

KEYNOTE

THE EMERGENCE OF EMOTIONALLY MODERN MINDS

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ABSTRACT

No other ape displays so much interest in what others think as humans. And no other ape cares so much about what others think about them. From an early age, little humans are also more reflexively eager to cooperate and share. Such prosocial emotions laid the groundwork for bipedal apes in the line leading to the genus *Homo* to develop unprecedented levels of cooperation and food-sharing, making it possible for brains as large and inter-connected as those of modern humans to evolve. But long before hominin brains evolved to be the size of “anatomically modern” *Homo sapiens*, our peculiarly prosocial ancestors must have already been more other-regarding, in this sense already “emotionally modern”. Drawing on new information from behavioral ecology, developmental psychology and social neuroscience, this lecture will highlight the role that a life phase not ordinarily associated with mentalizing and social evaluations – namely infancy – played in the evolution of these large brains with their distinctively human prefrontal cortex.