

The Situated Mind and the Space of Reasons

On the Match and Mismatch between Pragmatism and Phenomenology

Danilo Manca



Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/ejpap/3000>

DOI: 10.4000/ejpap.3000

ISSN: 2036-4091

Publisher

Associazione Pragma

Electronic reference

Danilo Manca, "The Situated Mind and the Space of Reasons", *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* [Online], XIV-2 | 2022, Online since 17 October 2022, connection on 03 November 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ejpap/3000> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejpap.3000>

This text was automatically generated on 3 November 2022.



Creative Commons - Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International - CC BY-NC-ND 4.0
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

The Situated Mind and the Space of Reasons

On the Match and Mismatch between Pragmatism and Phenomenology

Danilo Manca

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I am very grateful to Carl Sachs and the two anonymous reviewers of this article for their very useful comments.

- 1 In a very famous passage of *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Wilfrid Sellars explains that “in characterizing an episode or a state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says” (Sellars 1956: 169). Among those who have discussed this passage, Robert Brandom has seen the key to the form of pragmatism that Sellars bequeaths to us in the regress from the rules governing the use of meanings to the norms implicit in practices of giving and asking for reasons.
- 2 In the last decade, the expression “situated mind” has been used to designate a series of multifaceted approaches to the analysis of mind that set aside the assumption that the term “mind” simply coincides with what happens in the skull box, holding instead that the mind emerges from the interaction between brain, living body, and environment. As has already been demonstrated, in the enactive approach to a theory of a situated mind, pragmatism and phenomenology intersect from the outset. For instance, in the study that launched this approach, *The Embodied Mind*, Varela, Thompson, and Rosch explicitly endorse Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological view because it exhibits a “pragmatic dimension” differing from Husserl’s approach, which, in spite of the insistence on the lifeworld as the ground of all activities, remained “entirely theoretical” (Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1991: 19). Although the term “pragmatic” does not (explicitly) aim to join a philosophical tradition, it fosters the principle of a primacy

of practice over theory, a principle that is at the basis of every pragmatism.¹ Besides, as Shaun Gallagher (2017) has accurately reconstructed, in the representatives of so-called classical pragmatism, we find anticipations of the enactivist conception of embodied mind as situated within a physical as well as a social environment.

- 3 In this article I have a twofold aim. First, I would like to tackle a theoretical issue: I would like to question what happens to the primacy ascribed to the discursive space of reasons over all other processes in which human beings are involved when we adopt a situated conception of mind. Second, I will reflect on the role that the phenomenological perspective can play in the dialogue and opposition between classical pragmatism (here I will refer to Dewey, due to the attention he has already received from studies on the relationship between the enactive approach and pragmatism) and the neo-pragmatism that has followed the linguistic turn, mainly represented by Brandom.
- 4 In light of this, we may also understand the sense in which this article develops a metaphilosophical consideration. Sellars opens his widely debated article on “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man” by claiming that “the aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term” (Sellars 1962: 1). Following this metaphilosophical observation, here I will ask to what extent two families of views such as pragmatism and phenomenology interact in the attempt to blend things together, i.e., nature and culture; mind and world; and what happens inside the human body and what happens outside it.
- 5 I will divide my argumentation into four sections. In the first, I will discuss the aporetic alternative that Brandom offers for the origin of intentionality: to defend the conviction that it takes shape in the intersubjective games of language, he ends up endorsing a cognitivist conception of mind as a private theater. In the second section, I will question Brandom’s distinction between sentience and sapience in order to show that following the phenomenological tradition, the enactive approach proposes a third option for the origin of intentionality, i.e., intentionality is generated at the level of the living body. In the third section, I will delve more deeply into the articulated phenomenological notion of the living body, suggesting at the end that the social space of reasons presupposes the process of niche-construction in which organism and environment take shape through a process of mutual constitution. And in the last section, I will tackle the issue of language by highlighting how analytic neo-pragmatism and the enactive approach can collaborate to reach a deeper explication of the role of language in the process of niche-construction.

1. Tertium non datur?

- 6 In his introductory essay *Articulating Reasons*, Brandom very clearly explains the paradigm shift that characterizes his analytic pragmatism. First of all, we can speak of pragmatism because in the attempt to develop an account of the conceptual, the strategy to adopt consists in taking as a starting point the activity of applying concepts and elaborating on that basis an understanding of conceptual content. In other words, according to Brandom (2000: 4), we legitimately talk about pragmatism insofar as the view at stake “offers an account of knowing (or believing, or saying) *that* such and such is the case in terms of knowing *how* (being able) to *do* something.”

- 7 On the other hand, such a pragmatic strategy for exploring the realm of the conceptual has to be seen as analytic (or linguistic) insofar as it places the “fundamental locus of intentionality” in language, understood in Wittgensteinian terms as a public game where the meaning of a concept is established by the way in which it is used in a particular context. As Brandom (*ibid.*: 5) sums it up: “Concepts are applied in the realm of *language* by the public use of sentences and other linguistic expression.” The sole alternative that Brandom sees is that concepts could be taken to be “applied in the realm of *mind* by the private adoption of and rational reliance on beliefs and other intentional states” (*ibid.*).
- 8 In Brandom’s reconstruction, the philosophical tradition stretching from Descartes to Kant took for granted “a *mentalist* order of explanation that privileged the mind as the native and original locus of concept use, relegating language to a secondary, late-coming, merely instrumental role in communicating to others thoughts already full-formed in a prior mental arena within the individual” (*ibid.*). In contrast, the period after Kant, having Hegel and Frege as forerunners, was characterized by a reversal of the traditional order: there was “a growing appreciation of the significance of language for thought and mindedness generally, and a questioning of the picture of language as a more or less convenient tool for expressing thoughts intelligible as contentful apart from any consideration of the possibility of *saying* what one is *thinking*” (*ibid.*).
- 9 Does the intentionality of the conceptual find its origin either in some private episodes, or alternatively, in the public game of giving and asking for reasons? *Tertium non datur?*
- 10 Brandom’s polemical target is the tradition of representationalism, i.e., the belief that the task of the concepts we translate into words, propositions, inferences, and arguments is to mirror the world, and that this operation first takes place (according to a model that has been perfectly exemplified by classical computationalism) in our cranial box and is then externalized through that formidable tool that language is.
- 11 Brandom sees the paradigm shift that he is defending epitomized in Michael Dummett’s claim according to which “we have opposed throughout the view of assertion as the expression of an interior act of judgment; judgment, rather, is the interiorization of the external act of assertion” (Dummett 1973: 362). The problem, however, is to what extent such a way of accounting for the linguistic turn leaves intact the view of the mind to which it is opposed. It seems as if it is merely a matter of reversing the order of priorities: it is the public act of asserting that generates the private mental activity of judging, and not vice versa. This provides a different genealogy for the realm of the conceptual, but in no way excludes that the mind can be reductively understood in the classical way as the realm of inner episodes.
- 12 After all, this impression is explicitly supported by the way in which Sellars conceives of thoughts in the last part of “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind.” Here Sellars invents the myth of Jones, who, in his attempt to account for the fact that his Rylean fellow men “behave intelligently not only when their conduct is threaded on a string of overt verbal episodes [...] but also when no detectable verbal output is present,” develops “a *theory* according to which overt utterances are but the culmination of a process which begins with certain inner episodes” (Sellars 1956: 186). Sellars shows that the same mentalistic order of explanation that Brandom will contest – one according to which our overt verbal behavior is the culmination of a process that begins with “inner speech” – is possible only by applying to these inner episodes the resources of the semantic discourse with which in the public process of giving and asking for reasons,

