

Skilled intentionality for 'higher' cognition: Dealing with REC's intelligible interface problem

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So far Hutto & Myin's (2012) Radical Embodied or Enactive Cognition (REC) with its focus on 'basic minds' has manifested itself as a very good starting point for criticizing different positions in philosophy of mind and embodied cognitive science that invoke notions of content and representation. However, although methodologically an initial focus on 'basic minds' certainly makes sense, it comes at a price: REC now faces the "intelligible interface problem". If the basic mind is non-propositional in nature how does it relate to propositional knowledge?

This interface problem limits the reach of REC significantly and may seem to reinforce a problematic gap between 'lower' cognition (basic minds) and 'higher' cognition (for example building a house or making a correct propositional knowledge claim about the world). This issue is similar to a problem McDowell faces currently because he (2009) has introduced a distinction between non-propositional perception ('intuitional content') and explicit judgments with propositional content.

An entirely different problem encountered by REC (Hutto & Myin, 2012), is that so far it lacks a positive account gives guidance to researchers in embodied cognitive *science*. If REC wants to be embraced by that scientific field rather than ignored, it cannot limit itself to criticizing the philosophical assumptions of other accounts but, rather, will have to be able to at least point to promising research paradigms and projects. Natural allies are Gibsonian ecological psychology and researchers in embodied cognitive (neuro)science working on skillful unreflective action. Humans share unreflective responsiveness to possibilities for action or 'affordances' (Gibson, 1979; Chemero, 2003, 2009) with other animals.

I understand affordances as relations between an aspect of the environment and abilities available in a 'form of life' (Wittgenstein, 1953; Rietveld & Kiverstein, under review; compare Chemero, 2009). Crucially, the landscape of affordances in our own form of life is very rich thanks to the variety of our practices and abilities. This rich landscape includes possibilities for actions that are traditionally considered as instances of 'higher' cognition: e.g. possibilities for social interaction, for language use, and even affordances for making correct propositional judgments. Given our practice and the abilities acquired in it, the color of the letters on my screen affords judging correctly that these letters are black. I will show how my notion of *skilled intentionality* (Rietveld, 2012a/b; Rietveld, De Haan & Denys, in press (BBS), Kiverstein & Rietveld, 2012), understood as skillful responsiveness to a *whole field* of affordances, makes it easier to deal with the intelligible

interface problem and substantially increases the reach of REC. Moreover, because of its roots in biology and ecological psychology, it can give positive guidance to REC-minded researchers in cognitive science and affective science.

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