

The Evolution of Experience

Peter Godfrey-Smith

Mardi 7 juin - 14h

BIOLOGICAL EXPLANATION AND SUBJECTIVITY

École normale supérieure, Salle Jaurès

29 rue d'Ulm, 75005 Paris

Remise du Prix Jean-Nicod et cocktail après la conférence

Jeudi 9 juin - 14h

FRAMEWORK QUESTIONS, AND A START ON THE EVOLUTIONARY SEQUENCE

École normale supérieure, Salle Jaurès

29 rue d'Ulm, 75005 Paris

Mardi 14 juin - 10h

THE EVOLUTION OF EXPERIENCE

École normale supérieure, Salle Jaurès

29 rue d'Ulm, 75005 Paris

Jeudi 16 juin - 14h

LATER STAGES, OBJECTIONS, AND ALTERNATIVES

École normale supérieure, Salle Jaurès

29 rue d'Ulm, 75005 Paris

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Frédérique de Vignemont

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philosophie cognitive

Conférences Jean-Nicod de

L'esprit humain, son organisation, sa nature, ses relations avec le corps et avec le monde sont depuis toujours parmi les thèmes centraux de la philosophie. La psychologie contemporaine elle-même a pris naissance au sein de la philosophie. Elle s'est émancipée, mais l'émergence des sciences cognitives consacre d'une certaine façon le retour de la philosophie dans ce champ de recherche. Les développements de l'informatique et des neurosciences, en jetant une nouvelle lumière sur les phénomènes mentaux, ont eu pour effet de relancer le débat philosophique. La « philosophie de l'esprit » est ainsi plus florissante que jamais. Ce retour n'a rien d'une régression, car la philosophie dont il est question est en phase avec la recherche scientifique, informée par elle et en constante interaction avec elle.

Les Conférences Jean-Nicod visent à promouvoir les recherches philosophiques se rapportant à la cognition et à faire connaître en France les travaux réalisés à l'étranger dans ce domaine. Le conférencier présente ses recherches au cours d'un cycle de conférences qu'il rassemble ensuite en un livre.

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COLLECTION JEAN-NICOD

The MIT Press - F. Récanati (dir.)

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École Normale Supérieure
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Peter Godfrey-Smith

The Evolution of Experience

2022



**Peter
Godfrey-Smith**

Peter Godfrey-Smith is Professor of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Sydney, in Australia. After studying at the University of Sydney and UC San Diego, he taught at Stanford, Harvard, the Australian National University, and the CUNY Graduate Center before returning to Sydney. He has written six books, including *Darwinian Populations and Natural Selection*, which won the 2010 Lakatos Award, and *Other Minds: The Octopus, the Sea, and the Deep Origins of Consciousness*, which won the Patrick Suppes Prize in 2019. His most recent book is *Metazoa: Animal Life and the Birth of the Mind*.

SÉLECTION BIBLIOGRAPHIQUE

- 2020** *Metazoa: Animal Life and the Birth of the Mind*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020.

"Gradualism and the Evolution of Experience", *Philosophical Topics* 48 (2020): 201-220.
- 2019** "Evolving Across the Explanatory Gap", *Philosophy, Theory, and Practice in Biology* 11 (2019): 1.
- 2017** "The Evolution of Consciousness in Phylogenetic Context", in K. Andrews and J. Beck (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Animal Minds*. London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 216-226.
- 2016** "Mind, Matter, and Metabolism", *Journal of Philosophy* 113 (2016): 481-506.

Other Minds: The Octopus, the Sea, and the Deep Origins of Consciousness. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016
- 2015** "An Option Space for Early Neural Evolution" (G. Jékely, F. Keijzer, and P. Godfrey-Smith), *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 370 (2015) 20150181

The Evolution of Experience

Mardi 7 juin

BIOLOGICAL EXPLANATION AND SUBJECTIVITY

The first part of this lecture will give an overview of the picture to be developed and defended across all four. My aim is to give an account of the evolutionary history of animals and nervous systems that makes sense of the origin of subjective experience (sentience, phenomenal consciousness). My account has some features of a «how possibly» explanation, but is intended to be empirically motivated. The second part of the lecture begins on some general questions of framing – materialism, monism, multiple realizability, concepts of experience and consciousness – that will continue in lecture 2. The boundaries between major topics do not exactly coincide with the boundaries between lectures, but I will try to ensure that each lecture remains self-contained.

Jeudi 9 juin

FRAMEWORK QUESTIONS, AND A START ON THE EVOLUTIONARY SEQUENCE

This lecture will be initially concerned with stage-setting, outlining positions on materialism, reductionism, multiple realizability and related topics. It will also look at the mind-body problem itself, and changes in how the problem has been conceived over recent decades. Solving the problem will involve a combination of critical moves that take us away from conceptions of the problem that make it look harder than it really is, and more positive moves bridging an «explanatory gap» that remains after the critical rethinking. In the latter part of the lecture I will start exploring the early history of animal life.

Mardi 14 juin

THE EVOLUTION OF EXPERIENCE

My account of the biological basis and origin of subjective experience has two elements. Part of the explanation is given in terms of the evolution of agency and subjectivity, as features of the animal way of being, and another part involves some particular characteristics of nervous systems. The evolutionary history of animals functions in my account as a constraint and a resource. I argue that there is probably a broad distribution of subjective experience across different kinds of animals, both past and present, though the usual «yes or no» question will probably have to be replaced in a framework that recognizes gradual change and graded presence. Some specific groups will be discussed, including cephalopods and various arthropods, as well as vertebrates.

Jeudi 16 juin

LATER STAGES, OBJECTIONS, AND ALTERNATIVES

The first part of the lecture will complete, and summarize, my evolutionary account and the place of subjectivity within animal life. This will include a look at human consciousness, and later stages in the evolutionary story. The rest of the lecture will be concerned with possible objections, alternatives to my view, and my reasons for not following paths seen in other discussions (Dehaene, LeDoux, and others). I'll also look at radically inclusive views – biopsychism and panpsychism – and at rejections of the possibility of a gradualist account of the origin of subjective experience.