

Darwin destroyed the concept of human specialness

[Health & Medicine](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Darwin destroyed the concept of human specialness I would say I disagree quite strongly with the assertion that Darwin destroyed the specialness of humanity. For this relatively brief paper I am going to attempt to refute this claim and try to highlight some of the things that highlight how we have kept the same level of 'specialness' that we have always had. There are many people who would say that we humans are the only beings with full consciousness, in the words of a great many this would translate to having a soul.

Humans surely have a soul-like property, a mind, something that separates us from the multitudes of lower species from the smorgasbord of earthly life. It isn't my purpose for this paper to discuss whether or not we have a soul but I do intend to talk about what constitutes our mind, our selves. The fact that we as humans possess a high degree of consciousness to me spells a very special kind of existence.

Can even our nearest intelligent creatures on the tree of life appreciate the magnificence of life? Can a chimpanzee sit back and admire the beauty of the sprawling life in the jungle? Does he marvel at his own bodies ability to repair itself after he has been in a bloody brawl with a rival? Can a dolphin be awestruck by the morning sun glistening on the surface of the water? Does he wonder what life would be like for him if he were one of those surface beings he often sees on boats in the ocean?

Humans are extraordinary because, being the most advanced form of life on the planet, we possess brains larger than all other forms of life(save for some large mammals but even then ours are much bigger proportionally)

With this we have evolved two magnificent features which can only set us
<https://assignbuster.com/darwin-destroyed-the-concept-of-human-specialness/>

worlds apart from and ahead of all other life forms. We have this amazing sense of self, sense of awareness- in a word -consciousness. This grants us the capability of knowing who and what we are (to a large extent anyway), and where we came from (Darwin is owed some credit in this field).

It is the ability to see beauty in a sunset on a savannah, to hear the splendour in Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker, to read great works of literature and be able to travel the universe with our imaginations. The other great feature we have as a follow on from having large brains is the wonderful power of language. This splendid trait has gone hand in hand with consciousness to create the incredibly unique life form that homo sapiens has become. Our ability to understand the universe and our position in it is one of the glories of the human species.

Our ability to link mind to mind by language, and especially to transmit our thoughts across the centuries is another (Dawkins 2008 p3) Our advanced cultures have truly become magnificent phenomena. We have complex, yet highly virtuous systems of ethics and values. Largely stemming from our aforementioned large brains and the use of language we have self evolved to create ways of living that set us apart from all the rest of earthly creatures, both those alive today and all the previous inhabitants of the earth including ones from bygone eras.

Humanity is replete with themes of co-operation, love, compassion, altruism, sympathy for our fellow beings as well as for all other life forms. We have been capable of many such virtues for a long time, since we became human one could say. As John Eccles (1980 p204) reminds us, there are snippets of evidence that as far back as eighty thousand years ago Neanderthal man
<https://assignbuster.com/darwin-destroyed-the-concept-of-human-specialness/>

held ceremonial burials- a truly altruistic act. Or, as he also noted- the bones of two men dated from sixty thousand years ago which show they were incapacitated for up to two years yet they had been kept alive by caring tribes folk.

There is other evidence from as far back as this of the compassionate behaviour between members of humanity and we all know only too well of absolutely countless examples of it in recent history and of course in present day. For all modern mans shortcomings and problems in our societies, we have always been gifted with a great sense of right and wrong, of cruelty and kindness. With this majestic property that is consciousness comes the boundless faculty of thought. We are capable to reason, plan, remember to a limitless degree.

Technology today has become something we could never have imagined even one hundred years ago. We have invented the most ingenious and sophisticated equipment to be able to look inside our brains. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans and the more recent positron-emission topography (PET) scans are machines with wonderful capabilities for seeing goings on in the brain. We can monitor which parts of the brain are being used when we experience certain thoughts. We cannot however, as Ward highlights (2008 p147), even begin to monitor in advance what people are thinking.

Our thoughts are far and away more complex and profound than any other animals (or machine) can hope to have and, importantly, remain ours and ours only. If we try to look at the bigger picture, the macroscopic view of things, are we still special? When we gaze up into the night sky and <https://assignbuster.com/darwin-destroyed-the-concept-of-human-specialness/>

contemplate our place in the universe it is very easy to become overawed by the sheer scale of the cosmos and our relative minuteness in it. How can there be anything special about us when we are almost nothing in relation to the vast universe.

I believe it is not that we are in the universe but that we are the universe. "Far from exposing human beings as incidental products of blind physical forces, science suggests that the existence of conscious organisms is a fundamental feature of the universe" (Davies 1992 p21). As Davies alludes to here humanity is actually an intrinsic part of the universe and, whether or not there are other advanced conscious beings far out in space, we are or are part of the pinnacle of life, of nature, and of the cosmos.

If the universe is one giant living organism, a vast clockwork mechanism, a massive computer then we are its brain, its central cog, its CPU. I try to imagine the perspective of a person who would make a statement like the title for this essay. I can understand the point whereby humanity is seen as simply the result of a very long line of life adapting and developing or, to use the term elucidated and made famous by Darwin- evolution. Life is just mechanical, they might say they have learned from Darwin, it only instinctively drives to keep living.

What's so special about what is simply the as yet highest point of this unconscious, robotic like endeavour in nature. Are we more special than the animals below us on the food chain, or before us in eras like the dinosaurs. Was even the earliest amoeba not as special as us given its importance in the chain of events? This viewpoint, while largely correct in its facts and

assumptions, doesn't give any credence to what homo sapiens has become since he has evolved from the ape.

Hopefully this paper has made some of a case as to why the two legged big brained organisms that we are have a deep specialness to them.

Bibliography Davies, Paul. 1992. THE MIND OF GOD. London: Penguin Books

Dawkins, Richard. 2008. MODERN SCIENCE WRITING. Oxford: Oxford

University Press Eccles, John C.. 1980. THE HUMAN PSYCHE. Berlin:

Routledge Ward, Keith. 2008. The Big Questions in Science and Religion.

Pennsylvania: Templeton Foundation Press