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Explaining the Minimal Counterintuitiveness Effect Without Assuming A Strongly Modular Mind

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Abstract: This paper outlines two approaches to account for the finding that concepts that are minimally counterintuitive are better remembered than intuitive or maximally counterintuitive concepts. The first approach considers such memory advantages to be a property of the concepts themselves while the second approach emphasizes the role played by the context in which such concepts appear in allowing a reader to make sense of them. The context-based view also suggests that counterintuitive concepts lose their advantages as they become widely accepted and embedded in a cultural milieu. In the new context, ideas with enhanced counterintuitiveness obtain transmission advantages. This helps explain cultural innovation and dynamism. It also allows us to account for the development and spread of complex cultural ideas such as the overly counterintuitive religious concepts including the Judeo-Christian-Islamic conceptions of God.