Kolozsvár: Pro Philosophia, 2002, pp. 198-203; and "Preadamiták, eredeti bűn, emberi szabadság" (Praeadamites, original sin, human freedom) In: Nyíri Kristóf, Palló Gábor (ed.), *Túl az iskolafilozófián. A 21. század bölcseleti élménye* (Beyond school philosophy. The philosophical experience of the 21st century), Budapest: Áron Kiadó, 2005, pp. 317-332.

My paper discusses the question, with the help of certain examples of classical history of philosophy, of how the problem of the biological descent of mankind, which has by now become a problem of scientific interest, has influenced the all-time ethical theoretical frameworks and through them the views on political communities. In the first part of my paper I will discuss the period contained between the last decades of the 17th century and the end of the 18th century. During this period the question of polygenesis vs. monogenesis had gained a considerable importance in the debates of the intellectual life of European modernity, as a discussion of the dilemma whether mankind had its origins in one common ancestor, or the different races had different ancestors. Within this issue, I will discuss the connection of John Locke's views political philosophical views on this matter; then, in relation to Voltaire and Herder, I will briefly hint on the ways the debate on polygenesis vs. monogenesis lived on in the middle of the 18th century, gradually yielding its place to the similar debate on the origins of language towards the end of the century. Finally, I propose the possibility that the appearance, in contemporary paleoanthropology, of the hypotheses of multiregional vs. recent African origin, and especially the role they have in the social representation of the public opinion concerned, can be paralleled to some extent to early modern views.

Locke's political philosophy and the Unitarian teaching on Adam and his sin[1]

Locke's ideas of our concern were formed during his emigration to the Netherlands, in connection to his Dutch, Polish and Transylvanian Unitarian readings. Of this relationship, philosophical historiography has mainly been concerned with the question of religious freedom: as a result of the interest of the Cambridge school, Locke's Unitarian readings from the period of his emigration in the Netherlands have recently gained a considerable notoriousness.[2] These texts have usually been linked to Locke's concept of tolerance; however, beside tolerance, there is another,

[1] The subject of this chapter appears in more detail in my following paper: "The Connection between the Unitarian Thought and Early Modern Political Philosophy" in *Journal for the Study of Religions & Ideologies,* 3, (2002) 142-157; URL: <http://www.jsri.ro/old/html%20version/index/no_3/mester_bela-articol.htm>

[2] The most important literature from the Cambridge circle has proved to be the book of John Marshall, *Resistance, Religion and Responsibility,* Cambridge: CUP, 1994.

more basic field with regard to the creation of political community in which Unitarianism might have influenced Locke's work. According to Marshall, Locke can be attested to have read Unitarian authors beginning with 1679, the first of which was the work of György Enyedi[1]; however, he started to be concerned with certain points of the Unitarian set of problems already in his Oxford years. The effect of systematic Unitarian theological readings in Locke's works can no longer be textually proved after this date, but the appearance of a new motif makes this connection probable at least. Since the winter of 1680-1681, Locke has been seriously concerned with the sin of the first human couple, the questions of original sin and free will. His perception of the matter has gradually left his original standpoint akin to the Calvinist one, and has approached the Unitarian idea.[2]

Locke's orientation can be adequately valued only if one takes into consideration that all the thinkers preceding Locke – and let us only refer to the best known of these, Hobbes – imagine a clear boundary between a natural and a political state. They do this on the analogy of the medieval Christian perception connecting the origin of power to the original sin, and our being born in sin to our being born subject to power, that is, the situation that we cannot break up the connection that links us to power. Hobbes does not preserve the idea of the innocence of the natural state, but his basic anthropological presupposition, the idea of state power created for the people of "ill nature", contains the pre-modern connection of human nature corrupted by the original sin and the origin of power.

