



Gordon Pennycook

University of Regina, Canada

11 MAY 2021

Intuition, reason, and social media

Abstract:

A growing folk-psychological narrative contends that social media algorithms are so effective that they impact our very cognition. This narrative coincides with prominent claims from psychologists about the power of intuition and infirmity of reason insofar as our capacity to engage in analytic thinking is unable to overcome the (perhaps unconscious) influence of the social media algorithms. In this talk, I will present evidence that reports of the death of reason have been greatly exaggerated. Our research shows that people can and do override their intuitions and that reasoning often facilitates accurate belief formation. Furthermore, although social media may impact what is salient to us when making choices about what to share with others, this is not intractable. In fact, simple prompts that remind people to think about accuracy are sufficient to increase the quality of the news content that people share. This indicates that unreasonable behavior on social media is more a function of lazy thinking than of an inability for people to overcome social media algorithms.