II

The Ontogeny of Uniquely Human Cognition

> In the process of development the child not only masters the items of cultural experience but the habits and forms of cultural behavior, the cultural methods of reasoning.
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> Lev Vygotsky
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> "The Problem of the Cultural Development of the Child" (1929)

Human cognition is unique in multifarious ways. But at the root of all of these, we would argue, are the ontogenetic processes by which young children come to put their heads together with others in acts of shared intentionality. Although great apes' "core knowledge" of the spatial-temporal-causal-quantitative structure of the physical world and their basic understanding of agency and social interaction are foundational for uniquely human cognition, they are not sufficient. We need, in addition, cognitive processes evolved for social and mental coordination with social partners.

The issue is not just "mind-reading"—apes turn out to be pretty good at that. But they do it mostly in competition. Social and mental coordination with others for purposes of cooperation is something different. In mind-reading aimed at competition, I do not want you to know what I am thinking. In mental coordination aimed at cooperation, I do. Many of humans' everyday acts are thus designed to actually help others read their minds. And so an element of recursion enters the picture as I *intend* that you *know* what I *think*.