

03 - 04 July 2023, Heidelberg, Germany

Embodiment of reason, reasons of the body

Philosophical and anthropological perspectives
on a basic concept of philosophy

August Klett: Wurmlöcher, 1919. Sammlung Prinzhorn, Heidelberg



**2-day conference at the Heidelberg University Hospital
Section for Phenomenological Psychopathology and
Psychotherapy**

Speakers

Godehard Brüntrup (München)
Thomas Fuchs (Heidelberg)
Matthias Jung (Koblenz)
Miriam Kyselo (Trondheim)
Gustav Melichar (Heidelberg)
Alva Noë (UC Berkely)
Julia Peters (Heidelberg)
Jan Slaby (Berlin)
Anja Stukenbrock (Heidelberg)
Michela Summa (Würzburg)
Christian Tewes (Mannheim)

Organizer

Thomas Fuchs (Heidelberg)
Gustav Melichar (Heidelberg)
Philipp Schmidt (Heidelberg)

Location

ZPM-Library, Thibautstr. 4, 2nd floor
69115 Heidelberg

Registration

Due to limited places, please register under:
Ute-Anna.Wittenberg@med.uni-heidelberg.de

Preliminary Timetable

Monday, July 3

- 8:45–9 *Welcome and introduction*
- 9–10 Gustav Melichar – A Kantian Postulate of theoretical reason and naturalized epistemology
- 10:00-11 Julia Peters – Embodied cognition in Hegel
- Coffee break*
- 11:30-12:30 Matthias Jung – Qualitative Thought: John Dewey's Conception of Embodied Cognition
- Lunch break*
- 14–15 Godehard Brüntrup – “Simple Physical Feelings”: On the Mental Foundation of Physical Causation
- 15–16 Christian Tewes – Embodied Experiences and Categorical Thoughts: How the Body Shapes Our Concept of Causation
- Coffee Break*
- 16:30–17:30 Thomas Fuchs – The embodied basis of abstract concepts and logical operations
- Conference Dinner*

Tuesday, July 4

- 9–10 Alva Noë – Perception as a relationship
- 10–11 Miriam Kyselo – Embodied Interpersonal Affordances
- Coffee Break*
- 11:30–12:30 Anja Stukenbrock – Participatory sense-making: egocentricity and embodiment revisited
- Lunch break*
- 13:30–14:30 Michela Summa – Judging the proper distance
- 14:30–15:30 Jan Slaby – Habits of Affluence
- 15:30–15:45 *Conclusion*

Conference

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Section for Phenomenological Psychopathology and Psychotherapy,

July 3–4, 2023

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Description and research goals:

At least since Plato's days, the concept of reason has been crucial for the understanding of the human body, the soul, and their relation. In his *Phaedo*, for instance, Plato thinks of the reason as an epistemic capacity which separates the body and the soul so profoundly that it can be argued that the soul survives the death of the body. The impact of this line of thought on Western philosophy can hardly be overemphasized. Therefore, it is not surprising that our contemporary self-understanding is still influenced by this tradition, for instance in contemporary AI-functionalism, according to which reasoning is a formal process of computation that can in principle be implemented in any material form.

The underlying problem of the relation between reason and the body in humans, though, has in no sense lost its force. In his article "Fodor", Jerry Fodor (1996) has distinguished three major problems for naturalization projects in the philosophy of mind: 1) experiences or qualia, 2) intentionality, and 3) reason. Reason, as the classical understanding suggests, adds to the intentional relations of the mind relations to rules and principles. A reasonable action is characterized by an intention that accords with the principles of reason. Likewise, a reasonable understanding is a theoretical judgement that accords with these principles. Although these views are classical, the focus in the philosophy of mind has not thoroughly investigated the problem of reason.

We see the turn to embodiment and especially the enactive approaches in the philosophy of mind as progressive and important tendencies in the field. Enactivism, following H. Jonas (1973), builds on the *life-mind continuity thesis* that says that human cognition is preformed and prefigured by the organization of an organism and its interactions with its environment. Thereby, the organism needs to *make sense* of its environment in relation to its own needs. This active self-regulation and interaction *enacts* not only emotions but cognitions as well. However, an unresolved problem for the enactive account is how this rudimentary form of sense-making *scales up* to the complex and intersubjective mediated human rationality. For scaling up cognition towards human reason, phenomenology is of crucial importance because the *lived body* and the *transcendental aspects* of human reason figure among the core topics for phenomenological investigations.

However, an approach of embodied reason is still lacking in the literature, although first steps have been recently made, for instance by S. Gallagher (2017), (2020) or A. Noë (2012), (2015). To fill this desideratum and to approach the capacities for reason from an embodied point of view will be crucial for a contemporary (self-)understanding of the human mind and the human being in general. The relation of the living body and the capacities for reasoning is pertinent and urgent because of two contemporary views that question the relation and lead to an abstract and problematic understanding of human reasoning. The first one can be called the "postmodern view". The "postmodern view" inherits from Nietzsche the assumption that all reasoning is ultimately

subjected to irrational forces of life that aim at power and reproduction. The second one can be called the “AI view”. The “AI view” abstracts entirely from the lived body and understands reasoning as functional processes that can be realized independently from the human body. Both tendencies, however, undermine our understanding of human beings. Embodied reason is thus not only a research desideratum, but at the same time highly relevant to society. For example, discourses and communication seem to change fundamentally when the other person is no longer seen as a rational being whose autonomy is accompanied by insight into reasons.

The *goal* of this workshop is to address the embodiment of reason. We would suggest two complementary approaches to the topic: The embodiment of reason and the reasons of the body. The first is an exploration of how reason is conditioned, shaped, and constituted by bodily experiences, and how faculties of reason enactively shape bodily existence in the *Um-* and *Mitwelt*. The second approach explores a layer of rationality that is as such most intimately tied to the living body. Skillful coping with the environment, the participatory sense-making with other persons, and empathy towards other persons may give rise to a new interpretation of the principles and rules that commonly define reason for us.

The contributions to the workshop may engage with one or more of the following questions:

- How does the paradigm of the embodied mind change our view on reason and rationality?
- The current theory of reason is strongly influenced by rational choice theory. Can we extend our view on reason by considering embodiment? Are there for instance specific communicative, affective, or emotional aspects of embodied reason?
- What about the classical distinction between practical and theoretical reason? Does the embodiment of reason shed new light on this distinction or does it provide grounds to overcome this dualism?
- What are the embodied presuppositions for the development of the abilities of reasoning?
- Can reason still be upheld as a universal concept?
- How is our self-understanding affected by a philosophical understanding of reason?
- Can we account for transcendental aspects of reason within embodied accounts of the mind?
- Can we use the normative principles of embodied reason as guidelines for critique?

Invited Speakers:

Prof. Dr. Godehard Brüntrup (München)

Prof. Dr. Dr. Thomas Fuchs (Heidelberg)

Prof. Dr. Matthias Jung (Koblenz)

Prof. Dr. Miriam Kyselo (Trondheim)

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