Chapter 3


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ABSTRACT

What does “reasoning” mean? What is its purpose? And, how does it function? This chapter defines reasoning and the distinction between deductive and inductive reasoning. Secondly, the argumentative theory of reasoning proposed by Mercier and Sperber (2011) is presented to understand the purpose of the reasoning. This theory postulates that its function is to convince others and to evaluate information received when someone tries to convince another. Thirdly, the authors focus on the intervention model of reasoning developed by Evans (2011) to try to understand how the reasoning functions. This model is derived from dual-process theories and proposes a distinction between two types of processing in reasoning. The last part explains the importance of considering the emotional factor in the study on the reasoning process.

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INTRODUCTION

Before trying to understand why and how people reason, it seems necessary to understand what is the reasoning. After a definition of the reasoning, the authors will present first the argumentative theory of reasoning (Mercier & Sperber, 2011), which concerns the purpose of reasoning and sheds new light on errors of reasoning. This theory postulates that the function of reasoning is not to discover a rational truth but rather to find arguments supporting our point of view or decision in order to convince others, and to evaluate and filter information we receive when someone tries to convince us (Mercier & Sperber, 2011).

Secondly, the authors will focus on the intervention model of reasoning (Evans, 2011) derived from dual-process theories. This model proposes a distinction between two types of processing in reasoning: Type 1, which leads to the formulation of an initial intuitive conclusion, and Type 2, which is always involved but whose effectiveness depends on individual or task characteristics. Details about this model and Type 1 and Type 2 will be presented in this part.

To conclude, this chapter will present research on the link between emotion and reasoning. Although emotions do not appear in the reasoning model proposed by Evans (2011), many studies indicate a strong link between these two processes throughout development (Amsterlaw, Lagattuta, & Meltzoff, 2009; Blanchette & Campbell, 2012; Blanchette, Lindsay, & Davies, 2014; Eliades, Mansell, Stewart, & Blanchette, 2012; Muris, Merckelbach, & van Spauwen, 2003; Schwarz & Bless, 1991; Tricard, Maintenant, & Pennequin, 2018).

WHAT DOES “REASONING” MEAN?

A Definition of Reasoning

Used in many everyday situations (e.g. to convince someone, to solve a problem or to demonstrate a point), reasoning is defined as “the mental activity used to produce an argument or to assess the conclusion or proof of the argument” (Rossi & Van Der Henst, 2007, p. 26). First and foremost, reasoning involves making an inference in order to draw a conclusion from the multiple elements of a situation, and then to evaluate its validity. In psychology, inference refers to the ability to draw a conclusion from elements of the situation that are already known (the premises).

First, based on Rossi and van der Henst’s definition (2007), reasoning is the mental activity underpinning this activity, in other words, the cognitive process. There are many theories of human reasoning. In this chapter, the authors focus on
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