



Reflective Situated Normativity

Jasper C. van den Herik¹ · Erik Rietveld^{1,2,3}

Accepted: 15 January 2021 / Published online: 4 February 2021
© The Author(s) 2021

Abstract Situated normativity is the ability of skilled individuals to distinguish better from worse, adequate from inadequate, appropriate from inappropriate, or correct from incorrect in the context of a particular situation. Situated normativity consists in a situated appreciation expressed in normative behaviour, and can be experienced as a bodily affective tension that motivates a skilled individual to act on particular possibilities for action offered by a concrete situation. The concept of situated normativity has so far primarily been discussed in the context of skilled unreflective action. In this paper, we aim to explore and sketch the role of the concept of situated normativity in characterising more reflective forms of normativity. The goal of the paper is two-fold: first, by showing more reflective forms of normativity to be continuous with unreflective situated normativity, we bring these reflective forms into the reach of embodied accounts of cognition; and second, by extending the concept of situated normativity, new light is thrown on questions regarding reflective forms of cognition. We show that sociomaterial aspects of situations are crucial for understanding more reflective forms of normativity. We also shed light on the important question of how explicit rules can compel people to behave in particular ways.

✉ Jasper C. van den Herik
jasperherik@gmail.com

Erik Rietveld
d.w.rietveld@amsterdamumc.nl

¹ Department of Psychiatry, Amsterdam UMC, Meibergdreef 9, 1105 AZ Amsterdam, The Netherlands

² Department of Philosophy/ILLC, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

³ Department of Philosophy, University of Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands

Keywords Normativity · Rules · Embodied cognition · Wittgenstein · Skills · Situated cognition · Situated appreciation · Situated normativity

Situated normativity is the ability of skilled individuals to distinguish better from worse, adequate from inadequate, appropriate from inappropriate, or correct from incorrect in the context of a particular situation (Rietveld 2008a). Situated normativity is not rooted in detached judgements, but consists in a situated appreciation expressed in normative behaviour. Skilled individuals are motivated by the situation by being drawn to those possibilities for action that contribute to improving grip (Dreyfus 2002; Merleau-Ponty 1945). This *tendency towards better grip*¹ is based on embodied skills and habits that have been shaped by a history of learning in sociomaterial practices. In tending towards better grip on their situation, what matters to an individual is expressed in their activities. The concept of situated normativity enables us to understand better how embodiment and sociomaterial practices come together in constituting the normativity inherent in situations of human life.

In continuous interaction with their sociomaterial environment, the individual's different practice-based skills are enmeshed. This tendency towards grip can be experienced by a skilled individual as a directed affective tension (Bruineberg and Rietveld 2014); a feeling of being *moved to improve* the situation (Rietveld 2008a). A paradigmatic example of situated normativity is the feeling of *directed discontent* (Wittgenstein 1967), in which specific possibilities for action stand out in the current situation because they are anticipated to alleviate the affective tension. Wittgenstein gives the example of a tailor that appreciates the lapels on a suit as too wide by cutting them narrower.

In earlier work, situated normativity was primarily discussed in the context of unreflective action (Rietveld 2008a; cf. Klaassen et al. 2010). The possibility of extending the concept of situated normativity to explicit or reflective forms of normativity is therefore currently underexplored. In this paper we aim to explore and sketch the role of the concept of situated normativity in characterising these more explicit or reflective forms of normativity.

The topic of reflective normativity and its relation to unreflective normativity is a broad topic. It is often assumed (e.g. Dreyfus 2002) that unreflective action, for example in absorbed skilful coping, and detached judgements are very different phenomena with different explanations and different concepts of action. In current cognitive science, a similar idea is expressed in the distinction between 'lower' and 'higher' forms of cognition. So-called 'lower' forms of cognition are often thought

¹ We use 'tendency to better grip' instead of 'tendency to maximal grip' (Dreyfus 2002) or 'tendency to optimal grip' (Bruineberg and Rietveld 2014). In our view, 'maximal' or 'optimal' can be taken to imply that grip admits of a global optimum, such that an individual can achieve a state in which the tendency to grip has been fulfilled. However, in real life, individuals and their sociomaterial environments are constantly changing, which makes the idea of this global optimum a theoretical abstraction. In shifting to 'a tendency to better grip', we aim to foreground the fact that improving grip on the situation is an unfolding process in which no stable optimum can be achieved.

to be explainable in terms of a direct interaction with the current environment, whereas so-called ‘higher’ forms of cognition are supposed to require representational intermediaries (Clark and Toribio 1994). Embodied accounts of cognition that characterise cognition in terms of skilful interactions with the environment are then thought to face a *scaling-up challenge* in accounting for ‘higher’ forms of cognition. Normativity plays a central role in the scaling up challenge. It is often assumed that engaging in some forms of so-called ‘higher’ cognition, for example involving language, involves a particular kind of normativity that requires individuals to mentally represent rules (e.g. Searle 1995; Matthews 2003).

Proponents of embodied accounts of cognition have argued that the distinction between these so-called ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ forms of cognition can be evaded by arguing that so-called ‘higher’ forms of cognition can also be characterised in terms of skills (Noë 2012; Degenaar and Myin 2014; Kiverstein and Rietveld 2018; Moyal-Sharrock 2019; Rietveld 2012; Rietveld et al. 2018; Myin and Van den Herik 2020). On these embodied accounts, activities in all human practices, ranging from climbing a mountain to picking a lock, and from playing a game of tag to solving mathematical equations can be characterised as the exercise of skills in concrete situations.

