

DESMOND MORRIS

LA SCIMMIETTA NUDA

BREVE STORIA DEGLI ESSERI UMANI



BOMPIANI

The Little Naked Ape: a Brief History of Humanity

Desmond Morris, illustrations by Sergio Ruzzier



LA SCIMMIETTA NUDA

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Desmond Morris (January 24, 1928) is a British zoologist and ethologist who was born in Purton, Wiltshire, England. He is also a popular author of sociobiology. He is very well known for his original work entitled, *The Naked Ape: A Zoologist's Study of the Human Animal*, first published in 1967. It has been translated into twenty-three languages

Throughout history, humans have built cities, painted masterpieces, composed wonderful music and poetry, and invented machines that allowed them to fly in the sky. And yet deep down they have never stopped being some kind of furless ape.

We are a bit nude compared to chimpanzees, orangutans, or gorillas, who are our closest relatives. We are *naked apes*, in fact.

At birth, a human baby and a baby monkey are different in appearance but share an impressive number of gestures, attitudes, and abilities.

Over time, the human baby begins to develop more varied and complex abilities and behaviors. We are very proud of our intellectual abilities, and in fact we call ourselves *Sapiens*, or the wise ones.

Yet it is best to remember that inside every wise human there is a legacy, and an animal spirit: inside of us a little monkey lives on. Every now and then it peeps out and reminds us where we come from, and what we were before we became what we are now.

quote

- "I discovered long ago that, if you write a book about cats or dogs, everybody loves you, but if you dare to write a book about human beings, all hell breaks loose..." - Desmond Morris

excerpt

My name is Desmond Morris and I am a zoologist and an ethologist: I study animals and their behavior. And since humans are animals, I also study humans.

Many years ago I wrote a book entitled *The Naked Ape*. This is a version of the original book, but is dedicated to children and young readers who are looking for more than fairy tales, animal stories, or adventure tales: everything that is written in this book is entirely true.

It is the story of our ancestors, told in a very straightforward way, and also quickly - when you are older you can read the longer version, and many other very interesting books that discuss the same topic.

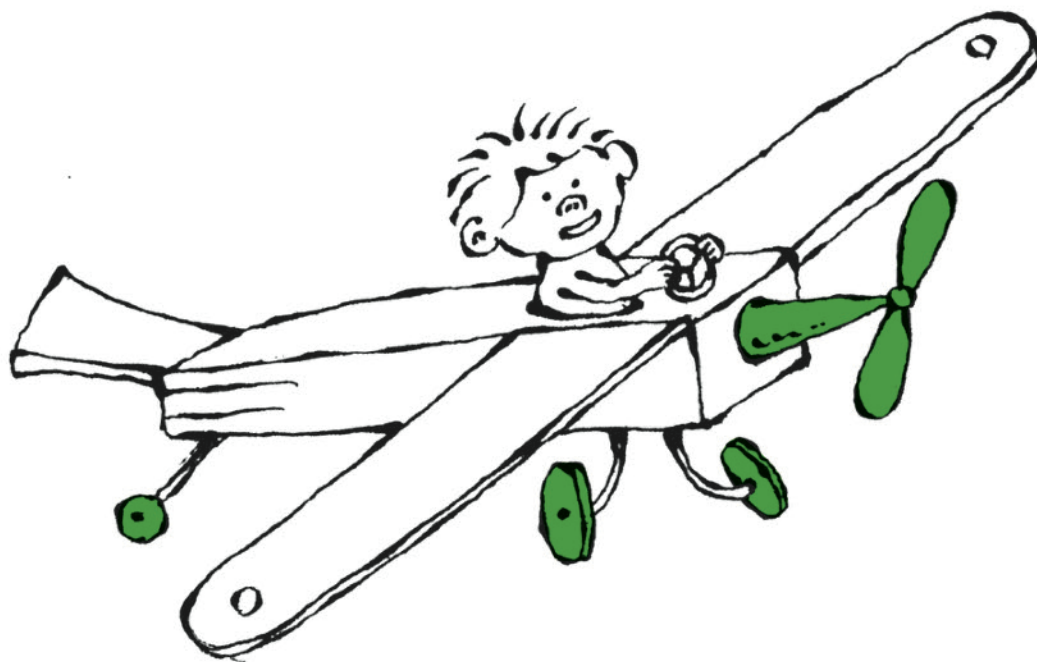
In the meantime, you have this book, that is made just for you, the youngest of the naked apes, that is why the title is *The Little Naked Ape*.

It is your chance to understand who we are and where we come from. Which is very important to understand if you want to know where we are going.

Enjoy!

