

Shoddy Scholarship or Something More Sinister?

The Real Enigma of Reason

SUMMARY OF THIS PACKET

Serious questions have emerged regarding the scholarship behind the book, *The Enigma of Reason: A New Theory of Human Understanding* (paperback, Harvard, 2018). The authors, Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber, claim to offer a novel account of human reasoning, namely that it evolved to solve the joint problems of argumentation and justification.

The problem is that central ideas promoted as new are not. They have been in press since 2003, in the form of the Justification Hypothesis (JH; Henriques, 2003). More to the point, Dr. Mercier was made aware of the literature on the Justification Hypothesis back in 2013 in an email exchange. Since that time, Mercier and Sperber's theory of human reasoning moved from the argumentative theory in 2011 to one that includes the dual functions of argumentation and justification presently. In other words, their account of human reasoning went from being highly similar to the Justification Hypothesis in 2013 to being almost identical to it in 2017. And there is no discussion of the Justification Hypothesis anywhere in their book; rather they tout their view as a completely novel approach.

The facts are such that only one of two conclusions can be reached: Either (a) Mercier and Sperber have been remarkably negligent in their review of the literature, such that they are claiming to have a new idea that they were already informed about but somehow overlooked and thus their work is a striking example of shoddy scholarship; or (b) there is a more sinister explanation that they acted with intent.

The collected packet lays out the necessary materials to understand what has occurred. Readers can draw their own conclusions regarding which of the options is more likely.

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Shoddy Scholarship or Something More Sinister?

The Real Enigma of Reason

A blog to be posted on Psychology Today, Theory of Knowledge

In *The Enigma of Reason: A New Theory of Human Understanding* (Harvard, 2017; Paperback 2018), Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber claim to offer a novel account of human reasoning. “Reason,” the authors argue (p. 8), “has two main functions: that of producing reasons for justifying oneself, and that of producing arguments to convince others.”

The book lays out their “interactionist” approach to human reasoning and contrasts it to the “intellectualist” approach. The authors characterize the intellectualist approach as the standard formulation that emphasizes the idea that reasoning is valuable because it helps humans arrive at more precise and accurate conclusions about the world. In contrast, their interactionist approach emphasizes the notion that the social and linguistic evolutionary environment shaped the architecture of human reasoning and reason giving.

The authors’ purportedly new theory posits that there are two closely related components to human reasoning, which they call the “argumentative” and “justifying” functions. The argumentative function allows individuals to persuade skeptical others and to determine the legitimacy of others’ claims. The justifying function enables humans, as social actors, to generate accounts to themselves so that they can present their behavior in a socially justifiable manner. In the words of the authors (p. 8), “By giving reasons in order to explain and justify themselves people indicate what motivated and, in their eyes, justifies their ideas and actions.”

Although the book makes a strong case and offers a relatively thorough review of the literature, there is one glaring and enormous problem with it. They claim that this is a new account to explain the dynamics of human reason, but this claim is simply wrong. As regular readers of this blog know, the Justification Hypothesis (JH) offers almost an identical account of human reasoning. (In addition, the JH also offers an account of human self-consciousness and the evolution of culture). And it predates this book in the peer reviewed professional literature by almost 15 years.

A charitable person might wonder if the authors knew about the Justification Hypothesis. Indeed, that was what I presumed when I first encountered Mercier and Sperber’s theory of reasoning in 2013. Their initial account was called the ‘Argumentative Theory of Reasoning,’ and was first outlined in a major publication in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* in 2011. When I became aware of it in 2013, I was a bit concerned that the authors had not cited my work. After all, the parallels between the JH and the theory they put forth were substantial. The JH had been in print since 2003 and been the topic of several papers in peer reviewed journals by authors other than myself. (See the reference list at the end of this blog).

But it is a big world out there, and it was conceivable that the authors simply missed the JH in their review of the literature. To make the connection and to be sure they were aware of my work going forward, on September 9, 2013 I wrote to Dr. Hugo Mercier to inform him about the Justification Hypothesis and how it accounted for human reasoning in a similar way. In the email, I attached two papers. One was the [original 2003 paper](#) in which the JH is presented and the [other was the 2011 chapter on the JH from my book, A New Unified Theory of Psychology](#). In making contact I explained to

Dr. Mercier that “The Justification Hypothesis posits that human reasoning evolved because language created the adaptive problem of “reason giving” (aka justifying, which of course overlaps much with arguing). I employ an evolutionary argument and use the lens to understand modern research similar to the work you have done. Attached are two articles. I particularly recommend scanning the chapter on the JH to get a feel for where our ideas might intersect.”