Hobbes' argumentation seems to be connected in some points to that of Calvin, who, similarly to Luther, refers to part 13 of Paul's epistle to the Romans in his teachings on obedience to superiority. (It is important however that Paul speaks here about the obedience to a religiously alien, pagan Roman authority.) Calvin in his interpretation argues with the Anabaptists at a considerable length in order to prove the justification of secular power even in the age after salvation. While

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[1] *Explicationes Locorum Veterum et Novi Testamenti, ex Quibus Trinitatis Dogma Stabiliri Solet* (Kolozsvár, 1598.). Locke had probably used the Groningen edition from 1670, which however literally corresponds to the first version printed in Kolozsvár.

[2] See Marshall, *Resistance, Religion and Responsibility*, mainly 141-146. In the last chapter of his book, when discussing the later thinking of the philosopher, Marshall calls Locke, with a somewhat unfortunate, yet quite telling term, a "Unitarian heretic".

reading his text, it becomes apparent that Calvin's image of man and in connection to this his thoughts on the legitimation and tasks of secular power contain several *topoi* which then appear later at Hobbes in a similar context. It is noteworthy that Calvin's ideas about the relationship of ecclesiastical and secular power – which consider Christ's power over his disciples unique and inimitable, and of a purely spiritual effect, as well as his view that superiority has the right to determine the external circumstances of religious practice, the so-called indifferent things or *adiaphora* – are almost literarily repeated in the *Leviathan*.

In his works of political philosophy written in Oxford, especially the *Two Tracts of Government*, Locke clearly followed the traditional, Calvinist line of thought, and according to the evidence of a note, he mostly had the same opinion in 1676 as well. However, these years also marked the beginning of his doubts connected to the Holy Trinity, and he attempted to investigate the history of this dogma; then this endeavour was followed by fundamental and extended Unitarian readings. As Marshall writes: "By the time of the *Treatises'* publication it is clear, [. . .] that Locke opposed original sin in common with Socinians, and it is possible that this opposition had developed by the time that Locke's description of the state of nature as peaceable with initially little sin."[1]

Locke's interest in Unitarianism and the problems of the original sin reaches its highest during his preparations for, and writing of, the *Second Treatise of Civil Government*; therefore it is justified to try to parallel some of the anthropological presuppositions of this piece of writing to the Unitarian denial of the original sin. In Locke's case there is no clear anthropological presupposition which might accurately explain the necessity of secular power as a consequence of human nature. People are certainly not corrupted in their nature, but nor are they innocent. Traditionally, it is § no. 111 which is usually referred to both in relation to natural state and the early stage of civil government, as an evidence of the unclear boundary between the two. The connection between the original sin and secular power seems stronger in § 116 and following, in which Locke repeats his well-known arguments against Filmer's idea that everybody was born under a fatherly power, and this fact accounts for all the forms of secular power, which originates thus from Adam. Filmer considers the subjection to power as a state which accompanies the original sin, as a kind of punishment; in opposition to this, Locke

[1] Marshall, *Resistance, Religion and Responsibility*, p.145.

emphasizes the free birth of all human beings, implicitly perceiving all new generations as devoid of sin. At the same time, Locke's text never denies clearly the original sin; especially in his debates with either concrete persons or general opinions, he takes over the usual discourse of political theory literature about Adam and his sons. The work also allows for a kind of reading according to which Locke does not step out from the framework of the anthropological theories of previous authors; instead, he is only being less consistent, especially compared to Hobbes. Later, however, in his theological masterpiece finished in the last years of his life and even more so in his manuscripts and notes, he clearly defines his standpoint, and formulates it in an unambiguous language.[1]

At this point we have to discuss in detail the relationship of Locke's works of epistemology, theology, and political philosophy. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, when refuting the doctrine of innate ideas, in § 19 of the second chapter of the first book,[2] contains a notable argumentation on the idea of sin, which, as it cannot be formulated in clear terms in all cultures, cannot be an innate idea; in another place, he proves the same thing in connection to virtue. The image which Locke draws about the man who cannot differentiate between sin and virtue, but possesses the ability to develop the talent of differentiation derives from the Unitarian idea of the uncorrupted man, who is not born in sin, yet falls into his individual sins because of his imperfection. However, in some of his views, Locke remained closer all his life to the ideas which explained the state of humankind by the original sin, than to Unitarianism. He does not seem to accept the man's being a creation of God as a sufficient cause for the man's mortality and work obligation. He also remained at the doctrine of Adam's perfect original nature, which Adam and consequently all his descendants had effectively lost, without also inheriting the sin itself. (He needed this inconsequent solution in order to be able to maintain Christ's image as a saviour, because the salvation needs some kind of bad state preceding it).

