

Epistemic, Rational and Social Norms

Project for FNS “pro*doc” application (3 candocs)

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General Overview

Most philosophical research on norms has focused on *practical* norms and values. Almost everyone agrees that there are practical norms and values. And even skeptics and relativists have to admit that we make value judgements, about what to do or not to do, or about what is good and what is bad. Thus the ethical domain has been the realm *par excellence* of normative and evaluative concepts, of what is right and what is wrong, correct or incorrect, of *oughts* and *mights*, and the like. However, philosophers are increasingly interested in norms and values that appear to exist beyond the core domain of ethics: epistemic values, norms of reasoning and rationality, and social norms and values. The investigation of such domains now appears necessary for a general understanding of normativity and value. The present project aims at conducting research in those specific domains while keeping an eye on the larger issue of a general philosophy of norms and values.

The *basic issues* in traditional meta-ethics are the following: what is the meaning of ethical normative judgments? (the *semantical* problem) To what kind of evaluative properties do they purport to refer to, and do these properties exist? (the *ontological* problem) If such judgements are true, how do we know them? (the *epistemological* problem) How can they motivate us to act accordingly? (the *motivation* problem) Philosophers have given a number of answers to these questions. On the ontological and epistemological issues, the main opposition has been between realists and cognitivists on the one side (there are moral properties, which can be known) and anti-realists and expressivists on the other (moral properties are mere projections of our feelings and attitudes). In the latter camp, some claim that all norms are at bottom social or social-related. On the motivational issue, internalists claim that moral properties are necessarily motivating, externalists that they can fail to motivate. A number of philosophers claim that practical normativity is mostly to be thought in terms of deontic concepts (of the *oughts* and *mights* types), others claim it falls within the scope of value concepts (of the *good* and *bad* kind), and others that it can be unified under the general concept of *reason* (Scanlon 1998, Skorupski 1999). There are also a variety of answers about how these abstract meta-ethical issues relate to various kinds of theories in normative ethics (consequentialism, deontologist, hedonism, perfectionism and the like) and in moral psychology.

The four basic problems of meta-ethics carry over to other areas in which normative judgements appear to be made:

- **The epistemological domain:** Are there things that we ought to believe, that it is good to believe, correct or incorrect to ignore? The traditional debate about putative “ethics of belief” has raised that problem (Locke 1610, James 1905, Conee and Feldman 2005, Engel 1999). The first issue here is whether there are things that we ought to believe for non-epistemic, practical reasons. The second is whether there is a specifically epistemic kind of normativity. At first sight, we do seem to appraise beliefs when we say that they are justified or rational, and we tend to value knowledge more than true belief, as Plato remarked long ago in the *Meno*. Some have thus claimed that epistemic justification is compliance with epistemic obligations (Chisholm 1977), or that knowledge is definable in terms of intellectual virtues (Zagzebski 1996). However, some epistemic concepts such as sensation and perception are not obviously normative. A further issue is whether the structure of epistemic reasons parallels that of practical reasons: for instance, whether epistemic reasons are to be understood in an “internalist” or in an “externalist sense” or whether there are “normative” as well as “explanatory” reasons (Audi 2000, Engel 2005).
- **The rational and psychological domain:** A number of philosophers have claimed that certain *mental* and *psychological* concepts also belong to the “space of reasons” (Sellars 1963, Burge 1990, McDowell 1994, Brandom 1994). This is a much disputed claim: if there is a normative dimension of the mental, is it intrinsic or extrinsic (Dretske 2000, Burge 2003)? Is it a real feature of mental contents or is it only a feature of our ascriptions and interpretations of mental contents (Peacocke 1992, Gibbard 2003, Boghossian 2003, Engel 1998, 2000, 2001, 2007)? Is it a feature of conceptual contents only or does it apply to non-conceptual contents as well? How do we become aware of the normativity of the mental, and is it phenomenologically salient (Martin 2002, Dorsch 2007b)? Why do we take it seriously, and are we right in doing so? Does it extend to desires, intentions and other motivational states (Dorsch 2007b)? All these questions have been prominent in contemporary philosophy of mind mostly because it is widely believed that the normative dimension of mental phenomena is an obstacle to a naturalistic and

causal account of them (Putnam 1982). It is a much disputed issue whether that is the case, and if so how naturalists can answer this challenge.

- **The social domain:** Because they are properties of groups, social norms and values pose a specific epistemological problem. Can they be known only by testimony (by listening to others)? Or by inference and theorizing (by observing other people's behaviour)? In the latter case, how much of the theory is innate, and is it reducible to the theory of mind? Or can social norms and values be directly experimented, through specific emotions for instance (Dorsch 2007a)? These questions are increasingly investigated in the social cognition literature (Sperber 1975, 1996, Wellman & Miller 2006, Kalish 2006). On the ontological side, several kinds of entities might be the object of our knowledge of social values and norms: observable properties of objects, people and situations, including relational ones such as affordances (Gibson 1979, Deonna 2006, Goldie 2007), or only indirectly observable properties such as (at least some) mental properties.

The first aim of the present project is to develop new research lines in these three areas. The project will thus be structured around three sub-projects, each of which is meant to accommodate one PhD student:

- A. *The Nature of Epistemic Norms.*** Epistemology, conducted by Pascal Engel and Julien Dutant (Geneva).
- B. *Norms of Mind.*** Philosophy of mind and value theory, conducted by Gianfranco Soldati and Fabian Dorsch (Fribourg).
- C. *Social Normativity.*** Ontology and epistemology of social facts, conducted by Laurence Kaufmann and Julien Deonna (Lausanne).

The second goal is to find generalizations from one domain to others, with the broader intent to establish a framework for a general philosophy of norms. As no such framework exists in contemporary philosophy, building one is beyond the scope of the present project, but useful steps in that direction will be made in each sub-project.

The third aim is to integrate more closely than is usually done research on norms and values with metaphysics by relying on two other “pro-doc” projects. First, discussions of the motivational problem about norms (how norms cause us to act), which arise in each sub-project, can usefully rely on Prof. Esfeld's research module on the metaphysics of mental causation. Second, the ontology of normative properties and values can benefit from Profs. Mulligan, Correia et al.'s research module on (meta-)metaphysics of properties and relations, notably through the development of a framework for describing property roles, and the work on the intrinsic/extrinsic, categorical/relational and formal/material distinctions. (Further specific interactions with “pro-doc” projects are indicated in the relevant sub-project sections below.)

