THE TEACHER TAUGHT? WHAT CHARLES DARWIN OWED TO JOHN LUBBOCK

by

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The period around the publication of John Lubbock’s Origin of civilisation in 1870 and Charles Darwin’s Descent of man and selection in relation to sex the following year is key to a re-evaluation of the relationship between the two men, usually characterized as that of pupil and master. It is in the making of Descent that Lubbock’s role as a scientific collaborator is most easily discerned, a role best understood within the social and political context of the time. Lubbock made Darwin—both the man and his science—acceptable and respectable. Less obvious is Darwin’s conscious cultivation of Lubbock’s patronage in both his private and public life, and Lubbock’s equally conscious bestowal, culminating in his role in Darwin’s burial in Westminster Abbey.

Keywords: John Lubbock; Charles Darwin; scientific collaboration

‘MY DEAR MASTER’: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOHN LUBBOCK AND CHARLES DARWIN

On 21 April 1882, less than 48 hours after Charles Darwin died, and without consulting Darwin’s family, John Lubbock (the future 1st Baron Avebury) organized a petition from Members of Parliament to the Dean of Westminster, asking that the man who had been among his ‘kindest and best friends’ be buried, not in their home village of Down (now Downe), Kent, as Darwin had intended, but in Westminster Abbey.1 Lubbock’s part in Darwin’s funeral, like the part he played in Darwin’s life, involved a complex network of social and political patronage and a sound sense of strategy, and was played out against the background of a difficult relationship with Darwin’s children, alongside whom he had grown up. Lubbock acted in concert with William Spottiswoode, President of the Royal Society, and Darwin’s cousin Francis Galton; together they represent a web of power that spanned science, wealth, and political and social influence. Galton and Spottiswoode had worked together as honorary secretaries of the Royal Geographical Society; Lubbock and Spottiswoode were both members of the X Club, a small and influential group united by their friendship with and support for Darwin, and all three men had been involved in the recreation of the Ethnological Society as a pro-Darwinian forum for debate on human

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origins. Their rapid action after Darwin’s death suggests that they had discussed in advance, if not actually planned for, the possibility of burial in the Abbey: Spottiswoode immediately sent a telegram to Darwin’s sons making the initial suggestion and wrote to the Dean of Westminster, and Galton added his support from the perspective of a family insider, but it was Lubbock who took the necessary practical steps. As a Member of Parliament for most of the previous decade, he would have known of the recent debates in the House of Commons on the relationship between the Dean of Westminster and Parliament, and been well aware that although it was the Dean and Chapter who gave formal permission, no burial as controversial as Darwin’s threatened to be could take place in the Abbey without overt political support.

News of Darwin’s death had spread rapidly through the metropolitan scientific network, and first reached Lubbock on the following evening as he attended a meeting of the Linnean Society. It was only after he had organized the petition, by which time the decision about the burial had effectively been taken out of their hands, that he heard directly from Darwin’s family. Francis Darwin, at his mother’s anxious insistence, wrote a little guiltily to assure Lubbock that the ‘affectionate regard’ in which he held their father had not been ‘in any way forgotten’, and that, outside the immediate family, only Joseph Hooker and Thomas Henry Huxley had been higher up the list of those personally informed. In his own letters to Francis and William Darwin, Lubbock diplomatically expressed personal sympathy for their wish to have Darwin buried at Down, but was adamant that from ‘a National point of view’ burial at Westminster was ‘clearly right’.

It was in one of those letters that Lubbock described Darwin as his ‘dear master’, and this characterization of the relationship between the two men has remained largely unchallenged. Lubbock shares with John Stevens Henslow and Thomas Henry Huxley the dubious distinction of having his name demoted below that of Darwin in accounts of his own life: as Henslow is characterized as Darwin’s mentor, and Huxley as his bulldog, Lubbock has become his pupil or his apprentice. The difference in age between the two men—Lubbock was 8 years old when the 34-year-old Darwin moved in as a neighbour—and the sheer weight of Darwin’s reputation means Lubbock has been cast as the natural beneficiary of the relationship. Yet there are few other people whose company Darwin so actively sought out, and although their frequent meetings leave inevitable gaps in the documentary record, Lubbock deserves to be better remembered for his wide-ranging contribution to the Darwinian enterprise.

**‘Meet we must …’: The Lubbock—Darwin Correspondence**

For a man active in so many fields, Lubbock left little in the way of personal record. His friend and first biographer, Horace Hutchinson, commented that Lord Avebury ‘was not
of those who reveal the inner self intimately in their letters,’ and Lubbock’s diary entries are sporadic and often laconic, verging on telegraphic. In this light the warmth of the 68 surviving letters that Lubbock sent to Darwin is all the more remarkable, and the total of 170 letters in their correspondence is a large number considering that the two men lived as close neighbours for most of their lives. Lubbock moved entirely away from his family home for only four years, from 1861 until his father’s death brought him back as master of the house in 1865; and although he spent more time in London after his election to Parliament in 1870, he was nevertheless in Down for considerable periods each year, and frequently returned to host weekend house parties.