In this paper, we build on these embodied accounts of cognition and aim to extend the concept of situated normativity to reflective forms of normativity. We argue that the notion of situated normativity enables us to articulate a continuity in our skilled normative behaviour, ranging from unreflective behaviour to following explicit rules. Instead of taking reflection to consist in a representation-mediated, and thereby detached form of normativity, we characterise reflection as inherent in practices and as itself a situated and skilfully performed action.²

This paper unfolds as follows. In the first part of this paper, we introduce the concept of unreflective situated normativity, paying special attention to how sociomaterial practices and an individual’s lived situated normativity relate through social attunement. In the second part, we shift attention to reflective situated normativity. We argue that by adopting an *expressive view of language*—as opposed to the still dominant *designative view*—it is possible to extend the concept of situated normativity to more reflective forms of normativity. On the expressive view, verbal behaviour is not the outward sign of private thought. Instead, thoughts are articulated *in* speaking. When applied to the notion of situated normativity, articulations of situated appreciations can be seen as instances of the normative behaviour characteristic of situated normativity. Based on examples, we show how this view enables us to foreground a social aspect of situated normativity by showing how people can jointly articulate a situated appreciation over time. We end the paper with some reflections on explicit rules.

² Noë (2012, p. 3; cf. 2015) makes a similar point when discussing language: “We don’t just *use* words, we criticize and reflect on the use of words, we query and ponder meaning. Or rather, criticism, reflection and refinement belong to the unproblematic language internal ways we use words.”.

1 Unreflective situated normativity

Central to concept of situated normativity is that normativity is expressed in engagement with the world as intelligent behaviour that has an important affective dimension. The behaviour that is characteristic of situated normativity is affective in the double sense described by Colombetti (2014): firstly, in responding adequately to a situation an individual exhibits their capacity to *be affected* by the world, and thus display a lack of indifference with respect to their situation; and, secondly, this behaviour is accompanied by a bodily feeling of being motivated by the world to enact particular action possibilities. This kind of normative behaviour often occurs without reflection or deliberation.

This motivating feeling is an expression of an individual's tendency to better grip on the situation. From a third-person point of view, grip can be described as an (inherently instable) equilibrium between internal and external dynamics within the agent-environment system (Bruineberg and Rietveld 2014; Rietveld 2008b). From a first-person point of view, the tendency to better grip can be (pre-reflectively) experienced as an *affective tension* that draws the individual to act on certain possibilities for action.

Both an individual's internal dynamics and their situation have been shaped by sociomaterial practices. This makes situated normativity, even in an unreflective form, social in nature (Rietveld 2008a; Rietveld and Kiverstein 2014).³ Skilled people have a tendency to be drawn to those possibilities for action that will improve their grip on the situation, in the sense that it becomes more appropriate with respect to sociomaterial practices. Unreflective situated normativity is social because the conditions that constitute better or worse, or appropriate or inappropriate can be traced to sociomaterial practices.

We take practices to be sociomaterial because social and material aspects cannot be separated in thinking about practices (Mol 2002; Suchman 2007; Orlikowski 2007; Van Dijk and Rietveld 2017, 2018, 2020). Through our actions, we modify shared situations, and thereby the possibilities for action available. Because of this constant intertwining, the social and the material are in principle inseparable. A simple example of a sociomaterial practice is given by desire paths, where a path is formed by repeated walking of different individuals that in turn constrain subsequent walking. The desire path is both social, as it is formed by regular patterns of behaviour, and material, as it consists in patterns of grass.

An instructive example of unreflective situated normativity is the tendency to maintain appropriate interpersonal distance. Cultures differ in the distance that is deemed appropriate. When appropriate interpersonal distance is not maintained, for example when somebody stands too close while talking to you, this deviation

³ The social nature of situated normativity does not mean that embodiment plays no role in situated normativity. In fact, situated normativity foregrounds how embodiment is shaped in sociomaterial practices. In this paper we will not discuss the question whether it is possible to have non-social forms of normativity, as one would find for example in the enactive approach. Thompson (2007, p. 70) maintains, for example, that any living system necessarily brings about norms, based on the idea that organisms continually have to recreate the conditions for their own continuation.

induces a directed affective tension that can be resolved by increasing interpersonal distance (Beaulieu 2004, p. 794). Although the practice of maintaining appropriate interpersonal distance gives rise to norms, these norms are not context-independent general rules. Appropriate interpersonal distance depends very much on the situation. In a busy elevator, appropriate interpersonal distance is much smaller than it is if there are only two persons in the elevator, between friends the appropriate distance is much smaller than it is between strangers, and in the case of a global pandemic the appropriate distance will be larger than before. Being attuned to practices of maintaining appropriate interpersonal distance thus depends on being able to negotiate interpersonal distance in concrete situations, not in following context-independent rules.

There is a relation between the lived appropriateness of the skilled person's situated appreciations and the norms of the sociomaterial practice. Because a skilled individual has attuned to a practice, whatever satisfies the skilled individual in a particular situation is usually appropriate (we return to the process of social attunement in the next section). The norms in play are, from our Wittgensteinian perspective, rooted in regular patterns in behaviour yet cannot be reduced to them, as every situation is unique. Being skilled does not consist in blindly repeating patterns of behaviour, but in being able to improve grip on the situation based on a history of material engagement. Unreflective situated normativity is not occurrently guided by rules, nor need it be derivative of reflective normativity: what matters is not articulation or reflection, but simply reliable participation in a practice (Wittgenstein 1953; Rietveld 2008a).

1.1 Social attunement: the link between individuals and practices.

The link between practices and an individual's situated normativity lies in social attunement. Through social attunement an individual becomes a competent participant of a practice, a member of a community (Reed 1995). In the case of unreflective situated normativity, a distinction can be made between different ways in which individuals are attuned to practices. We distinguish between implicit attunement, which involves no instruction, active attunement, which relies on teaching based on the expression of a teacher's own situated normativity without there being explicit rules in play, and explicit attunement based on articulated rules. We now discuss these three forms of attunement in turn.