The following presentations of the sub-projects will describe the three domains of philosophical enquiry already outlined in rather general terms. The three related PhD positions will be internationally announced, and we expect to attract applications from young researchers with a very strong educational background. During the selection process, we shall require the applicants to provide us with more specific research projects, which fit into one of the three more general lines of research envisaged by us. The present versions of the three sub-projects are therefore written with the intention to leave enough room for young scholars to determine more precisely the hypotheses and questions which they wish to consider.

Sub-project A: The Nature of Epistemic Norms

Summary

The traditional debate on the “ethics of belief” has recently ramified in a set of interrelated issues about the characterization of epistemic norms (Locke 1610, James 1905, Conee and Feldman 2005, Engel 1999), and issues about the integration of epistemic norms in a naturalistic world-view have recently appeared in the ontological and epistemological aspects of that research. Pascal Engel and Julien Dutant's research already bears on those issues, and will provide a framework for a PhD project on the nature of epistemic norms.

Present State of Research

Much of the recent work on epistemic norms has been pursued within contemporary epistemology. Two main groups of issues have been explored: 1) the characterization of epistemic norms: what they prescribe and how we follow them, and 2) the nature of epistemic norms: whether they fit in a naturalistic world-view and how.

The characterization of epistemic norms: Traditionally, beliefs are said to be justified and apt to count as knowledge in virtue of three kinds of properties: their *truth*, the *evidence* that we have for them, and their *rationality* and *coherence*. These properties can be said to be normative in the sense of being constitutive of correct belief: a belief is correct if it is true, justified if we have enough evidence for it, and rational if it exhibits the proper logical relations to other beliefs. None of these properties is by itself sufficient for defining what counts as a correct belief: some beliefs can be true but not justified nor coherent, and some can be coherent without being true. A central task of epistemology is to spell out which properties are central for epistemic appraisal. Some epistemological theories emphasize truth (for instance reliability theories define justification as truth conduciveness of processes of belief formation (Goldman 1986)), others emphasize coherence (Lehrer 1993), other theories emphasize evidential relations in general (Conee and Feldman 2004). One of the main issues in epistemologies consists in spelling out which of the properties of justification are primary and constitutive. But specifying which properties are relevant to epistemic evaluation is one thing – let us call this the *appropriateness problem*, and determining in what sense these properties can guide and regulate our beliefs is another thing – let us call this the *regulation (or reliance) problem*. Most of the theories which are labelled as “internalist” take the normative properties of justified beliefs, for instance coherence and evidence, to be such that the believer has access to them and follows them reflectively, or at least potentially so. The norms of truth, evidence, and coherence are thus requirements of which the subject is aware, and which he is supposed to follow. Not all internalist theories imply that the epistemic norms are obligations or interdictions that one has to respect, but at least one theory, the so-called “deontological” theory of justification (Alston 1989) implies that it does. Externalist theories, by contrast, do not impose that requirement: a subject can know, and can be justified to believe something without being aware of the constitutive norms of belief formation, and without having to conform to them. So in principle, for externalist theories, the subjects could distance themselves from the norms which are in place, or fail to comply.

A number of issues have been raised about the relationship between epistemic evaluation and the kinds of mental states to which it applies if the normative epistemic properties are supposed to regulate these mental states. In particular if there are epistemic obligations to believe certain things, doesn't this presuppose that we could have some sort of voluntary control over our beliefs? Many writers think that if doxastic voluntarism is the price to pay for a strong form of deontologism about justification, the price is too high (Alston 1989, Engel 2001a, Dorsch 2007b). Another issue concerns what Peacocke (1992) calls the “normative liaisons” of various thought contents: do they, as he himself suggests, come from the kinds of concepts which are involved in these contents (demonstrative, perceptual, spatial, temporal, etc.)?

Although the notion of normativity has been indirectly present in many traditional epistemological issues, the very notion of epistemic norm has not been the object of a separate examination until recently. It is part and parcel of this part of the project to focus directly upon it, by concentrating in particular on the following questions.

The naturalization of epistemic norms: As naturalism becomes an increasingly powerful framework in both philosophy and the human sciences, there is an growing need to integrate epistemology in the wider picture of empirical sciences, and with it the domain of epistemic normativity. Can epistemic norms and values fit within the naturalistic worldview?

Four main options: strict autonomy, conceptual autonomy, conceptual reduction, eliminativism. In broad terms, four different answers have been explored. *Strict autonomists* claim that non-normative accounts of knowledge are impossible, and thus that epistemology will remain an autonomous discipline (see, in different ways, Stroud (1989) and Lehrer (1997)). *Conceptual autonomists* accept that knowledge supervenes on non-normative facts, so that epistemology can in principle state under which objective conditions one has knowledge, but doubt that any illuminating account of that fact-value link can be given, and take it as a primitive (Williamson, 2000). Both take a dim view of the potential integration of epistemology within science.

Stronger forms of integration have been put forward in the “naturalized epistemology” tradition (Kornblith (1994)). Roughly speaking, two distinct projects have been developed under that name. But none has given a satisfying account of epistemic norms so far. *Conceptual reductionists* aim at a naturalistic description of *our concept of knowledge*, namely an analysis of the common-sense concept of knowledge in non-epistemic, non-evaluative terms (Goldman 1986). They may tell us what epistemic states we *do* value, but not that we should value them (Weinberg et al., 2001). *Eliminativists* aim at giving a naturalistic description of *knowledge*, namely a description of the psychological processes that result in what we take to be knowledge (Quine 1969). They may tell us what objective property knowledge is, but not that it is valuable (Kim 1988).

Normativity remains either unexplained or unaccounted for in the dominant views. Autonomists preserve epistemic normativity at the expense of taking it as a primitive and keeping it apart for the scope of natural science. They do have a normative standpoint in epistemology, but they have nothing to rely on when normative conflicts appear – for instance, when judging whether induction yields knowledge, or when arguing against the skeptic’s strict standards for knowing.

But on the other hand, both versions of naturalized epistemology fail to account for the normativity of knowledge, as is reflected in the fact that they are lead to endorse epistemological conservatism (Stich 1990, Kitcher 1992, Kornblith 1999). The first describes as knowledge the reasoning practices we happen to use – and thus assumes that the practices are good. The second describes as knowledge whatever classify as knowledge – and thus assumes that our intuitions about what knowledge is are right. Both lack a standpoint from which to judge our practices and our intuitions.

Research project

The following issues are to be addressed by the sub-project's members. As already mentioned above, we do not think it advisable at this point to give a definitive PhD outline for the candoc. The PhD will focus on a specific subset of the issues depending on the candidate's strengths and interests.

