



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From Professor Milford H. Wolpoff and Dr. Rachel Caspari

Sir,

'Grappling with the Ghost of Gould' by David P. Barash

Barash (2002), even while disagreeing deeply and fundamentally with Gould, and questioning the validity of many of his achievements, inadvertently reflects Gould's power and persuasiveness. His book review essay, quite appropriately named, ends with the exaltation to "consider, as a final extended quotation, this marvelous rhetorical flourish against the polyphyletic theory of human origins." This is followed by a citation of Gould's terminal mischaracterization of multiregional evolution as a polygenic theory based on parallel evolution. Since its inception in the 1980s, multiregional evolution has never been polyphyletic. It has always been a theory about intraspecific evolutionary processes with an emphasis on gene flow, and therefore provided a model for hominid evolution that was antithetical to punctuated equilibrium theory (Wolpoff and Caspari, 1997). Gould consistently misportrayed it and widely publicized multiregional evolution as a polyphyletic model of parallel racial evolution similar to that of Carlton Coon's in the 1960s. This can never be corrected now, and when Gould was alive, repeated attempts to do so in *Natural History*, where for the most part his

incorrect and misleading depictions regularly appeared, were rejected by an editor. Why Gould needed to be protected on this issue, and for that matter why he continued to describe a hypothesis based on gene flow (Wolpoff et al 2000) as polygenic and polyphyletic will now always remain unknown, but it is embarrassing. In any other discipline it would be laughable to have to deal with a theory dead for more than a half century, as if current physics papers needed to repeatedly prove that distant galaxies were red shifted, or continued to debate whether light was a particle or a wave.

Milford H. Wolpoff
Rachel Caspari
Paleoanthropology Laboratory
Department of Anthropology
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1382, USA.

References

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- Wolpoff, M. H., J. Hawks, and R. Caspari 2000 Multiregional, Not Multiple Origins. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 112(1):129-136.