First, there is an implicit attunement to regular ways of doing things. Maintaining appropriate interpersonal distance is a good example of this form of attunement. Learning to maintain appropriate interpersonal distance is usually not taught explicitly. Moreover, the practice of maintaining interpersonal distance need not be the object of reflective awareness in order to explain the affective tension that motivates people to act in regular ways. In the case of interpersonal distance, many people are oblivious to most patterns of interpersonal distance—although social distancing due to COVID has brought greater attention to these patterns. Moreover, the felt affective tension that results from another person not maintaining appropriate social distance need not be experienced in those terms. For example, after meeting someone that stands too close to us, we might just have a general

sense of unease, of wanting to take a step back, or take that person to be awkward in communicating, without being able to trace this to inappropriate interpersonal distance.

Second, in active *attunement* teaching unfolds in the absence of explicit rules. In this case, a teacher instructs a novice by relying on her own behavioural tendencies that express her situated normativity. The teacher can either do this by *showing* what should be done in a particular situation, or by gestures or other non-verbal expressions of appreciation (e.g. facial gestures) or verbal means—and of course a combination of these. Crucially, for this kind of teaching the teacher need not be able to formulate explicit rules, nor needs she be reflectively aware of the regular patterns of behaviour that constitute the practice. She can simply rely on her own (experience of) situated normativity in guiding a novice's behaviour. This process can be characterised as a process of *guided rediscovery* (Ingold 2001), in which a novice gets a feel of the aspects of a situation that are relevant in the practice to which she attunes. In this sense, active attunement does not rely on the transmission of knowledge from teacher to novice, but rather consists in a teacher setting up the conditions that enable a novice to *notice* and respond to what is relevant in a particular situation.

A good example of this kind of teaching can be found in the teaching of architectural design. Designing cannot be taught by following explicit rules. Instead, a competent architect will point out to a novice architect where her design is 'awkward', 'looks good', 'doesn't quite work', and so on. In this way, the novice architect gradually develops a *feel for designing*. The *result* of implicit attunement and active attunement is similar. The *feel* for designing that is gradually developed by the novice architect is similar to the *feel* for interpersonal distance gradually developed by children. Neither can articulate the regularities to which they have attuned, yet they notice when a situation deviates from these regularities. This is the *feel* for situated normativity, or what we have called lived situated normativity (Rietveld 2008a): they have a *feel* for the grip they have on their situation and how to improve it.

Note that although situated normativity is grounded in regularities, it cannot be reduced to them. Crucially, situated normativity is expressed by being drawn to certain possibilities for action afforded by a *particular concrete* situation. There is thus no mindless repetition of context-independent behaviour scripts, but instead a context-sensitive tendency toward grip on a particular situation. Moreover, sociomaterial practices are not given as background conditions in a particular situation. Instead, practices unfold through time and, being *regular* forms of behaviour, have to be maintained in order to persist by being constantly enacted and re-enacted (Van Dijk and Rietveld 2018; Kiverstein et al. 2019). This in turn means that, as a member of a community, the attuned individual co-determines the way in which the practice will continue. A deviation from a regularity can *set* or shift a standard of appropriateness and thereby steer the practice in a different direction. Think here for example of a philosopher that develops a novel framework or novel line of thought. In doing so, she continues the practice of philosophy whilst at the same time contributing something new. Attuning to a practice is thus not a one-way process in which an individual's behaviour is drawn in line with pre-given practice-

based norms, but a reciprocal process between people that attune to one another (cf. Ingold 2017).

Third, in *explicit attunement* a teacher makes use of explicit rules. A paradigmatic example here is learning chess. An introduction to chess starts out by learning the rules of the game, such as rules for how the pieces move. And, initially, a chess player has to explicitly remember the rules in order to be able to move a piece ('How did the bishop go again? Ah, diagonally.'). However, even a moderately skilled chess player will no longer require an awareness of these rules (i.e., those for moving pieces). Her behaviour simply becomes in line with the rules. As a player learns to play chess, referring to the rules for moving the pieces is no longer required for guiding the player's behaviour. The chess player can then direct her attention to more abstract properties of the chess situation, such as pieces being attacked, pinned, or undefended, properties that presuppose the rules for moving pieces that are now taken for granted.

Although a distinction can thus be made between the different levels of articulation in social attunement, the performance of the skills thus learned is similar in that the appreciation of the *skilled* individual in a particular context does not require an awareness or representation of a rule, but instead a state of lived situated normativity, which is expressed in an action that reduces the felt affective tension and at the same time improves grip. There are of course also differences between the different levels of articulations, to which we will return in the next section.

2 Reflective situated normativity

We now turn attention to *reflective situated normativity*. In this paper, we foreground reflective forms of normativity that rely on linguistic practices and *can* involve explicit rules. As mentioned in the introduction, reflective forms of cognition and/or normativity are often classed as 'higher' forms of cognition that are detached from the current situation and require a different concept of action and a different explanation (involving, for example, representational intermediaries). If this is indeed the case, reflective normativity would be outside the reach of an account of situated normativity.

In this second part of the paper, we want to argue against this dichotomy between 'higher' and 'lower'. Building on the *expressive view of language* we explore cases in which language enables us to express and articulate situated appreciations, or, more generally, how our grip on the situation is fairing. Then we foreground the role of social interaction in jointly articulating situated appreciations. We finally turn our attention to explicit rules and the interrelation to unreflective situated normativity.

2.1 The expressive view of language

How does our language behaviour relate to the world around us and our ways of thinking about this world? Theories of this relation can be categorised as expressing two main views on language (Taylor 2016; Hacker 2014). On the one hand there is the *designative view*. On this view, the primary speech act is assertion, and the

primary evaluation of language is in terms of the truth or falsity of these assertions. Charles Taylor (2016) traces the designative view to thinkers like Hobbes and Locke, who argued that language functions by providing perceptible signs for private thoughts, thus enabling the transference of thoughts from one person to another. On those views, propositionally articulated thought must predate language, as learning language consists in formulating explicit and truth-evaluable hypotheses about the designative function of words (of the form “‘dog” means DOG’) and the rules for combining them (Markman 1981; Clark 2009). Matthews (2003) calls this *the received view*. Quite recently still, and most fervently, a version of this view was defended by Fodor (2008), but also in the language and cognitive sciences the designative view continues to be supported (see Van den Herik 2018, §1 for a discussion).

