Abstract

Cognition is a crucial factor for primates as it allows properly perceive and respond to the surrounding environment. This thesis is devoted to cognitive phenomena, which are often associated with understanding the physical environment and object manipulation. Much attention is focused on causal reasoning, object permanence and tool using. Particular emphasis is placed on the ontogenesis of these cognitive abilities. One of the main questions is how development differs between humans and non-human primates. Despite the fact that non-human primates, just like humans, have a very complex knowledge of the laws of the physical environment, causal reasoning and object permanence develops in a very similar way for these related species, but far from the same way. A large disparity is observed mainly in the area of the pace of development. Tool use in humans and non-human primates is strongly influenced by social learning and traditions.

Key words: primates, physical environment, cognitive abilities, causal reasoning, object permanence, object manipulation, tool using, ontogeny