On September 10, 2013, Dr. Mercier wrote back the following:

That was an interesting read!

I think an important difference is that your theory is part of a much broader one about the mind and consciousness, whereas we've tried to be more pointed and only talk about one cognitive mechanism (albeit an important one). We're also stressing more, I guess, the 'reception' side of the story: how reasoning is used not only to produce arguments, but also to evaluate them.

In my final reply I asked him to keep me informed of any major developments in their work. That was the end of our communication.

Several weeks ago (almost five years since this exchange), I happened upon their recent book and have since read it. Their model has indeed morphed in an important way since 2013. Instead of being solely the argumentative theory, it is now the “interactionist” approach to the evolution of reasoning/reason giving and is contrasted to the “intellectualist” approach. Even more striking is the fact that their theory goes from focusing solely on argumentation to highlighting both argumentation *and* justification (see p. 9 of their book). That is, in the four years since Dr. Mercier was explicitly made aware of the JH (in 2013) to when it was published in book form (in 2017), their theory went from being highly similar to the JH’s account of human reasoning to being almost identical to it. And while *The Enigma of Reason* has over 1000 citations included, the JH is not even mentioned, and none of the works on the JH are cited.

To see the remarkable parallels between the two ideas, see Table 1 (p. 4), which aligns the key claims of Mercier and Sperber’s “new account” with my 2003 article. In addition, I have generated a timeline so that folks are clear about what happened and when (p. 5), and, as noted, I have included relevant references published during or prior to 2011 (p. 6-7).

Mercier and Sperber are receiving much attention and credit for promoting this presumably novel idea. It is important that the record is set straight. Their interactionist approach is not a new idea; the JH encompasses all its key features, and it was published almost 15 years prior. Even more crucial in terms of academic integrity, the first author was made aware of the JH, along with when and where it had been published. And he read up on the JH and acknowledged the similarities. And their account morphed directly towards it and yet there was no citation.

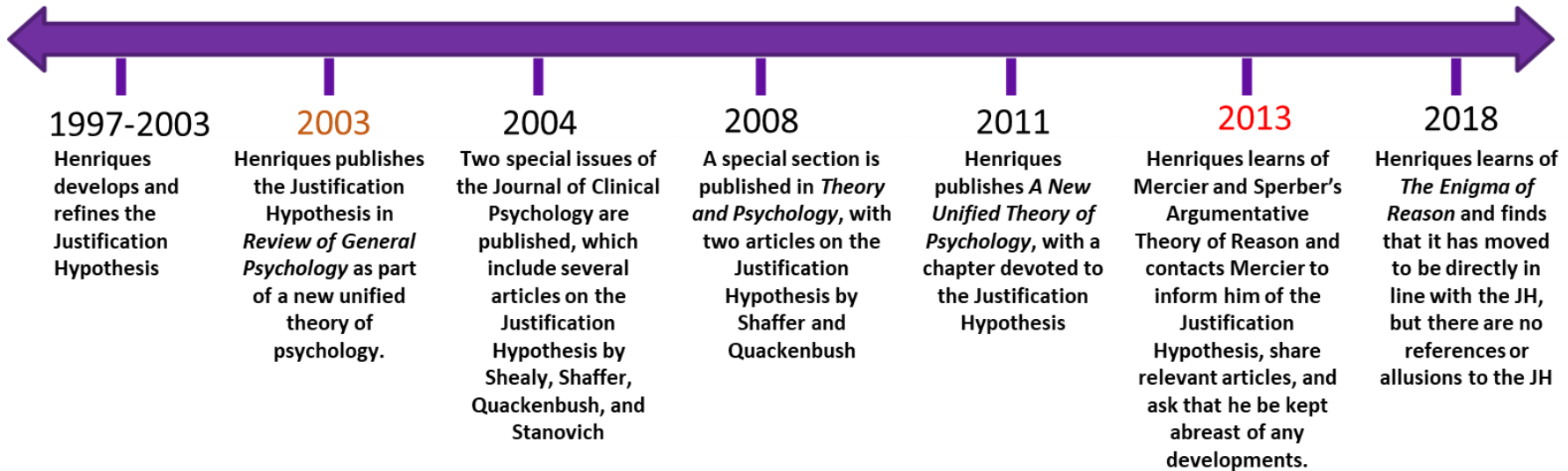
As such, I think they should be asked to explain the omission and their claim that they are offering a new and original theory of human reasoning when the facts suggest otherwise. It will be interesting to hear the justifications and arguments they offer for this disturbing state of affairs.