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[1] "For whilst some men would have all Adam's posterity doomed to eternal infinite punishment, for the transgression of Adam, whom millions had never heard of, and no one had authorized to transact for him, or be his representative" *The Reasonableness of Christianity as delivered in the Scriptures* (The works of John Locke, in Nine Volumes. The Twelfth Edition. Volume the Sixth. London: [C. Baldwin, printer], 1824, p. 4)

[2] According to the most recent editions which consider the Introduction as the first chapter, this text is § 19 of the *third* chapter.

It is an interesting question to analyze the places in Locke's texts which seem to allow the conclusion that, while in other places clearly accepting our origin from Adam, he seems to leave open the possibility of the polygenesis of humankind, its origins from several Adams. In the *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, in those places where he describes the impossibility to trace back the existence of lordship to Adam, or in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, where he proves the impossibility of the existence of innate ideas, he enjoys using ethnographic examples from contemporary travelogues. In both works he argues against the unity of humankind, deriving from its lineage and regarded as a kind of physical state, as if suggesting: we people all possess such ideas and institutions, and as Adam's sons, it could not be otherwise. In opposition to this determinism of descent, also serving as a principle of the legitimation of power, he represents the idea of the free expression of human abilities both in epistemology and in social life; it is in the interest of this if the human being appears without preconditions, with freely expandable potentials. At certain points one can often sense that Locke does not only defend the free possibilities of the individual human mind imagined as a *tabula rasa* against the biological determination of our in-born ideas, or the freedom of agreement against the legitimation of our descent from Adam, but he also seems to hint to the fact that *not all of us descend indeed* from Adam. The debate with the biblical narrative and its contemporary ideological consequences begins to bring about a new narrative, a competitive narrative of the origins of humankind. Locke's texts are not clear at this point - possibly purposefully. Even the most straight-forward part, the sentence quoted from the *Reasonableness*, allows the reading that he is merely speaking about the struggle of legitimations based on descent and contract, the expressions used should be understood metaphorically, and the entire sentence is a rhetorical device which should not be taken literally: "millions had never heard of, and no one had authorised to transact for him, or be his representative".

For Locke, however, humankind's exemption from the original sin does not mean the lack of sinfulness, as this would be equal with perfection. The imperfect, *practically* always sinning man *usually* creates some kind of political power, but this is not an anthropological necessity. The man may cancel the social contract exactly because, at least theoretically, he can be imagined, albeit for one hypothetical moment, *at the same time* as a man and as a being outside the social contract, as he had not been born as a sinner, and is thus not subject to power; what is

more, he may not even be a descendant of Adam, and is thus devoid from the consequences of the previous course of (salvation) history. He is *born free* in this sense as well, and is free to start a new history of ethics and power.

The generations after Locke on the origins of humankind

Locke's careful formulations on the polygenesis of humankind deserve attention because the debate on polygenesis vs. monogenesis has become one of the most important debates of ethics, anthropology, and indirectly also political theory in the lives of the generations following him and also to a great extent learning from him. The theory of polygenesis appears at the beginning of modernity in opposition to the traditional, biblical concept of the monogenesis of humankind. Its appearance is connected to the early modern Netherlands, a few decades before Locke's writings.[1] As from the end of the 18th century until nowadays the theory of polygenesis has been intertwined with the various forms of appearance of European superiority and racism, especially in the colonies, it is interesting to refer to the different role of the theory in the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century. The theory of polygenesis appears as a refutation of the traditional theory of creation and its consequences, similarly to the then fashionable conceptions on the plurality of worlds. Both of these conclude that rational beings, regardless of their descent from Adam, are capable of

