

International Seminar on Paleontology, Evolution,
Paleoecosystems and Paleoprimatology
Room 410, build. B35 (3rd floor, northern wing)

Tuesday 15th March 2022 – 13h00

Bipedalism in hominins: scientific advances, epistemological issues

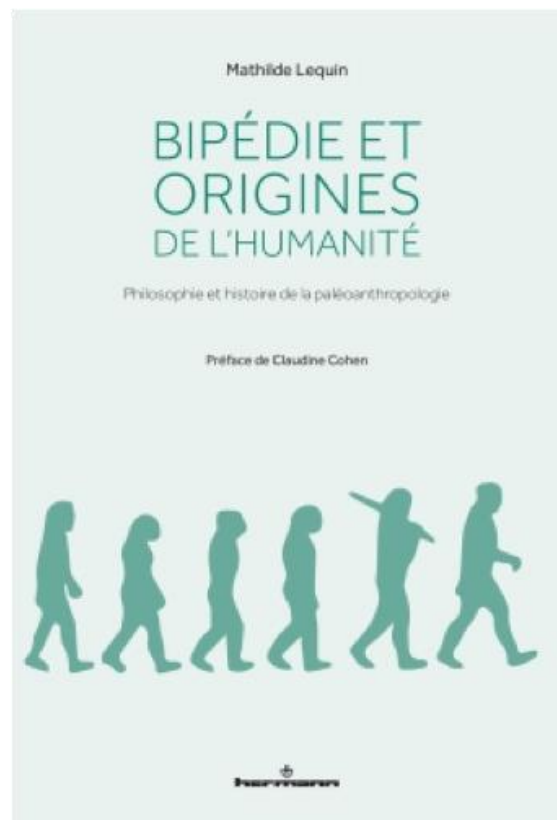


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Bipedalism is considered to be one of the characteristics of the hominin lineage (including all taxa closer to extant humans than to extant chimpanzees and bonobos). Therefore, it is one of the defining criteria that paleoanthropologists use to determine whether a fossil specimen belongs to the taxon Hominini. Interpretation of fossil remains has often been based on circular reasoning that defines hominins as bipedal and interprets any "bipedal" feature as necessarily being a hominin feature. But in recent decades, fossil discoveries have led to question this conception of "bipedalism", suggesting a marked locomotor diversity among hominins, and even among European Miocene hominoids. I will analyze this reconfiguration of the question of bipedalism and its consequences in the use of bipedalism to define what is or is not hominin.



Mathilde Lequin is a researcher at the CNRS. She is a philosopher and a specialist in the epistemology of paleoanthropology. Her work focuses on the criteria for interpreting fossils and for defining the human being at different taxonomic levels through questioning past human diversity, at the crossroads of the philosophy of biology and philosophical anthropology.