Post Script: As noted on pages 8-14 of this packet, Drs. Mercier and Sperber have been made aware of this issue and replied with strong denials of any wrongdoing whatsoever. They argue that they glanced at the papers on the Justification Hypothesis, decided they were not relevant and moved on. I will leave it to the readers to judge if there is, in fact, relevant overlap.

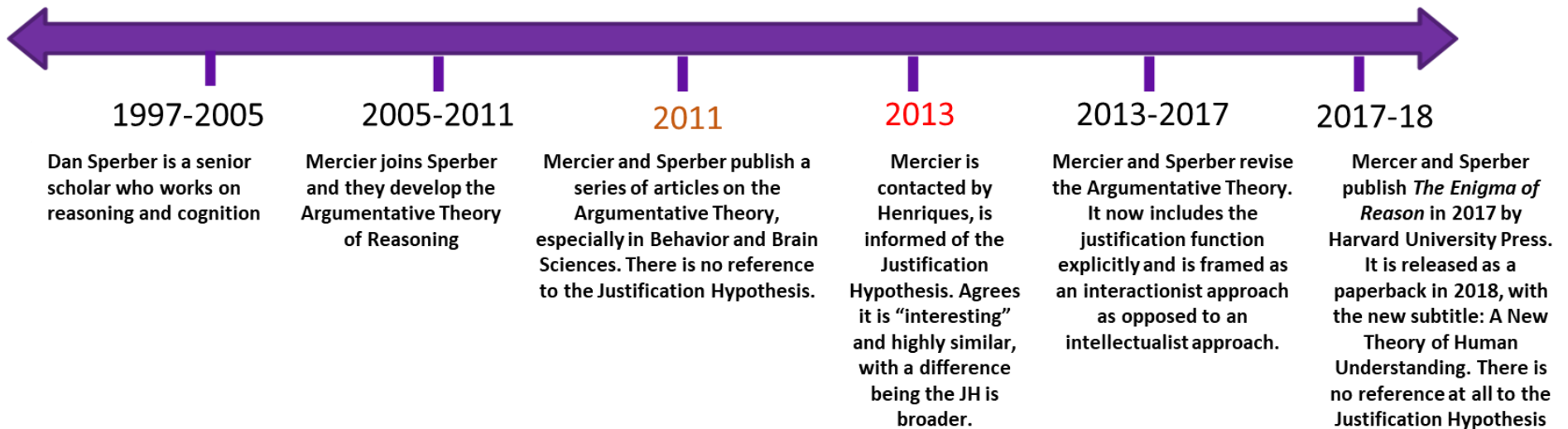
Table 1. The Similarities between the Interactionist Account and the Justification Hypothesis (as published in 2003) on the Evolution of Human Reasoning in 2017/2018.

