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CARE, SOCIAL PRACTICES AND NORMATIVITY. INNER STRUGGLE VERSUS PANGLOSSIAN RULE-FOLLOWING

abstract

Contrary to the popular assumption that linguistically mediated social practices constitute the normativity of action (Kiverstein and Rietveld, 2015; Rietveld, 2008a,b; Rietveld and Kiverstein, 2014), I argue that it is affective care for oneself and others that primarily constitutes this kind of normativity. I argue for my claim in two steps. First, using the method of cases I demonstrate that care accounts for the normativity of action, whereas social practices do not. Second, I show that a social practice account of the normativity of action has unwillingly authoritarian consequences in the sense that humans act only normatively if they follow social rules. I suggest that these authoritarian consequences are the result of an uncritical phenomenology of action and the fuzzy use of "normative". Accounting for the normativity of action with care entails a realistic picture of the struggle between what one cares for and often repressive social rules.

1. Introduction Proponents of embodied cognition, following prominent phenomenologists, have come to appreciate the role that bodily abilities, embodied mechanisms, language and affective care play for the constitution of diverse kinds of normativity. They have developed accounts of normativity for animal cognition (Barandarian et al., 2009; Thompson, 2007; Thompson and Stapleton, 2009), ethics (Colombetti and Torrance, 2009; Urban, 2015), rationality (Gallagher, 2018) and everyday human action in general (Jeuk, 2017a, 2019; Kiverstein and Rietveld, 2015; Rietveld, 2008a,b; Rietveld and Kiverstein, 2014). And it is the last one, the normativity of human action, which I analyze in this paper.

I argue that care for oneself and others should be considered the main source of the normativity of everyday human actions, rather than linguistically mediated social practices. I establish my claim in contrast to Julian Kiverstein's and in particular Erik Rietveld's work. Their account, contrary to mine, emphasizes the importance of linguistically mediated social practices over care. I show that their account entails counterintuitive results if applied to several instances of everyday human action. I further show that the idea that social practices constitute the normativity of action has unwelcome ethical ramifications, if we switch our focus from idealized actions in the arts, in games and in professional sports to mundane instances of actions that are representative of the social reality of most humans.

2. Rietveld and Kiverstein on the Normativity of Everyday Actions Rietveld and Kiverstein have put particular emphasis on the co-constitutive role of care— what they call "concern"—, bodily skill and language for the normativity of action (Kiverstein and Rietveld, 2015; Rietveld, 2008a,b; Rietveld and Kiverstein, 2014). They depart from the assumption that human and *non-human* animals can perform normative actions.

> The normative standards at work in animal behaviour are not conferred on the animal from the outside. These are standards that originate in the animal's practical understanding of the possibilities for action the material environment offers. Animals in exercising their abilities and skills are no less capable of refining and improving their grip on the environment, and in doing so they display sensitivity to whether their grip on the environment is better or worse. Some way of engaging with the environment can be better or worse relative to the activities in which animals belonging to a particular form of life take part. (Kiverstein and Rietveld, 2015, p. 719)

Animal actions exhibit normativity because they can be performed better or worse. Animals

can advance the skills that control their actions and they can recognize if they perform subpar. Rietveld and Kiverstein ascribe this potential for normative action, not unlike Dreyfus (2002), to what Merleau-Ponty has called the "grip on the environment". Importantly, animals are motivated to enhance their grip on the environment because they care for the consequences of successful actions.

Despite highlighting the centrality of care for the normativity of animal actions, Rietveld and Kiverstein state that the case varies in certain respects for humans, given their unique linguistic form of life.

> The human form of life is one that is heavily mediated by linguistic forms of communication, and questions of getting things right arise for humans with an interest in communicating about a shared sociomaterial world. (Kiverstein and Rietveld 2015, p. 719)

What concretely explains the normativity of everyday human actions—what Rietveld (2008) calls "situated normativity"—is the ability to follow linguistically mediated social human practices: "that one is reliably participating in a communal custom" (Rietveld, 2008b, p. 985). Rietveld ascribes this idea, like many other proponents of embodied cognition, to Wittgenstein, to whom I refer henceforth as "EC-Wittgenstein" (Embodied Cognition-Wittgenstein, i.e. how Wittgenstein is regularly interpreted by proponents of embodied cognition).[1]

Even though Rietveld argues that shared social practices are the primary source of normativity for human everyday actions, he still attributes a significant role to care.