[1] Isaac de la Peyrère French Calvinist thinker's work, entitled *Praeadamitae sive exertatio super versibus duodecimo, decimotercio, & decimoquatro, capitis quinti Epistolae d. Pauli ad Romanos. Quibus inducuntur primi homines ante Adamum conditi*, was published in Amsterdam, by Elsevier, in 1655. Characteristically, Peyrère also exposed his views on the praeadamites in connection to the exegesis of the parts on the original sin of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. There is no concrete evidence on Locke's having read this work, but the public burning of the book in Paris, after the author had also publicly revoked his teachings, made it so famous that Locke must have heard about the matter and the existence of such a view while being in Amsterdam, where the work had been published. (It shows the popularity of the work that it was also published in English in the following year: *Man Before Adam, or, A Discourse upon the Twelth, Thirteenth, and Fourteens Verses of the Fifth Chapter of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans. By which are prov'd, that the first men were created before Adam.* London, 1656.) A good overview of the early modern theoris on the matter is offered by Urs Bitterli, *Der "Wilden" und die "Zivilisierten". Grüngzüge einer Geistes- und Kulturgeschichte der europäisch-überseeischen Begegnung*, München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1976.

cognition, ethical behaviour, and the creation of society. The theory is important in the arguments of the Enlightenment, as opposed to the universal ethics of the great Christian churches, building upon the descent from Adam and the original sin common for all men (*peccatum originale originans*); it is also important in the elaboration of a new ethical universalism, extended to all rational beings. The author's polygenetic or monogenetic approach was practically indifferent in the judgment of the peoples considered as the descendants of Adam. The polygenetic theory may yield the conclusion that the peoples overseas were regarded as happy and sinless, not taking part in Adam's sin, but it may also have concluded that they were rational animals. The arguments were the same in both cases: the ideas that they allegedly did not work, and that their women could give birth with ease, in the first case was the sign of their happiness and the fact that they were devoid of the consequences of the fall, while in the second case the same *topoi* appeared as beastly features. It also cannot be stated that the monogenetic theory was clearly connected to the idea of the equality of the different types of men. It was a widespread view among the representatives of this theory that, despite the common origin, the peoples with dark skin are the descendants of Cain or some other ill-famed Biblical character, or – in a non-biblical view – the less sophisticated, less developed, and cruder forms of the same race. The representatives of both theories could have equally objected to, or defended, slavery. It is so because in fact I do not judge a black slave differently if I say that, not being a descendant of Adam, he can perform only lower level work; or if I say that, although he is Adam's child, but as a descendant of Cain his abilities are exactly as they would be according to the other theory. Similarly, I may consider him equal to white men, whether or not I think of him as being or not a descendant of Adam. The borderline between the two theories does not lie in the judgment of the peoples living outside Europe, nor does it lie in taking sides for or against universal ethics. The supposition of the polygenesis of humankind, or the existence of rational beings living on other planets has often been used as evidence that the rules of universal ethics do *not* refer to mankind on the basis of race and origin – as a single divine commandment, only and exclusively to Adam's descendants – but they are valid for all the rational beings of the universe, regardless of any theory of descent. The adepts of monogenesis are also not necessarily ethical universalists, as their theory clearly contains the supposition that there are various ethical concepts which belong to the cultures of peoples on different levels of development, but

having a common origin. The *confiding* application of both theoretical frameworks can be regarded as an attempt to find a way to manage the experience of the cultural diversity of humankind, by the requirement to understand universal ethics as independent from ecclesiastical teachings.

The ethical dilemma of the 18th century can best be grasped in Voltaire's path as a thinker. First, as a devoted disciple of Hobbes and Locke, he perceives ethics as a conventional rule, the content of which is practically irrelevant, and the only essential viewpoint is the mere existence of *some kind of* rule. This view is grounded by his standpoint in the question of the polygenesis of humankind, discussed on several occasions in a rather provocative manner.[1] It is quite noteworthy that in some of his works, primarily in the *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1764), when discussing theological questions connected in previous centuries to the debate on polygenesis vs. monogenesis (especially the original sin, free will, and Jesus' nature), Voltaire keeps citing the Unitarian viewpoint, even if somewhat distantly, as the perspective which is still the most acceptable for him. Later, however, he faces the fact that the system of rules understood only as the result of mere conventions may bring about judgments which would still disturb his sense of morality, that is, he needs to presume again the possibility of a universal ethics.[2] In the end, Voltaire does not solve satisfactorily the dilemma of ethical relativism based on the principle of polygenesis and universal ethics later considered desirable. Perhaps not because in this line of thought the basis of universal ethics would have been the theory of monogenesis, but this in the given cultural context was identical with the biblical narrative, the basis of the ethical universalism of Christian churches, which it had already discarded once on account of its intolerant consequences.

