Chimpanzees and Human Children: The Evolution of Human Psychology

with Michael Tomasello

Abstract

Much can be learned about human nature by studying how  humans compare psychologically to our nearest great ape relatives. I will present a series of studies that experimentally compare great apes to human children of different ages in various domains of cognition and social interaction. The results of these studies will suggest a framework for an evolutionary picture of how humans are unique psychologically, and some hints about how during evolution they might have become that way.

Bio

Michael Tomasello is Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Duke University, and emeritus director at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig, Germany. His research interests focus on processes of cooperation, communication, and cultural learning in human children and great apes. His recent books include Origins of Human Communication (MIT Press, 2008); Why We Cooperate (MIT Press, 2009); A Natural History of Human Thinking (Harvard University Press, 2014); A Natural History of Human Morality (Harvard University Press, 2016); and Becoming Human: A Theory of Ontogeny (Harvard University Press, 2019).