Evolution

Human Body

Georgia N. Coober*
University of Colorado Boulder, Regent Drive at Broadway, Boulder, CO 80309-0017, USA
*: All correspondence should be sent to: Dr. Georgia N. Coober.
Author's Contact: Georgia N. Coober, Ph.D., E-mail: gncoober1@hotmail.com
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BEFORE consciousness learned to ask questions,
before language learned to carve meaning into sound,
before history, memory, grief, joy, or desire—
there was only a cluster of dividing cells
spiraling into form.
Human body,
you began as a single fertilized zygote—
one cell,
one nucleus,
one genome curled like a secret
waiting to be read.
From that origin,
your story unfolds.
Two hundred types of cells will bloom from you:
neurons stretching like galaxies of thought,
epithelial walls sealing the borders of organs,
erythrocytes carrying oxygen with hemoglobin's
iron-red grace,
muscle fibers twining into ropes of strength.
Human body,
you are multiplicity born from unity.
Mitotic divisions create the early embryo,
gastrulation folds it into three primary layers—
ectoderm, mesoderm, endoderm—
the holy trinity of development
from which all else emerges.
Ectoderm becomes the nervous system,
the brain,
your most intricate creation.
It also forms the skin—
that shield of keratinized vigilance.
Mesoderm becomes the heart,
bones,

muscles,
kidneys,
blood—
the moving machinery of being alive.
Endoderm becomes the gut,
lungs,
liver,
endocrine glands—
the inner chambers of metabolism.
From these layers,
you rise into complexity.
Your heart,
a muscular pump the size of a clenched fist,
begins beating around week four of embryonic life—
and it will not rest
until your final breath.
It beats 100,000 times per day.
It pushes 7,000 liters of blood
through 60,000 miles of vessels—
a red river system
connecting every corner of your being.
Arteries branch like ancient trees.
Veins return like tributaries.
Capillaries narrow to single-cell lanes
where erythrocytes bend
just to pass through.
Human body,
you circulate life with each beat.
Your lungs unfold into five lobes—
spongy orchards of alveoli
numbering in the hundreds of millions.
Each alveolus a chamber
where physics meets biology,
where oxygen diffuses into blood
down its concentration gradient,
and carbon dioxide escapes
to be exhaled into the world.
Your breath is an unconscious metronome,
timed by the medulla,
modulated by chemoreceptors,
adjusted by need—
slow in sleep,
rapid in fear,
steady in thought.
Your digestive tract,
nine meters long,
unwinds like a muscular river
from mouth to anus.
In the mouth,
salivary amylase tastes starch.
In the stomach,
parietal cells secrete acid
strong enough to dissolve bone
yet gentle enough
when protected by mucus
to spare its own walls.
The small intestine—
duodenum, jejunum, ileum—

absorbs the universe into you:
glucose, amino acids, fatty acids, vitamins.
The liver processes them,
the pancreas orchestrates enzymes and hormones,
the large intestine retrieves water
and cultivates a microbiome
that outnumbers your own cells.
Human body,
you are an ecosystem within an organism.
Your skeleton,
206 bones in adulthood,
is no lifeless scaffold—
it is living tissue,
mineral and collagen intertwined,
marrow-filled,
blood-feeding,
constantly remodeling
through osteoblasts and osteoclasts
in a dance of deposition and removal.
Your joints articulate motion:
hinge, pivot, ball-and-socket,
gliding, saddle, condylar—
each shaped by evolution
for walking, reaching, grasping,
running, holding, creating.
Muscles—
cardiac, skeletal, smooth—
contract through the sliding filament model,
actin and myosin pulling
like oars in a microscopic rowboat.
Through them,
you lift, breathe, speak, laugh,
blink, swallow, dance,
and reach for things
both physical and metaphysical.
Human body,
you are biomechanics wrapped in biology.
Your kidneys filter 180 liters of plasma daily,
distilling it into a liter or two of urine—
a molecular census
of everything you are and consume.
Nephrons—
a million per kidney—
use pressure, pumps, gradients,
and hormonal guidance
to maintain homeostasis.
Human body,
you balance water, salt, pH, pressure
with quiet precision.
Your endocrine system releases hormones—
chemical messengers like whispered instructions—
from glands that sit like jewels
throughout your body:
thyroid, adrenal, pituitary, pancreas, gonads.
They regulate growth, stress, metabolism,
reproduction, temperature, emotion.
Cortisol rises with morning urgency.
Melatonin settles you into night.

Insulin greets every meal
like a careful accountant
adjusting glucose ledgers.
Your immune system patrols ceaselessly—
innate and adaptive branches intertwined.
Macrophages engulf invaders.
Neutrophils rush first.
NK cells detect distress.
Dendritic cells present antigens
like briefings before battle.
T cells coordinate, remember, attack.
B cells secrete antibodies—
proteins shaped with exquisite specificity
to recognize what does not belong.
Human body,
you defend yourself
with microscopic armies.
And then there is the nervous system—
a network of extraordinary delicacy.
Eighty-six billion neurons
in the brain alone,
each forming thousands of synapses.
Action potentials race along axons
at speeds up to 120 meters per second.
Neurotransmitters—
dopamine, serotonin, glutamate, GABA—
ferry signals
across synaptic clefts
nanometers wide.
Your cerebral cortex folds into gyri and sulci
to maximize surface area,
storing memory, language, logic, imagination.
Your limbic system shapes emotion.
Your cerebellum grants precision.
Your brainstem maintains survival.
Human body,
you generate mind from matter.
Your senses collect data
every moment:
photons striking retinas,
sound waves vibrating cochlear hair cells,
chemicals binding to olfactory receptors,
pressure deforming mechanoreceptors
along skin and fascia.
You build reality
from electrical impulses
and interpret the world
with astonishing speed.
But you are not only structures and signals.
You are movement, aging, regeneration.
Each day,
you recycle millions of cells.
Intestinal lining renews every week.
Skin sheds constantly.
Red blood cells live only 120 days
before being dismantled in the spleen.
Yet neurons—
some last a lifetime.

Human body,
you are a mosaic of the fleeting and the enduring.
Your genome—
3.2 billion base pairs of A, T, G, C—
resides in nearly every cell,
folded into 23 pairs of chromosomes.
Genes encode proteins;
proteins perform everything
from catalysis to structure
to signaling to repair.
Epigenetic marks remember experience.
Mitochondria power you
with ATP forged in oxidative phosphorylation.
Human body,
you are chemistry arranged into consciousness.
From the outside,
you are symmetry broken just enough
to be interesting:
a heart slightly left,
a liver slightly right,
lungs asymmetrical,
neural pathways crossing.
From the inside,
you are rhythm and regulation—
circadian cycles, hunger cues,
temperature control,
feedback loops,
homeostatic harmonies.
And despite your complexity,
you remain fragile.
You bruise, scar, age, ache.
You heal, adapt, persist, endure.
Human body,
you are resilience shaped by biology.
Every breath,
every heartbeat,
every synaptic spark
is part of an ancient lineage
stretching back to the first life on Earth.
You are not separate from nature—
you are one of its most intricate expressions.
Human body,
you are evolution's orchestra,
biochemistry's triumph,
physics given purpose,
matter becoming meaning.
And though this poem ends,
your story continues—
in movement, in memory, in perception,
in the simple fact
that every cell within you
is still working,
still dividing,
still signaling,
still striving
to keep you alive.
You are a universe
contained within skin.

A billion processes
coordinated into one existence.
Human body—
you are science
that breathes.
You are biology
that dreams.
You are life
learning to understand itself.■

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