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Stream A: Consciousness and Naturalism

Title: Three evolved domains of belief: predictive, cooperative, and communicative.

Abstract: Applying a functional analysis to the broad category 'belief' gives insight into the possible nature and evolution of a range of types of belief including scientific, moral, and religious belief. Here I present Quine and Ullian's (1978) account of the web of belief, Quine's account of the conceptual scheme of science (1980), Spelke and Kinzler's (2007) account of core knowledge systems, van Leeuwen's functional analysis of belief (2014) and Dennett's account of physical and intentional stances (1987). I present these accounts as models to illustrate how we might identify distinct functional roles of distinct cognitive processes that generate distinct types of cognitive content (all traditionally located within the folk psychological category of 'belief'). I then offer my own account of distinct functional roles that may explain three domains of belief, these being predictive belief, cooperative belief and communicative belief. I suggest that there are distinct cognitive systems that have been selected for by natural selection due to their propensity to generate beliefs that further prediction, cooperation, and communication, respectively. My proposal does not preclude the existence of other systems, but these systems are discussed because they are likely to exist due to the evolutionary importance of prediction, cooperation and communication.

References**:**
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Spelke, E. & Kinzler, K. (2007). Core Knowledge. *Developmental Science 10*(1), 89-96.
van Leeuwen, N. (2014). Religious credence is not factual belief. *Cognition 133*(3), 698–715.

Bio: Graham Wood's research concerns the relationship between human values and scientific perspectives. He examines this relationship within three realms: moral psychology, cognitive science of religion, and environmental philosophy. In his research moral, religious, and environmental values are examined using insights from philosophy of mind, cognitive science, and evolutionary psychology.