we make our very way of using words and concepts thematic. In other words, the mentalistic order derives from concealing the fact that our “ability to have thoughts is acquired in the process of acquiring overt speech and that only after overt speech is well established, can ‘inner speech’ occur without its overt culmination” (*ibid.*: 188). By so arguing, Sellars carries out his aim of defending the classical view by showing how the inner episodes, far from being category mistakes, are rather compatible with the theory of an intersubjective origin of our concepts.

- 13 And yet this view does not fill the explanatory gap between mind and body that Cartesian dualism has created with the paradigm of “the ghost in the machine.”² Nor does it address the even deeper gap that cognitivism has opened – as Thompson (2007: 6) pointed out – between neurophysiological, subpersonal, and computational cognition on the one hand and subjective experience on the other. Even though the theory of the primacy and autonomy of the logical space of reasons arises from the attack on the myth of the given,³ does it not risk perpetuating the (equally empiricist) myth of the private theatre of the mind?
- 14 When I ask whether there is an alternative to the two theories that Brandom outlines in his reconstruction, my question is actually a call for a more radical approach – one in which the dualism between language and mind that Brandom (most likely unwillingly) endorses disappears. In other words, the hypothesis I intend to discuss is that the discovery of the intersubjective origin of our thinking totally changes the way we conceive of the mind as well. Instead of relegating the mind to the sphere of private episodes, thus identifying it completely with intracranial phenomena, we could then understand it as the result of the interaction of our nervous system through the mediation of the living body with our surrounding social environment. In this way, Brandom’s intersubjective and linguistic theory of the conceptual can be seen as presupposing an enactive theory of the pre-conceptual (or still only potentially conceptual) contents of experience. Let me put this in the words with which Thompson (2007: 411) concludes the last chapter of his masterpiece: “The individual human subject is the enculturated bodily subject. In this way, the knowing and feeling subject is not the brain in the head, or even the brain plus the body, but the socially and culturally situated person, the enculturated human being.”

2. Senses of Sentience

- 15 As is evident, Brandom could readily subscribe to the words of Thompson with which I concluded the last section, at least if it were not for the fracture between sentience and sapience that lies at the foundation of his theory of the logical space of reasons.
- 16 In order to deal with the broad realm of cognitive capacities that constitutes our mind, and to circumscribe the sphere of the conceptual and the correlated kind of awareness, Brandom finds it quite useful to distinguish between sentience and sapience. In his view, sentience consists in “what we share with nonverbal animals,” i.e., “the capacity to be *aware* in the sense of being *awake*” (Brandom 2000: 157). In contrast, sapience concerns “understanding or intelligence rather than irritability or arousal” (*ibid.*).⁴ It is the capacity of rational agents to be aware of their intentional states, to see beliefs and desires as constituting reasons for their behavior, and thus to make both practical inferences concerning how to get what one wants and theoretical inferences concerning what follows from what.

- 17 Human beings share with other sentient animals a practical intentionality. This consists in a directedness toward objects that “animals exhibit when they deal skillfully with their world” (Brandom 2014: 349). Examples would include not only the way in which a predator is directed at the prey it stalks (and the prey at the predator from which it flees), but also what a builder does in constructing a house. In other words, it is a form of know-how generated from a goal-governed disposition that the phenomenon of sentience nourishes, such that in the lived life of an animal, objects, events, and situations acquire practical significance (as food, threat, and so on) by means of the capacity for being attuned to their affordances.
- 18 The fact that sentience is accompanied by practical intentionality does not call into question Brandom’s conviction that the origin of our ability to use concepts must lie in language, for the simple reason that (quite surprisingly) Brandom does not attribute any verbal capacity to non-human animals.⁵ But even if he granted what is evident from observing the behavior of non-human animals – i.e., that they communicate and have a social dimension – I suppose that Brandom would still deny that we can attribute to them the ability to use concepts as norms. In his view, it is one thing for objects and events in the world to acquire practical meaning in the sentient life of an animal, but it is quite another to be able to talk about the content of our experiences, to justify our actions and beliefs, to commit ourselves to what we say, and thus to take responsibility and acknowledge authority. In other words, being in the space of reasons is very different from manifesting a certain predisposition to act on the basis of ends in the space of nature.
- 19 Considered in its development, Brandom’s argument is somewhat aporetic. In *Articulating Reasons*, he recognizes language as the fundamental locus of intentionality. In light of later distinctions, however, one would have to amend the statement by saying that linguistic and intersubjective practices are the birthplace of the discursive and normative intentionality that is typical of humans as rational agents. But this is evidently a tautology. More interesting, however, is to note (as Gallagher does) that in Brandom, in the opposition between the private theater of the mind and the public game of giving and asking for reasons, a third original locus for intentionality is at least surreptitiously identified, and this is precisely sentience.
- 20 In *Between Saying and Doing* (2008), Brandom clearly appreciates the invitation of classical pragmatism to begin not with the relation between representings and representeds, but with the nature of doing, of the process that institutes that relation. He thereby presents as a founding idea of pragmatism the conviction that “the most fundamental kind of intentionality (in the sense of directedness toward objects) is the *practical* involvement with objects exhibited by a sentient creature dealing skillfully with its world” (*ibid.*: 178). Gallagher reads this as implying that “pragmatists and neo-pragmatists would argue that the intentionality of propositional attitudes is itself derived from a more original form of embodied intentionality, what phenomenologists like Husserl and Merleau-Ponty call operative or ‘motor intentionality’” (Gallagher 2017: 62). But this association is overly optimistic.
- 21 Gallagher acknowledges that Brandom appeals to a normative and social account of intentionality. This would have to do with what Brandom calls “the practice of *deontic scorekeeping*, i.e., our mutual implicit practice of keeping track of each other’s and our own actions in terms of normative status” (Gallagher 2017, who refers to Brandom 1994: ch. 3). In the aforementioned passage, Brandom parenthetically specifies that the

intentionality that finds its roots in practices related to sentience consists in the mere being directed toward objects; thus it has to be sharply distinguished from the normative, social, and discursive intentionality that arises from giving and demanding reasons, from making commitments and attributing responsibility and authority.

