University of Edinburgh
Psychology Seminar Series

Nick Chater
Professor of Behavioural Science, Warwick Business School

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F21, 7 George Square, EH8 9JZ

Joint Reasoning in Social Interaction: A Virtual Bargaining Approach
(with Tigran Melkonyan, Jennifer Misyak & Hossam Zeitoun)

Successful social interaction involves coordinating thoughts and behaviour between people. But how is such coordination achieved? If each person attempts to second-guess the thoughts and behaviour of the other, there is a danger of an infinite regress.

We introduce a new approach: that people can reason jointly about what they would agree to think or do, were they able to negotiate. That is, they reason not about “What will you do?” and “What should I do?, but rather “What should we agree to do?” Where it is “obvious” what a resultant such negotiation would be, no actual communication is required: we can coordinate our thoughts and actions through a simulation of the bargaining process.

Virtual bargaining provides a new foundation for understanding the reasoning that underpins social behaviour, including communication itself.