The problem, in the case of Voltaire and Locke at least, derives partly from the background of their epistemological thinking. The criticism of the theory of innate ideas also shows that knowledge is thought of as a kind of object materially present within us, which, were it indeed innate, would derive from our parents and ultimately from Adam just as our physique and facial features. In this framework it is clearly difficult to argue at the same time for a unitary biological descent and for

[1] A summary of his relatively early thoughts on the matter is the *Traité de métaphysique* (1734). In his intellectually summarizing work entitled *Le philosophe ignorant* (1767) he also speaks about his changing relationship to Locke, referring as well to the issue in question.

[2] This is about the repeated cases of the French Huguenots executed – legally, according to the laws of the country – under the accusation of blasphemy.

cultural diversity, while common human values which derive not from the biological identity of humankind are practically impossible to interpret.

This dilemma is solved by the process of the history of ideas in the course of which the place of the debate of polygenesis vs. monogenesis on the origins of mankind is gradually taken over by the similarly termed discourse on the origin of language, while the previous discourse still preserves its publicity to some extent. It is this double approach which allows for authors to handle the ambivalence of cultural diversity and universal human abilities as *equally and simultaneously* valid. The cultural differences and traditions handled separately from biology are gradually considered more valuable in the century, as the language also comes to the forefront. The philosophies of language becoming more elaborated and placed in the centre of the discourse allow for Herder to leave aside the problem of descent from various biblical and non-biblical characters in connection to the variations of the human race. Instead – sustaining his theory on the system of degrees of evolution which, despite its hierarchical nature, states the biological unity of humankind – he emphasizes the diversity of cultures and customs, mixing the presumption of the common ability of humankind to create language with the empirical experience of the diversity of languages and the cultures built upon them. Some decades earlier, in the spirit of the science of his age, Voltaire had to offer some kind of apparently scientific, biological explanation as the basis of the diversity of cultures and moralities; for Herder, language and tradition were already enough.

Monogenesis and polygenesis in recent paleoanthropology

It seems from all these that the question of the polygenesis or monogenesis of humankind had lost its importance in ethics and political philosophy by the end of the 18th century, with the growing interest in the research of linguistic and cultural philosophy, and has become a professional question of paleoanthropology, unrelated to any ethical or political philosophical theory concerning human community.

However, from the second half of the 20th century, the biological approach to the definition of genetics and paleoanthropology as well as, independently from it, individual and collective identity has increased, and this has also had its effect on science; let us only think of the endeavours combining human ethology and ethics. Due to these factors, our age also raises questions similar to the questions of early modernity, naturally in a different conceptual framework, mostly

ignoring the biblical narrative. It is worth noting that the non-professional public opinion and the scientific documentary literature intended for it regards the evidence and theories connected to our human predecessors as ideas which radically influence human identity. This situation easily results in questions about races which best resemble various kinds of human predecessors, or about the genetic origin of the population or individuals of certain contemporary territories. The definition of the most distant ancestors has become an industry, at least in Europe. As according to the accepted view, the human race is genetically largely uniform as compared to other primates, there are calculations to determine the time when the common mother and father of all of us lived, and how many males and females from different places and with different genetic inheritance had populated a certain territory (Europe for instance was populated by ten males and seven females). As a result of these, it is quite easy to determine from the procurer's genetic sample his descent from one or the other of these ancestors called by mythological fantasy names. (The enterprise dealing with it offers to make the "genealogical tree" of any European human being for about 100 Euros plus postage on the basis of the DNA sample sent to them.)