- 22 The point is that Brandom seems much more interested in emphasizing the fracture between the different meanings of intentionality rather than the deep continuity of life and mind. As Thompson (2007: ix) explains, the leading principle of the enactive approach to mind is that “where there is life there is mind, and mind in its most articulated form belongs to life.” The fact that for Brandom, the practical intentionality of sentient animals is to be identified with mere object-directedness means that in this dimension, there is no potential propositional content to be made explicit at a discursive level, but only a generic purposiveness in the way in which the organism relates to the world. There are no descriptions to be made, only targets to aim at, needs to satisfy, and eventually objects to label (as food or as threat).⁶
- 23 In contrast, for enactivism, the practical intentionality connected with sentience is evidence of a broader sense of intentionality identifiable with the organism’s openness to the world. Sentience does not merely mean “the capacity of being aware in the sense of being awake,” but rather the “feeling of being alive and exercising effort in movement” (*ibid.*: 161). The difference is subtle but decisive. In Brandom’s account, to be sentient is one with the generic condition of having sense organs that can be activated; this condition entails that the organism is irreflexively aware of its being in the world, but is completely focused on a specific object or state of affairs. Conversely, in the enactive view, what has to be emphasized is that the openness to the world that sentience entails coincides with a primordial form of *self-awareness*. The latter arises out of the sensorimotor organism’s capacity for paying pre-reflective attention to its activity of feeling its own body at work. Sentience means feeling oneself to be a living body. Thus consciousness in the sense of sentience can be described as “a kind of primitively self-aware liveliness or animation of the body” (*ibid.*).
- 24 As long as Brandom connects the practical intentionality of sentient creatures with phenomena that have no propositional content – for example, hunger or pain – he can at most assume that such a practical intentionality generates private episodes. This explains why he holds that in the context of practical intentionality, the propositional dimension should be understood in terms of the representational dimension. Pain and hunger are paradigmatically conscious phenomena. I feel pain, I locate it; I am immediately aware of being hungry and orient myself toward objects that can satisfy my need. In this way, I individuate representings of my feelings, but they do not have content that “could be expressed by sentential ‘that’ clauses” (Brandom 2014: 348). In other words, in non-human sentient animals, the knowing-how that is involved in their practical intentionality could in no way be transposed into a form of knowing-that.
- 25 At the same time, Brandom identifies pragmatism with the view according to which “discursive intentionality is a species of practical intentionality,” so that “knowing-that (things are thus-and-so) is a kind of knowing-how (to do something)” (*ibid.*: 350). In the terms of the radical externalism that the enactive approach advocates, this entails that discursive intentionality finds its roots in the embodied dynamic interactions between organisms (with each other), as well as between the organism and the environment. The practical dimension of intentionality is one with sensorimotor self-awareness. It operates “anonymously, involuntarily, spontaneously and receptively” (Thompson

2007: 30). In other words, even in a context where the living body is not able to operate as a subject that (also only unconsciously) differentiates itself from another existent that it makes an object of its cognition, what is at work is a very primordial form not only of intentionality, but also of awareness – more specifically, of an awareness that allows the body to feel alive. Perhaps here there are no particular concepts to apply and manage, but it is in the operative intentionality of the living body that we can nevertheless find the origin of that pragmatic capacity of knowing how to do something in which the semantic capacity of knowing what we are thinking and saying about something is rooted. *Tertium datur*.

3. The Living Body and a Niche for Reasons

- 26 Insofar as Brandom stresses that sentience is an exclusively biological phenomenon while sapience is rooted in the social dimension, he embraces a form of dualism in which the realm of nature is sharply distinguished from the social space of reasons. As proof of this, we need only refer to the Kantian distinction between a realm of nature and another of freedom, a distinction that Brandom repeatedly evokes in *Making it Explicit* (1994). By overlooking that such a distinction is an antinomy of reason to be overcome, Brandom shows how it allows us to understand the difference between facts and norms.
- 27 Kant (1974: 3) tells us that “everything in nature, in the inanimate as well as the animate world, happens according to rules”; thus being subject to rules “is not special to us discursive, that is concept-applying, subjects of judgment and action” (Brandom 1994: 30). Yet “what is distinctive about us as normative creatures is the way in which we are subject to norms [...]. As natural beings, we act according to rules. As rational beings, we act according to our *conception* of rules” (*ibid.*). In other words, the distinction between facts and norms is itself “not a factual but a normative difference” (*ibid.*: 58): it depends on the way in which we institute norms in our social, discursive, intersubjective practices. In Sellars’ terms, it concerns the way in which within the conceptual framework of persons, we recognize a primacy of the scientific image of the human being in the world over the manifest one, just by highlighting that “everything acts regularly, according to the law of physics” (*ibid.*: 27). What is problematic, however, is the fact that Brandom completely fails to deal with the emergence of the social, discursive, and intersubjective practices that – as rational agents – humans adopt, within the conceptual framework of persons, from the natural functions that they perform as organisms.
- 28 Again, the problem is the lack of a full analysis of the deep continuity between life and mind, or still better, between biological and social life, between the interactions that we exchange with the physical environment in which we are immersed as natural beings and the interactions we exchange with the social, cultural, and historical world in which we dwell as persons. Further evidence of this is obtained if we consider that Brandom uses the term “naturalization” to enhance Hegel’s transposition of Kant’s transcendental account of rules into the social norms in which spirit actualizes itself.⁷
- 29 In contrast to this, enactivism is part of that composite movement which, following Merleau-Ponty’s intention to find in the analysis of living nature the “unthought” of phenomenology, aims to naturalize Husserl’s transcendental analysis of the syntheses of which the living body is both subject and object.⁸ This is a crucial point. To insist on

the continuity between the biological life and the rational agency of the human being primarily enables the latter to improve its capacity for describing its own functions.