As was his practice with all who came within his orbit, Darwin made constant requests of Lubbock: he asked for loans of books and equipment and for help in tracking down references; he bombarded Lubbock with questions about his own areas of expertise; and he not infrequently suggested lines of enquiry for Lubbock to pursue that were of particular relevance to his own agenda. The tenor of their correspondence is far from one-sided, however: for every letter from Darwin suggesting a particular reference, or asking for examples to support an argument, there is a similar one from Lubbock; for every letter from Lubbock thanking Darwin for lending something, there is one from Darwin doing the same.

The most striking feature of the correspondence is how much of it is to do with arrangements to meet. Almost every letter, on both sides, requests a meeting or regrets not being able to meet more often. Lubbock described a talk with Darwin as like ‘sea air’ and reminisced about their habitual Sunday visits. ‘It is a long time since we have met,’ Darwin wrote to Lubbock in 1867, and, he continued, ‘if Mahomet does not come to the mountain, the mountain must come some Sunday to Mahomet.’ Although these meetings leave far more of their personal interaction undocumented than are, for example, Darwin’s discussions with Joseph Dalton Hooker, which were most commonly pursued in letters, the fact of the meetings, and the clear importance that Darwin placed on them, deserves to be considered in any assessment of Lubbock’s contribution to Darwin’s work.

‘EVERY SPECIES IS A LINK…’: LUBBOCK’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO ORIGIN

John Lubbock’s significant contribution to Darwin’s published work cannot be in doubt. Two citations in the first edition of Origin in 1859, when Lubbock was only 25 years old, became eight by the fourth edition of 1866.

Between 1853 and 1858, the years immediately preceding the publication of Origin, Lubbock was publishing far faster than Darwin—14 significant papers compared with, at a generous count, 6 for Darwin—and was rapidly establishing himself as a naturalist in his own right. Although one of the references to Lubbock in the first edition of Origin is a straightforward recognition for the drawings he had made from Darwin’s dissections of driver ants, Lubbock’s published work on the degree of variation in insects, in particular the unexpectedly wide variation in the nervous system in scale insects, gave Darwin valuable ammunition against those who argued that variation operated only within limits too narrow to allow natural selection to operate.

By the time of the third edition of Origin in April 1861, Darwin was able to include a reference to a case of significant secondary sexual differences published by Lubbock the previous year. ‘It is a remarkable fact’, Darwin wrote, ‘that the secondary sexual differences
between the two sexes of the same species are generally displayed in the very same parts of the
organization in which the different species of the same genus differ from each other’, an
observation he believed was confirmed by Lubbock’s work on marine copepods.18

From the third edition of Origin onwards, Darwin was also able to quote Lubbock in a
crucial counter-attack to the argument that no intermediate forms between allied species
had been discovered. He quoted just a single sentence: ‘Every species is a link between
other allied forms’, but the point was a significant one. Lubbock had first used the phrase
in the same Linnean Society paper, where it formed part of several cogently argued
paragraphs on the structure and development of a particular group of crustaceans.19 Its
real utility to Darwin lay more in what Lubbock went on to do with the argument than in
his own inclusion of it in successive editions of Origin. Lubbock incorporated the whole
discussion into a new chapter on the Quaternary mammals inserted into the second
edition of his Pre-historic times, which appeared in 1869, removing any reference to a
specific organism and making instead a general argument about species and varieties:

Opponents of Mr Darwin’s theory often ask with misplaced triumph for the links
connecting any two species. In fact, however, every species is a link between other
allied forms... as long as any varieties remain undescribed there will be intervals—
indicating however, gaps not in nature, but in our knowledge. Moreover, it is admitted
by every one that there are variable species, that is to say, species which present two
or more extreme forms, with intermediate gradations. Now we may fairly ask those
who assert that no two species are connected by links, how they would separate the
instances of variable animals... from the case which they say does not exist.20

Pre-historic times, first published in 1865,21 was an exceptionally successful popular
book and remained the foremost textbook on human prehistory up to World War I.22 The
inclusion of Lubbock’s ‘missing link’ argument into later editions embedded that
argument, and with it the application of Darwinian ideas to humans, into popular
consciousness in a way that Origin itself did not.