The semantics of epistemic norms: Although, as was mentioned above, many normative concepts seem to fall under the general notion of reason, it is not clear that all forms of normative import of cognitive and epistemic states are the same. In the first place one must distinguish the *satisfaction* conditions of mental states from their *correctness* conditions. The satisfaction condition of a belief that P is that it has a certain intentional content: the content that P. The correctness condition of the belief that P is that P be true (Mulligan 2007). The phrase “beliefs aim at truth” is ambiguous between these two readings, but only the second is the normative one (Engel 2005, Dorsch 2007b). This we can call, as above, the constitutive norm for belief (Wedgwood 2001). But this norm has to be distinguished from other norms attached to this concept. If I believe that P, and realise that P implies Q, then presumably I ought to believe Q. But this “ought” is not of the same kind as the preceding one. Following Broome (2000) and Millar (2004) we may call it a normative *requirement* or *commitment*. Commitments of this sort are implications of a concept which are associated to the constitutive norm, but which are not identical with it. There are also such commitments for intentions: in particular if I intend to *f*, and realise that a means to *f*-ing is that I *g*, then I should intend to *g*. These commitments are in turn distinct from the *reasons* and *justifications*. I may have a commitment to believe that P (for instance because it is implied by Q) without having an adequate reason to believe that P. Similarly I may be committed, if I intend to *f*, to *g*-ing, because I recognise that *g*-ing is a

necessary means to *f*, without having any good reason to *g*. This shows that, contrary to the claim that normativity is a matter of reason through and through, normativity is not exhausted by the realm of reasons. Or if it is, that we have to distinguish a number of concepts of reason to map out this terrain.

A major task of this project will consist in sorting out these normative notions and their interrelations. It will investigate in particular, the main epistemic concepts of *belief*, *knowledge*, and *justification*. The concepts of belief and of knowledge, in particular, have intimate connexions with those of truth and of assertion, which are highlighted by Moore's paradox. But the nature of these connexions has yet to be elucidated. If knowledge is a genuine mental state, the same questions arise, in particular with respect to its being the constitutive norm for belief and assertion (Williamson 2000).

Evidence and probability: Although truth figures more or less at the centre of the nexus of epistemic norms and relations, it is not the only norm which matters to epistemology. According to a number of philosophers, the primary concept is neither truth nor knowledge, but belief and probabilistic degree of rational belief. Within the Bayesian tradition, the evidential relations are elucidated in terms of subjective probability relations, and most Bayesians think that they are deeper than the truth and coherence relations, although in a sense Bayesianism is a form of coherentism. It is an open question whether qualitative epistemic concepts can be translated in terms of probabilistic relations (see e.g. Kaplan 2002). Some paradoxes like the lottery paradox highlight this conflict between our intuitions, and raise, among others, the question whether classical logic offers the correct normative guidance for our epistemic intuitions.

The epistemology of epistemic norms: The task of an analysis of the normative liaisons of epistemic concepts does not end once the constitutive and other requirements have been spelled out. That an epistemic attitude such as belief or knowledge is subject to a constitutive norm does not explain how the norm actually regulates the formation of belief. Different accounts of that regulation, which we can call the problem of the specific epistemology of epistemic norms (a parallel problem arises for the epistemology of moral judgements), can be given. One can understand the correctness condition for belief in teleological terms, as the goal that is intentionally aimed by the believer (Velleman 2000), as a "transparent" condition immediately present to the believer (Shah 2003), or as regulated by a knowledge condition (Engel 2005). In each case, one has to understand how a subject can rely upon a norm in guiding his belief formation. This issue is investigated specifically in sub-project B (*see below*, the question of reliance).

Ontology: what kind of necessity is normative necessity? Are normative conditions, such as correctness conditions, deontic necessities which hold in all possible worlds, or merely conceptual or analytic necessities which follow from the possession conditions of epistemic concepts? Some philosophers take them to be a priori requirements on concepts (Peacocke 1992), others take them as a genuine kind of necessity, normative necessity (Fine 2002). Normative necessity itself can be considered as *sui generis* and irreducible, or as supervening upon natural necessity. That raises the issue of its ontological independence. Naturalistically inclined philosophers will be tempted to consider the normative domain as reducible to the natural order. Pluralists and dualists will accept its autonomy, but will run the risk of its being a "nomological dangler". This foundational issue is closely linked to the question whether the normative domain can be understood in terms of the evaluative domain of values. Most naturalists claim that if the structure of epistemic normativity is teleological, it will lend it itself more easily to a naturalistic analysis in terms of means and ends, or causes and consequences. That raises the question whether epistemic norms and values can be naturalized, which will form the last chapter of this sub-project.

The naturalisation of epistemic norms: Though naturalized epistemology projects have generated much discussion, we think that several important issues have been neglected:

The knowledge / concept of knowledge distinction. Research in epistemology massively relies on spontaneous judgements about real or imaginary situations such as Gettier's cases. Those judgements are usually taken to be data about *knowledge*: they tell us that a subject in such a situation knows or fails to know. But they are in fact data about our *concept of knowledge*. So they have bearing on the theory of knowledge proper only insofar as one assumes that our concept of knowledge is adequate. But that may fail to be the case.

The emotion of disgust provides a useful analogy (Rozin & Nemeroff 1990): disgust has evolved as a mechanism to avoid contaminating substances, but our disgust intuitions (e.g., that anything that touches a disgusting thing is disgusting) only partly correspond to the properties of their intended target. Similarly, our

intuitions about knowledge may partly misrepresent knowledge.

The stability / universality of the intuitions. A number of psychologists and philosophers (Nisbett, Stich) has investigated the issue whether our epistemic “intuitions” in particular about Gettier problems and the traditional definition of knowledge as justified true belief, are as stable and widespread as epistemologists assume. Some studies however seem to show that they are not, and that there are wide divergences between the epistemic intuitions of people belonging to distinct cultural and economic groups.

Epistemology and the psychology of epistemic intuitions. The psychology of our epistemic intuitions is still a new field, which need to be investigated, and which is likely to renew not only issues about the stability of epistemic concepts, but also meta-normative issues about the relativity or absolute character of our epistemic norms (Stich 1990, Bishop and Trout 2005).

