

# MSHS

AXE 1 COGNITION & COOPÉRATION  
AXE 2 TIC, USAGES ET COMMUNAUTÉS

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Disciplines  
concernées a  
priori :

psychologie,  
linguistique,  
philosophie



Quentin Matsys, The Money Changer and His Wife (1514), Musée du Louvre, Paris.

## Ownership outside the law: The psychological roots of children's ownership judgments

### Conférence

#### Axe 1 - MSHS Sud-Est -

Ownership is a major influence on how people think and feel about objects, and how they use them. For instance, people value and prefer their own possessions over non-owned objects; ownership impacts people's memory for objects; and ownership even influences how people physically handle objects. One influential view of ownership distinguishes between "psychological" and "legal" aspects of ownership. For instance, people can feel ownership over material goods that are not actually theirs, and can also feel little or no ownership over goods that do belong to them. This suggests that feelings of ownership do not always match legal ownership status.

However, there are reasons to think that many "legal" aspects of ownership are actually psychological.

One reason to believe this is that people who have no legal training regularly make a variety of judgments about the ownership status of objects. Even toddlers and preschool-aged children make judgments about ownership status. Young children not only lack familiarity with the law, but their judgments about ownership may sometimes be at odds with adult input or intuitions. For instance, young children often uphold ownership rights in instances where adults' do not. As such, young children's sensitivity to the ownership suggests that the status of who owns an object is itself psychological (rather than legal), and that there is more to psychological ownership than feelings of ownership over goods.

In this talk, **Ori Friedman**

(**University of Waterloo**) will first review a series of experiments showing that ownership status shapes young children's judgments about objects. These studies show that ownership affects children's judgments even when owned objects are physically identical with other objects. They also show that ownership affects judgments that are fundamental to children's social reasoning, including judgments of how people should behave, and predictions of how they will behave. He will then outline a psychological account of how young children conceive of ownership rights, and describe some experiments providing preliminary support for this account. Finally, I will suggest that this account may also explain some peculiarities in adults' judgments about what can be owned.