In this paper, we want to start from another kind of view, the *expressive view* (Merleau-Ponty 1945; Baldwin 2007; Taylor 2016; Kiverstein and Rietveld 2020). Here language does not depend on pre-existing language-like thoughts. Instead, the constitutive dimension of language is foregrounded by showing how language enables us to make, articulate and give expression to distinctions and abstractions. Whereas on the designative view language is merely an outward sign of pre-existing private thoughts, the expressive view presupposes that language makes possible new ways of thinking. Language behaviour is not the outward sign of private thought, but the material realisation of a way of thinking. On this view, learning language entails being initiated into a particular way of understanding to the world, which is expressed and articulated verbally.

A good example of how language constitutes new ways of understanding the world can be seen in categorical colour perception, i.e., the ability to perceive the colour spectrum as consisting of different colours. Davidoff and Roberson (2004) describe how patient LEW, who has aphasia for colour words, is unable to sort colour samples in the way people that have an active command of colour terms can. While sorting colour samples into categories, LEW’s ‘performance was abnormal because he used a slow pairwise comparison for each stimulus; the colour groups did not “pop out”’ (Ibid.: 139). In line with Dummett (1975), they argue that this phenomenon makes sense when we realise that there is no purely perceptual way to distil categories from continuously varying stimuli. There are simply no non-arbitrary points on the rainbow that would mark colour categories. Moreover, different cultures have different ways of carving up colour space (Roberson et al. 2000). Therefore, our conventional verbal ways of categorising colour *impose* a way of categorising colour space, rather than reflect colour categories we could already distinguish. In line with the expressive view, learning colour words entails learning to distinguish categories in colour space (Van den Herik 2018). This in turn means that learning to see *colours* makes possible a new way of relating to the world, or, in the words of Merleau-Ponty (1945, p. 155), it is the ‘acquisition of a certain style of vision’.

By learning language, we are initiated into ways of understanding our world. When we speak, we give expression to these ways of understanding. This language-based capacity for making distinctions enables the making of very fine-grained distinctions. But of course, in the first instance, language is a social form of skilful

behaviour (Van den Herik 2017; Rietveld and Kiverstein 2014). By means of language we draw someone's attention to an aspect of the current situation as being a particular way (Van den Herik 2018; Kukla 2017). Viewed in this way, language is primarily a means of regulating other people's and our own relation to the world (Baggs 2015). We can weave together situations (Ingold 2000, p. 361) by pointing out to others that one aspect of the current situation is similar to earlier situations. For example, if a child learns to say the word 'ball', and she uses that word on a given occasion she thereby suggests to someone else to treat the thing in front of her as a ball, e.g., to start playing a game. In such a case, verbal behaviour acts as an *operator of reminiscence* (Bottineau 2010, p. 283), linking the present situation to situations encountered earlier, and thereby suggest a way of treating the current situation.

Crucially, the expressive view of language is in line with the situated view of normativity. Both perspectives take *behaviour* to be central to understanding the phenomenon in question: for the expressive view of language, verbal behaviour is not a sign of private thought, but the material realisation of a way of thinking; similarly, situated normativity takes our appreciating and affective behaviour to be central in understanding normativity. Our normative behaviour is not an expression of private judgements; rather, our attunement to practices is expressed in our normative behaviour.

2.2 Articulating situated appreciations

The expressive capacity of competent speakers has an important role to play in situated normativity. We will now look at two examples given by Wittgenstein to explore this role. The first example concerns an architect who is designing a door:

You design a door and look at it and say: "Higher, higher, higher ... oh, all right" [...] The expression of discontent says: "Make it higher ... too low! ... do something to this". (Wittgenstein 1967, p. 13).

Wittgenstein gives this example to show how discontent is directed: in designing the door the architect has an experience of the designed door as being 'too high' and thus in need of lowering. This discontent with the situation can be expressed by redrawing the door such that it is lower, thereby dissolving the affective tension (Rietveld 2008a). But it can also be expressed in talking. We can image two architects at work, one manipulating the model of the door of a house, and the other one saying 'Make it higher ... too low! ... do something to this'. In this case, by means of talking the architect articulates her appreciation such that it *becomes available* to the other architect. This in turn attracts attention to a particular way of dealing with the situation by pointing out the action possibility of making the door higher. It is, however, not an explicit deliberation on the situation in which the appreciation is expressed, nor does it mark a breakdown of skilled engagement with the situation. In the process of jointly designing a building, these articulations are an integral part. Similarly, if I warn a playing child of the car that is fast approaching by shouting 'Look out!', I'm not detached from the current situation that I am

living. The mere fact that language is involved thus does not entail a detachment from the current situation.

Remember: on the expressive account of language introduced in the previous section, the expression of discontent ('Make it higher') is not an outward sign of an internal appreciation that is only externally related to it. The expression articulates the appreciation. The architect does not *first* think to herself that the door is too low, only then to communicate this to the other architect. The thinking happens in the speaking. (This does not negate the possibility that we sometimes think of something to say before we say it). Saying the word 'higher' contributes to the architects' orientation on the current situation, in which certain possibilities for action stand out as motivating, in this case the possibility of making the door higher.