‘YOU HAVE LAID WILLIAM & MYSELF UNDER AN ENDURING OBLIGATION’:
LUBBOCK AS PATRON

In the weeks immediately after the publication of the first edition of Origin in November
1859, Darwin wrote to John Lubbock not once but twice, impatient to have his verdict on
the book and to enlist his support: ‘Have you finished it?’, he demanded, ‘if so pray tell
me whether you are with me on general issue, or against me’;23 ‘I have, I hope I may say
we have’, he continued with subtle flattery, ‘a fair number of excellent men on our side
of question on mutability of species’ (Darwin’s emphasis). ‘I care not for Reviews’, he
wrote in another letter, ‘but for the opinion of men like you & Hooker & Huxley &
Lyell.’24 Despite Lubbock’s publication record, he was still only 25 years old with no
formal scientific role, and it may seem incongruous to include him in this list alongside a
professional botanist, an established zoologist and the foremost geologist of the time, but
Darwin’s recruitment of Lubbock to his circle of supporters was no accident; nor was it
simply sentimentality for the young man whose interest in natural history he had fostered.

Ask anyone today to construct a mental map of the social and cultural forces at work in
the village of Down in Darwin’s time, and they will probably picture his house, Down
House, as the equivalent of a gas giant, distorting the gravitational field so that everything else revolved around it. But that was not the contemporary perception. It was the Lubbocks’ country seat of High Elms, which, if not a gas giant, was at least a pretty respectable white dwarf: theirs was the local great house, and the Darwins were very much its satellites. Darwin family letters and diaries show that Emma and Charles Darwin and their children attended annual balls and other formal social occasions at High Elms, and although the Darwins often initiated local philanthropic undertakings, such as the establishment of the free school and a reading room for working men, it was the Lubbock name that carried weight.

Darwin was nothing if not quick to take advantage of any resources that came to hand, and the Lubbock family, long before John Lubbock became useful as a fellow scientist, already represented a valuable resource. Lubbock’s father, John William Lubbock, 3rd baronet, was a Fellow of the Royal Society and the head of a wealthy banking family; ‘The great Astronomer’, as Darwin described him on first moving to Down. He told his sister of Lubbock’s 3000 acres and grand house: ‘he is’, Darwin continued, ‘very reserved & shy & proud or fine—so I suspect he will be no catch, & will never honour us’; by 1856 Darwin was soliciting Sir John’s intervention on Thomas Henry Huxley’s behalf to help Huxley secure an appointment at the University of London.

John Lubbock was consulted for investment advice, and both Lubbocks were drafted in to help launch Darwin’s eldest child, William, on a banking career. Darwin’s last surviving letter to the younger Lubbock, written just days before his death, was to introduce him to Romilly Allen, one of Emma Darwin’s cousins, and to ask Lubbock to help establish Allen in an archaeological career. John Lubbock’s social standing, as much as his scientific abilities, meant that his voice carried disproportionate weight when he spoke in Darwin’s support: at the British Association meeting in Oxford in 1860; when he proposed Darwin for the Royal Society’s Copley Medal in 1862 and 1863; when he petitioned Parliament on Darwin’s behalf; or when he acted as joint owner and editor of the Natural History Review, and then of the Reader. In all of these capacities, he was actively engaged in promoting Darwin’s ideas, not just as a member of the scientific elite but also as a member of the establishment with superior social standing. And although Darwin might decry Lubbock’s election as MP for Maidstone in 1870 as a loss to science, he was extremely quick to take advantage of this new route to the reins of power. Within months, Lubbock was arguing in Parliament, albeit unsuccessfully, on Darwin’s behalf for a question about cousin marriage to be introduced into the 1871 census.

This was not always a comfortable aspect to their relationship, and Lubbock’s exercise of his social position within village and parish was not necessarily welcome. The Darwins took an active part in parish affairs: Emma and their daughter, Henrietta, taught in Sunday school, and Charles was treasurer for parish charities and the church organ fund; they were on friendly terms with John Brodie Innes, vicar of Down until 1868, but his successor, George Sketchley Ffinden (referred to privately by Emma Darwin as ‘the Ffiend’), was at best coldly disapproving of his famous parishioner and at worst actively hostile. In 1875 Lubbock felt it his duty to intervene in a dispute over the local School Board, suggesting delicately that Darwin had inadvertently slighted Ffinden, but Darwin coldly refused to apologize: ‘if Mr. Ffinden bows to Mrs. Darwin or myself’, he wrote, ‘we will return it; but I fear under present circumstances that we can take no further step’, signing off with unusual formality, ‘My dear Sir John, yours sincerely’. Relations with Ffinden never improved, but by this period the nature of the friendship between Darwin and Lubbock...
was being tested by a series of altered circumstances, not least the changing relationship between Lubbock and Darwin’s now adult children.

