

Embodied and Situated Cognition: from Phenomenology to Neuroscience and Artificial Intelligence

UNPRINCIPLED EMBODIED ENGAGEMENTS: SOCIAL COGNITION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION

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This paper defends a radical enactivist account of basic forms of intersubjectivity. In general, radical enactivism offers a non-cognitivist way of understanding experience and intentionality - one that contrasts embodied responding to symbolic thinking. With respect to the former, I argue that organisms can be intentionally directed at aspects of their environment in ways that are not content-involving - i.e. their intentionality is not to be understood as a property of their mental states or mental representation. Such responding is not intrinsically truth-conditional. Going against standard naturalized theories of content, I argue that the nature of this intentional directedness is best understood in biosemiotic terms (Crudely, biosemiotics is biosemantics without the semantics). Connectedly, although organisms must be informationally sensitive to specific worldly offerings, this sensitivity does not involve the acquisition or manipulation of encoded information content - e.g. as modularist accounts of perception would have it. With this understanding of intentionality in hand it is possible to understand primary nonverbal interaction in terms of a special responsiveness to another's intentional - as opposed to their propositional - attitudes. Our primary engagements with others therefore neither involve the manipulation of propositional attitudes nor any understanding of them - they do not take the form of 'mind', nor even, 'body' reading.