	Henriques (2003)	Mercier and Sperber (2017/2018)
1. The idea that human reason is shaped by evolution in a socio-linguistic environment involving justification and persuasion.	“Effectively justifying one’s actions almost certainly was a new, difficult, and extremely important problem for our ancestors to be able to solve, precisely the type of adaptive problem that would lead to strong selection pressures and rapid evolutionary change.” (p. 172)	“Reason, we will argue, evolved as a response to problems encountered in the social environment rather than solitary thinking.” (p. 182-183)
2. The idea that there are two domains of reason giving, to self and to others	“The JH suggests that humans have such a strongly developed sense of folk psychology because they are the only species that has had to articulate what they think to others. Likewise, humans are the only animals that have had to evaluate the legitimacy of others’ explanations.” (p. 171)	“Reason has two main functions: that of producing reasons for justifying oneself, and that of producing arguments to convince others.” (p. 8)
3. Framing the problem of reasoning as the difference between the Analytic/Intellectual versus Social/Interactionist Approach	“The ideological goals of the two institutions (i.e., science and law) help illustrate the conceptual distinction [between reasoning analytically and reasoning socially]. Because the law is a good example of a justification system, an analogy comparing the human ego (i.e., the reasoning self-consciousness system) with the role of defense attorney is helpful in clarifying the implications.” (p. 173)	Paraphrasing the overview of the book, offered on the bottom of page 11: The focus of the book is to convince readers that humans reason based on a social interactionist approach rather than primarily attempting to arrive at the accurate answer (what they call the intellectualist approach).
4. Explaining the empirical findings that humans are better at social motivated versus analytic reasoning, and that the reasoning system operates based on short cuts framed by social motives.	“The JH further suggests that the general reasoning capacity in humans emerged out of determining what is and what is not justifiable in the social context. This gives rise to another implication of the JH. If social reasoning gave rise to general reasoning, then humans should be particularly adept at social reasoning, at least in comparison with other forms of general reasoning. This is precisely the case. Cognitive psychologists have long noted that people reason more effectively about what they may, ought, or must not do in a given set of social circumstances than they do when reasoning generally.” (p. 175)	“Psychologists generally recognize that reasoning is biased and lazy...Yet most maintain that the main function of reason is to enhance individual cognition—a task it fails at abysmally. The interactionist perspective, on the other hand, offers for the first time an evolutionary plausible account of the often decried biases and shortcomings of reason.” (p. 10)
5. Explaining fact that reasoning/reason giving is biased toward self interest.	In explaining how the JH accounts for self-serving biases: “Defense attorneys are, by definition, biased in terms of how they explain their client’s behavior, and they work to explain their client’s behavior in a way that affords the most social influence. Thus, according to the JH, people should tend to explain their behavior and the things that happen to them in a manner that affords the most social influence. In an article titled “The Totalitarian Ego,” Greenwald (1980) surveyed the vast social psychological literature on how information about the self is processed. He likened the human ego to a personal historian that is totalitarian and relentless in the manner in which it revises and fabricates history to make the individual seem more important, cognitively consistent, altruistic, and effective than the evidence would warrant. Taylor and her colleagues (Taylor & Brown, 1988, 1994; see also D. L. Krebs & Denton, 1997) concluded that most people (a) view themselves in unrealistically positive terms, (b) believe they have greater control over their environment than is actually the case, and (c) have a more rosy view of their future than the base rate data could justify.” (p. 173)	“The lawyer analogy of reasoning [which had just been covered] brings to mind a context in which persuasion is paramount and the myside bias makes obvious sense: when defending a point of view the myside bias is a good thing. It is a feature, not a bug. This fits with the prediction of the interactionist approach. If the function of reasoning, when it produces reasons, is to justify one’s actions or to convince others, then it should have a myside bias.” (p. 219)

Timeline for Henriques' Development of the Justification Hypothesis



Timeline for Mercier and Sperber's Development of the Argumentative into Interactionist Approach



References

Mercier and Sperber's Primary Article on the Argumentative Theory of Reasoning

Mercier, H. and Sperber, D. (2011). Why do humans reason? Arguments for an argumentative theory. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 34(2): 57-72.

Mercier and Sperber's Book on the Interactionist Approach

Mercier, H. and Sperber, D. (2018; Paperback). *The enigma of reason: A new theory of human understanding*. Harvard University Press.

Articles on the Justification Hypothesis published by Henriques

***Henriques, G. (2003). The tree of knowledge system and the theoretical unification of psychology. *Review of General Psychology*, 7, 150-182. doi: 10.1037/1089-2680.7.2.150**

Henriques, G. (2004). Psychology defined. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 60, 1207-1221. doi: 10.1002/jclp.20061

Henriques, G. (2005). Toward a useful mass movement. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 61, 121-139.

Henriques, G. (2008). The problem of psychology and the integration of human knowledge: Contrasting Wilson's Consilience with the Tree of Knowledge System. *Theory and Psychology*, 18, 731-755. doi: 10.1177/0959354308097255

***Henriques, G. (2011). The Justification Hypothesis.** Chapter 5, In *A New Unified Theory of Psychology*. <https://unifiedtheoryofpsychology.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/the-justification-hypothesis.pdf> (this was published the same year, but was given to Dr. Mercier, so I list here)

***These are the two attachments** I sent to Dr. Hugo Mercier in 2013.

Professional journal publications that discuss the Justification Hypothesis by other authors prior to 2011

Anchin, J. C. (2008). The critical role of the dialectic in viable meta-theory: A commentary on Henriques' Tree of Knowledge System for integrating human knowledge. *Theory and Psychology*, 18, 801-816.

Calhoun, L. G. (2004). The unification of psychology: A noble quest. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 60, 1283-1289.

Katzko, M. W. (2008). Pruning the Tree of Knowledge. *Theory and Psychology*, 18, 817-828.