‘OUR FATHER’S SECOND SON’: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOHN LUBBOCK AND DARWIN’S CHILDREN

Lubbock was five years older than the Darwins’ eldest child, William, and showed an early aptitude for natural history. Within a few months of moving to Down in 1842, Darwin had made friends with Lubbock’s mother and with the Lubbock children she was educating at home; Lubbock became a ‘sort of pupil’ of Darwin’s, and by the time he left Eton at the age of 14 years it was Darwin who arranged for him to have a microscope of his own.31 Darwin’s continuing fondness for Lubbock as he grew to adulthood is patent from their letters. In 1872 Darwin asked Lubbock to visit him but was fretful that the state of his health might make him bad company: ‘I cannot bear’, he wrote, ‘that you sh’d. think me indifferent of your friendship. . . . Whether I see you or not, I hope you will believe in my sincere attachment.’32

Just two years later in April 1874, Darwin asked Lubbock to sell him a piece of land adjoining the grounds of Down House. The land included Darwin’s favourite ‘thinking path’—the sandwalk around a spinney where he took his habitual stroll—that up to then he had rented from the Lubbocks on a 21-year lease. In his reminiscences of his father, Francis Darwin credited the incident with permanently damaging the relationship between the two men, which he described as ‘melancholy’ in later years. His father was, he said, ‘much grieved at Sir John making such a remarkably good bargain out of the Sandwalk’.33

At first sight this seems persuasive. Later in the same year, when Darwin was seeking to have a bill regulating vivisection introduced to Parliament, he turned not to Lubbock but to Lord Derby to introduce it to the House, and there are far fewer surviving letters between them after this date than before. However, contemporary evidence suggests that Francis Darwin’s memory had misled him about the importance of the land transaction. Although both Darwin and Lubbock had some cause to feel a little aggrieved—Lubbock because he felt pressured to sell land that formed part of the inheritance settled on his son, and Darwin because Lubbock turned the matter of valuation over to an agent and stuck by that price—any really bad feeling between the two was short-lived. Immediately after the sale had been concluded, Darwin was in touch with Lubbock, asking for his signature on a petition to support the Zoological Station at Naples;34 and although in July Emma Darwin described Lubbock’s demeanour on a visit being ‘not quite as usual’,35 by September Darwin was contributing his own notes for use in Lubbock’s British wild flowers,36 and Emma was able to express the hope that his ‘old friendly feeling’ would ‘a good deal return’.37 In the same letter, Emma wrote of their growing concerns over the state of Lady Lubbock’s health, and it may have been as much the Darwins’ intervention over this as the sandwalk purchase that caused constraint between the neighbours. Both Emma and Charles Darwin were extremely close to Ellen Lubbock, who had been ill for some years after a train accident. By October 1874 they believed that her health was ‘failing in a way to cause great uneasiness’,38 and by December Darwin was sufficiently alarmed that he discussed what could be done with another friend who had also tried to intervene, and wrote directly to John Tyndall, urging him to do what he could to influence Ellen Lubbock to consult a different doctor.39
Francis’s recollections are, however, evidence of the tensions between Lubbock and Darwin’s children: ‘I am afraid’, he admitted, ‘our feeling to Sir John did not tend to keep warm my father’s feeling, we didn’t get on very well … Lady Lubbock the younger used in enthusiasm to call my father Sir John’s 2nd father, and we used to parody this by calling Sir John our second brother.’

It takes little imagination to see the jealousies that could emerge between the children of a famous father into whose lives a clever and favoured older boy was introduced, a boy who had shared in their father’s experimental work, and contributed to his most iconic publication, while they were all too young. Add to that the fact that when William Darwin was struggling at Cambridge, Darwin, worried for his future, turned for advice to the very same young man—only five years older than William—to set him up with a career as a junior member of his own profession of banking, and it would be more surprising if the young Darwins had not resented Lubbock. That ill feeling, however, pre-dates the sandwalk incident: as early as 1869 Darwin’s daughter, Henrietta, writing to one of her brothers about another member of the Lubbock family, asked if he, ‘like all the other Lubbocks’, was resolved to have nothing to do with them; and Emma remarked more than once on her children’s lack of enthusiasm for their visits to High Elms.

The professional relationship between Darwin and Lubbock was also maturing and altering by this date. By the time that Darwin’s *Descent of man and selection in relation to sex* appeared in 1871, Lubbock had beaten Darwin into print in the field of human behaviour and human evolutionary history, not just with *Pre-historic times* but with *The origin of civilisation and the primitive condition of man*.