The discovery of a new find repeatedly surfaces the present version of the debate on monogenesis vs. polygenesis: the polemics on multiregional development vs. the recent African origin model,[1] and its even more recent variant, the question whether the Neanderthals could have met or even mixed with the ancestors of the contemporary man. Grahame Clarke's classic summary had still considered that from the *australopithecus* onwards all kinds of *homo*s were one single race.[2] Since then, there are presumably more and more distinct and extinct *homo* races, and thus their relationship also becomes more and more problematic. There are debates on the monogenesis or polygenesis of humankind also in connection to the earlier stages of the phylogeny of humankind, but the most debated one is the problem of the co-existence or even possible mixture of the modern man and the Neanderthals. The most intriguing find in the matter is the girl found in the Portuguese Lagar Velho, which possesses the traits of both the Neanderthal man and

[1] One of the most famous of such debates in the recent past was that of Alan Thorne (Australian National University) and Chris Stringer (Natural History Museum, London) on the interpretation of the Australian find of the *Mungo Man*, called like this after the site where it was found, the dried-out Mungo lake in New South Wales.

[2] Grahame Clarke, *World Prehistory*, CUP, 1969.

the modern man.[1] There is a wide range of theories on the co-existence of the two or races, from claiming that the modern man had extinguished the Neanderthals, to the assumption that we had genetically mixed with them and mankind as it is now descends from both races.[2]

It is interesting to see how naturally the informative and sometimes scholarly literature of the recent debate on monogenesis vs. polygenesis uses the self-definitions of biblical and other cultures, and the also traditional scepticism against these. The adepts of monogenesis speak about the genetic determination of "Adam", "Eve", the "forefathers of Europe", or the "ancestor of the tribe",[3] and argue for it with the undoubtedly great genetic homogeneity of our race. The adepts of polygenesis however draw our attention to the weaker points of these calculations of descent, and they are clearly not disturbed by the idea of a "mixed descent"; according to some of them it is even possible that in the veins of certain groups of people flows more blood of Neanderthals than in others, and it is also possible to prove it.

The researchers who reject the genetic kinship seem to regard as a criterion of a truly *human* use of tools, culture, or mental activity the fact that these cannot be characteristic of a Neanderthal man, while those who wish to prove such a genetic kinship try to push the beginnings of human culture at an ever greater distance in time, and they emphasize the cultural parallels between the finds on Neanderthals and the *Homo sapiens*. Such debates are going on in connection to the comparison of the toolmaking of the two kinds of men. According to the assumption of Wesley Niewoehner, paleoanthropologist of the University of New Mexico, formulated on the basis of the finds of Skhūl-Qafzah in Israel, while the Neanderthal man could only use his tools holding them in his fist because of the structure of his hand, the contemporary *Homo sapiens*, practically living in the same place was able to grasp his tools by their

[1] See: D'Errico, F.–Zilhaõ, J.–Julien, M.– Boffier, D.–Pelegrin, J., „Neanderthal acculturation in western Europe? A critical review of the evidence and its interpretation" in *Current Anthropology,* 39 (1998) (Supplement): 1-44.

[2] The most recent summary of these theories in Daniel Kaufman, "Comparisons and the case for interaction among Neanderthals and early modern humans in the Levant" in *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 3 (August 2001): 219-240.

[3] The genetic calculation which traces back the genetic inheritance of humankind to one single Adam and Eve has raised great interest recently; the "ancient parents" of Europe have been mentioned before; and the scholarly community has named a recent African find with a word of the local Afar language meaning "the ancestor of the tribe".

