The Intersubjective Mirror in Infant Learning and Evolution of Speech

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The Intersubjective Mirror in Infant Learning and Evolution of Speech illustrates how recent findings about primary intersubjectivity, participant perception and mirror neurons afford a new understanding of children's nature, dialogue and language. Based on recent infancy research and the mirror neurons discovery, studies of early speech perception, comparative primate studies and computer simulations of language evolution, this book offers replies to questions as: When and how may spoken language have emerged? How is it that infants so soon after birth become so efficient in their speech perception? What enables 11-month-olds to afford and reciprocate care? What are the steps from infant imitation and simulation of body movements to simulation of mind in conversation partners?

Stein Bråten is founder and chair of the Theory Forum network with some of the world's leading infancy, primate and brain researchers who have contributed to his edited volumes for Cambridge University Press (1998) and John Benjamins Publishing Company (2007). (Series B)


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“In one of the most detailed and erudite treatises today, Stein Bråten explains how we relate to each other driven by evolutionarily ancient impulses. Instead of the traditional focus on human intelligence, Stein Bråten stresses the body and how it is moved by other bodies. A very compelling account of how we came to be such incredibly social primates.”

Frans de Waal, Emory University, Author of “The Age of Empathy” (Harmony, 2009).

“Stein Bråten’s last book provides an incredibly rich and original perspective on the evolution and development of infants’ (pre)verbal intersubjectivity. Bråten beautifully masters the most relevant literature in Philosophy, Developmental and Comparative Psychology, Cognitive Neuroscience and Computer Science guiding the reader in a fascinating journey. A must read for everyone interested to learn how the human mind develops.”

Vittorio Gallese, University of Parma

“...In his insightful analysis of the history of child development, Stein Bråten identifies a major choice-point in the 1920s: was the child to be thought of as naturally social, born with others in mind, or as naturally egocentric? Given the potent influence of Freud and Piaget, it was the egocentric child that dominated research for many decades. Increasingly, however, research in child psychology, in neuroscience and in comparative primatology, has underlined the early attunement that the human infant displays towards the gestures and actions of other people. Stein Bråten offers a wide-ranging analysis of these convergent research findings and uses them to offer a fresh analysis of the course of social development in the child.”

Paul Harris, Harvard University, School of Education

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