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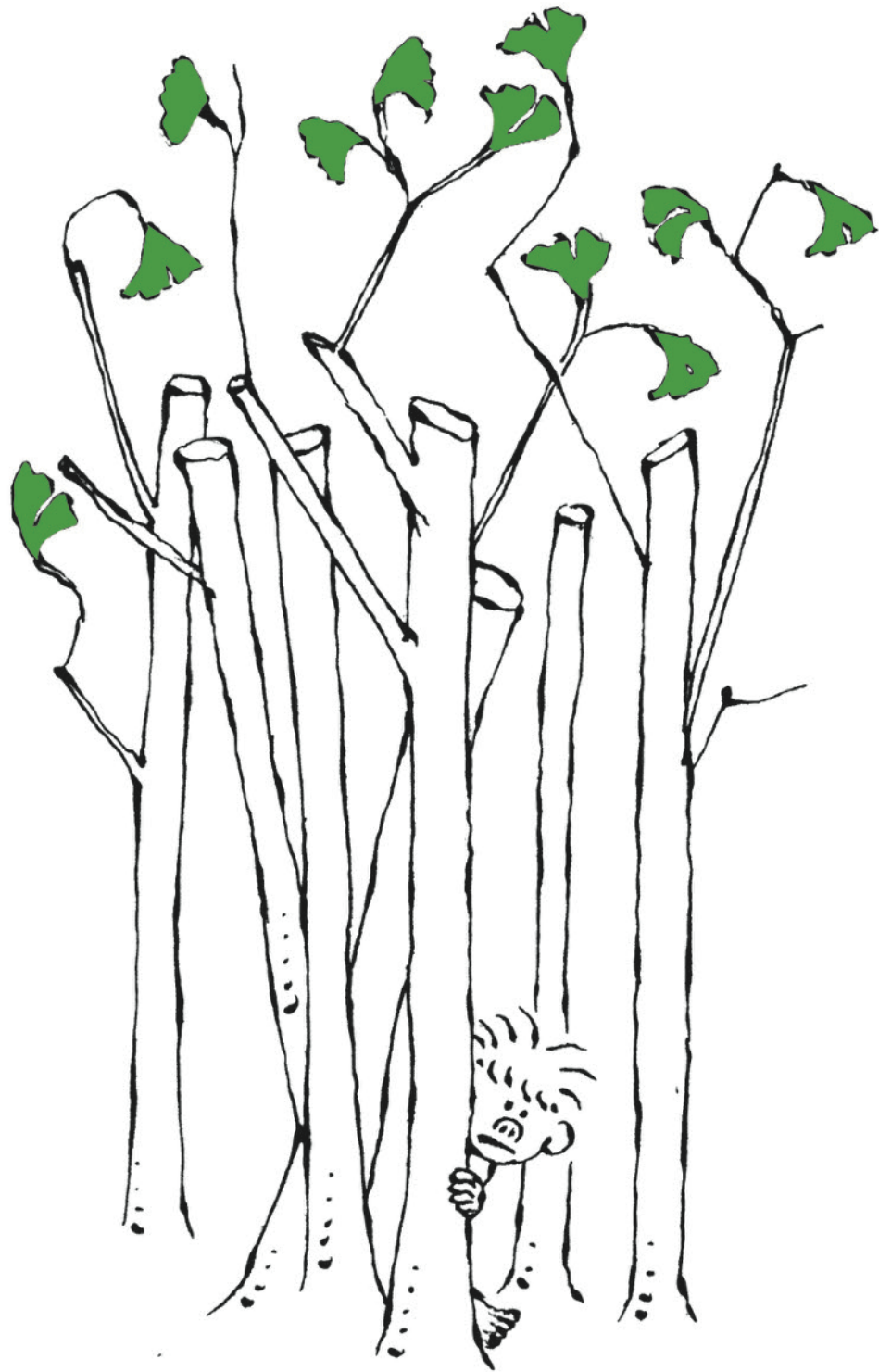


Noi umani siamo così orgogliosi delle nostre capacità intellettive **che ci siamo chiamati HOMO SAPIENS**, che in latino, la lingua degli antichi romani, vuol dire uomo sapiente. Noi siamo i Sapienti, dunque. Ce lo diciamo da soli. Eppure dentro ogni Sapiente c'è uno spirito animale: dentro di noi abita una scimmietta che ci ricorda da dove veniamo e che cosa eravamo.



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MESTIERI BELLISSIMI



La PALEONTOLOGIA è la scienza che studia i resti di animali e piante fossili, cioè che si sono conservati nella roccia. L'ETOLOGIA è la scienza che studia il comportamento degli animali (uomo compreso).

I mammiferi insettivori, come dice il nome, all'inizio mangiavano solo insetti. Poi alcuni scoprirono il buon sapore delle piante: bacche, nocciole, foglie, germogli, ma sgranocchiavano volentieri anche uccellini, rane, uova, lucertole. Ci vedevano sempre meglio; imparavano ad afferrare e stringere, e i loro arti diventavano capaci di gesti più precisi; e anche il cervello piano piano cresceva, come la CODA, utilissima per mantenere l'equilibrio. La foresta era un ottimo posto dove vivere, e rimasero lì, evitando il pericolo degli animali da preda che infestavano le praterie. Tutto questo succedeva fra trentacinque e venticinque milioni di anni fa.