handle. Michael S. Bisson from Montréal studies the differences in toolmaking strategies on the basis of the same finds. According to him, the problem to be solved in the debates regarding the relationship of the Neanderthal man and the contemporary man is the evaluation of the importance of our image constructed on the consciousness and mind of the Neanderthals. Were they capable of the same mental processes and the same level of intellectual flexibility as the modern *Homo sapiens*? Bisson's answer, based on the reconstruction, is a definite "no".[1] The researchers of the origins of culture who accept a single-centred formation of mankind, if unexpectedly finding elements in Neanderthal sites which correspond to their own concept of culture, try at once to find some new criterion which would only be characteristic for the *Homo sapiens*. For instance, they considered the use of symbols as a criterion of culture, and they accepted the body's painting in red for funeral as a sign of it. Then, when they found bodies painted in red in Neanderthal graves as well, they started to consider bodypainting as merely a kind of "proto-symbol", and tried to find other, more complicated criteria for a "truly" human culture, only characteristic for the *Homo sapiens*.[2]

The problem of the Neanderthals' disappearance and relatively long co-existence with the *Homo sapiens* is also an important one. The coherent answers given to these two questions can be divided into two groups: I. the Neanderthals lost the competition for evolution by (1) being extinguished by the modern man; (2) becoming extinct by losing their territory, because their biologically determined mental structure could only imperfectly create a system similar to human culture; II. the two kinds of humans mixed because there were no essential biological, mental, and cultural differences between them.

The second hypothesis which assumes the fusion of the two kinds of humans, also allows the assumption that the blood of the Neanderthals does not flow equally in the veins of contemporary

[1] See: Michael S. Bisson, "Interview with a Neanderthal: an Experimental Approach for Reconstructing Scraper Production Rules, and their Implications for Imposed Form in Middle Palaeolitic Tools", in *Cambridge Archaeological Journa.* 2 (October 2001): 165-184.

[2] Examples for this method: Robin Dunhax – Chris Knight – Camilla Power (eds.), *The Evolution of Culture: An Interdisciplinary View*, New Brunswich: Rutgers University Press, 1999, especially I. Watts: *The Origin of Symbolic Culture* and S. Mithen: *Symbolism and the Supernatural*. Adrienne Zihlmann's review, basically in agreement with the concept of the volume, in *American Journal of Archaeology* 3 (July 2001): 538.

humans, and this also raises problems of identity, as recognized by the representatives of this theory as well. The reviewer of two recent volumes representing this theory, who agrees with the theoretical background of the reviewed works, reminds the reader with some irony that the discussion of the question reproduces the controversy around the documentary entitled *The Last Tasmanian*, along with the ambitions connected to land ownership for those Tasmanians who could, or reckoned to, partly trace back their ancestors to Tasmanian aboriginals, and considered themselves, by the right of "a drop of native blood", to be entitled to own the land of the island. In principle, the case does not differ much from the idea which may be formulated by many Europeans who think they can partly trace back their ancestors to the earliest European natives, the Neanderthal man. The theory discussed in the volumes assumes on the basis of Rosalind Harding, that the strong depigmentation typical for Europeans could not have happened in a tropical climate where the formation of man is usually assumed to have taken place. Red hair and freckles could especially be the kind of characteristics which Europeans have inherited from their Neanderthal ancestors – but these are largely typical of certain European populations, while not so much of others.[1]

The above examples indicate that the debates of recent paleoanthropology are conducted against a set of problems also present in the case of similar early modern theories. Both theories, whether considering the modern man a descendant of the Neanderthals or considering the Neanderthals an extinct race not related to ours, claim – similarly to 17th-18th century ideas – that we can only have anything to do with the memories of a rational being, namely the Neanderthals, if we are the biological descendants of the creators of these memories. The first hypothesis regards the Neanderthal man as a rational being *because* it is related to us, while the second hypothesis emphasizes its rudimentary rationality *because* it is biologically different from us. The idea that would make the memories of *all beings that possess some kind of rationality* our own memories, merely on the basis of their rationality, could only be included into modern theories and scientific publicity by a

[1] The volumes are: Ian Tattersall, *The Last Neanderthal. The Rise, Success and Mysterious Extinction of Our Closest Human Relatives,* Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999; Ian Tattersall – Jeffrey Schwarz, *Extinct Humans,* Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2000. The review of M. H. Wolpoff in *American Journal of Archaeology* 4 (October 2001): 715-716.

philosophical reflection alone, which existed in early modernism, but seems to be utterly lacking from recent discourses.

Translated by Emese G. Czintos