The appearance of Lubbock’s *Origin of civilisation* in 1870, just as Darwin was finishing *Descent*, further upset the most famous upset stomach of the nineteenth century: ‘I have read 4 or 5 Chapters with extreme interest, too much interest for the good of my internal viscera. … I shall be able & must modify what I have written.’ The resulting index entry for Lubbock in *Descent* is among the longest in the book.

Both *Pre-historic times* and *Origin of civilisation* were direct responses to Darwin’s *Origin*: part homage, part extrapolation. Whereas *On the origin of species* was an exhaustive survey of the evidence of variation within and relationship between every species except humans, leaving it almost to the last page to suggest that ‘light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history’, Lubbock concluded exhaustive surveys of the habits of human populations, both modern and in the fossil record, by putting the human species in a wider evolutionary perspective: *Pre-historic times* ends with a section on ‘Natural Selection applied to man’ and *Origin of civilisation* with ‘Development of the individual, and that of the species’.

*Origin of civilisation* was based on several unrelated lectures, many of them popular ones, given partly in response to George Douglas Campbell, Duke of Argyll’s *Reign of law*, and *Primeval man*. Moreover, one of its principal aims was to refute Campbell’s hypothesis that ‘primitive’ societies were the result of degeneration from a natural state of civilization. Darwin used Lubbock’s counter-argument in *Descent*, and also, crucially, referred to Lubbock for evidence of the unity of the human species, and for a much longer timescale for human history than previously accepted. Less obviously, but
no less significantly, Lubbock succeeded in framing human descent from ape-like ancestors in such a way that he was able to present an optimistic view of the perfectibility of humans, and of religion as a natural concomitant of civilization, in a way that Darwin never could—valuable propaganda that made broadly Darwinian ideas far more widely palatable.50

In writing *Descent*, Darwin followed his usual practice, and mined his old notes, going right back to Lubbock’s 1853 paper on the marine copepod *Labidocera*.51 He wrote a note on the paper’s usefulness for sexual selection,52 and went back to Lubbock with new questions, giving as a personal communication from Lubbock some further information on adaptations to the antennae and legs in the males and their use in mating.53

There are footnotes in *Descent* citing Lubbock on the development of language, an area that Darwin found particularly tricky, and on religion, for Lubbock had pointed out before Darwin that many groups of humans do not have clear religious beliefs.54 Lubbock had also provided information on suicide in savages in response to a specific query from Darwin.55 Some examples of human behaviour that Darwin owed to his reading of *Origin of civilisation* were clearly tacked on to discussions in *Descent* at a late stage, for example on personal ornamentation in primitive cultures.56

It seems what principally gave Darwin his upset stomach was Lubbock’s argument that early human societies had been uniformly promiscuous, a conclusion that Darwin struggled to reconcile with his case for the role of sexual selection in the origins of racial difference. Widespread promiscuity was top of Darwin’s list of factors that would inhibit the action of sexual selection, and he discussed the evidence brought forward by Lubbock, John Ferguson McLennan and Lewis Henry Morgan at length.57 When Darwin first studied Lubbock’s evidence for promiscuity in early humans in July 1870, he wrote a note in the margin of his copy of *Origin of civilisation* that it was not strong.58 All except the last chapter of *Descent* was sent to the printers shortly afterwards, in early August,59 and there Darwin argued that, by analogy with several species of great ape, some kind of mate choice in early humans was likely.60 In September 1870, on reading the published version of Lubbock’s address to the working men of Liverpool, which contained a restatement of Lubbock’s argument and more references to Morgan,61 Darwin tempered his position, conceding now that the evidence was ‘very strong almost overwhelmingly strong for communal marriage’; but by then *Descent* was already in proof. Lubbock was unconvinced by the analogy with apes: ‘What monkey ever watched over the conduct of a daughter?’ he protested, ‘or scrupled to carry off another’s wife?’62

Lubbock had been elected a Member of Parliament in February 1870, limiting opportunities for detailed discussion between the two men, but some related discussion had certainly taken place in the early stages of the writing of both their books. In 1867 Lubbock had asked Darwin for any evidence he could supply that might suggest a natural antipathy to close inbreeding, and had in return introduced Darwin to McLennan’s work, and to his own concept of ‘exogamy’, which saw the origins of monogamous relationships in the exclusive ownership by a man of the women he captured from other tribes.63

