

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

# SCIENCE NEWS

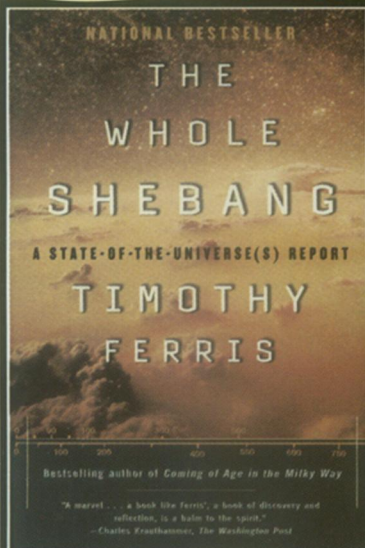
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Ferris provides a lucid, nontechnical overview of current research and a forecast of where cosmological theory is likely to go in the 21st century. A master analogist, he presents accessible explanations of relativity and quantum physics, “inflationary” models indicating that the universe is much

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The contending theories of human evolution hold a special fascination for those who question the origin of human nature. In this book, prominent paleobiologist Steven M. Stanley proposes a bold new theory to answer the classic chicken-or-egg question of human evolution: Which came first, our bipedalism or the unprecedented size of our brain?

With insight and remarkable common sense, Stanley argues that the confluence of environmental factors and developmental imperatives is the key to the mysteriously swift evolution from *Australopithecus* to *Homo* 2.5 million years ago. While the human brain is one of the most remarkable achievements of evolution, Stanley shows that it is intimately tied to our species' slow maturation and “postnatal helplessness,” which requires extremely attentive parenting, particularly constant lifting and carrying of infants. This trade-off, which Stanley calls a “great evolutionary compromise,” indicates that no tree-dwelling species could develop large brains. But if abandoning the trees was an evolutionary requisite for large brains, what can explain why our ancestors would choose the dangerous, grassy terrain of Africa? A catastrophic change in the global climate is the answer Stanley unfolds in this anthropological detective story.

Gracefully written and provocative in its hypothesis, *Children of the Ice Age* puts Steven M. Stanley in the mainstream of a popular scientific debate—one that holds urgent lessons for today.

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