



## Book Review

**Infant Chimpanzee and Human Child. A Classic 1935 Comparative Study of Ape Emotions and Intelligence.** By N. N. Ladygina-Kohts, edited by Frans B. M. de Waal, Oxford University Press, Oxford, U. K., 2002, xv +452 pp., \$ 65.00 (hardback).

In 1913, a Russian psychologist, Nadezhda Nikolaevna Ladygina-Kohts, opened a research laboratory in the Darwin Museum of Moscow and began to observe the behavior of a one-year-old chimpanzee named Joni. The study ended in 1916 when Joni died of pneumonia. In 1925, Ladygina-Kohts began to observe her own newborn son, Roody, and collected notes in a diary as she had done with Joni. The years spent observing Joni and Roody resulted in an impressive amount of detailed descriptive material, accompanied by beautiful photographs and drawings. The book was published in Russian in the 1920s and 1930s, but its first comprehensive English translation, with the supervision of Frans de Waal, has only now become available. *Infant Chimpanzee and Human Child* is preceded by an introduction by Allen and Beatrix Gardner, who taught a chimpanzee, Washoe, American Sign Language, and it is followed by a brief overview of research on facial expressions of emotions in chimpanzees written by Lisa Parr, Signe Preuschoft, and Frans de Waal.

Unlike the Gardners and many others who set out to assess how much human behavior and language could be learned by chimpanzees, Ladygina-Kohts made it clear in the preface of her book that she tried to avoid training Joni or teaching him any human habits. Instead, her goal was to observe his natural and spontaneous behavior. In the book, however, Ladygina-Kohts occasionally admits that Joni was trained to perform various human activities such as drinking milk from a mug and using the potty. Furthermore, a conflict often arose between her dual role as an objective observer and a caregiver. Thus, as she admits that she often brushed Joni or Roody aside while "sitting motionlessly and writing for long periods of time" (p. 8), she probably deprived the chimpanzee and her son of interactions with their caregiver that are very much part of their natural and spontaneous behavior.

The first part of the book contains a detailed description of the chimpanzee's physical appearance, his expressions of emotions, and his instincts, including his hygienic and sexual activities, eating and drinking, nest-building and sleeping. We also learn about the struggles involved to keep the chimpanzee in his cage, to walk him to another room, to get him to wear a blanket in the winter, or to give him a bath. Joni seemed adept at guessing what people were thinking, deceiving them, and observing and imitating their actions, though he had trouble recognizing himself in a mirror.

The second part of the book describes Roody's physical appearance and behavior in a way that mirrors Joni's description. Ladygina-Kohts makes some insightful observations about the way both the infant chimpanzee and the child used similar facial expressions and hand gestures. She also noted how they differentiated between familiar and unfamiliar people and between their primary caregiver and other familiar people. In many ways, Ladygina-Kohts describes the basic features of attachment to a caregiver a few decades before they were noted and organized in a comprehensive theory by John Bowlby.

The differences in behavior were many. For example, Ladygina-Kohts was struck by the emergence of altruistic behavior and concepts of fairness and justice in the child versus the selfishness of the chimpanzee. She was also impressed by the child's superior ability to imitate human actions and the ease with which Roody acquired speech.

What is totally missing in *Infant Chimpanzee and Human Child* is a discussion of the origins of the similarities and differences in chimpanzee and child behavior, and, more generally, a discussion of the processes underlying the development of behavior or cognition. For example, learning is hardly ever mentioned. In their Introduction to the book, the Gardners argue that the study reflects the view, common at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that infant development unfolds according to an inexorable species-specific plan. However, the book makes no reference whatsoever to any theory or other empirical studies. Despite the fact that Ladygina-Kohts received a degree in Psychology from the University of Moscow in 1917, her writings hardly reflect her academic education. Although her study was conducted in the Darwin Museum, Darwin and his work are never mentioned. With all its insightful observations and inventive experimental manipulations, *Infant Chimpanzee and Human Child* comes across as the work of an amateur and not that of a scholar.

I am not sure whether Ladygina-Kohts meets the criteria for being considered a pioneer in her field and her work a classic (what are these criteria anyway?). It is remarkable that somebody developed an interest in and devoted so much effort to comparing chimpanzee and human development in the middle of Stalinist USSR at a crucial moment of world history. It is

important that this work is now available in English and that this piece of history is accessible to a larger audience.

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