The struggle for reputation

Péter Érdi

in Ranking: The Unwritten Rules of the Social Game We All Play

This chapter discusses what reputation is and why and how we are struggling for it. Reputation can be considered a form of currency, and our reputation determines whether or not other people invest in us, buy from us, or give us some kind of reward. Indirect reciprocity is an efficient evolutionary mechanism that has led to the emergence of reputation. In the Internet age, digital reputation plays a particularly important role. After a brief discussion about the measurement of reputation, the chapter turns to the rules of the ranking games that scientists and artists play. The rules for these players are better elaborated than the rules for other communities. The illusion and manipulation of objectivity is discussed and related to two of the most prestigious awards: the Nobel Prize and the Academy Award. A recurring perspective in the book, namely the navigation between objectivity and subjectivity, is analyzed, here in the context of the nomination and selection processes for each award. The author then turns to digital reputation. Since a big industry has emerged with the goal of making websites more visible, the search engine manipulation effect and its possible impact is discussed.