- 30 For instance, in order to strengthen the sharp distinction between humans and other sentient but non-discursive living beings, Brandom differentiates mere sensing from perceiving: “We not only sense, we also perceive. That is, our differential response to sensory stimulation includes noninferential acknowledgment of propositionally contentful doxastic commitments. Through perception, when properly trained and situated, we find ourselves passively occupying particular positions in the space of reasons” (Brandom 1994: 276).
- 31 Even in the phenomenological tradition, perception cannot be reduced to a reaction to sensory stimulation. For Husserl (1973: §13), it is already a form of judgment in an extended sense, and an expression of doxa, due to its capacity for discerning and defining an existent as an object. But precisely for this reason we cannot argue, as Brandom does, that perception is a passive way of occupying a particular position in the space of reasons. Perception is the source of belief, so at least it can be said to participate in the practice of giving and asking for reasons as an act that in being focused on the object makes subjectivity pre-reflectively conscious of its own functions. A key condition for arguing this is to shed light on the continuity obtaining between perception and the lower layers of sensing, which in Husserl’s phenomenology assume the general title of “passive syntheses.”⁹
- 32 In perception, the individual’s intentionality, understood as a conscious (albeit pre-reflective) object-directedness, is already largely shaped; thus the perceiver is fully enabled to confront an existent as an object on which she acts and which she cognitively and/or affectively explores. As the enactivists have extensively argued, this is possible because perception is a form of action that presupposes an articulated set of processes that actively place a living body in its environment. (Examples of such processes are the slight shifting of the pupils or the head, or the orientation of the body in its space.)
- 33 Now this general framework that strives to integrate the scientific explanation of biological life with the way in which life is lived by the social self has led scholars to liken the phenomenological conception of mind to the approach of classical pragmatism, chiefly to Dewey. Marvin Farber (whose project of naturalizing Husserl inspired Sellars’ own reading of Kant) had already seen some affinities between Husserl and Dewey.¹⁰ More recently, Chemero (2009: 183) has suggested that “radical embodied cognitive science” is “a direct descendent of the pragmatism of American naturalists William James and John Dewey,” and Gallagher has devoted an entire chapter to pragmatism as both a forerunner of a situated conception of mind (including both the enactive and the extended approach) and a perspective that could yield significant resources for clarifying and integrating the enactive approach.
- 34 Gallagher focuses in particular on Dewey’s notion of situation. With this term Dewey designated the way in which the “dynamical transactional relation” between organism and environment is accomplished: “In actual experience, there is never any such isolated singular object or event; an object or event is always a special part, phase, or aspect, of an environing experienced world – a situation” (Dewey 1938: 67, quoted in Gallagher 2017: 54). Gallagher rightly emphasizes that here “situation is not equivalent to environment. Rather the situation is constituted by organism-environment, which means that the situation already includes the agent or experiencing subject.” What I

find more problematic, however, is Gallagher's conviction that "although 'organism' seems a very biological term, by characterizing it in relation to the environment in this way Dewey's concept is very much akin to the notion of the lived body (*Leib*) as found in phenomenology and as distinguished from the objective body (*Körper*)" (Gallagher 2017: 54-5). It is true that like the enactivists, Dewey considers not only the physical but also the social environment. However, the concept of "living body" includes that of lived experience (*Erlebnis*), which as Brandom himself notes, is extremely problematic for Dewey.

- 35 More accurately, in a phenomenological perspective the organism (*Organismus*) is the living body as it is studied by biology, from an external point of view – certainly through the tools of scientific investigation, but eventually also by observation. Conversely, *Leib* designates the living body as it is lived by assuming a subjective point of view, a perspective from within that takes the body as both the subject and the object of self-exploration. Although the two terms refer to the same object, they highlight different ways of experiencing it.
- 36 As Brandom reconstructs the issue in his analysis of the pragmatist tradition, insofar as the pragmatists have learned the lesson from Hegel, they conceive experience as *Erfahrung* and not in terms of *Erlebnis*. In other words, "experience is work, something *done* rather than something that merely *happens* – a process, engaging in a practice, the exercise of abilities, rather than an episode" (Brandom 2011: 7). Experience must not be understood as a private inner state that depends on the *input* from an external given, thus serving as an epistemic basis for the process of learning. Instead, it is structured as the "situated, embodied, transactional" (*ibid.*: 53) process of learning itself, that is, "the statistical emergence by selection of behavioral variants that survive and become habits insofar as they are [...] adaptive in the environments in which they are successively and successfully exercised" (*ibid.*: 39).
- 37 In classical pragmatism, the Hegelian transposition of Kant's account of experience into the social norms of spirit winds up being integrated with the Darwinian, evolutionary explanation of the world. The polemical target is empiricism, which is the highest philosophical expression of the defence of the given. In light of this, *Erlebnis* is taken to be a synonym of *Empfindung*, that is, a subjective, private, contingently qualified experience.¹¹ However, as Gallagher and Zahavi (2008: 8) explain, "the phenomenologist does not get locked up in an experience that is purely subjective, or detached from the world." Often phenomenology is erroneously confused with a subjective account of experience. Instead, however, it is an account of subjective experience that aims to have an objectivity and a rigor that differs from that of the positivistic approach of science. Many scholars have identified phenomenological investigations with the systematic use in philosophy of introspective practice. But phenomenologists reject this interpretation of their method, arguing that subjective experience is not something that happens in the mind understood as a closed box, an inside as opposed to the world that would be the outside. The phenomenon is not something contingent and private, the illusory way in which reality presents itself to bodies made in a certain way. The phenomenon is the result of the interaction of the living body with the environment, so when one wants to describe perception phenomenologically, she has to consider both the features of the subjective acts concerned and the way in which the object is presented in reality in order for it to be perceived (i.e., through adumbrations, always in perspective, etc.). While Dewey seeks to overcome the distinction between

subject and object, finding their integration in aesthetic experience,¹² phenomenology holds that this distinction changes according to the way in which in each life process the living body and its environment act upon each other.