Institutional framework

Pascal Engel has dealt with issues related to the ethics of belief and epistemic norms in a recently completed book on knowledge (Engel to appear *b*) and in numerous articles (Engel 1999, 2000a, 2001, 2001a, 2005, Engel & Mulligan, 2003). Pascal Engel and Julien Dutant have edited a collection of readings in epistemology (Dutant & Engel 2005). Julien Dutant has co-organized a workshop on the naturalization of norms at the Congrès de la Société de Philosophie des Sciences, Geneva, March 29-31, 2007, in which he discussed the case of epistemic norms.

The project will be associated with the current project on Norms and Reasons at Geneva. It will specifically interact with Prof. Esfeld's research module on Mental Causation on several issues: how can epistemic norms motivate (cause) us to act? How must epistemic norms supervene on natural facts in order for them to be part of the natural causal order? And more generally, what is the place of norms in the natural world? Moreover, the ontological issue of characterizing normative properties can usefully rely on Profs. Mulligan, Correia et al.'s research module, notably on their general framework for formulating property roles.

Timetable (to be modified in accordance with the candidate's interests)

Months 1-12: Work on the ontology of epistemic norms in relation with the (Meta-)Metaphysics project; work on the epistemology of epistemic norms in relation with sub-project B.

Months 13-24: Work on the semantics of epistemic norms; Work on the naturalization of epistemic norms. Stay within the group *Epistemic Value* at Stirling (Scotland).

Months 25-36: Final draft of the thesis.

Sub-project B: Norms of Mind

Summary

The fact that we do - and should - rely on reasons, or try to conform to corresponding norms, when forming beliefs or intentions is commonly explained either in terms of our access to the appropriateness of such a reliance and to the authority of the respective reasons or norms (cf. the internalist view), or in terms of the nature or function of the mental states concerned and the proper rational working of our minds (cf. the externalist view). This sub-project is meant to present and assess a third approach (i.e., the experiential view), according to which our reliance on reasons is rather a matter of our being phenomenally aware of the normative dimension and standing of the conscious states involved. Our aim is to defend as much as possible the idea that this third view is best equipped to account for our reliance on reasons, as well as to pay justice to certain related phenomenological observations.

Introduction

Our proposed research - which is meant to be conducted by one PhD student - is concerned with the nature and the application of the norms that govern the ways in which we, or similarly rational beings, form beliefs

and intentions (and, consequently, act). In particular, we aim to investigate why we actually follow such norms when making up our minds, and under which conditions we can count as satisfying them.

The norms in question may be epistemic or practical in nature (cf. Audi (2001) for a detailed discussion of the structural similarities between the two normative realms). They may oblige us to do something - for instance, when they demand from us to intend to help a person in need, or to give up a prejudice. They may allow us to do something - for instance, when they permit us to pursue our hobbies, or to believe what we see. Or they may proscribe us to hurt do something - for instance, when they prohibit hurting other people, or believing the words of the clairvoyant. More abstract examples are the obligation to form only true beliefs, or the demand to intend to do what morality - or, alternatively, prudence - requires.

The norms which govern our formation of beliefs and intentions are intimately linked to reasons. This is basically due to the fact that that formation is essentially rational: we normally form beliefs and intentions on the basis of, and in response to, respective reasons available to us. Therefore, by governing our formation of these states, the norms in question govern automatically our responses to the kinds of reason concerned. That we are allowed or obliged to form a particular belief or intention thus means that the appropriate (i.e., permitted or demanded) response to the relevant reasons is precisely to form the state in question. In other words, when we are making up our minds about theoretical or practical matters, we conform to the respective norms by relying on the right reasons.

State of research

Two issues: appropriateness and reliance: Now, in view of the fact that our reliance on reasons in making up our minds is inseparably linked to certain governing norms, many important questions have been posed - prominently among them (cf. sub-project A above): whether the reasons derive their normative power from norms, or whether they instead actually establish them (Scanlon (1998)); or whether what we usually take to be the norms governing our responses to reasons are really all genuinely normative legitimations and obligations, or whether some of them are instead mere descriptive claims about what it means, say, to be rational (cf. Broome (2000), and Kolodny (2005)). Our own focus will be on two other important questions that are concerned with the actual occurrence and adequacy of our reliance on reasons.

The first - the *question of appropriateness* - addresses the issue of which conditions there are on the adequacy of our rational formations of beliefs and intentions: when do we actually count as appropriately relying on epistemic or practical reasons, or as conforming to the corresponding norms? What is at issue here is therefore the legitimacy of our formations of beliefs and intentions (and thus also of any subsequent performance of actions).

The second question - the *question of reliance* - deals with the issue of why reasons and norms indeed play their central role in how we acquire our beliefs and intentions: why do we actually rely on epistemic and practical reasons, and try to satisfy the corresponding norms - at least under normal conditions? What is at issue here is, accordingly, the psychological impact which reasons and norms normally have on our formation of beliefs and intentions (and thus also on our performance of actions).

Two approaches to appropriateness: internalism and externalism: The rich amount of theories and controversies regarding the question of appropriateness cannot properly be captured in a research project like this. Therefore, we have decided to focus on two particular approaches which have figured very prominently both in epistemology and in practical philosophy - namely what we will call the internalist and the externalist views on appropriateness. (Note that the notions 'internalism' and 'externalism' are often used in other and sometimes unrelated ways, notably in practical philosophy and in relation to how reasons or, alternatively, normative judgements are linked to motivation).

Although it is possible to be internalist with respect to one type of reasons and norms, and externalist with respect to another (cf. Burge (2003) on such a differentiation between forming beliefs on the basis of other beliefs, and forming them on the basis of perceptions), the two views are usually taken to be central elements of opposing accounts of normativity.

Internalism: The *internalist view* endorses the idea that what is central to our appropriate reliance on epistemic or practical reasons and our conformity to the corresponding norms is that the respective reasons and norms are, at least partly and in principle, accessible to us. More precisely, such an accessibility is

understood as a condition on the appropriateness of belief- or intention-formation. That we are permitted or required to believe or intend something is thus said to depend partly on our capacity to grasp (part of) the respective right or obligation. This grasp should thereby go beyond the mere recognition of the reasons and norms in question. It does not suffice that we simply realize that there is a reason - or even a good reason - to believe or intend something. We also have to be able to recognize that it is a good reason for us, and we have to be able to make this fact clear to ourselves and to others. Therefore, internalists maintain that the appropriateness of a formation of a belief or an intention requires possible access to the fact that this formation is appropriate from our own perspective (cf. Williams (1981), Korsgaard (1996), Velleman (2000), and Wright (2004)). And this again requires a special form of access to the reasons or norms in question - namely a form of access which is somehow reflective in nature and goes beyond the mere recognition of reasons in the form of perceptions, desires, descriptive and normative judgements, and so on.