Quackenbush, S. W. (2005). Remythologizing culture: Narrativity, justification and the politics of personalization. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 61, 67-80. doi: 10.1002/jclp.20091

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- Shaffer, L.S. (2005). From mirror self-recognition to the looking-glass self: Exploring the Justification Hypothesis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 61*(1), 47-65.
- Shaffer, L. S. (2006). Durkheim's aphorism, the Justification Hypothesis, and the nature of social facts. *Sociological Viewpoints, 22*, 57-70.
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- Shealy, C. N. (2005). Justifying the Justification Hypothesis: Scientific-Humanism, Equilintegration (EI) Theory, and the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI). *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 61*, 81-106. doi: 0.1002/jclp.20092
- Stanovich, K. (2004). Metarepresentation and the great cognitive divide: A commentary on Henriques' "Psychology Defined". *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 60*, 1263-1266.
- Vazire, S. & Robins, R. (2004). Beyond the Justification Hypothesis: A broader theory of the evolution of self-consciousness. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 60*, 1271-1273.

Replies from Drs. Mercier and Sperber

Dr. Sperber and Mercier have been informed regarding the concerns about plagiarism. They were first made aware of these concerns on June 20, 2018, when, unbeknownst to me at the time, a person who knew of the Justification Hypothesis posted a critique of *The Enigma of Reason* on Amazon, accusing the authors of “intellectual theft.” (Appendix A offers a screen shot of this exchange). Dr. Mercier responded on Amazon to this review within hours, denying all knowledge of the JH. He wrote:

“Although it is possible that Dr. Henriques has some relevant insights, I can assure you that neither of us had ever heard of him or his hypotheses (they really don’t seem to be as popular as you paint them to be). To be honest, reading a bit more now, I doubt that there are that many similarities (for example, ours is not a theory of consciousness at all), but even if there were, that is a common enough occurrence (and, then, if we’d known about these ideas, we would have happily acknowledged them).”

If we take this post at face value, we are to believe that Dr. Mercier proceeded to review my work and extracted enough knowledge of the JH and how it was not related to their work in a short time. And doing so apparently never sparked recognition in him that he had been informed by me about and read up the ideas our years earlier.

Importantly, in the post Dr. Mercier also claims to *know* that Dr. Sperber was also ignorant of of the JH. However, as noted below, Dr. Sperber states in his correspondence that he did not hear of the Amazon review until after June 26. Thus, this means that Dr. Mercier made this claim without ever checking with Dr. Sperber about it. How could Dr. Mercier be so sure that Dr. Sperber did *not know about the JH without even asking him?*

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When I saw Dr. Mercier’s denial on Amazon, I thought it was possible that Dr. Sperber was not aware of the situation. In consultation with others, it was deemed that the ethical thing to do was to open up a line of communication with Dr. Sperber to inform him of the situation and to obtain his narrative. If Dr. Mercier had taken from the JH and not told Dr. Sperber, I would not want to be accusing Dr. Sperber of anything sinister.

Dr. Joe Michalski (Associate Academic Dean at King’s College Canada) agreed to be a potential mediator for this delicate situation, and together we reached out to Dr. Sperber on June 26, 2018. We sent a note (marked highly important) that we wanted to speak with him regarding an important matter concerning intellectual property. We did not hear from him and sent a second note on June 27th. (See Appendix B, which includes: (I) the initial notification email; (II) Dr. Sperber’s initial reply; (III) Dr. Michalski’s follow up reply; and (IV) Dr. Sperber’s final reply).

On June 28th, Dr. Sperber offered an initial reply to Dr. Michalski only (Appendix B, II). The reply was strong in its denial of any wrong doing. He stated that any claims regarding intellectual property issues were “delusional” and replied only to Dr. Michalski because he did not want to dignify the concern with a direct reply to Dr. Henriques.

Dr. Michalski responded (III) by explaining that the situation was, in fact, quite complicated. He narrated to Dr. Sperber how Dr. Henriques had contacted Dr. Mercier, shared the JH, that Dr. Mercier had replied, and how their ideas had moved from argumentation to justification in the interim.

Dr. Sperber responded (IV) and once again denied any wrongdoing. He proceeded to offer a longer justification as to why claims of plagiarism were completely misguided. He reiterated having never heard of me or my work prior to June 26, 2018, and he never had read anything on the Justification Hypothesis. He stated that he, not Dr. Mercier, was the one who had the idea to move their theory from argumentation to justification. And he was the one who “wrote all the passages” about that issue in the book.