> Situated and lived normativity presupposes embodied concerns. Once certain things matter to someone, one may be affectively influenced. These concerns operate at the level of the skillful body and immediately tie the individual to the normative order by producing appropriate affective behaviour. Note that experts typically care about the adequacy of the objects they produce. (Rietveld, 2008b, p. 993)

Rietveld argues for the existence of a complex feedback loop between care and linguistically mediated social practices. He argues, following Hobson (2004), that already children affectively care about the social feedback of others and therefore internalize socially shared practices. And in the process of adapting to, refining and performing normative actions, care plays a sustaining cause, in that care *compels* individuals to abide by social rules.[2]

Rietveld explains this process using the example of how an architect is skill-wise socialized in her community. An architect acquires skills and develops care for her craft through hard work and learning. She does so through the interaction with experts in her field, who are themselves standing in a social relationship to other experts in their field. The latter point is supposed to stress the wider social character of social practices, such as architecture. As

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1 My aim in this paper is not to evaluate whether the idea that following social practices constitutes the normativity of action, in the way it is described by proponents of embodied cognition, is actually Wittgenstein's (Heras-Escribano and de Pinedo, 2016; Hutto, 2013; Loughlin, 2014; Rietveld, 2008b). I confine myself therefore here to describe how Wittgenstein is interpreted by proponents of embodied cognition which is also why I use the phrase "EC-Wittgenstein".

2 "Compelling" is a term that Rietveld constantly uses. To be charitable, he uses the term to explain the phenomenon of non-deliberative action that often has a compelling nature. Yet we will see that terms like "compelling" or "disciplining" can swiftly reveal the authoritarian undertones of social rule-following, depending on how we render the social context in which actions occur.

Rietveld claims:

> Due to all this largely *unobtrusive* and *unnoticed disciplining* of the body the architect has learned to see *what is right and what is not. She develops preferences and sensitivities along the lines of the examples set by these experts.* This way she develops a 'feeling' for the situation and the ability to assess, and if necessary to correct her own performance. (Rietveld, 2008b, p. 989, italics mine)

The idea here is that agents are re-directed towards social rules by means of careful discontent in case they unwillingly deviate from a social rule. Given these considerations, affective care moves from a prime source of the normativity of action, that it plays for non-human animals, to a mechanism of learning, refinement and disciplining that keeps humans in the constraints of socially shared practices. Further, note the strong normative ("what is right and what is not") as well as authoritarian language that Rietveld uses in the quote above. The architect is *disciplined* into practices that she *accepts as her preferences and sensitivities based on the examples given to her by experts.* As we will see later, this, if read charitably, amounts to a naïve Panglossian view of social norms. If read in the context of most people's social reality, it rather describes an authoritarian, if not totalitarian view of norms.

Despite these shortcomings, I think there is a lot to agree with Rietveld's work. In particular, the idea that affective care is responsible for non-deliberative rule-keeping judgments is a most welcome addition to the debate. And it also seems true that affective care is responsible for the adaption, refinement and disciplining of human action with regard to social practices. In the following, I show, first, that the normativity of everyday human actions derives primarily from affective care for oneself and others, and not from linguistically mediated social rules. Then I show, second, that care for oneself and others does not stand in the naïve, harmonious relationship to social rules that authors who follow EC-Wittgenstein seem to assume. Even though many social practices certainly contribute to what makes us who we are—independent of whether that is good or bad—many, if not most social rules might stand in an adverse relationship to what we want and care for; i.e. they force us to follow practices that might not be in alignment with our care for us and others. Accordingly, some of us constantly have to compromise or negotiate between the normativity that derives from our care for ourselves and others and the law-like rules of socially constructed practices.

3. Care for Oneself and Others versus Authoritarian Rule-Following

One basic idea, that certainly goes back to at least Heidegger (1927/2006), but also to other philosophical traditions that emphasize the importance of interest, affect and care, such as utilitarianism (Singer, 2009), is that affective care plays a constitutive role for the grounding and generation of normativity and phenomena related to normativity, such as goals and purposes. Ratcliffe (2002), referring to Heidegger, puts it like this: "Care is the condition for the possibility of apprehending the world as a significant whole, as an arena of possible projects, goals and purposes" (p. 289).

