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Biologie, psychologie et évolution

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Evolution and development of the social functions of reason
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Hugo Mercier est chercheur en sciences cognitives. Ces recherches portent principalement sur le raisonnement, ainsi que les mécanismes psychologiques dédiés à l'évaluation des informations communiquées. Avec ces collègues, il a conduit des expériences avec une variété de populations afin de mieux comprendre le fonctionnement cognitif. En particulier il s'est intéressé aux très jeunes enfants ainsi qu'aux populations de culture non-occidentale.

Résumé de la conférence

Human reason is known to have many failings. Reason is biased: we have a strong tendency to find reasons that support our prior beliefs or decisions, whether they are right or not. Reason is lazy: when it comes to supporting our beliefs or decisions, we accept just about any superficially sound reason. As a result, individual reasoning is often ineffective, with people regularly failing to overcome even blatantly faulty intuitions. Dan Sperber and I have attempted to make sense of these failings by suggesting that human reason mostly serves social, rather than individual, functions. I will explain how, when reason is seen as serving social functions, its biases can be seen as useful features, and more light can be shone on the strengths of reason, in particular its ability to objectively evaluate others' reasons, and to create constructive group discussions. I will also review recent work on the early development of the abilities to use reason in social context, suggesting that these abilities develop very early, with several positive results obtained in children from 2 to 5 years of age.

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Lecture proposée

Mercier, H. (2016). The argumentative theory : Predictions and empirical evidence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 20*(9), 689-700.