Because it is important relative to the time line of events, here is a paragraph from Dr. Sperber’s June 28 to Dr. Michalski email summarizing how he came to be aware of my work:

“After I received Dr Henriques mail, a couple of days ago, I asked my co-author Hugo Mercier if he had ever heard of him, and he directed me to the 'review' at Amazon.com. Two hours later or so, he wrote to me again, saying that, checking his old email, he now realized he had had, and had forgotten, an email exchange with this Dr Henriques in 2013, which he copied to me. Dr Henriques sent him two papers of his on September 9, 2013. Already on September 10, Hugo sent the message that you quote in your mail. This is the type of message you send when you receive a paper out of the blue and look at it cursorily and when you are a kind and considerate person, as Hugo is. We received many messages, papers etc. after the publication of our BBS paper; most of them, rightly or wrongly, we didn't find particularly relevant and we didn't share with one another. Hugo, in particular didn't share Dr Henriques' papers with me.”

For clarity, what Dr. Sperber is saying is that Dr. Mercier completely forgot about the initial exchange with me. Indeed, he had so completely forgotten hearing from me that even when he reviewed the JH to determine that it was not related in the hours that followed the critical review on Amazon, he still did not recall that he had read it earlier.

Dr. Mercier claims that he did not contact Dr. Sperber about the review, which was posted on June 20, for it was only after Dr. Sperber heard from me (June 26) that he and Dr. Mercier dialogue about the Amazon review. And it was only after a prompt from Dr. Sperber, six days after writing the reply to the review in Amazon, that it dawned on Dr. Mercier that he may have heard about the JH previously. He then checked his email and found the exchange and papers dating back to 2013, at which point he shared them with Dr. Sperber.

It should also be noted here that apparently this entire episode did not result in any concern or curiosity from Dr. Sperber. In regard to his second reply, he still claims to know (a) nothing of the Justification Hypothesis or my work; and (b) nevertheless is not concerned either about a proper literature review or issues of intellectual property.

Appendix A:

Screenshot of Amazon Review and Dr. Mercier's reply

Customer Review

☆☆☆☆☆ **This book is Intellectual Theft**
By [Book Lover](#) on June 20, 2018
Format: Hardcover

This book is nothing more than intellectual property theft.

Let me clarify. The idea that humans are the only animals that can access another thoughts via words and questions is hugely important, thus the material covered in the book is important. But the authors didn't come up with this "novel" or "revolutionary" idea, and not only is this a simple case of 2 people coming up with a similar idea at the same time, anything more than a cursory review makes it clear the authors are intentionally pilfering the idea of another academic scholar. Dr. Henriques, a psychologist and one of the nation's leading experts on suicides and depression, put forth the Justification Hypothesis back in 2003 in his Tree of Knowledge system. He clearly explains how the Justification Hypothesis works and why it had such a radical impact on our evolution and development. These ideas simply copy his, with zero references or acknowledgements (indeed the lack of referencing his work is even more damning because it is obvious they intentionally left references to him out). And it isn't like this was a "one and done" deal with one obscure paper that a person can't be expected to read, he has been talking about these ideas in many public venues, including multiple peer reviewed journals, for 15 years.

Are the ideas presented in this book important? Yes. Are they the authors' original and novel ideas? Absolutely not. And I don't believe it is a good idea to support those that take the work of others and propose it as their own.

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[Hugo Mercier](#) 3 hours ago (Edited) [Report abuse](#)

Although it is possible that Dr Henriques had some relevant insights, I can assure you that neither of us had ever heard of him or of his hypotheses (they really don't seem to be as popular as you paint them to be). To be honest, reading a bit about it now, I doubt there are that many similarities (for example ours isn't a theory of consciousness at all), but even if there were, that's a common enough occurrence (and, then, if we'd known about these ideas, we would have happily acknowledged them).

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by [Hugo Mercier](#)

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Appendix B:
Email Exchanges with Dr. Sperber

I. HENRIQUES NOTIFICATION EMAIL

From: Henriques, Gregg
Sent: Wednesday, June 26, 2018
To: Dan Sperber
Cc: Joseph Michalski
Subject: important intellectual property matter
Importance: High

Dear Professor Sperber:

I am writing because I need to communicate with you about an important issue regarding intellectual property and the book you have recently co-authored with Dr. Hugo Mercier, *The Enigma of Reason: A New Theory of Human Understanding* (Harvard Press, 2017/2018). I would appreciate it if you could please reply to this email indicating that you have received this note, and that you will look for the next correspondence from me. Upon receiving your reply, I will share with you the necessary information. Note, at this point I am only contacting you rather than both you and Dr. Mercier for reasons that will become clear in my next correspondence. Thank you for your willingness to attend to this important matter.