- 38 Thus the reference to lived experience (*Erlebnis*) is decisive for a full description of the situated, embodied, transactional experience that constitutes the process of learning (*Erfahrung*). It is not by chance that Husserl employs both terms. Besides, in a phenomenological view, what is given is always the product of syntheses; thus the analysis of *Erlebnisse* aims to reveal how behind what happens, there is always something done, and in this doing, both the organic life and the environment are always actively engaged in a co-constitutive process.¹³
- 39 Husserl thereby paved the way for the study of mind as the result of the reciprocal constitutive relationship that exists in the lifeworld between the self and its environment. Then with the naturalization of phenomenology, the description of the conceptual framework of persons as rational agents is joined to the scientific description of the framework in which we act as natural beings.
- 40 Let me say this in another way: the social space of reasons is opened up by the bodily self within the niche that the organism constructs in its relationship of mutual shaping with the environment. The enactive approach inherits the concept of *Umwelt* that Merleau-Ponty took from Von Uexküll and Husserl's concept of the lifeworld. Enactivists have integrated these notions with the thesis introduced within evolutionary biology that organisms are "niche-constructing beings."¹⁴ The conviction that cognitive capacities depend on extracranial and even out-of-body resources – a conviction that the different variants of the situated approach to mind share – is seen as the expression of a process that leads the human species, like many other living beings, to modify its habitat and to create, from itself, its own niche in it. In this way, the human being finds itself able to transform itself in order to improve its capacity of adaptivity; conversely, the human being is able to take advantage of the world's predisposition to be modified and used by enhancing the world's so-called *affordances*.
- 41 If Brandom needs to introduce a rift between our natural and our social being (primarily with the distinction between sentience and sapience), it is because he has disregarded the circumstance that behind the social norms we institute lie the unconscious and implicit practices that we enact (or bring forth) as niche-constructing beings. On the other hand, it must be recognized that if the physical environment of the organism presents itself as a (mostly) closed unit, the social environment of the person presents itself instead as an open horizon in which new norms can be more easily established through the practice of giving and asking for reasons, with such norms gradually becoming familiar until they are eventually taken for granted. The notion of the space of reasons is therefore closer to the Husserlian notion of the lifeworld, understood as the historical, social, cultural, and intersubjective horizon in which people's lives take place, than to the notion of *Umwelt* considered as a "closed unit,"¹⁵ i.e., with the ecological niche that guarantees the survival of the species precisely because it is very difficult to change.

4. Games for Expression

- 42 In light of previous sections, in the history of pragmatism and phenomenology the main convergence seems to be between classical pragmatism, especially Dewey's, and

the enactive approach. Despite their differences, these two perspectives identify the living body as the original and fundamental locus of intentionality and practical knowing-how.

- 43 Yet on the one hand, not all variants of the phenomenological view would be willing to downplay the significance of the linguistic turn in philosophy. And on the other hand, it is misleading to think that the pragmatist perspectives that focus on *Erfahrung* as a process of learning and acquiring habits underestimate the role of language.
- 44 Beginning with the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl interprets language as the source of the expression of thinking. He in no way adheres to the mentalistic conception according to which thoughts take shape in the mind as private episodes and are then brought to expression by language, but his perspective cannot be regarded as fostering a linguistic pragmatism either. It is instead what Brandom would call a conceptual (non-realist) Platonism: thoughts have universal validity – they are contents that exist independently of being represented in the mind or uttered – but linguistic expression is nevertheless the moment in which their potential existence becomes actual. Brandom (2011: 55) is thus right to place Husserl in that dominant lineage in phenomenology and then hermeneutics that is pervaded by the centrality of language. According to Dummett (1994), the only reason Husserl does not endorse the linguistic turn is because he extended to the whole range of living processes the distinction between sense contents and reference that he introduced in parallel (if not earlier, and certainly independently) with Frege’s distinction between sense and reference.
- 45 As clearly emerges in §124 of *Ideas I*, the noematic sense gives a conceptual shape to the layer of expression, whose role is to bring out the mark of the conceptual as transparently as possible.¹⁶ In other words, every content of experience is already potentially conceptually shaped. Frankly, I do not count myself among those who identify the perspective of Husserlian phenomenology with a defence of non-conceptualism. As I have already explained, according to Husserl, beyond what is given there is always a synthesis, i.e., what life does; pure concepts (i.e., categories that establish how things blend together) are already in things forever, and thus are the basis for each conventional use of empirical concepts to assert that things are thus-and-so.¹⁷
- 46 Regarding the latter aspect, it seems to me that there is not only a match between Husserl’s view and the tradition of pragmatism, but also the most radical mismatch: in everyday practical life, thanks to the natural attitude we assume in our lifeworld, we constantly institute norms of linguistic behavior; they concern the way we use concepts to live in a space in which the practice of giving and asking for reasons dominates. On the other hand, these norms that we as rational agents have conventionally instituted presuppose norms that we institute as living beings participating in the process of constructing the niche in which the human species is engaged. These are obviously not the terms that Husserl would adopt, but as Merleau-Ponty teaches us, they do not conflict with the way Husserl thinks about things; on the contrary, they are the completion of an element that remained unsaid in Husserl’s theory of nature.
- 47 In light of this, to conclude the present study we can consider the ways in which the development of phenomenology helps us reflect on the encounter of pragmatism with the linguistic turn.