In the examples discussed so far, we assumed that the affective tension characteristic of situated normativity was sufficiently directed so as to promote *particular* possibilities for action, i.e., a sense of directed discontent. However, in many cases a situated appreciation of the situation is not directed towards immediate improvement. Sometimes we improve a situation step by step. We feel a dissatisfaction in the sense that we realise the current situation can be better, but we but we cannot quite determine what course of action would alleviate this affective tension. Situations like this require an exploration of possibilities afforded by the current situation. Wittgenstein gives the example of looking for *the right word*:

How do I find the 'right' word? How do I choose among words? It is indeed sometimes as if I were comparing them by fine differences of smell: *That* is too ..., *that* is too ...—*this* is the right one.—But I don't always have to judge, explain; often I might only say, 'It simply isn't right yet'. I am dissatisfied, I go on looking. At last a word comes: '*That's* it!' (Wittgenstein 1953, p. 203^e, emphasis in original)

This example is unlike the architect's directed discontent of the door as being 'too low' in the sense that no clear course of action suggests itself. The process of improvement is more explorative, uncertain, and meandering. It can involve adopting a reflective attitude towards one's expressive behaviour and lived experience. This is a form of engaged reflection. Candidate words are compared and thereby appreciated. This appreciation can be (pre-reflectively or reflectively) experienced as an affective tension. Once a right word is found, the affective tension is partially dissolved. In articulating the vague thought, a sense of dissatisfaction motivates the person to find the right word. However, what word is right is not determined in advance, and one can never be certain that a better word cannot be found. We might decide, for example in writing a text, that this word will have to do for now, and return to it later.⁴ The right word might in the end never be found, which is why the process is more uncertain than in the earlier door-example in which the direction of improvement (making it higher) was immediately clear. At

⁴ This is where the case of finding the right word is different from James' (1890) description of a *tip of the tongue experience*—as when I can't remember the name of a friend—which Wittgenstein goes on to discuss next: when I find the word that was on the tip of my tongue, the tension experienced is fully dissolved, for I have found what I was looking for.

the same time, when seeking the right word, the affective tension is not directionless (Klaassen et al. 2010). It is often instantly clear to us whether a word is better or worse than other candidates. As Wittgenstein (1967, p. 18) remarks, the ‘answer in these cases is the one that satisfied you’. The lived affective tension guides this search. Moreover, in rejecting possible words, our sense of what word could be the right word can become more determinate.

The two aspects of situated appreciation just discussed, its expressive character and the fact that situated appreciations can be more or less directed or immediate point us towards an important function that language plays in situated normativity. By bringing these two elements together we can see how language enables us to jointly articulate situated appreciations; that is to say to articulate appreciations together in a given situation. Wittgenstein’s example of finding the right word can also happen in interaction between two individuals. In writing this paper, for example, we were looking for the right word to cover both directed discontent and directed discomfort as used by Wittgenstein. Several terms were suggested by either one of us, until we settled on the term ‘situated appreciation’. In this five-minute-long episode of talking, choosing among different alternatives was a joint process, where the ‘fine differences of smell’ mentioned by Wittgenstein were developed and explored jointly on the basis of a wide variety of reasons or, perhaps better, because we wanted to attune to a multiplicity of practices. For example, what came up in this process of articulation was the way philosophers usually talk, how both of us have used terms in earlier papers, but also the other projects we are currently engaged in which we perhaps might want to use the same word later. So, in this process of coordination our conversation helped to *establish a continuity* (Van Dijk and Rietveld, *in preparation*) between this particular situation and the different practices the two authors are engaged in.

Language thus enables individuals to *engage a situation together*, by drawing attention to certain aspects of the sociomaterial practices we care about and exploring different ways of going on together. Moreover, sharing a verbal expression of situated appreciation enables people to determine whether and how their appreciations of the same situation are similar or different, and, in the case in which they are different, a consensus can be negotiated.

Although this reflective form of normativity is more explicit than, say, moving backwards to create a larger distance from a person who stands uncomfortably close, it is *not disengaged* or *detached*. For many of the practices we engage in, the possibility of reflection is a constitutive part of the practice, rather than a way of ending up outside the practice. Noë makes this point with respect to our linguistic practices:

Tripping, arguing, adjudicating dispute, innovating, explaining, articulating, trying better to express—these are ready-to-hand modalities of ordinary, everyday language use. Criteria of correctness, questions about how to go on, or about what is or is not grammatical, dealing with misunderstanding, these are activities that we carry on, and that we fight about, inside of language, and they do not require us to shift [...] to a language external activity of setting up the grammar. (Noë 2017, p. 84, emphasis in original).

When applied to our example of the two authors of this piece trying to find the right word, we can say that this kind of reflection on what terms to use is *part and parcel* of the activity of the linguistic activity of writing a philosophy paper. This deliberation does not force us to take a perspective outside the activity, it is rather one of the possibilities for action afforded in this particular practice. Debating what term to use, then, does not signify a breakdown in the activity of writing a paper together, it is a part of the activity. Viewed in this way, jointly articulating a more or less directed situated appreciation can, like Wittgenstein's solitary example, best be seen as *engaged reflection*.

Another aspect foregrounded by the discussion in this section is the temporal dimension of situated normativity. In interaction, we can jointly articulate our situated appreciation *through* time. When one of us first proposed the term 'situated appreciation' we had a vague sense that it might be the right word. Through exploratory activity, in which we explored different reasons for using the word and possible counter arguments, we gradually decided that it was indeed the *right* word. However, due to a host of possible reasons, for example feedback received by others, reading another text, or just a growing sense of dissatisfaction, we could decide in the future to revisit this term and find a better one.

Besides the time-scale discussed above, the joint articulation of situated appreciations plays an important role in the maintenance of collective practices (cf. Kiverstein et al. 2019). Following our situated appreciation of 'situated appreciation' being the right word in the context of this paper, it becomes probable that we, or other writers, will use this word in further papers because it strikes them as being the right word to characterize the phenomenon of situated normativity. Earlier we remarked that there is a relation between what satisfies an expert and what is correct in a particular practice. In general, what satisfies an individual who is attuned to a particular practice is what is correct in that practice. At the same time, episodes of articulation play a crucial role in how standards of correctness change in practices. Through verbal interaction, individual participants constantly (re)negotiate and thereby hone their situated appreciations of particular situations.

The examples discussed of language use in the expression and articulation of situated appreciations show that situated normativity can involve language without thereby becoming a matter of detached reflection. Instead, language plays a role in expressing and articulating situated appreciations in the flow of activity.

2.3 Explicit rules

In discussing the role of language in situated normativity so far, we foregrounded the fact that these articulations are not detached from the particular situation, but express an engaged situated appreciation. In this final part we turn attention to explicit rules.