(I am ccing a college, Associate Dean at Kings College in Canada, Dr. Joe Michalski, who has served to consult me about this matter. Please cc him also on this reply).

Sincerely,
Gregg

Gregg Henriques, Ph.D.
Professor
Department of Graduate Psychology

II. SPERBER'S INITIAL REPLY

From: Dan Sperber
Sent: Thursday, June 28, 2018 9:44 AM
To: Joseph Michalski
Subject: The Enigma of Reason

Dear Dr Michalski,

As you probably know, Dr Gregg Henriques has send me (and now resent) an email message, cc-ed to you, that I find not only weird but also, in the light of an Amazon.com libellous review of our book, *The Enigma of Reason*, entitled "This book is Intellectual Theft" that Dr Henriques must have at least inspired, offensive. Dr Henriques seems to believe that, in our book, we have stolen ideas of his. This is doubly delusional. His work has had no influence on ours whatsoever. Moreover, ideas about justification that we discuss in a few pages of our book and that he seems to think we have stolen from him go back to Aristotle and have been quite extensively discussed in 20th century philosophy, psychology, and sociology. We give relevant references.

If you are a friend of Dr Henriques, you would render him a service by reassuring him that he has not been the victim of intellectual theft. If need be, a competent and honest lawyer would point out that he doesn't have even the beginning of a case.

Here is why I will not directly answer Dr Henriques' messages nor engage in any discussion with him. If, by reading our book, he could come to the conclusion that we have stolen ideas from him, then there is nothing I could say that would convince him otherwise. I don't have the time for this.

Sincerely,

Dan Sperber

III. MICHALSKI'S REPLY TO SPERBER

From: Joseph Michalski
Sent: Wednesday, June 27, 2018 8:15 AM
To: Dan Sperber

Dear Professor Sperber:

I appreciate that you are a busy academician with many other obligations. I will be brief. It seems that there are a couple of key facts you may not be aware of that complicate matters. I certainly agree that if you were not aware of the Justification Hypothesis, then this would not be an issue and there would be friendly dialogue about the overlap in ideas going forward. As a community, ideally we connect regularly with those in our respective fields with respect to the latest ideas and research.

That's where things were in 2013 and why, when Dr. Henriques became aware of your and Dr. Mercier's work, he did the collegial thing by contacting Dr. Mercier to share his own work on the Justification Hypothesis. The Hypothesis explicitly characterizes the evolved design of human reasoning & reason giving as an adaptive response to the problem of human language and social influence. Dr. Henriques' first article came out in 2003 and his book was published in 2011 (along with several more articles by Dr. Henriques and other colleagues).

In response to the materials he received, Dr. Mercier wrote back the following to Dr. Henriques on September 10, 2013:

**That was an interesting read! I think an important difference is that your theory is part of a much broader one about the mind and consciousness, whereas we've tried to be more pointed and only talk about one cognitive mechanism (albeit an important one). We're also stressing more, I guess, the 'reception' side of the story: how reasoning is used not only to produce arguments, but also to evaluate them. Thanks for sending the papers.
take care,
Hugo**

Dr. Henriques thanked him and requested that he be informed about any new developments. Since that time, the theory of human reason proffered in *The Enigma of Reason* is the idea that human reason evolved not only to serve as a basis of argumentation, but of justification as well. This makes it almost identical to the Justification Hypothesis. Hence I think part of the concern is Dr. Mercier's denial that he'd ever heard of the Justification Hypothesis and stating that he would have cited this work had he been aware.

I am not recommending litigation or anything along those lines, but I merely offered to serve as a mediator in the hopes of gaining some clarity and mutual understanding as to what has happened. As you well know, the currency of ideas and our reputations as scholars are the most important resources we have as academicians.