Similarly, Urban gives a succinct summary of the role of care, which he calls "concern", for enactivism, one particular sub-paradigm within embodied cognition that has been heavily influenced by work of phenomenologists:

> That which makes the world meaningful for a cognitive system is its concern governed by the norm of the system's own continued existence and flourishing. It means that sense-making establishes a non-neutral perspective on the world which comes with its own normativity. Certain interactions facilitate autonomy of the system, while others degrade it – the former are better, the latter are worse. (Urban, 2015, p. 122)

The conception of care that I use in this paper to account for the normativity of action draws heavily on Heidegger's (1927/2006) concept of "Sorge", the primary English translation of which is "care" (Dreyfus, 1991; Heidegger, 1927/1962). Heidegger's concept of care refers to a transcendental structure that itself comprises the transcendental structures understanding, affectivity, falling and discourse which Heidegger further grounds in the transcendental structure temporality (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 335). Taken together, these transcendental structures are the ontological conditions of the possibility of us being in our world: "Dasein's Being is care" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 329).

Care accounts for action ontologically, because without care we cannot account for how the world presents itself as a place that invites actions, rather than a place of unintelligible substances or space-time points that have no significance for embodied creatures such as us (Dreyfus, 1991; Heidegger, 1927/1962; Jeuk, 2017a, 2019; Zahavi, 2009). And care accounts for action psychologically, because without caring, we would have no motivation to act in the first place (Heidegger, 1927/1962; Jeuk, 2019; Ratcliffe, 2002).

Obviously, an explanation, let alone a justification of this Heideggerian transcendental project is beyond the confines of this paper. Fortunately, it is also not necessary for my argument. I use in the following "care" in its everyday (*alltäglich*) sense—that sense from which Heidegger departs his analyses too. "Care", according to this everyday sense means as much as affectively caring for something. Since "care", in its ordinary language sense, contrary to its ontological sense, is not further analyzable, I explicate "care" in the following with the help of examples. Applying the method of cases, I develop examples of cases of representative human actions and account for the normativity of these actions either with care or with linguistically mediated social rule-following practices. This procedure shows that care accounts for the normativity of action more adequately than linguistically mediated social rule-following practices.

Before I commence with my analysis, I want to highlight one important point. Even though I stated above that I do not want to further engage with transcendental considerations and that I deem "care" not further analyzable in its everyday meaning, it is important to keep in mind that there is an affective and understanding-related component to care, as Heidegger (1927/1962) made clear: "Every understanding has its mood. Every state-of-mind is one in which one understands" (p. 385).[3]

In order to care for something, we have to understand what it is and why we care for it. Yet, the why of caring is certainly affective; caring is not a disinterested cognitive state. In that sense care has several connotations: affective ones, cognitive ones and ethical ones because usually caring involves, as we will see, caring for what seems right to us.

In that sense, care is the primary form of normativity for all animals in that they seek to act according to what is good for them and others that they care about if they can do the latter (Jeuk 2019). For instance, out of care for oneself, a bird looks for food, because it seeks to sustain itself. And I wake up in the morning and go to work as it is expected from me because, in the end, I care about getting paid and buying food for myself and my loved ones. Concretely, I do not wake up in the morning and go to work, do what is expected from me, because I uncritically follow rules like an automaton. I do so, because, if I am lucky enough, I care about my job. Or rather, like most humans that have to sell their labor (or even have to

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3 Particularly the translation of "*Befindlichkeit*" as "state-of-mind" is unfortunate, because it conceals the affectivity involved in *Befindlichkeit* (Heidegger, 1927/2006, p. 335), but "mood" expresses the involved affectivity well and is an adequate translation of "*Stimmung*", which Heidegger uses in the original as an aspect of *Befindlichkeit* (Heidegger, 1927/2006, p. 335).

do slave labor), I do so because I care for things that can only be sustained in most societies if an employer or other market actor compensates me monetarily. Similarly, when I prepare a sandwich for myself, I might follow a social rule or rather a suggestion for a certain recipe. Yet, I only do so not because I am uncritically following a rule, but because I believe that following this recipe will allow me to make a sandwich that is to my liking—probably because I believe that the author of the recipe possesses a certain skill at cooking that is indicative of a cooking mastery that allows preparing dishes that are tastier than the meals that I could have prepared based on my own limited skill set. Yet, contrary to that Rietveld (2008b) claims: "Note that the expert's *adequate* response does not only decrease her dissatisfaction, but also changes something in the intersubjective world: *it corrects the object*" (p. 969, my italics).