- 48 The first aspect to emphasize is that even if language does not represent the original place where the organism's intentionality takes shape, it nevertheless certainly represents what is first for us – what pervades all experience in our lifeworld, within the conceptual framework of persons, and thus also our privileged access to understanding the life of our body. Hence unlike Brandom, for Husserlian phenomenology, linguistic expression will not have an ontological primacy over all other lived processes, but it certainly has a heuristic one.
- 49 When observing the affinities between the enactive approach and Dewey's cultural naturalism, one tends to emphasize that for the latter, cognition is certainly a crucial part of the embodied and actively engaged process of inquiry within the environment – the process in which experience consists. But it has neither a paradigmatic nor a primary role, as it seems to have in the enactivist view. As Dreon (2019: 498) has explained, this is why for Dewey, cognition cannot exhaust “the richness and variety of experience.” It has to be considered as “an intermediate stage” whose results are some possible “outcomes of an inquiry,” rather than as “the true nature of everyday things we find ourselves dealing with.”¹⁸
- 50 Yet the notion of cognition in the enactive approach to the mind is much broader than that proposed by Dewey. Over time, the enactivists have corrected their views. In particular, referring to his previous characterization of life as “autopoiesis plus cognition,” Thompson (2011: 122) admits that he would rather say that “living is sense-making and that cognition is a kind of sense-making.”
- 51 A physical phenomenon, like a wave or a soap bubble, is “an individuating process but not a sense-making one,” because it determines its identity and stability through dynamic processes, but “it does not modulate its coupling with the environment in relation to virtual conditions and norms.” A unicellular organism is “a self-individuating and sense-making being but not a cognitive one, if by ‘cognitive’ we mean being intentionally directed toward objects as unities-in-manifolds having internal and external horizons” (*ibid.*). Hence cognition cannot exhaust the richness and variety of experience, but the concept of sense-making does. In the enactivist view, the production of sense can also be seen when bacterial cells (the simplest autopoietic system on Earth) that swim in the presence of a sucrose gradient tumble about until they hit upon an orientation that increase their exposure to sucrose. Now being a nutrient is not an intrinsic property of the sucrose molecule, but by being linked to the bacteria's metabolism, it acquires (or bring forth) this meaning and virtue.¹⁹
- 52 Thus the concept of sense-making should not suggest an act in which a subject imposes on an object its system of representation, with the mind coloring the world in a certain way based on the range of categories at its disposal. In fact, the act of making sense instantiates the embodied and dynamic processes of interaction, coupling, and mutual shaping between the organism and the environment, these taking shape and differentiating each of them in relation to the other thanks to, and during, these processes themselves. Therefore in the process of sense-making, the virtual and implicit norms that rule life on Earth are made explicit. Human language – the discursive practice of giving and asking for reason in a particular way – is both one example of this process and that process through which those living beings that are rational agents become aware of the meaning and the virtue of the process of sense-making itself.

- 53 In an Aristotelian fashion, Husserl sees sense as potentially located in things. This explains why “we can absolutely not rest content with ‘mere words,’ i.e. with a merely symbolic understanding of words,” but “we must go back to the ‘things themselves,’” i.e., to phenomena and living processes (Husserl 2001a: 168). And yet we also allow our capacity for linguistic expression to make this often latently operative process of making sense explicit and thematic, to explicate the virtual conditions and norms at work in the organism-environment interaction.
- 54 From a metaphilosophical point of view, this shows how important it is to engage phenomenology to promote the encounter between classic pragmatism and the neo-pragmatism that has endorsed the linguistic turn.
- 55 When Dewey claims that language is the tool of tools, he is surely bending a classical empiricist image of language to a conception that describes language as a shared and public activity, rather than as the externalization of the mind’s private theater.²⁰ And yet from a phenomenological perspective, this image continues to be reductive; it seems closer to the extended than the enactive approach.
- 56 As Brandom (2011: 80) argues, “most of the things we want to do we can only even *want* to do because we can talk.” Accordingly, the very intelligibility of the ends we pursue depends on our linguistic capacities. “They are precisely *not* goals we can make sense of *first*, so that later language can be brought into the picture playing the role of a possible tool for achieving them – as fastening two pieces of wood firmly together *can* be made sense of in advance of considering nails and hammers, screws, and drivers, glue, clamps, and so on.” Accordingly, language cannot be seen only as a tool for expression; rather, it acquires a sense as a set of practices, a game whose main focus is that of asking for and giving reasons.
- 57 In the extended approach to mind, the depiction of language as the tool of tools further acquires new meaning. In particular, Andy Clark describes it as “the ultimate artifact” for at least two reasons.
- 58 First, not only does public language “confer on us added powers of communication; it also enables us to reshape a variety of difficult but important tasks into formats better suited to the basic computational capacities of the human brain” (Clark 1998: 193). Introducing a comparison that Brandom would consider inappropriate, Clark likens the capacity of language to exploit “our basic cognitive capacities of pattern recognition and transformation in ways that reach out to new behavioral and intellectual horizons” to the capacity of a pair of scissors to enable us to exploit “our basic manipulative capacities to fulfil new ends” (*ibid.*: 193-4).
- 59 Second, in this potentiality there is a recursive aspect at stake: the human capacity to talk has itself evolved in part “so as to exploit the contingencies and biases of human learning and recall” (*ibid.*: 194). In other words, in the process of niche-construction, just as language allows us to adapt to the world, so also – in a mirror-image fashion – our capacity for linguistic communication takes a shape that fits well with the most fruitful strategies that we as living beings adopt in this process of adaptation. Accordingly, it becomes very difficult to determine “where the user ends and the tool begins” (*ibid.*). Language no longer appears as “the mere imperfect mirror of our intuitive knowledge,” but rather as “part and parcel of the mechanism of reason itself” (*ibid.*: 207).

- 60 However, it is exactly in light of this last difficulty that we might legitimately question the accuracy of the tool metaphor. Thompson and Stapleton (2009) focus on the difference between the extended and the enactive approaches by explaining that the externalist view routinely assumes that what goes on entirely inside the head provides a paradigm for what a cognitive process is, then takes technological resources as playing a similar role: “if factors outside the head can be shown to have a comparable or equivalent status, [...] then those external factors count as part of the cognitive process.” This coincides with the parity principle introduced by Clark and Chalmers (1998). But the enactive approach does not accept this assumption. More radically, it holds that what goes on strictly inside the head counts “only as a participant in a cognitive process that exists as a relation between the system and its environment” (Thompson & Stapleton 2009: 25-6).
- 61 Here what is more useful for enactivism is not the extension of the metaphor of language as a tool that empiricism proposes, but an extension of the metaphor of language as a game that Wittgenstein proposes and that the theorists of the space of reasons, like Brandom, have further elaborated. Writing devices and means of communication, as well as linguistic signs themselves, would then in this view be external resources that the mind has been incorporating over the centuries. Indeed, they have radically modified our body (they shape our voice, regulating the way we use our organs to speak or write) and as such, they participate in the more articulated game of expression that is the epitome of the process of sense-making. Following Merleau-Ponty, the enactive approach identifies this game not with speaking alone, but with a more diverse set of practices that find their origin in the gestures that the body performs.²¹
- 62 Recasting one of Wittgenstein’s metaphor, Brandom (2000: 14) claims that “language (discursive practice) has a center; it is not a motley.” In this regard, “inferential practices of producing and consuming reasons are downtown in the region of linguistic practice. Suburban linguistic practices utilize and depend on the conceptual contents forged in the game of giving and asking for reasons, are parasitic on it” (*ibid.*). From the phenomenological perspective that the enactive approach has naturalized, we might further revise this assumption at the core of analytic neo-pragmatism by asserting that in the region of expression, the space of reasons is the central square where the embodied and situated life of human beings predominantly takes place. Thus the analysis of the space of reasons is the starting point for exploring the human capacity of expression in order to understand how it contributes to the process of niche-construction.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ANDREWS Kristin, (2020), *The Animal Mind: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Animal Cognition*, Oxon/New York, Routledge.