Sincerely,
Joe
Dr. Joseph H. Michalski
Associate Academic Dean; King's University College at Western University

IV. SPERBER'S SECOND REPLY

From: Dan Sperber <dan.sperber@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 28, 2018 3:25 PM
To: Joseph Michalski
Subject: Re: The Enigma of Reason

Dear Dr Michalski,

Thank you for your prompt response. I appreciate that you "merely offered to serve as a mediator in the hopes of gaining some clarity and mutual understanding as to what has happened," and I agree with you that "the currency of ideas and our reputations as scholars are the most important resources we have as academicians." In this spirit of responsible common sense, let me share with you some information about the facts of the matter.

After I received Dr Henriques mail, a couple of days ago, I asked my co-author Hugo Mercier if he had ever heard of him, and he directed me to the 'review' at Amazon.com. Two hours later or so, he wrote to me again, saying that, checking his old email, he now realized he had had, and had forgotten, an email exchange with this Dr Henriques in 2013, which he copied to me. Dr Henriques sent him two papers of his on September 9, 2013. Already on September 10, Hugo sent the message that you quote in your mail. This is the type of message you send when you receive a paper out of the blue and look at it cursorily and when you are a kind and considerate person, as Hugo is. We received many messages, papers etc. after the publication of our BBS paper; most of them, rightly or wrongly, we didn't find particularly relevant and we didn't share with one another. Hugo, in particular didn't share Dr Henriques' papers with me.

I am the one who, at a later date in the writing of our book, started thinking that we should approach the use of reasons for justification and their use for argumentation in an integrated manner when discussing the mechanism of reason. I wrote all the passages about the issue in our book. I am originally a social scientist and I may have been influenced in taking this approach by old readings of the extensive work of Jürgen Habermas on reason and justification. I was also influenced on this issue by the work of the philosopher Joseph Raz. A third source is the work of Jon Haidt on moral justification, which had already influenced our earlier work.

As I mentioned, I first came across the name of Dr. Henriques when I received his mail a couple of days ago. Maybe too bad for me, but I have never read any of his work. In any case, the idea that justification and reason are closely linked, while neglected in recent psychology of reasoning, is not a particularly original one. I would be surprised if the way we used this idea in our theory of human reason and the way Dr. Henriques used it for his own goals weren't rather different. Be that as it may, there is no issue of intellectual theft here at all. The 'review' at Amazon.com that claims that there is is a direct and totally unjustified attack on our "reputation as scholars" (to use your words), which I resent.

Sincerely,

Dan

Appendix C:
2013 Email Exchanges with Dr. Mercier

Original Email reaching out to Dr. Mercier

On Mon, Sep 9, 2013 at 8:14 PM, Henriques, Gregg - henriqgx <henriqgx@jmu.edu> wrote:

Hi Hugo,

A while back I read your B&BS article on a human theory of reasoning, and I have been meaning to write since then because I had a similar idea that might be of interest to you. It is called the "Justification Hypothesis" and posits that human reasoning evolved because language created the adaptive problem of "reason giving" (aka justifying, which of course overlaps much with arguing). I employ an evolutionary argument and use the lens to understand modern research similar to the work you have done.

Attached are two articles. I particularly recommend scanning the chapter on the JH to get a feel for where our ideas might intersect. I would be happy to discuss this further if you are interested.

Best,

Gregg

Professor

From: Hugo Mercier

Sent: Monday, September 09, 2013 11:26 PM

To: Henriques, Gregg - henriqgx

Subject: Re: Argumentative Theory and Justification Hypothesis

Hi Gregg,

Thanks a lot for sending this, I'll give the papers a look as soon as possible and get back to you!

Cheers,

Hugo

On Tue, Sep 10, 2013 at 2:43 PM, Henriques, Gregg - henriqgx <henriqgx@jmu.edu> wrote:

Thanks, Hugo. Look forward to it.

Best,

Gregg

Professor

From: Hugo Mercier

Sent: Tuesday, September 10, 2013 10:32 PM

To: Henriques, Gregg

Subject: Re: Argumentative Theory and Justification Hypothesis

That was an interesting read!

I think an important difference is that your theory is part of a much broader one about the mind and consciousness, whereas we've tried to be more pointed and only talk about one cognitive mechanism (albeit an important one). We're also stressing more, I guess, the 'reception' side of the story: how reasoning is used not only to produce arguments, but also to evaluate them.

Thanks for sending the papers

take care

hugo

Wed 9/11/2013 2:52 PM

Hi Hugo,

Thanks for taking the time to check out what I sent. I agree with your assessment of the differences. If there are any major developments in your work please let me know.

Best,

Gregg

Gregg Henriques, Ph.D.

Professor