There are at least two ways of understanding rules. First, the word 'rule' is sometimes used simply to refer to regularities in collective behaviour. For some of these regularities, it might be possible for a third-person observer to formulate a rule that describes this regularity in some situations. This articulation from a third-person perspective, however, is purely descriptive and does not carry the normative

force usually associated with rules. If an observer, for example, finds that adults in the Netherlands tend to go to bed between 10 and 12 o'clock in the evening, it does not follow that they *should* go to bed at this time.

Second, there are explicit rules. These rules are stated in public language and do have a prescriptive function. Rules do not have this prescriptive function by themselves: they only have normative force in as much they are *enforced* by people in their relations to others (Van den Herik 2020). One might be tempted to conclude that following these explicit rules would amount to a non-situated form of normativity as these rules can sometimes be stated independently of and prior to a particular situation in which they apply. Think for example of spelling rules, that can be specified independent of a particular context. One might therefore think that following explicit rules constitutes a kind of normativity that is distinct from situated normativity, a form of detached reflection that falls outside the scope of situated normativity. We think that this conclusion is unwarranted. As we described in the section on attunement, explicit rules that are used in teaching, although they structure subsequent behaviour, often play no explicit role in subsequent behaviour. For example, the skilled chess player has no need to refer to the rules for moving pieces while deciding on their next move, although the player will only consider moves that are in line with these rules.

At the same time, it is of course true that we sometimes follow explicit rules. Even in this case we think it is a mistake to make a dichotomous distinction between situated normativity and non-situated normativity as it robs us of the resources to *understand how explicit rules compel us*. Instead, we argue that even the following of an explicit rule involves situated normativity. In particular, in this subsection we argue first, that to follow a rule requires that one can distinguish between situations that are in line with the rule, and those that are not; in other words, one has to understand the rule and know how to follow it. This in turn means that one has to know when and how to apply the rule, which is a based on situated normativity. Second, we argue that articulating a rule is itself a situated and skilled activity.

As Ryle (1946) argued, we cannot follow a rule if we don't know how to behave in accordance with that rule. In his words, 'Rules, like birds, must live before they can be stuffed.' (Ibid. p. 11). Viewed in this way, rules are not independent of our practices of doing things. Like a third-person observer, a participant in a practice can notice a regularity and give expression to this regularity. However, the difference between the 'rule' formulated by an outside observer and the rule articulated by a participant in a practice is the normative force. For it is the participant who can enforce the rule as a standard of correctness (Van den Herik 2020; Hacker 2014). Think for example of a dictionary: while it sets out to capture regularities in the use of words, the practice of writing dictionaries is not 'outside' other linguistic practices: the dictionary also prescribes how one *should* use words, and this normativity is enforced, for example in the class room, or when two people have a disagreement about the meaning of a word.

Although rules thus arise out of the collective activities that form sociomaterial practices, they do not leave practices unaffected. Borrowing a term from Noë (2015), we can think of practices of articulating explicit rules as *reorganizational practices*. The articulated rule does not just describe, but also prescribes: it attracts

attention to a particular aspect of our practice, puts it on display, and regulates that aspect. Articulated rules thus loop back into and regulate our regular forms of behaviour.

Take a simple example. Suppose someone articulates a rule not to use phones during dinner time in a particular household. Articulating this rule is a way of attracting attention to a particular aspect of recurring events, namely the use of phones during dinner time. Note that it would make no sense to propose this rule unless it somehow related to a recurrent form of behaviour. In order to follow the rule, those situations in which somebody uses a phone during dinner time have to strike one as incorrect or, better perhaps in this case, inappropriate. This in turn can prompt one to verbally articulate the rule (again), tell somebody to put their phone away, or give a meaningful glance to the person using the phone. Here, the explicit rule feeds back into the recurrent activity, normatively structuring the pattern of behaviour.

The link between the so-called context-independent rule and its normative force *is* situated normativity. A decision to follow an explicit rule is meaningless if I am unable, *in particular situations*, to ascertain what course of action would be in line with the rule, and this concrete appreciation cannot itself be explained in terms of explicit rules (cf. Ryle 1946). Explicit rule-following is only possible against the background of situated normativity and the compelling force of situated appreciation.

Note that an important difference between blind rule-following and explicit rules comes to the fore in case of a disagreement between two skilled individuals. When there are no explicit rules available in the given practices, the rules can of course also not be cited. If, for example, two people disagree whether one of them is talking too loud (a disagreement that would often not be made explicit), no rule can be cited to settle the matter. In the case where explicit rules are in play, however, they can be cited and enforced in order to arbitrate the disagreement. This, then, is an important function of the practice of articulating rules. Linguistically articulated rules enable us to hold each other accountable for our behaviour (Sidnell and Enfield 2017; cf. Rietveld and Kiverstein 2014).

To understand this distinction, consider the following example. On the one hand, we have somebody who is attuned to the practice of driving on the right-hand side of the road without learning the explicit rules, and without having the capacities to articulate a general rule based on his experience. This person will drive on the correct side of the road. However, if he gets hit by a person driving on the wrong side of the road coming from the opposite direction, this person lacks the resources to hold the other person accountable by citing the rule. This person might become angry, because his expectations have been broken, but he will not be able to establish himself who was responsible in this particular instance. On the other hand, a person that drives on the correct side of the road and *can* articulate this rule, has the capacity to negotiate responsibility in the case somebody drives on the wrong side of the road.