How does this apply to the sandwich example? What is correct about a certain sandwich? If a sandwich is to my liking and an expert cook would alter the taste so that I do not like it anymore, in which way would she correct my sandwich? What Rietveld might have in mind here, following EC-Wittgenstein, might be this: my sandwich might not fall into any socially recognizable linguistic category, such as, for example, "BLT Sandwich". And the expert cook might "correct" my sandwich so that it does fall into a socially recognizable category. Yet, the question is why that should be important, as long as I do not specifically care for making a sandwich according to a social category. And even if I would care that my sandwich falls into a socially recognizable category according to a rule, it seems as if my care for this, as suggested above, derives from my care for something like taste and not for my care that my sandwich falls into a socially recognizable category. We certainly cannot claim that the act of making a sandwich that does not fall into a social category is not a normative action. As long as I care about the outcome of my action, the action is also normative; the sandwich is correct for me. There are obviously many cases where the normativity of action partly depends on linguistic social rule-following; for instance, many actions that involve language are such cases. For example, if I go to a diner and order a Kale Sandwich and get a Reuben Sandwich instead, a social rule has been violated. Social rule violations such as that are perhaps the unique case of normativity that can be partly captured by an EC-Wittgensteinian account such as Rietveld's. Yet, importantly, social (linguistic) rule violation does not sufficiently, let alone foundationally account for the norm violation depicted above. The normativity of the involved action is compromised only if I care about the linguistic rule violation. Yet, for instance, I might actually like the outcome that results from the rule violation more than what would have resulted from proper linguistic rule-following. Or I might reject the Reuben Sandwich, not because of a social linguistic rule violation, but because I care for getting a Kale Sandwich because I care for things such as animal ethics or a particular taste. And the latter have nothing to do with social rule-following. Even though the waiter violated a social rule, the normative aspects of her action depend on my care for animal ethics and taste, not on the violation of a linguistic rule. *The linguistic rule merely helps to coordinate actions so that they are in accord with the agential norms for which we care—they do not constitute this normativity by themselves.* To further stress this point here, if I would live in a society that does not care about animals, would I then even act not normatively, if I reject the BLT sandwich because of animal ethical reasons, because the guiding social rule would be to consume animals. I think we have reached a good point to focus now on the ethically problematic aspects of the idea that social rule-following constitutes the normativity of action.

As the discussion of the sandwich example already indicates, social practices and rules often stand in antagonistic relationships to the normativity that derives from care for oneself and others. Yet, authors working in the EC-Wittgensteinian tradition assume a Panglossian world where learning a skill according to social norms contributes to the flourishing of oneself and others, and where the actions that are performed in accord with social norms are intrinsically

good; both ethically and epistemically.[4] Basically, a preestablished harmony between the things one cares for and social rules seems to exist according to their view. Recall Rietveld's (2008b) statement above: "Due to all this largely *unobtrusive* and *unnoticed disciplining* of the body the architect has learned to see *what is right and what is not. She develops preferences and sensitivities along the lines of the examples set by these experts*" (p. 989). I argue that this is the case for only very few activities and only very few people. For most people, it seems that one of the two following situations applies.

First, to speak with Marx and Engels (1845-1846/1958), either stand under the influence of false consciousness and follow social practices as if they were in accord with your own care; either out of a lack of critical understanding or out of emotional dissonance. Second, constantly compromise in an inner affective struggle between the demands of an authoritarian, law-like world and your own normativity deriving from care for yourself and others.

In general, it seems that the EC-Wittgensteinian idea of normativity as harmonious social-rule-following derives from the lack of a proper phenomenology of everyday activities that is representative of the social, economic and ethical reality of most people. For most people actions are centered on things for which they care: food, shelter, dignity, appreciation, freedom, and pleasure in one's recreational time. And these things have to be negotiated, compromised and brought in compliance with the economic and social reality that they face. A reality where most of us must spend *an overwhelming part of our waking lives by selling our labor* for employers and their economic aims within a system that seems to care little about human flourishing and what we as individuals care for. That the everydayness of the overwhelming part of people is comprised by work (or rather labor) which happens under subpar social and economic standards is unfortunately even missing from Heidegger's work that often focuses on artifacts such as a singular, isolated episode of hammering a nail or romanticized and isolated instances of classic craftsmanship.

Now, Rietveld believes that the conceptual framework that he uses to describe the everyday actions of certain experts extends to other cases of everyday actions—as one should expect.