A closer examination of the text of *Descent* and of the correspondence suggests that much of Lubbock’s and Darwin’s shared thinking on the most fundamental questions concerning human origins may in fact have been arrived at through discussion. As Graham Richards noted,64 there is a striking similarity between Darwin’s conclusions in *Descent* about the geographical origins of the human species, and a passage previously published by
Lubbock in *Pre-historic times*. ‘It is . . . probable’, Darwin wrote, ‘that Africa was formerly inhabited by extinct apes closely allied to the gorilla and chimpanzee; and as these two species are now man’s nearest allies, it is somewhat more probable that our early progenitors lived on the African continent than elsewhere’.65 This echoed Lubbock, who six years earlier in *Pre-historic times* had written that ‘our nearest relatives in the animal kingdom are confined to hot, almost to tropical climates, and it is in such countries that we must look for the earliest traces of the human race.’66

The most likely explanation for the similarity is that Darwin had habitually discussed human evolutionary history with Lubbock and that the results of those discussions are throughout *Descent* but unacknowledged. It is unlikely that Darwin had simply failed to give proper attribution to Lubbock’s published work: Lubbock’s very public earlier dispute with Charles Lyell over what Lubbock believed to be inadequate citation of his own work in Lyell’s *Antiquity of man* suggests that he would not have let such an omission go unchallenged, however eminent the colleague, and the same dispute had left Darwin with a horror of committing unwitting plagiarism.67 In a robust response to *Descent*, Lubbock pointed out that Darwin could have cited a paper of his on variation in muscles, but makes no mention of the arguments on human origins.68

The genesis of the idea seems to pre-date either publication, and it is likely that neither man could claim sole ownership. In February 1862, in a letter to Charles Kingsley, Darwin wrote, ‘Man is clearly an old-world, not an American, species’, and that he would expect any intermediate forms between him and ‘unknown Quadrumana’ to be found in ‘Tropical countries, probably islands’.69 In the month surrounding that letter to Kingsley, Darwin and Lubbock exchanged no fewer than six letters and met at least twice, and the meetings were at Darwin’s insistence: ‘It is an age since we met’, he wrote, ‘and I should much enjoy seeing you. I would come over any day to your luncheon.... Or how would it suit you to come and sleep here.... Meet we must.’70 Such instances suggest that there may be scope for exploring Darwin’s published work, not just for the unattributed but for the unattributable, for collaborative work with Lubbock and with others.

Collaboration with Lubbock goes back to the period before the publication of *Origin*, with Darwin as early as 1857 writing to thank Lubbock for saving him from a ‘disgraceful blunder’ in some statistical work on variation;71 and despite Darwin’s letters asking for Lubbock’s reaction to *Origin*, it is unlikely that he was really in doubt about Lubbock’s overall position. Everything that Lubbock went on to publish assumes speciation by natural selection as a starting point, and we know from Lubbock’s diary that, even if he did not know the precise mechanism that Darwin was proposing, he was a convert to the general principle. As early as 1853 he described a conversation among the young men of a house party, ‘when the ladies were gone to bed’, on the ‘mutability of species’: ‘I believe we all agreed’, he wrote, ‘that it seemed probable they might change into one another.’72 It is inconceivable that he could have adopted such a view without having discussed it with Darwin. They commented on one another’s published and unpublished work, and they helped one another build networks: Darwin may have introduced Lubbock to Ernst Haeckel, but it was Lubbock who introduced Darwin to Herbert Spencer.73

By the time of the fourth edition of *Origin* in 1866, Darwin felt confident enough of both his understanding of Lubbock’s views, and the weight of Lubbock’s reputation, to use his name alone, without reference to any published work, to counter some inconvenient arguments of Fritz Müller on embryology and on the origin of larval stages in insects.74
Despite their changing relationship from the early 1870s onwards, Lubbock continued to be active on Darwin’s behalf, and Darwin continued to seek his assistance. Lubbock used the many speeches he made in his capacities of both politician and scientist to promote Darwin and Darwinism, and was the conduit again and again for petitions to Parliament seeking pensions for one scientific colleague or another, or to protect Darwin’s beloved postal service, or for government money for projects that Darwin supported, such as James Torbitt’s research into potato blight. Even in the case of the bill on vivisection, a closer examination of the wider correspondence reveals that Lubbock was, and remained, closely involved in advising on both its content and the strategy for presenting it, and that it was a tactical decision to use Derby rather than Lubbock to present it to Parliament. Lubbock continued to go to some lengths to introduce Darwin to Establishment figures, including in 1875 a member of the royal family in the person of Francis, Duke of Teck, husband of Princess Mary Adelaide, and in 1877 to William Gladstone, the former Prime Minister. These were not casual acts—the meeting with the Duke of Teck took months to set up. When Darwin tried to slide out of the original arrangement and move the meeting to High Elms, worried that he could not get ‘a sort of living Royal Duke’ out of the house if he got tired, Lubbock kept him gently but firmly to the mark, replying that ‘it would seem hardly courteous to the Duke not to ask him down.’ Although Darwin might in private poke fun at the aristocracy, he was fully alive to the importance of being accepted by the world they represented, and actively cultivated others, such as Lady Dorothy Nevill, and Lord and Lady Derby.

