



MONREPOS

Archäologisches Forschungszentrum und Museum
für menschliche Verhaltensevolution

Press release | 31 July 2019

HUMAN ROOTS AWARD 2019

MONREPOS Archaeological Research Centre honours evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar with international research award

Neuwied / Mainz. On November 8th, this year's HUMAN ROOTS AWARD will be awarded for the third time by the Archaeological Research Centre and Museum for Human Behavioural Evolution MONREPOS, a department of the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Mainz (RGZM), Leibniz Research Institute of Archaeology. This year's winner is Prof. Dr. Robin Dunbar, evolutionary psychologist at Oxford University. The MONREPOS jury justified the choice of Dunbar with his outstanding achievements into understanding human sociality. Dunbar is the author of numerous articles and popular science books.

Along with many other fundamental scientific works, Dunbar's outstanding recognition is that cognitive boundaries for maintaining stable social contacts are set within the human brain. Thus, on average, each person maintains about 150 stable relationships with their fellow human beings – this number is known as the "Dunbar Number". This number exceeds those in the social environment of other vertebrates, yet many problems inherent to large, complex-structured societies may result from this limitation of our social capacities.

The HUMAN ROOTS AWARD honours scientists from various disciplines for their contributions to the understanding of human behavioural evolution. The prize has been awarded by MONREPOS since 2017 and is now regarded as the "small Nobel Prize" in archaeology and the evolution of human behaviour, as Professor Sabine Gaudzinski-Windheuser, head of the MONREPOS research centre, points out. The international research prize is endowed with 10,000 Euros and stands for the promotion of interdisciplinary scientific dialogue. It seeks to build a bridge between the "archaeology of becoming human" and other scientific disciplines in order to link the archaeological view of "becoming human" with the humanistic agenda of "being human". Only in this way is it possible to make "staying human" a sustainable option for our future, as the prize jury of seven scientists emphasizes.

After the death of Irenaeus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, one of the founding fathers of human ethology and patron of the first HUMAN ROOTS AWARD, patronage was taken over in 2018 by the Oxford evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins. Dawkins was the first prize winner in 2017; in 2018, Steven Pinker from Harvard University (USA), experimental psychologist, cognitive scientist and linguist, was honoured with the HUMAN ROOTS AWARD.

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Press kit

You can download the press kit (including press release and press photo) in German and English from our Cloud: <https://cloud.rgzm.de/index.php/s/ONdMjXb4GvMhIEE>

Press photo



The Oxford evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar is the third winner of the HUMAN ROOTS AWARD. The award is presented annually for outstanding research achievements that contribute to the understanding of human behavioural evolution.

Credits: Andre Camara

MONREPOS Archaeological Research Centre and Museum for Human Behavioural Evolution

MONREPOS is at the same time museum and research institute. It is a department of the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Mainz, the Leibniz Research Institute for Archaeology, located in the Monrepos stately home near Neuwied, where research has been conducted for more than 30 years. The research centre and museum is closely linked to the section of Pre- and Protohistoric Archaeology at the Institute of Ancient Studies of the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz.

Our research focuses on the inheritance we carry within us, which is worth millions: Our human behaviour has evolved over more than 2.6 million years. This early human history spans the longest and defining period of our behavioural evolution, that is central to our research at MONREPOS. Our archaeology thrives on working together, on questions, impulses, discussion. And, not least, on criticism and on tolerance. It needs people who are curious, creative and courageous – whether these are scientists, pro bono helpers, media or visitors. MONREPOS sees itself as a platform for everyone who wishes to understand how we evolved and what unites us.

Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum (RGZM) | Leibniz Research Institute for Archaeology

The RGZM is a globally operating archaeological research institute and museum with its headquarters and three other seats in Mainz, Neuwied and Mayen. Since its foundation in 1852, it dedicates itself to the material legacy of humankind from the Pleistocene to the Middle Ages, aiming to understand human behaviour and action, human activity and thought, and the development and transformation of societies. The concentration of archaeological, scientific, restoration and IT expertise within one institute allows it to examine human material remains from different perspectives over a period of 2.6 million years. The RGZM is one of eight Leibniz research museums. It makes its research results available to both the scientific community and the general public by means of permanent and special exhibitions, publications and a wide variety of different events. It has its own publications department that publishes three specialist journals and numerous scientific monographs.