



The evolutionary roots of human intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity, the emotio-cognitive process in which we share the subjective states of other individuals is one of the principal mechanisms underlying human social interactions. It is proposed to be the key element that separated us from the other great apes, having led to the evolution of language and cumulative culture through mutually shared representations of goals, emotions, and needs. In the core of intersubjectivity lies empathy. Empathy roots our prosocial and morally guided behaviour, and impaired empathy leads to poor or absent intersubjectivity and prosociality. Despite increased interest in intersubjectivity and empathy in several disciplines, the evolutionary conditions that promoted their appearance remain elusive. The recently proposed cooperative breeding hypothesis offers a powerful explanation for this crucial shift in human evolution. It proposes that humans evolved unique emotional, motivational and cognitive adaptations for intersubjectivity because of cooperative breeding, i.e. frequent care and provisioning of young by non-mothers. Cooperative breeding may have increased the motivation and ability to benefit others' welfare (in all cooperative breeders) and to operate in a shared cognitive space (in *Homo*). I will examine the hypothesis by outlining the evidence on the intersubjective capacities of our closest living relatives and a distantly related, cooperatively breeding primate. Thereafter, I will outline the next steps in my research to unravel the roots of intersubjectivity.