According to some versions of the internalist view, this accessibility condition requires the possibility of full conceptual grasp of the appropriateness of the belief- or intention-formation and, hence, of the relevant reasons or norms. This may mean the ability to point to the reasons and their normative power (cf. Chisholm (1977) and Lehrer (1997); cf. also Bonjour in Bonjour & Sosa (2003)); or the capacity to access those mental factors responsible for the appropriateness of one's belief- or intention-formations (cf. Conee & Feldman (2004)); or the ability to grasp - and perhaps even determine - the nature and status of the norms that we are following and which may even explicitly guide us (cf. Korsgaard (1996); cf. also Soldati (2002) for discussion); or the capacity to recognize that certain reasons would survive fully informed and rational deliberation (cf. Williams (1981)); or some other reflective capacity or set of ancillary beliefs of a similar kind (cf. Wright (2004), or traditional foundationalists in epistemology; cf. also Burge (2003) for discussion).

Moreover, at least in the moral case, internalists often assume a necessary link between grasping that we are obliged - or perhaps even only allowed - to rely on certain reasons and actually ending up intending - or otherwise being motivated - to act accordingly (cf. Williams (1981) and Korsgaard (1996)). Hence, the access required for appropriateness might also have to show such motivational consequences. And it is not implausible - though rather uncommon - to assume that something similar might be true in the epistemic or in other practical cases.

Less demanding versions of the internalist view may weaken the accessibility condition by allowing that the grasp of the normative status of the belief- or intention-formation need not be complete (and perhaps not even entirely conceptual) in its reflective grasp of the normative force and standing of the respective reasons and norms. For instance, Wright (2004) argues that the Cartesian sceptical challenge to, say, our perceptual knowledge of the external world can be answered only if we are able to rationally claim warrant for our perceptual beliefs; and that this again requires implicitly accepting or trusting that the respective sceptical scenarios do not obtain (e.g., that the external world does exist). Hence, the form of access required for the appropriate formation of perceptual - and possibly other - beliefs may concern only part of the normative status of the respective reasons, namely their intactness in the face of scepticism.

Externalism: The externalist view, on the other hand, maintains that what matters for appropriateness is mainly the fact that the states involved in the formation - notably those providing us with access to the reasons concerned (e.g., perceptions, desires, normative or other judgements, etc.) - are of the right kind. Accordingly, it is claimed that being in those states already suffices for our resulting formations of beliefs or intentions to be appropriate, or to satisfy the respective permissions or demands - at least under normal conditions, when our minds are working properly and we are unaware of any potential defeating circumstances.

Most versions of the externalist view agree on which states are of the right kind, namely those being in and relying on which is conducive to attaining the epistemic or practical values in question. But they differ in how they account for this conduciveness. Perceptions, for instance, are often understood as having the evolved function to lead to true or knowledge-constituting beliefs (cf. Dretske (2000)). But alternatively, their intimate link to truth or knowledge may also be seen as a constitutive (and possibly non-naturalizable) part of their nature as representational states (cf. Burge (2003)). On the other hand, certain kinds of desire (in conjunction with respective beliefs) have been said to be likely to lead to intentions to perform moral actions in virtue of being of the right type - such as desires of benevolence (cf. Hume (1998), though he may be more internalist than not), or desires to act morally (cf. Parfit (1984)), or desires which otherwise reflect

moral worth (cf. Nagel (1986); Smith (1994) and Pettit & Smith (2006) for discussion).

Deontic vs. evaluative norms: The fact that the internalist view stresses our access to reasons and norms, while the externalist view highlights the conduciveness of the mental states concerned to the attainment of values, correlates with another important difference in emphasis. Proponents of the internalist view often assert that the satisfaction of norms should be understood as a matter of our own responsibility, investment and achievement (cf. Chisholm (1977), Korsgaard (1996), Lehrer (1997), Pollock & Cruz (1999), Velleman (2000), and Wright (2004)). Their externalist opponents, by contrast, maintain that what counts instead is the fact that we actually succeed in acquiring knowledge, or intending what is rational or good (cf. Parfit (1984), Nagel (1986), Dretske (2000), Kornblith (2002), Sosa in Bonjour & Sosa (2003), and Burge (2003)); while it hardly matters whether this is simply a consequence of the nature and normal functioning of our minds, as well as, possibly, luck (cf. Williams (1981) and Pritchard (2005) for discussion of the latter topic), or whether we are involved in a more active or reflective way. Hence, what internalists seem to be concerned mainly with deontic norms, conformity to which requires some explicit grasp of them and presumably also letting oneself being guided by them; and externalists mainly with evaluative norms, conformity to which requires primarily the attainment of the values concerned.

Internalism and externalism on reliance: Now, the question of reliance has not very often been addressed by proponents of either the internalist or the externalist view. But the natural answer for the internalist would seem to be something like the following: we actually rely on reasons because we take this practice to be appropriate (i.e., permitted or demanded), at least as long as we are unaware of any potentially defeating circumstance; and we normally take reliance on reasons to be appropriate because we have some access - which we presumably exercise from time to time - to the kind of appropriateness at issue. What seems to become especially important here is the issue of authority: of why we take, from our own subjective perspective, good reasons and norms as making legitimate claims on us (cf. Korsgaard (1996)). Most internalists locate the source of this legitimacy in our own rational or human nature. Accordingly, our access to the appropriateness of relying on reasons consists either in our own conferral of this appropriateness onto that rational practice (e.g., in virtue of our autonomous will; cf. Korsgaard (1996)), or in the reflective insight that, given our human nature, this rational practice is, in one sense or another, good for us (cf. Williams (1981), Velleman (2000), and Wright (2004)).

By contrast, an externalist will presumably answer the question of reliance as follows: we actually rely on reasons when forming beliefs or intentions simply because such reliance is part of being in the respective reason-providing states; and it is part of being in these states because of certain aspects of their nature or function. Moreover, our resulting practice of reliance will make sense in the wider picture of life and survival since it will be, by and large, successful - even though we need not have access to this fact for it to obtain (cf. Dretske (2000), Kornblith (2002), and Burge (2003)). Nonetheless, externalists may still resist the naturalization of reasons and norms (e.g., Nagel (1986), and Burge (2003)) - although it is not always clear what would be gained by such resistance, given that some of the main obstacles to naturalization, such as subjective accessibility or even subjective responsibility, are taken to be far less important than often thought. In any case, reliance is understood by the externalists, not as a form of personal trust, but as part of the proper working of the rational mind. Consequently, the issue of authority turns out to be unconnected to the issue of reliance.

