



Folk Physics for Apes: The Chimpanzee's Theory of How the World Works

Daniel J. Povinelli

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From an early age, humans know a surprising amount about basic physical principles, such as gravity, force, mass, and shape. We can see this in the way that young children play, and manipulate objects around them. The same behavior has long been observed in primates - chimpanzees have been shown to possess a remarkable ability to make and use simple tools. But what does this tell us about their inner mental state - do they therefore share the same understanding to that of a young child? Do they understand the simple, underlying physical principles involved? Though some people would say that they do, this book reports groundbreaking research that questions whether this really is the case.

Folk Physics for Apes challenges the assumptions so often made about apes. It offers us a rare glimpse into the workings of another mind, examining how apes perceive and understand the physical world - an understanding that appears to be both similar to, and yet profoundly different from our own. The book will have broad appeal to evolutionary psychologists, developmental psychologists, and those interested in the sub-disciplines of cognitive science (philosophy, anthropology). The book additionally offers for developmental psychologists some valuable new non-verbal techniques for assessing causal understanding in young children.

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