> For example, can we apply the conceptual framework of being moved to improve to the preparation of soup by a professional cook as well as by the person who is skillfully preparing dinner at home? To me it seems that all of the above suggests that we can, but it will still require some work to articulate the conditions under which we can do so. (Rietveld, 2008b, p. 996)

Yet, we directly see the problems with Rietveld's account, if we switch our focus to a "mundane" working life like that of a poor subway toilet cleaner. If we replace the prestigious, perhaps economically unconstrained architect with an underpaid toilet cleaner, it seems cynical to assume that she feels *"compelled", "disciplined",* or *"moved to improve"* to clean the restrooms of the subway station according to the social expectation what a properly clean toilet has to look like. Neither seems it appropriate to call her *"attuned to ways of acting",* i.e. cleaning a toilet, or *"mastering the craft"* of subway toilet cleaning—terms that Rietveld uses in the context of architectural actions (Rietveld, 2008b, p. 989).

Obviously, there is an expectation we share about how a clean toilet looks like. But we see in the toilet cleaner case what happens when we make a norm out of rules and expectations. The

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4 I use at times "ethical" or "epistemic" interchangeably with "normative". I do this to highlight the particular aspect of a normative phenomenon in a context that might be either primarily ethical or primarily epistemic.

toilet cleaner is only a *good* toilet cleaner—and here we clearly see the full normative force of the term "good"—when she acts according to the expectation. But why should she, in the normative sense of care that we have for her and that she has for herself, act according to that expectation under the social, economic and socio-psychological conditions under which she most likely will have to work, i.e. terrible ones? Obviously, under none, if we are not economic paternalists.

And this shows us that there is a huge difference between acting according to an expectation based on a social rule and acting normatively. The prior expresses whether someone works according to a social rule, independent of whether this rule is evil, good, arbitrary or absurd, while the latter bestows an ethical status on someone's actions. And we should be very cautious to bestow this ethical status on people primarily based on their involvement in a network of social rules that are not of their own making—that have become their "form of life", but not based on their choice.

In Rietveld's defense, he claims that, "one of the important conditions is probably that the person cares enough about the consequences of his actions or the quality of his performance (in the case of experts such emotional engagement is typically high)", in order to apply his EC-Wittgensteinian conceptual framework (Rietveld, 2008b, p. 996). Yet, this claim is dubious, because why should a proper account of normative action be based on the motivation of the agent? A sufficient account of normative action should generalize to all kinds of actions. But even if Rietveld's framework would be applied only to cases in which high emotional engagement were present, the framework still entails unintuitive consequences. Take for instance the philosophical socialization of Descartes. He learned his "craft" from the scholastics but did not get attuned to how those experts in the field did philosophy. Did Descartes therefore act not-normatively, despite being highly emotionally engaged? Certainly not; rather, we might say, he was the one who acted normatively because his care for philosophy and truth made him break with the craft of the scholastics and their rules. How does this fit Rietveld's (2008b) following claim: "In the long run, *the community's established ways of acting* become ingrained and our architect will finally *display appropriate action instinctively*, in Wittgenstein's sense" (p. 989, italics mine). Obviously not at all.

To sum up, the normativity of action does often not derive from social rule-following. Rather to the contrary, there is a constant, often private inner struggle between social rule-following and what we normatively care for. To assume that the normativity of action derives from social rule-following, therefore, appears shockingly authoritarian at worst; playing in the hands of those who have economic, epistemic, social and political power, or hopelessly naïve at best, derived from the living world of worldly-detached philosophers. When some philosophers talk about the social dimension of the normativity of action, they apparently think about a casual game of chess or romanticize about a pre-industrial craftsman working in her cabin, but do not think about the complex and often brutal fabric of social, economic and political factors that make up the domain of sociality for most humans. Consider for instance the examples that Dreyfus (2002, 2007) regularly discusses when he analyzes skillful action. Most often he talks about professional chess players or other people involved in games and the arts. Or consider Montero (2013), who primarily discusses professional athletes and artistic dancers, whereas Rietveld often takes examples from non-ordinary, artistic architecture (Rietveld, 2008b; Rietveld and Brouwers, 2017). These authors focus on elite activities with a high potential for social distinction (Bourdieu, 1979/1984). And those cases that they discuss always seem to assume that the involved agent has an uncritical stance towards the rules and skills that she has to adapt and that these social rules are good in a normative sense.

