

III Cooperation

Tomasello's Early Spelke / Late Dweck

Basic idea: we are born as natural cooperators (Spelke); we then come to refine that into something that is more reciprocal (Dweck).

Evidence for natural cooperation:

Helping At 18 months, children will help an adult; this behavior is cross cultural, is shared with chimpanzees. Reward will actually diminish helping behavior, suggesting that it is intrinsically motivated (some background here: Deci and Ryan on intrinsic motivation; the theory of cognitive dissonance.) In contrast, empathy increases the behavior. Children's pointing seems to involve theorizing about what the other person wants: getting the battery at 20 months. (Background here: ascription of desires; ignorance; false belief.)

Informing At 12 months infants will point to a stapler to show an adult where it is. Other primates very rarely point, and then only with humans and as an imperative.

Sharing Children are not so good at this. But they will provide for other when there is no cost to themselves, unlike chimpanzees (the pull board experiment with chimps and children of 25 months; children pull to help others, chimps pull randomly). NB: this looks rather more like helping than sharing.

Evidence for reciprocation:

From around the age of 3, children help and share more if the others reciprocate. Chimpanzees, in contrast, show no obvious sense of fairness: they 'cooperate' in the ultimatum game for the least reward (beware of the early studies here on capuchins).

Second: at least from the age of 3 children are sensitive to norms, and they are norm enforcers.

Some answers to evolutionary puzzle:

- (i) we haven't evolved to be altruists. We have evolved to be reciprocators; true altruism is a side effect.
- (ii) we have evolved to be altruists within the family group; altruism broader than that is a side effect.
- (iii) we haven't evolved to be anything like altruists; altruism is a learned behavior.

Silk for Apes / Skyrms for Humans

Basic idea: non-human primate societies work using kinship relations and direct self-interest (Silk); human are involved in mutualism that looks more like the Stag hunt than a prisoners' dilemma (Skyrms). This requires three things: coordination; trust; norms.

Trust How to understand this? Rational choice model: trust is based on a belief about likely pay off. Some alternative philosophical views (i) trust as dependence on good will; (ii) trust as resulting from the recognition of others; (iii) trust as embedded in the reactive attitudes (and not belief). Evidence from neuroscience from the third: Kosfeld et al. on the role of oxytocin. Two core findings here: (i) doesn't simply increase preparedness to take risks (doesn't work when subject is confronting a random mechanism, rather than another individual); (ii) doesn't change belief.

Joint Intentions

What are these? Tomasello focuses on 'we' intentions. But how are these to be understood? Three main views in the philosophy literature:

- (i) they consist in individual intentions that happen to coincide in the right way;
- (ii) they consist in the intentions of entities that are not individuals;
- (iii) they consist in (or supervene on) the intentions of individuals that are inter-locking.

On this third view, I have to think something like: 'I'll do this if you will'. Tomasello seems to think that these are innate. Spelke sees them as mediated by language over a number of core innate skills (including the ability to reason about intentional agents and their goals).