- BRANDOM Robert B., (1994), *Making it explicit. Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, Cambridge, Mass./London, Harvard University Press.
- BRANDOM Robert B., (2000), *Articulating Reasons. An Introduction to Inferentialism*, Cambridge, Mass./London, Harvard University Press.
- BRANDOM Robert B., (2008), *Between Saying and Doing. Towards an Analytic Pragmatism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- BRANDOM Robert B., (2011), *Perspectives on Pragmatism. Classical, Recent, & Contemporary*, Cambridge, Mass./London, Harvard University Press.
- BRANDOM Robert B., (2014), "Intentionality and Language," in Nick J. Enfield, Paul Kockelman & Jack Sidnell (eds), *The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 347-63.
- CHEMERO Anthony, (2009), *Radical Embodied Cognitive Science*, Cambridge, Mass./London, The MIT Press.
- CLARK Andy, (1998), *Being There. Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again*, New York, The MIT Press.
- CLARK Andy & David CHALMERS, (1998), "The Extended Mind," *Analysis*, 58, 7-19.
- DEWEY John, (1938), *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- DEWEY John, (1981), *Experience and Nature. The Later Works. Volume I*, Carbondale/Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press.
- DEWEY John, (2004), *Essays in Experimental Logic*, New York, Dover Publication.
- DI PAOLO Ezequiel A., CUFFARI Elena Clare & Hanne DE JAEGER, (2018), *Linguistic Bodies: The Continuity between Life and Language*, Cambridge, Mass./London, The MIT Press.
- DREON Roberta, (2014), "Dewey on Language: Elements for a Non-Dualistic Approach," *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, 6 (2). Online: doi.org/10.4000/ejpap.309.
- DREON Roberta, (2019), "Framing Cognition: Dewey's Potential Contributions to Some Enactivist Issues," *Synthese* 198 (1), 485-506. Online: doi.org/10.1007/s11229-019-02212-x.
- DREON Roberta, (2022), *Human Landscapes. Contributions to a Pragmatist Anthropology*, Albany, State University New York Press.
- DUMMETT Michael, (1973), *Frege's Philosophy of Language*, New York, Harper & Row.
- DUMMETT Michael, (1994), *Origins of Analytical Philosophy*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.
- FARBER Marvin, (1968), *Naturalism and Subjectivism*, New York, State University New York Press.
- GALLAGHER Shaun, (2017), *Enactivist Interventions. Rethinking the Mind*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- GALLAGHER Shaun & Dan ZAHAVI, (2008), *The Phenomenological Mind. An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science*, London/New York, Routledge.
- HUSSERL Edmund, (1973), *Experience and Judgment*, ed. Ludwig Landgrebe, transl. James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks, Evanston, Northwestern University Press.

- HUSSERL Edmund, (1983), *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, transl. Fred Kersten, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff.
- HUSSERL Edmund, (2001a), *Logical Investigations. Volume 1*, transl. John N. Findlay, with a new preface by Michael Dummett, ed. with a new introduction by Dermot Moran, London/New York, Routledge.
- HUSSERL Edmund, (2001b), *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis. Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, transl. Anthony J. Steinbock, Dordrecht/Boston/London, Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- KANT Immanuel, (1974), *Logic*, transl. Robert S. Hartman and Wolfgang Schwarz, New York, Dover Publications.
- LEVINE Steven, (2019), *Pragmatism, Objectivity, and Experience*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- MADDALENA Giovanni, (2015), *The Philosophy of Gesture. Completing Pragmatists' Incomplete Revolution*, Montreal/Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press
- MANCA Danilo, (2013), "L'incanto della natura. Husserl e il naturalism 'aristotelico' di McDowell," *Metodo. International Studies in Phenomenology and Philosophy*, 1 (2), 143-63.
- MANCA Danilo, (2020), "Analisi dell'esperienza e mondo della vita. La mondanizzazione della fenomenologia negli Stati Uniti," *Discipline filosofiche*, 30 (1), 159-84.
- MCDOWELL John, (1994), *Mind and World*, Cambridge, Mass./London, Harvard University Press.
- MCDOWELL John, (2011), "Pragmatism and Intention-in-Action," in Rosa M. Calcaterra (ed.), *New Perspectives on Pragmatism and Analytic Philosophy*, Amsterdam/New York, Rodopi, 119-28.
- MERLEAU-PONTY Maurice, (1962), *Phenomenology of Perception*, transl. Colin Smith, London/New York, Routledge.
- MERLEAU-PONTY Maurice, (1964), "The Philosopher and His Shadow," in Id., *Signs*, transl. Richard C. McCleary, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 159-81.
- MERLEAU-PONTY Maurice, (2003), *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France*, compiled with notes by Dominique Séglaard, transl. Robert Vallier, Evanston, Northwestern University Press.
- RIETVELD Erik & Julian KIVERSTEIN, (2014), "A Rich Landscape of Affordances," *Ecological Psychology*, 26, 325-52.
- RORTY Richard, (1979), *Philosophy at the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- RYLE Gilbert, (1949), *The Concept of Mind*, New York, Routledge.
- SCHEAR Joseph K., (2013), *Mind, Reason, and Being-in-the-World. The McDowell-Dreyfus Debate*, London/New York, Routledge.
- SELLARS Wilfrid, (1953), "Inference and Meaning," *Mind*, 62 (247), 313-38.
- SELLARS Wilfrid, (1956), "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," now in Sellars 1991, 127-96.
- SELLARS Wilfrid, (1958), "Counterfactuals, Dispositions, and Causal Modalities," *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. 2: Concepts, Theories, and the Mind-Body Problem*, ed. Herbert Feigl, Michael Scriven and Grover Maxwell, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 225-308.
- SELLARS Wilfrid, (1962), "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man," now in Sellars 1991, 1-40.
- SELLARS Wilfrid, (1991), *Science, Perception and Reality*, Atascadero, Cal., Ridgeview Company.