Proposed research

The main aim of our research project is to put forward a further and so far undeservedly neglected alternative to the internalist and externalist views on the occurrence and appropriateness of rational formation of beliefs and intentions – namely what we would like to call the experiential view. The need for such a third view arises mainly from two sources: first, the seeming failure of the internalist and externalist theories to provide fully satisfactory accounts of our reliance of reasons, especially in respect to its psychological explanation (cf. the question of reliance); and second, certain phenomenological observations concerning our awareness of the normativity of our own mental states. The experiential view is thereby meant to constitute a compromise position trying to incorporate some of the virtues of the other two views, while avoiding most of their vices.

The project consists of three parts: (i) the discussion of some of the main weaknesses of the internalist and

externalist views; (ii) the formulation and elaboration of the experiential view as a viable third alternative; and (iii) the investigation of the defensibility of the experiential view in the light of its advantages, as well as various important objections. But again, this research project is intended to leave room for the prospective PhD student to choose his or her own focal points and hypotheses.

First part: weaknesses of the internalist and externalist views: Internalists and externalists (as understood here) have faced numerous objections both within epistemology and within practical philosophy; and many of these criticisms have been put forward by proponents of the respective opposing view. The relevant debates concern, for instance, the link between moral reasons and motivation (cf. Williams (1981), Smith (1994), and McDowell (1998)), or the regress problem of justification and the need for, and availability of, a refutation of scepticism (cf. Bonjour & Sosa (2003), and Wright (2004)).

However, since this project does not allow an adequate consideration of all these objections, it is intended to concentrate on challenges concerning the two central ideas of the views under consideration – namely the internalist idea that appropriateness requires some form of access over and above the mere recognition of reasons, and the externalist idea that being in the right reason-providing states suffices for appropriateness.

One of the main relevant problems for the internalist view is that it seems to be too intellectualistic, notably in its approach to the question of reliance, but also in its approach to the question of appropriateness. For instance, small children or certain animals appear to be able to engage in various forms of reasoning, and moreover in appropriate ways, without possessing or using the reflective or conceptual capacities required by internalists, and without being able to answer – and perhaps even to pose – the question of authority (cf. Burge (2003) and Papineau (1999)).

The externalist view, on the other hand, seems unable to explain the apparent link to the subject – after all, we do the reasoning and are held responsible for it, and not our minds – and hence the distinctively normative character of the reasons and norms concerned (cf. Korsgaard (1996) and Wright (2004)). And a further problem for the externalist is to accommodate the fact that it appears to be the absence of an awareness of defeating circumstances – rather than merely the absence of such circumstances – which matters for the appropriateness at issue.

Our hope is to make plausible that these are indeed serious objections to the two views under discussion, and that this fact provides strong motivation for the search for an alternative approach to our reliance on reasons – such as it is embodied by the experiential view.

Interlude: the experiential view: One of the key ideas of this new view is that we experience the normative power or status of the mental states concerned (or their manifestations in consciousness). That is, it is part of the phenomenal character (i.e., the what-it-is-like aspect) of the states which bring us into contact with reasons (e.g., perceptions or evaluations) that they are phenomenally marked as providing us with good reasons; and it is part of the phenomenal character of the states which we form on the basis of the reasons (e.g., judgements or intentions) that they are phenomenally marked as being supported by, or responding to, good reasons. Indeed, the idea is, more generally, that it is essential to our experience of rational states that we experience their normative force and standing: this is just what it means to recognize them as providing or being supported by reasons (cf. Soldati (2000) and (2002), and Dorsch (2007b)).

Another essential ingredient to the experiential view is that these experiences of normative appropriateness reflect the respective aspects of the nature or function of the states involved – for instance, their constitutive link to, or their characteristic role in the achievement of, epistemic or practical values. For example, the idea that perceptions are experienced as providing good reasons for belief is taken to indicate the fact that perceptions normally lead to true and justified beliefs (cf. Dorsch (2007b); cf. Martin (2002) for a similar idea).

The answer of the experiential view to the question of reliance is fairly straightforward: we rely on reasons when forming beliefs or intentions because we experience them as allowing or obliging us to do just this, and because we take this experiential awareness – just as perceptual or other forms of awareness – at face value (unless we are aware of defeating circumstances). The story of why we take our experience of normative appropriateness at face value will therefore be very similar to that one told with respect to perceptual consciousness – for instance, because the normative force of the recognized reasons becomes directly manifest as a genuine aspect of the world or our lives, and as open to our rational sensitivities (cf. McDowell

(1998); cf. Martin (2002) for perceptions and their experiential rational dimension).

With respect to the issue of appropriateness, however, the answer of the experiential view is presumably largely identical with that of the externalist one. Given that the experience of normative appropriateness is taken to reflect the substantial and stable links of the respective reason-giving states to epistemic or practical values, the appropriateness concerned is naturally understood in terms of the factors establishing these links, such as the nature or function of the states involved. Importantly, although the experiential view claims that the experiential form of access is necessary to explain our reliance on reasons, it would not seem very plausible for the theory to interpret this form of awareness as a condition on appropriateness as well (although it may still turn out that how we experience the respective states is necessarily linked to what is said to be responsible for their normative power, namely their nature and function).

Accordingly, while the experiential view agrees with the internalist one on the idea that access to the appropriateness of our reliance on reasons plays an essential part in this rational practice, the former does not treat it as necessary for the practice to be appropriated, but only as distinctive of its occurrence. And while the experiential view shares with the externalist one the idea that this appropriateness is primarily a matter of being in the right kind of state, it stresses also that we have some access to this kind of appropriateness. The experiential view therefore tries to find a middle-way between its two more extreme alternatives and thereby to preserve the significance of their central ideas: that accessibility is needed, and that being in the right type of state suffices. Of course, it manages to do this mainly because it understands the experiential access to normativity as an integral part of the states concerned.

Second part: The elaboration of the experiential view: The second part of the research project aims at a proper formulation of the experiential view. Among the things to be achieved are, first of all, a clearer specification of the notion of experiential (or phenomenal) awareness, and a better understanding of the central claims of the view. This will involve research into two topics which have been extensively discussed within the philosophy of mind: the nature of phenomenal consciousness (cf., e.g., Siewert (1998) and Martin (2002)), as well as phenomenal concepts (cf. the MR of Prof. Nida-Rümelin), and the nature and function of the mental states concerned (cf., e.g., Dretske (2000) and Burge (2003)). Relevant issues are: whether the relationship between the normative power or standing of states and our phenomenal experience of it is one of constitution, resemblance, counterfactual dependence, or something else (cf. Martin (2002) for some discussion); and to which extent this experience is laden with concepts (cf. McDowell (1994)).

