Les Origines de la Communication Humaine

Michael Tomasello

Lundi 15 mai de 16h00 à 18h00

The Intentional Communication of Great Apes

CNRS, Campus Gérard-Mégie, Auditorium Marie Curie,
3, rue Michel-Ange, 75016 Paris

Remise du Prix Jean-Nicod et cocktail après la conférence.

Mardi 16 mai de 14h30 à 16h30

The Co-operative Communication of Human Beings

École Normale Supérieure, Salle Dussane
45, rue d'Ulm, 75005 Paris

Jeudi 18 mai de 14h30 à 16h30

The Ontogenetic Emergence of Shared Intentionality

École Normale Supérieure, Salle Dussane
45, rue d'Ulm, 75005 Paris

Vendredi 19 mai de 14h30 à 16h30

The Ontogenetic Emergence of Co-operative Communication

École Normale Supérieure, Salle Celan
45, rue d'Ulm, 75005 Paris

Renseignements

Institut Jean-Nicod
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Conférences Jean-Nicod de philosophie cognitive

L'esprit humain, son organisation, sa nature, ses relations avec le corps et avec le monde sont depuis toujours parmi les thèmes centraux de la philosophie. La psychologie contemporaine elle-même a pris naissance au sein de la philosophie. Elle s'est émancipée, mais l'émergence des sciences cognitives consacre d'une certaine façon le retour de la philosophie dans ce champ de recherche. Les développements de l'informatique et des neurosciences, en jetant une nouvelle lumière sur les phénomènes mentaux, ont eu pour effet de relancer le débat philosophique. La « philosophie de l'esprit » est ainsi plus florissante que jamais. Ce retour n'a rien d'une régression, car la philosophie dont il est question est en phase avec la recherche scientifique, informée par elle et en constante interaction avec elle.

Les Conférences Jean-Nicod visent à promouvoir les recherches philosophiques se rapportant à la cognition et à faire connaître en France les travaux réalisés à l'étranger dans ce domaine. Le conférencier, sélectionné par le comité Jean-Nicod, présente ses recherches au cours d'un cycle de conférences qu'il rassemble ensuite en un livre.

Comité Jean-Nicod

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Conférences Jean-Nicod de philosophie cognitive
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cycle 2006

Michael Tomasello

Origins of Human Communication

Michael Tomasello

Docteur de psychologie de l'Université de Géorgie (1980), Michael Tomasello a enseigné à l'Université d'Emory et travaillé au Yerkes Primate Center de 1980 à 1998. Il est actuellement co-directeur de l'Institut Max Planck d'anthropologie évolutionniste à Leipzig. Il est spécialiste de l'étude comparative des capacités cognitives des primates et des jeunes enfants.
Ses travaux portent sur les processus de cognition sociale et plus particulièrement sur les aspects liés au langage et à son acquisition.

A l'occasion des conférences Jean-Nicod 2006, Michael Tomasello occupe un poste de directeur d'études associé à l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.

Ouvrages de M. Tomasello

2004. Beyond Nature-Nurture: Essays in Honor of Elizabeth Bates (Ed. avec D. Slobin). Mahwah (N.J.), Lawrence Erlbaum.

2003. Constructing a Language: A Usage-Based Theory of Language Acquisition. Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press.

2003. The New Psychology of Language, Volume 2: Cognitive and Functional Approaches to Language Structure. Mahwah (N.J.), Lawrence Erlbaum.

2001. Language Development: The Essential Readings (ed. avec E. Bates). Oxford, Blackwell.

1999. The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition. Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press.

1998. (Ed.) The New Psychology of Language: Cognitive and Functional Approaches to Language Structure. Mahwah (N.J.), Lawrence Erlbaum.

1997. Primate Cognition (avec J. Call). Oxford, Oxford University Press.

1995. Beyond Names for Things: Young Children's Acquisition of Verbs (Ed. avec W. Merriman). Hillsdale (N.J.), Lawrence Erlbaum.