Darwin’s willingness to maintain his relationship with Lubbock in the teeth of his family’s resistance is proof of its importance to him. And maintain it he did. Scientifically, the two men continued to collaborate, as is demonstrated by a detailed letter from Darwin to Lubbock dated April 1881, which followed a discussion they had just had on botanical experiments. When, towards the end of his life, Darwin found himself in reminiscent mood, he used a piece of cheap lined exercise paper to scribble a long and impulsive note on the changes he had seen in the world of science, to his neighbour, collaborator, and friend—John Lubbock.

**CONCLUSION**

John Lubbock has a claim to be remembered as not merely a contributor but also a collaborator in Darwin’s work: beyond the citations of his publications, the lending of books and the provision of references, and beyond even the reading of manuscripts, there is evidence to suggest that he engaged on an equal footing in substantive discussions of the wider implications of Darwin’s theories, in particular for human development. Moreover, he was a major player in a 40-year agenda that embedded Darwin and Darwinism firmly into both popular consciousness and the Establishment. Lubbock’s roles as scientific colleague, able popularizer and grand strategist were of sufficient importance to both men that they maintained their friendship in the face of increasing hostility from Darwin’s own children. It is one of the ironies of the nature of the evidence that those, like Lubbock, who were the closest members of Darwin’s circle, and probably contributed the most, have become the least visible.
What Darwin owed to Lubbock

Notes


3 For the records of contemporary discussion in the House of Commons on the role of Westminster Abbey burials and monuments in national life, see http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1879/aug/08/the-proposed-monument-to-prince-louis#S3V0249P0_18790808_HOC_104.

4 Letter from F. Darwin to J. Lubbock, n.d., CUL MS DAR 261.7, fo. 13; most of the letters relating to Darwin’s death and burial are in DAR 215.10.

5 Letter to W. E. Darwin, 25 April 1882, CUL MS DAR 210.15, fo. 6e.

6 Ibid.


8 G. Richards, ‘Psychological aspects of scientific biography or What do we do about Sir John Lubbock?’, unpublished paper delivered at a British Society for the History of Science one-day meeting on Scientific Biography held in Chelsea in 1987.


10 British Library MS Add 62684.

11 See F. Burkhardt et al. (eds), The correspondence of Charles Darwin (Cambridge University Press, 1985–); see also http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk.

12 Op. cit. (note 10); J. Lubbock to F. Darwin, CUL MS DAR 199.5, fo. 58.

13 Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), vol. 15, C. Darwin to J. Lubbock, 26 March [1867].


21 J. Lubbock, Pre-historic times as illustrated by ancient remains, and the manners and customs of modern savages, 1st edn (Williams & Norgate, London, 1865).

23 Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), vol. 7, letter to J. Lubbock, 14 December [1859].
24 Ibid., letter to J. Lubbock [22 November 1859].
25 Emma Darwin’s diaries, CUL MS DAR 242. For references to social occasions at High Elms, see, for example, E. Darwin to W. E. Darwin, [April 1863], CUL MS DAR 219.1, fo. 72; H. E. Darwin to G. H. Darwin, [April 1868], CUL MS DAR 45, fo. 290. The other local great house, Holwood, in the neighbouring parish of Keston, was the country seat of Robert Munsey Rolfe, Baron Cranworth, until his death in 1868. It was rented by Lord and Lady Derby until 1873, and then again after 1877, although they resided chiefly in London (J. R. Vincent (ed.), Diaries of Edward Henry Stanley, 15th earl of Derby (Royal Historical Society, London, 1994).
26 Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), vol. 2, letter to E. C. Darwin, [24 July 1842].
27 Ibid., vol. 6, letter to J. W. Lubbock, 27 May [1856].
28 Ibid., vol. 3, letter to Susan Darwin, [27 November 1844?]; vol. 9, especially letter to J. Lubbock, [8? June 1861].
29 CUL MS DAR 261.7, fo. 12 (Down House MS).
30 Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), vol. 23 (in preparation), letter from J. Lubbock 5 April [1875], and letter to J. Lubbock, 8 April 1875.
31 On friendship with Lady Lubbock, see Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), letter to W. D. Fox, [20 November 1843]; for Lubbock as Darwin’s pupil, see Francis Darwin’s recollections of his father (CUL MS DAR 140.3; see also http://darwin-online.org.uk); and for the purchase of the microscope, see Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), letter to Harriet Lubbock, [December 1848–1849]. For Lubbock’s early interest in natural history, see U. Grant Duff, The life-work of Lord Avebury (Watts & Co., London, 1924), pp. 3–13.
32 Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), vol. 20, letter to J. Lubbock, 23 October [1872].
33 CUL MS DAR 140.3; see also http://darwin-online.org.uk.
34 Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), vol. 22 (in preparation), letter to J. Lubbock, 8 April [1874].
35 Letter from E. Darwin to L. Darwin, 7 July 1874, CUL MS DAR 239.23.1, fo. 19.
37 Letter from E. Darwin to G. H. Darwin, 16 September [1874], CUL MS DAR 219.9, fo. 121.
38 Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), vol. 22 (in preparation), letter from E. Darwin to J. B. Innes, 12 October 1874.
39 Ibid., vol. 22 (in preparation), letter to J. Tyndall, 27 December 1874.
41 Letter to G. H. Darwin, CUL MS DAR 245, fo. 288; the letter was written shortly after Darwin’s fall from his horse on 10 April 1869.
42 See, for example, letter from E. Darwin to W. E. Darwin, 15 December [1858], CUL MS DAR 219.1, fo. 22.
45 Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), vol. 18, letter to J. Lubbock, 21 July [1870].
46 G. D. Campbell, The reign of law (Strahan, London, 1867).
49 Mithen, op. cit. (note 22); Darwin, op. cit. (note 43), vol. 1, p. 233; see also Patton, op. cit. (note 7), p. 70.
What Darwin owed to Lubbock