As already suggested, the experiential view shares important elements with the two other positions. This raises the question of how exactly it is related to them. To answer this, it needs to be asked, among other things, to which extent the experiential view presents a real alternative to, and not merely a modification of, either the internalist or the externalist view.

It will also be helpful to take a comparative look at other recent debates in philosophy in which positions very similar to the experiential view have been put forward – such as theories which treat our self-knowledge of mental states or actions as based on experiences of them (cf. Dorsch (2007b); or theories which take our basic awareness of ourselves to be experiential (cf. Kriegel, U. & Williford, K. (eds.) (2006)).

For further support – and likewise for inspiration – the experiential view should also consider the phenomenological accounts offered by Brentano, Lipps, the early Husserl, and their followers Ach, Pfänder and Scheler (cf. especially Ach (1935) and Pfänder (1963)). Since they were all concerned with normative issues and with our formation of beliefs and intentions and have come forward with many detailed and valuable insights, it will be worthwhile to study the respective phenomenological writings and connect them to the proposed account of our basic awareness of normativity, as well as to some of the related contemporary debates and issues.

The experiential view of mental normativity will also be compared to the perceptual model of social normativity formulated in Dr. Deonna and Dr. Kaufmann's subproject on social norms. We will ask whether the phenomenologies they postulate for mental norms and social norms, respectively, share some features, and whether they can be put under a more general framework for the phenomenology and knowledge of norms.

Third part: the defensibility of the experiential view: The aim of the third and last part of our research is to assess the experiential view, and to investigate to which extent it can be defended.

That will, first of all, involve elucidating in more detail how it can answer the question of reliance without

falling victim to the problems facing the internalist and externalist views (cf. the discussion above). While internalism seems to over-intellectualize our rational formations of beliefs and intentions by demanding a sophisticated form of access to the respective reasons and norms, externalism seems to fail in the opposite way by denying us, understood as responsible subjects, a prominent role in those formations. The experiential view appears to do neither: experiences of normativity can be had (though not conceptualized) by subjects lacking the respective concepts or reflective capacities; and the respective experiential awareness, or lack thereof, enables us to make our formations of beliefs and intentions our own and take responsibility for them - for instance, by letting ourselves be guided by what we experience as reasons (cf. Soldati (2002) for a similar approach to the issue of rule-following).

Then, the experiential view seems to get support from certain phenomenological observations (cf. Ach (1935) and Pfänder (1963)). We normally take our beliefs and intuitions to be appropriate, that is, supported by good reasons (if not, we tend to revise them or give them up). But our respective kind of awareness usually does not seem to be due to an inference based on (introspective) judgements or beliefs, given that it appears to be much more immediate than such a form of reasoning. And it should not be understood as being due to a spontaneous intuition, given that there is no good reason to postulate the existence of the required (causal or constitutive) reliable mechanism between forming a belief or intention in an appropriate way and immediately judging, when considering the issue, that this formation is indeed appropriate. Hence, the best explanation of why we take our beliefs and intentions to be appropriate responses to the reasons available to us may be that we *experience* this appropriateness (cf. Dorsch (2007b); cf. also O'Brien (2003) for similar arguments concerning our awareness of agency). The aim will be to evaluate and, if possible, to defend this understanding of the observation that we often take our beliefs and intentions to be appropriate. We will thereby fall back on the results of the work on phenomenal reflection done within the MR on phenomenal concepts conducted by Prof. Nida-Rümelin.

But when assessing the experiential view, it also needs to be considered how this approach to our reliance on reasons can deal with important objections. For instance, since the experiential view sides with the externalist one with respect to the issue of appropriateness, a defence of the former requires a satisfactory response to the internalist challenges to the externalist understanding of appropriateness. There is some hope that the issue of authority may be resolved by reference to the fact that our experiential awareness of the normative power of reasons presents itself to us as to be taken at face value (cf. McDowell (1998)). And any potential sceptical challenge to our recognition of reasons as appropriate may perhaps be addressed - so as to avoid the need for something like an internalist notion of trust - in terms of an impossibility of widespread failure, when the attainment of the respective values is concerned (cf. Davidson (1983)).

In addition, there are other likely objections which need to be addressed and, if possible, answered. In particular, it has been doubted that intellectual reason-giving or reason-supported conscious states (e.g., conscious beliefs or intentions) really possess a distinctive phenomenal character (cf. Siewert (1998) for a discussion)). However, most of the related doubts concern the issue of whether differences in phenomenal character can be as fine-grained as differences in conceptual content; while the experience of normativity assumed by the experiential view is independent of differences in content, and even in mental kind, given that it pertains equally to all conscious beliefs and intentions (cf. Dorsch (2007b); cf. also Dorsch & Soldati (2005) and Soldati (2005a) for a more thorough defence of the idea that conscious beliefs possess a distinctive phenomenal character).

Institutional framework

The research for this PhD-project will be accompanied and supervised by Prof. Gianfranco Soldati and Dr. Fabian Dorsch, both from the philosophy department of University of Fribourg.

Prof. Soldati has published a book and many articles on issues surrounding phenomenology, phenomenal consciousness, self-awareness, and the normativity of the mental (cf., e.g., Soldati (2000), (2002), (2005a) and (2005b)).

Dr. Dorsch has done extensive research on moral motivation and normativity, our knowledge and awareness of our own mental actions, and has written on the role of emotions in evaluations (Dorsch (2007a), and on the normativity of judgements and beliefs, as well as our experience of epistemic and practical reasons (Dorsch (2007b)). He will also be a member of the SNF-funded, Geneva-based research project on properties

and relations closely linked to Profs. Mulligan, Correia et al.'s research module on the (meta-)metaphysics of properties and relations.

Together, they have defended the idea that judgements and other conscious intellectual states possess a phenomenal character (Dorsch & Soldati (2005); cf. also Soldati (2005a)). Besides, they have organized – as well as presented their own work at – several international conferences at the University of Fribourg, among them one on the normativity of reasons (with Davor Bodrozic, Mark Kalderon, Niko Kolodny, Alex Miller, David Owens, Andrew Reisner and Nishi Shah as the other speakers), and one on the phenomenology of agency (with Michael Schmitz, A. D. Smith and Stephen White as the other speakers).