The term "normative" originally referred in philosophy to phenomena that are ethically or epistemically desirable. That is, the term has been used in philosophy in stark contrast to

contingent rule-following that is potentially aethical and aepistemic. A conceptual distinction between "normative" and "rule-following" is desirable to clarify the difference between, for instance, ethical and aethical rule-following. Yet, unfortunately, "normative" has come to be applied to domains such as language use, logical correctness, skill at any activity, any standard of correctness and rule-following. Obviously, ordinary language allows to use normative concepts such as "good" or "bad", "right" or "wrong" with regard to these rule-following practices. Yet, if we do so in the context of philosophy without qualification and differentiation, we end up rendering simple rule-following practices with an ethical and epistemic significance that they do not possess. Rietveld, Kiverstein and other EC-Wittgensteinians blur the meaning of "normative" in this sense, in that they use "normative" with a double meaning that pertains to rule-following simpliciter, yet that also expresses that this rule-following is ethically or epistemically desirable.

But, rather than merely rule-following, people often are motivated to act normatively in the ethical and epistemic sense; they act according to what seems right to them in accordance with their care structure—not necessarily deliberatively, but tacitly. Or they at least often compromise between what seems right to them and what is demanded from them by social rule-following. And again, if we blur this distinction, as for instance Rietveld does, we receive a picture of humans as not only constantly following social rules, independent of whether they are good or bad for them or others, but also as finding them desirable on top of that. The latter might be unfortunately contingently true in many societies where people suffer from dissonance or false consciousness. Yet, philosophers must not tacitly incorporate things like dissonance or false consciousness into their *normative* accounts of action without the qualification that dissonance and false consciousness are undesirable epistemic and ethical fallacies that are contingent on a particular form of society. Therefore, it is at least important for philosophers who are concerned with providing ontological accounts of the normativity of action to not blur the distinction between normativity and simple, linguistically mediated social rule-following.

4. Conclusion

I have argued that, despite all its virtues, Rietveld's and Kiverstein's account of everyday human action locates the source of the normativity of action incorrectly. Instead of linguistically mediated social practices, care for oneself and others, that has an ethical component to it, should be considered as the source of the normativity of everyday human actions. Further, I have highlighted the Panglossian, authoritarian undertones of the social rule-following paradigm that is commonly used in embodied cognition. These authoritarian tendencies might emerge from a misguided focus on certain idealized and unrepresentative cases of everyday human actions. If we, however, switch the focus to representative everyday actions, we see that social rule-following is often constraining humans in unethical and unepistemic ways, that render the claim that the normativity of everyday actions should derive from social practices highly dubious.

Fortunately, it should be easy for proponents of embodied cognition to switch the focus of their research to care. Many of them consider themselves phenomenologists and there is plenty of phenomenological literature that shows the foundational role of care for action and normativity (Heidegger, 1927/2006; Jeuk, 2017a, 2019; Ratcliffe, 2002). Further, there is plenty of phenomenological as well as embodied cognition literature on sensorimotor systems and embodied mechanisms that allows for the explanation of the non-deliberative monitoring of skillful action against the backdrop of care-based normativity (Dreyfus, 2007; Freeman, 2000; Gallese and Lakoff, 2005; Heidegger, 1929/2010; Husserl, 1952, 1918–1926/1966; Jeuk, 2017a,b, 2019; Ratcliffe, 2015).

What will be more challenging for proponents of embodied cognition will be to develop

representative cases of everyday human actions. It was one of the main aims of embodied cognition to put the environment of agents in the focus of explanations of cognition and action. Yet, unfortunately, proponents of embodied cognition have focused on really narrow cases of animal-environment interactions, such as hammering a nail or using one's direct material environment to direct one's actions. Or they have focused on too general cases, such as language use simpliciter as that what is supposedly explaining the totality of human social interactions. The former case is way too isolated; the latter case overemphasizes the role of language and rules immensely. Rather, what is needed is an account of the human environment that comprises the social, cultural, ethical, political and economic forces that constantly have a direct or indirect background influence on human action. Differently put, proponents of embodied cognition and many phenomenologists too will have to leave the unrepresentative cases of action that function as the descriptive basis of their work behind and develop more accurate representative descriptions.

Only if such an account is in place, will we be able to receive an adequate account of the relationship between the normativity of action based on care for oneself and others and the set of social, cultural, ethical, political and economic institutions that force us to compromise our normative stance while acting in the world.

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