

Abstract

Are animals rational ? [Les animaux sont-ils rationnels ?]

Doctoral dissertation

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The point of view adopted in this thesis is that the question of animal rationality must be addressed as a question of the extent, in the biological world, of economic rationality. It is suggested that rational agents should be classified as natural kinds rather than normative kinds. A mechanistic model of rational competence is proposed, inspired from adaptive control theories, and contrasted with the standard conception, which assimilate rationality with interpretability. It is concluded that the interpretive conception encounters many problems, and that the question of animal rationality is a problem of comparative biology rather than psychological interpretation. The vertebrate category is presented as a category that may be equipped with typical properties implemented by economic agents.

Keywords: Rationality, animals, evolution, economics, decision, naturalisation, biology.