52 CUL MS DAR 81, fo. 162.
54 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 65.
55 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 94; op. cit. (note 11), vol. 18, letter from J. Lubbock, 17 February [1870].
56 Darwin, op. cit. (note 43), vol. 2, p. 338: ‘Since this chapter was written Sir J. Lubbock has published his “Origin of Civilisation,” 1870, in which there is an interesting chapter on the present subject, and from which (p. 42, 48) I have taken some facts about savages dyeing their teeth and hair, and piercing their teeth.’
59 Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), vol. 18, letter to Mr Dorrell, 9 August 1870.
61 J. Lubbock, ‘On the social and religious condition of the lower races of man [read 17 September 1870]’, The Times, 19 September 1870.
62 Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), vol. 19, letter from J. Lubbock, 18 March [1871].
63 Ibid., vol. 15, letter to J. Lubbock, 26 March [1867].
65 Darwin, op. cit. (note 43), vol. 1, p. 199.
67 Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), vol. 13, letter to J. D. Hooker, 1 June [1865]: ‘No doubt Lyell took & forgot whole sentences from Lubbock—It is horrid—It will be our turn some day—perhaps we two shall tear each other’s eyes out…’; see also Appendix V, ‘The Lyell–Lubbock dispute’.
68 Ibid., vol. 19, letter from J. Lubbock, 18 March [1871].
69 Ibid., vol. 10, letter to C. Kingsley, 6 February 1862.
71 Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), vol. 14, letter to J. D. Hooker, 2 October [1866].
73 Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), vol. 14, letter to J. D. Hooker, 2 October [1866].
74 C. Darwin, On the origin of species, 4th edn (Murray, London, 1866): ‘Fritz Müller, who has recently discussed this whole subject with much ability, goes so far as to believe that the progenitor of all insects probably resembled an adult insect, and that the caterpillar or maggot, and cocoon or pupal stages, have subsequently been acquired; but from this view many naturalists, for instance Sir J. Lubbock, who has likewise recently discussed this subject, would, it is probable, dissent.’
75 See, for example, Darwin’s letter to A. B. Buckley, 31 October [1880] (CUL MS DAR 143, 182), for Darwin soliciting Lubbock’s help over a pension for Alfred Russel Wallace.
76 Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), vol. 23 (in preparation), C. Darwin to J. S. Burdon Sanderson, 15 and 19 April [1875] and 1 May [1875].
77 Ibid., vol. 23 (in preparation), C. Darwin to J. Lubbock, 3 May [1875] and [after 3 May 1875], and J. Lubbock to C. Darwin, 7 July [1875].
78 Darwin wrote about the Duke of Argyll: ‘What a fine thing it is to be a Duke: nobody but a Duke, the first time he geologised would have found a new formation; & the first time he botanised a new lichen …’ (Burkhardt et al., op. cit. (note 11), vol. 10, C. Darwin to C. Kingsley, 6 February [1862]).
79 C. Darwin to J. Lubbock, 16 April [1881], British Library MS Add 49645, 97–98.
80 C. Darwin to J. Lubbock, [after 31 August 1881], CUL MS DAR 261.7, fo. 11.
CORRECTION

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THE TEACHER TAUGHT? WHAT CHARLES DARWIN OWED TO JOHN LUBBOCK

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