Besides playing a role in attunement, another important function of explicit rules is to determine accountability. However, both instruction and determining accountability are activities that are distinct from the activity of 'following the

rule'. In everyday life, these activities are usually intertwined: we both follow traffic rules, get angry at people for not following the rules, and scold people that have little regard for traffic rules. But in actual practice, following rules and using rules to ascertain accountability can come apart as well. Edwards (1997, p. 5) remarks how, for him as an English visitor, the rules concerning traffic lights in Mexico City were hard to understand:

The way I came to understand it, the traffic lights [...] remained in force, but not in any way that was supposed to govern people's actions. If you went through a red light, and hit another car, then running the light could be invoked to say whose fault it was. [...] Such verbal and gestural pointings-out would not be automatic in their effects, however. It might be disputed not only that the light was red at that moment, but also that the rule applied in this case, that perhaps this was one of the 'less serious' red lights that everyone routinely goes through, and expects each other to go through, so you should always be careful and look to see what is coming and not rely on the light. [...] So this was the status of the rules—they were available and could be applied, but not definitively, nor without dispute.

Edwards continues that what is drawn out in this example, is true of all rules: namely that rules do not underly or govern behaviour, but are rather *available* to people in order to regulate their own and other's behaviour (cf. Hacker 2014; Noë 2017). This realisation, in turn, shifts attention to how people *use* formulated rules in concrete situations. In the traffic example given by Edwards, one point of articulating rules is to determine accountability in the case of an accident.

Crucial, for our present concerns, is that these episodes in which explicit rules play a role are themselves situated activities that form part of particular sociomaterial practices. Participating in traffic and determining responsibility following an accident are *different* activities in different practices, but these practices are intimately intertwined. First, as we have seen, the reflective possibility of articulating traffic rules feeds back and reorganises traffic practices: as we teach children the traffic rules, their behaviour comes to be in line with these rules. Second, these explicit rules can be used to ascertain responsibility. But ascertaining responsibility is itself a situated activity that can be performed skilfully. This involves skills such as describing what has happened, ascertaining and citing the explicit rules that are in play, and so on, and these activities in turn depend on situated normativity.

Recall that in the case of unreflective situated normativity, we argued that norms were not context-independent, but should rather be seen in context-dependent episodes of negotiating situations. For example, maintaining appropriate distance is dependent on many factors, and skilfully maintaining appropriate social distance entails a sensitivity to the particularities of a given situation in interaction with others. The same goes for explicit rules: they usually do not mention when they should be enforced and when they should be disregarded (cf. Millikan 1998). Think for example of the rule for driving on the right-hand side of the road. If the right-hand side of the road is blocked by a moving company's truck, one has no option but to use the left-hand side of the road.

Rules are sometimes used as hypotheses to *explain* behaviour of people. It is then assumed that these rules are represented in the cognitive system of individuals and guide their behaviour in concrete situations. The concept of situated normativity enables us to envisage an alternative: rules are not explanatory hypotheses, but are *resources* available to people to guide and justify the behaviour of themselves and of others (Van den Herik 2020). On this view, articulating rules and enforcing them in interactions with others is itself a situated activity that is performed skilfully. When people use rules to ascertain who is to held accountable for a traffic accident, for example, they are engaged in the activity of determining accountability, which is an activity that is distinct from participating in traffic, although there are of course important links between the two activities. These links, however, cannot be presupposed, but are forged skilfully by the participants themselves in the particular situation.

3 Conclusion

In this paper, we explored the reach of the concept of situated normativity, i.e. distinguishing between better and worse in the context of a particular situation. We started from unreflective situated normativity. This discussion set the scene for a discussion of reflective situated normativity. By starting from the expressive view of language, we argued that language enables people to articulate situated appreciations, both jointly and individually. Finally, we argued that situated normativity is also relevant in characterising other forms of normativity including explicit rules, as it provides a link between explicit rules and our lived, situated appreciation of a particular situation. Explicit rules can be seen as available resources that offer people possibilities for action, and it is situated normativity that can make the possibility of using such a resource feel compelling in the particular situation. We ended by arguing that practices of articulating rules can themselves be seen as patterns of situated activities that involve situated normativity, thereby alleviating the need to have different kinds of explanations for unreflective and reflective forms of normativity. This conclusion brings these reflective forms of normativity into the reach of embodied accounts of cognition.

Acknowledgements We thank Julian Kiverstein, Ludger van Dijk, and an anonymous reviewer for their comments and discussion.

Funding Work on this paper was financially supported by the European Research Council (ERC Starting Grant 679190 (EU Horizon 2020) awarded to Erik Rietveld for the project AFFORDS-HIGHER).

Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated

otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

References

- Baggs, E. (2015). A radical empiricist theory of speaking: Linguistic meaning without conventions. *Ecological Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10407413.2015.1068655>.
- Baldwin, T. (2007). Speaking and spoken speech. In T. Baldwin (Ed.), *Reading Merleau-Ponty: On phenomenology of perception* (pp. 87–103). Routledge Taylor Francis.
- Beaulieu, C. M. J. (2004). Intercultural Study of Personal Space: A Case Study. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2004.tb02571.x>.
- Bottineau, D. (2010). Language and enaction. In J. Stewart, O. Gapenne, & E. Di Paolo (Eds.), *Enaction: Towards a New Paradigm for Cognitive Science* (pp. 267–306). The MIT Press.
- Bruineberg, J., & Rietveld, E. (2014). Self-organization, free energy minimization, and optimal grip on a field of affordances. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2014.00599>.
- Clark, A., & Toribio, J. (1994). Doing without representing? *Synthese*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01063896>.
- Clark, E. V. (2009). *First language acquisition (Second edition)*. Cambridge University Press.
- Colombetti, G. (2014). *The feeling body: Affective science meets the enactive mind*. The MIT Press.
- Davidoff, J., & Roberson, D. (2004). Preserved thematic and impaired taxonomic categorisation: A case study. *Language and Cognitive Processes*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01690960344000125>.
- Degenaar, J., & Myin, E. (2014). Representation hunger reconsidered. *Synthese*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-014-0484-4>.
- Dreyfus, H. L. (2002). Intelligence without representation – Merleau-Ponty's critique of mental representation. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021351606209>.
- Dummett, M. (1975). Wang's Paradox. *Synthese*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00485048>.
- Edwards, D. (1997). *Discourse and Cognition*. Sage Publications.
- Fodor, J. A. (2008). *LOT 2: The language of thought revisited*. Oxford University Press.
- Hacker, P. M. S. (2014). Two Conceptions of Language. *Erkenntnis*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10670-013-9558-9>.
- Ingold, T. (2000). *The Perception of the Environment – Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill*. Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (2001). From the transmission of representation to the education of attention. In: H. Whitehouse (Ed.), *The debated mind: Evolutionary psychology versus ethnography* (pp. 113–153). Berg.
- Ingold, T. (2017). *Anthropology and/as Education*. Routledge.
- James, W. (1890). *The Principles of Psychology*. Holt and Company.
- Kiverstein, J., & Rietveld, E. (2018). Reconceiving representation-hungry cognition: an ecological-enactive proposal. *Adaptive Behavior*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059712318772778>.
- Kiverstein, J., & Rietveld, E. (2020). Scaling-up Skilled Intentionality to Linguistic Thought. *Synthese*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-020-02540-3>.
- Kiverstein, J., van Dijk, L., & Rietveld, E. (2019). The field and landscape of affordances: Koffka's two environments revisited. *Synthese*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-019-02123-x>.
- Klaassen, P., Rietveld, E., & Topal, J. (2010). Inviting complementary perspectives on situated normativity in everyday life. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-009-9133-7>.
- Kukla, R. (2017). Ostension and Assertion. In: Z. Adams and J. Browning (Eds.), *Giving a Damn – Essays in Dialogue with John Haugeland* (pp. 103–130). The MIT Press.