- STERELNY Kim, (2010), "Minds: extended or scaffolded?," *Phenomenology and Cognitive Sciences*, 9, 465-81.
- THOMPSON Evan, (2007), *Mind in Life. Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind*, Cambridge, Mass./London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- THOMPSON Evan, (2011), "Living Ways of Sense Making," *Philosophy Today*, 55, 114-23.
- THOMPSON Evan & Mog STAPLETON, (2009), "Making Sense of Sense-Making: Reflections on Enactive and Extended Mind Theories," *Topoi*, 28, 23-30.
- VARELA Francisco J., (1997) "Patterns of Life: Intertwining Identity and Cognition," *Brain and Cognition*, 34, 72-87.
- VARELA Francisco J., THOMPSON Evan & Eleanor ROSCH, (1991), *The Embodied Mind*, Cambridge Mass./London, The MIT Press.
- VON UEXKÜLL Jakob Johann, (1957), "A Stroll Through the Worlds of Animals and Men," in Karl S. Lashley (ed.), *Instinctive Behaviour: The Development of a Modern Concept*, New York, International Universities Press, 5-80.

NOTES

1. Actually, among the interpreters of Sellars' legacy in a pragmatist direction, Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1991 quote Rorty 1979 several times in conjunction with his criticism of representationalism, showing how his conception of "edifying philosophy" – whose guiding ideal is continuing the conversation of the West – leaves open the possibility of considering other philosophical tradition, such as the Buddhist tradition known as "Madhyamika."
2. See Ryle 1949.
3. As evidence of how his attack on the myth of the given could potentially join a situated approach to mind, let me just note that Sellars (1953: 337) compares the role of the given in shaping the conceptual apparatus to that of "the environment in the evolution of species."
4. See also Brandom (1994: 275-6).
5. His typical example is that of the parrot that we can teach to utter one noise rather than another, but with this we would get only a vocal behavior that is not yet a verbal one (see Brandom 1994: 88; Brandom 2000: 17). However, here we are asking another species to conform to the human language system; instead, we should evaluate its own linguistic and communicative abilities, and the correlated capacity of practical inference, independently of the human model. For an overview of this issue, see Andrews 2020.
6. Brandom (2014: 354) draws from Sellars (1958: 306-7) the distinction between merely labeling (or classifying) something and describing it: every response to what is given requires a classification based on stimuli ("the beam breaks under some loads and not others, the parrot squawks 'Red!' in some situations and not others"); however, this does not necessarily imply descriptive ability, which is at the basis of our capacity to thematize conceptual content and to articulate an inference.
7. See Brandom (1994: 86) and Brandom (2011: 17).
8. See Merleau-Ponty (1964). In my view, with his conception of second nature, McDowell (1994) does a better job than Brandom in engaging with the phenomenological perspective derived from Merleau-Ponty. If I have not taken McDowell as my point of departure here (see, however, Manca 2013), it is because his reference to pragmatism is weaker (but see his criticism to Brandom's conception of pragmatism: McDowell 2011), and he still continues to defend an internalist

conception of the mind, whereas Brandom more clearly advocates an externalism – which as we have seen, however, must be extended from the conceptual to the mental.

9. See Husserl 2001b.

10. See Farber (1968: 24-30), and for a discussion of this comparison, see Manca 2020.

11. See Brandom (2011: 7).

12. See Dewey (1981: §12).

13. According to Levine 2019 (see in particular 43-81), to have a satisfactory theory of objectivity from a pragmatist view, we need both concepts of experience: the conscious episodes of *Erlebnis* must be seen as part of the learning process of *Erfahrung* if we are to understand how it is rationally constrained by the world. And yet let us also notice that referring generically to the pragmatist view, Levine first distinguishes between “an active rational capacity – the capacity to make and take reasons,” and “a passive rational capacity to act on standing *habits* or *bodily skills*” (*ibid.*: 57). Second, with an explicit reference to Dewey and re-elaborating McDowell’s point of view, Levine identifies *Erlebnis* with perceptual experience that “contributes to the rational constraint of experience (*Erfahrung*)” (*ibid.*: 79). In contrast, for Husserl every life process that contributes to the subject’s learning process has its own first-person experience, even judging. From the phenomenological perspective, *Erlebnis* is neither a passive episode nor mere perceptual experience; it is the first-person way in which consciousness experiences its co-constitutive relationship with the environment.

14. See Thompson (2007: 95), Gallagher (2017: 54-9), Sterelny 2010.

15. See Von Uexküll (1957: 6); Merleau-Ponty (2003: 167-8). If we differentiate the operational closure of the niche from the openness of the lifeworld, the affinity with the pragmatist view, and in particular with the Deweyan emphasis on organic precariousness, becomes more evident. See on this point Dreon (2022: 55-6).

16. See Husserl (1983: 295).

17. This is why in this article I have preferred to leave out the debate with McDowell conducted by Dreyfus, who from an internalist position identifies phenomenology with a defense of non-conceptualism. In this regard see Gallagher (2017: 197-204) and Schear 2013.

18. See Dewey (1981: 10f., 28); Dewey 2004.

19. See Varela 1997; Thompson (2007: 74).

20. See Dreon 2014 for an accurate interpretation of Dewey’s philosophy of language.

21. On the link between language and gesture in the definition of the expressive capacities of the body, see Merleau-Ponty (1962: 202f.). On gesture from a pragmatist point of view, see Maddalena 2015. See also Gallagher (2017: ch. 10), Di Paolo, Cuffari & De Jaegher 2018, and Dreon 2022 on the need to avoid assuming an epistemological discontinuity between the so-called first-order cognitive practices (in particular, bodily perception) and the second-order ones, i.e., conceptual or linguistic cognition. The introduction of the notion of a “situated normativity” pursued by Rietveld and Kiverstein 2014 seems to me to be another way to integrate Brandom’s view of the linguistic, social game with the enactive account of operative motor intentionality.

ABSTRACTS

In this article I discuss the primacy that, following Sellars, Robert Brandom ascribes to the intersubjective and discursive space of reasons over all other processes in which the human mind

is involved. I will compare Brandom's perspective with that of the situated approach to the study of mind. At first, my aim is to show that the origin of intentionality has to be found in the sphere of sentience and the living body. Second, by comparing the enactivist account of language that derives from the naturalization of Husserl's phenomenology with the neo-pragmatist approach to the linguistic turn, I argue for a heuristic primacy owing to the linguistic practice of giving and asking for reasons. This allows me to reflect with a meta-philosophical approach on to what extent two families of views such as pragmatism and phenomenology, with their different variants, interact in the attempt to blend things together, i.e., nature and culture; mind and world; and what happens inside the human body and what happens outside it.

AUTHOR

DANILO MANCA

University of Pisa

danilo.manca[at]unipi.it