1992. First Verbs: A Case Study of Early Grammatical Development. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Origins of Human Communication

Conférences Jean-Nicod 2006

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Conférence du 15 mai

The intentional communication of great apes

Apes communicate with conspecifics most flexibly in the gestural domain, including adapting to the attentional state of the recipient. They use both intention movements (abbreviations of social actions that become communicative within a specific interactive context) and attention getters (actions that gain the attention of others to the self in a wide variety of contexts). All of these are basically dyadic - aimed at regulating the social interaction directly - not triadic in the sense of referring to external entities. They are also all basically "competitive" - aimed at getting the signaler what she wants - not co-operative in the sense of sharing psychological states. Interestingly, when interacting with humans many apes do learn to "point" to things they want triadically. But these "points" are action imperatives only; they are not co-operative in the human sense (and may not even be truly referential), as evidenced by the fact that these pointing apes still do not understand when humans point for them informatively.

Conférence du 16 mai

The co-operative communication of human beings

In contrast to our nearest primate relatives, human beings communicate with one another co-operatively. This co-operative structure pervades all aspects of the communicative exchange. Thus, human communication depends fundamentally on: (1) a joint attentional (or intersubjective) frame that provides the common ground necessary for reference; (2) the mutual manifestness of the communicative act itself, which generates both relevance inferences and interpersonal obligations; (3) the co-operative motives to help and to share experience with others (even if embedded within a selfish, deceptive motive); and (4) the ability to collaborate with others in joint activities, specifically to ensure that the receiver comprehends the sender's message as intended. The communicative activities of other animal species have little resembling this same co-operative structure. Human co-operative communication emanates evolutionarily from an adaptation for shared intentionality in general, as manifest in many other human cultural activities. Linguistic communication has this same co-operative structure, but adds, in addition, the perspective-taking inherent in contrastive linguistic symbols.

Conférence du 18 mai

The ontogenetic emergence of shared intentionality

The human adaptation for shared intentionality emerges ontogenetically at around the first birthday as two developmental pathways come together: (1) the general primate social-cognitive ability to understanding the goals and perceptions of others (and perhaps the intentions and attention of others); and (2) the uniquely human skills and motivations for sharing psychological states with others. As these two strands come together, human infants become able to create shared goals and intentions with others in joint action, and also to engage in various kinds of joint attentional activities, which create the ability to understand multiple perspectives on a common entity. The difference between humans and apes can be most clearly seen when their behavior is compared in situations involving helping (which do not involve full-blown shared intentionality, and in which they differ only a little) and situations involving true co-operation and shared intentions (in which they differ more profoundly). This same basic difference emerges when humans and apes are compared in the comprehension of communicative intentions: human infants understand co-operative communicative intentions prelinguistically, whereas apes do not understand these at all - but rather understand the (social) intentions of others most readily in competition.

Conférence du 19 mai

The ontogenetic emergence of co-operative communication

Infants begin expressing their communicative intentions also at around the first birthday. In addition to co-operative requests (expressions of desire that helpful others are supposed to respond to helpfully), infants also communicate prelinguistically for two other basic motives: (1) to help others by providing them with needed information (informing); and (2) to simply share interest and attention with others to outside events and activities declaratively. They also, on occasion, gesture for others iconically [deictic gestures being triadic analogues of ape attention-getters and iconic gestures being triadic analogues of ape intention movements]. A series of experiments suggests that these early communicative acts involve full-blown shared intentionality, including participation in joint attentional (intersubjective) frames with distinct perspectives, participation in joint activities with shared goals and intentions, and the comprehension of co-operative communicative intentions. Less certain is how infants acquire these skills (imitation? ritualization?), and whether infants' comprehension of communicative intentions is fully Gricean. Studies of how infants acquire their earliest skills of linguistic communication in discourse help to resolve some of these outstanding issues.