- Markman, E.M. (1981). The whole-object, taxonomic, and mutual exclusivity assumptions as initial constraints on word meanings. In: S. A. Gelman & J. P. Byrnes (Eds.), *Perspectives on language and thought Interrelations in development* (pp. 72–107). Cambridge University Press.
- Matthews, R., (2003). Does linguistic competence require knowledge of language? In: Barber, A. (Ed.), *Epistemology of Language* (pp. 187–213). Oxford University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1945/2012). *Phenomenology of Perception* (Trans: D.A. Landes). Routledge.
- Millikan, R. G. (1998). Language Conventions Made Simple. *The Journal of Philosophy*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2564683>.
- Mol, A. (2002). *The Body Multiple*. Duke University Press.
- Moyal-Sharrock, D. (2019). From deed to word: gapless and kink-free enactivism. *Synthese*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-019-02218-5>.
- Myin, E., & van den Herik, J.C. (2020) A twofold tale of one mind: revisiting REC's multi-storey story
- Noë, A. (2012). *Varieties of Presence*. Harvard University Press.
- Noë, A. (2017). The Writerly Attitude. In S. Marienberg (Ed.), *Symbolic Articulation: Image, Word, and Body Between Action and Schema* (pp. 73–88). De Gruyter.
- Noë, A. (2015). *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature*. Hill & Wang.
- Orlikowski, W. J. (2007). Sociomaterial practices: exploring technology at work. *Organization Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840607081138>.
- Reed, E. S. (1995). The ecological approach to language development: a radical solution to Chomsky's and Quine's problems. *Language & Communication*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0271-5309\(94\)E0010-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0271-5309(94)E0010-9).
- Rietveld, E. (2008a). Situated Normativity: The Normative Aspect of Embodied Cognition in Unreflective Action. *Mind*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/fzn050>.
- Rietveld, E. (2008b). The Skillful Body as a Concernful System of Possible Actions. *Theory & Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354308089789>.
- Rietveld, E. (2012) Bodily intentionality and social affordances in context. In F. Paglieri (Ed.), *Consciousness in Interaction. The role of the natural and social context in shaping consciousness* (pp. 207–226). John Benjamins.
- Rietveld, E., Denys, D., & van Westen, M. (2018). Ecological-Enactive Cognition as engaging with a field of relevant affordances: The Skilled Intentionality Framework (SIF). In A. Newen, L. de Bruin, & S. Gallagher (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of 4E Cognition*. doi.org/<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198735410.013.3>
- Rietveld, E., & Kiverstein, J. (2014). A rich landscape of affordances. *Ecological Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10407413.2014.958035>.
- Roberson, D., Davies, I.R.L., & Davidoff, J., (2000). Color Categories Are Not Universal: Replications and New Evidence From a Stone-Age Culture. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*. doi.org/<https://doi.org/10.1037/0096-3445.129.3.369>
- Ryle, G. (1946). Knowing how and knowing that. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, New Series*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aristotelian/46.1.1>.
- Searle, J.R. (1995). *The Construction of Social Reality*. Allen Lane.
- Sidnell, J. & Enfield, N.J. (2017). *The Concept of Action*. Cambridge University Press.
- Suchman, L. A. (2007). *Human-machine reconfigurations: Plans and situated actions*. Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, C. (2016). *The Language Animal. The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press*.
- Thompson, E. (2007). *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind*. Harvard University Press.
- Van den Herik, J. C. (2017). Linguistic know-how and the orders of language. *Language Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2016.09.009>.
- Van den Herik, J. C. (2018). Attentional Actions – An Ecological-Enactive Account of Utterances of Concrete Words. *Psychology of Language and Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.2478/plc-2018-0005>.
- Van den Herik, J. C. (2020). Rules as Resources: An Ecological-Enactive Perspective on Linguistic Normativity. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-020-09676-0>.
- Van Dijk, L., & Rietveld, E. (2017). Foregrounding sociomaterial practice in our understanding of affordances: The skilled intentionality framework. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01969>.

- Van Dijk, L., & Rietveld, E. (2018). Situated Anticipation. *Synthese, online-first*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-018-02013-8>.
- Van Dijk, L., & Rietveld, E. (2020). Situated imagination. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-020-09701-2>.
- Van Dijk, L. & Rietveld, E. (*in preparation*). Situated Talking.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953/2009). *Philosophical Investigations (Revised 4th ed.)*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1967). *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics*. Psychology and Religious Belief: Blackwell.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.