Timetable (to be modified in accordance with the candidate's interests)

Months 1-12: First part: Critical assessment of the internalist and externalist views (in close collaboration with sub-project A)

Months 12-24: Second part: Formulation of the experiential view (in close collaboration with the MR of Prof. Nida-Rümelin on phenomenal concepts)

Months 25-36: Third part: Critical assessment of the experiential view.

Subproject C: Social Normativity

Summary

Our proposed research – which is meant to be conducted by one PhD student – is concerned with the ontology of the “objects” that populate the social world and the capacities that enable fully-fledged members of society to grasp the social saliences of the situations in which they are embedded. There are currently two major ways of considering social cognition: as the identification of other’s opaque, unobservable psychological states, or as a sensory, perception-based means of gathering information about one’s social environment. This project aims at critically assessing the scope and the limits of both ways. In particular, we would like to investigate the kind of cognitive equipment that the detection and processing of social entities require, and to identify the social or cultural entities that are too grounded in justification and deliberation to be captured by a perceptual model.

Present State of research

How do I come to know that some object, event, process, etc., which is presently given to me in experience, is endowed with some distinctive ‘social’ dimension, property or significance? There are three main possible routes for acquiring such knowledge. (1) I might be informed through *testimony* that what I experience has the social significance it has. (2) I might *theorize* on the basis of prior knowledge what is the social significance of my experience. (3) I might be directly *acquainted* with the social significance of what I experience. The present project aims at exploring the viability of the third route to social knowledge and at formulating a satisfactory account of it.

Current research has been focusing heavily on the second route and more peripherally on the first route to the acquisition of social knowledge. The general assumption subtending this area of research is that the apprehension and understanding of the complexity of the social domain requires from the social agent the deployment of equally complex cognitive capacities. Social agents' capacity for evaluating the appropriateness, the acceptability and the effectiveness of their responses to social situations would be based upon conceptual thinking, practical deliberation, meta-representation and theory of mind. To account for social appropriateness, there is indeed one dominant theoretical strategy: it consists in broadening the scope of theory of mind until all kinds of social capacities and inferences are encompassed, including apparently non-mentalistic ones such as deontic inferences about what one may, must, or must not do in a given set of circumstances (Wellman & Miller 2006; Kalish, 2006). This is what we call the theoretical route to the acquisition and deployment of social knowledge: this latter is mostly regarded as the result of a series of successive inferences whose representational contents are isolated from one another. In the epidemiological

version of this theoretical view of social knowledge, the acquisition and success of social representations are ensured by their intrinsic properties, mainly systematic violation of hard-wired expectations about object boundaries and movements (naive physics), species configurations and relationships (naive biology), and goal-directed and interactive behaviour (naive psychology) (Sperber 1996; Boyer 1994; Atran 2001). Unlike domain-specific first-hand, intuitive, and perceptual information directly relevant for survival, social knowledge appears as second-hand, counter-intuitive representations. Social representations are assumed to be bracketed between circumspect “quotation marks”, which provide them with a rational safeguard preventing their direct implication in the inferences and actions linked to the tangible, indubitable reality of the physical world (Sperber, 1975, 1996).

Although undeniably a fundamental dimension of the manner in which we access social reality, deliberation and practical reasoning is, we believe, only part of the story. Social knowledge is not only the correlate of the disembedded, insulated associations of representations through which human beings *distance* themselves from the here-and-now imperative and requirements. The main idea behind the present project is that there are ways of apprehending social reality that are similar to the ways we apprehend the world as it is given to us in *perceptual* experience. Perception, beyond tracking for us how the physical world is and changes, is variously said to be quick, automatic, involuntary, distinctively phenomenological, domain specific, non-inferential, affording or resisting action. Is there an *acquaintance route* to the acquisition of social knowledge or is it only a metaphor? This project attempts to investigate the fruitfulness as well as the limits of the perceptual model – that will probably have to be distinguished from sense perception proper - to our cognitive, conative, and affective apprehension of social reality.

Research project

1. First of all, what perceptible objects are candidates for populating the social realm and what is their ontological status? *Prima facie*, we can distinguish between evaluative facts (i.e. Sam is elegant), deontic facts (i.e. one must not kill), social values (i.e. rightness, virtue, beauty, honesty), social relationships (i.e. kinship, reciprocity, dominance), social roles (i.e. president, teacher, father), social groups (i.e. American, white people, women, workers, etc.), social actions (i.e. reconciling, exchanging, playing), institutional acts (i.e. promising, baptizing), social concepts (i.e. sin, authority, nation, God) and social situations (i.e. food gathering, political struggle, caregiving). One question is of course whether they are on a par with respect to the way we experience them to be in play in any given circumstance.

This metaphysical part of the project should benefit from intensive collaboration with members of the Pr on The (Meta-)Metaphysics of Properties and Relations.

2. It has been argued that the self experiences the world as distinct from itself because the world offers *resistance* to it. Intuitively, objects are experienced in perception as distinct because they variously resist and are experienced as resisting our voluntary actions (C. Cassam, 2005). Here the question is what are the psychological mechanisms and competences underpinning the experiences of a resisting physical world? Now, can a similar argument be devised to the effect that the self might also constitute itself as distinct from its environment in experiencing the *social* world as “resisting”? Are the psychological mechanisms and competences underpinning the experiences of a resisting *social* world similar or different from those dedicated to the physical world? Would the emerging self who conceives itself as distinct from the social world be a distinctively social self? And if so in what sense?

A *prima facie* reason for wanting to carry out the analogy between a resisting perceptual world and a resisting social world is that at least some of these social “objects” have a public, objective, mutually manifest reality and often resist our voluntary actions. They are mostly experienced as having a mind-independent reality that imposes requirements on one’s behaviour. As such, they foster the «feelings of efforts» characteristic of the tactile perceptual resistance that is susceptible to trigger the distinction between oneself and the world.

This part of the project should strongly benefit from planned collaboration with members of Prof. Kevin Mulligan’s PR on the Boundaries of the Self (esp. Sub-project A).

3. Intuitively, and despite their complex nature, these public, objective and mutually manifest social objects/facts/rules, are seamlessly grasped by any competent member of society, who has the ability to

recognize ‘what is the thing to do’ given the circumstances and ‘how to respond to it’ in an appropriate way. Although reflection, inference and deliberation may occur from time to time, apprehension of social reality appears more often than not best captured by what we have called the perceptual model. Now, can the idea of perceptually experiencing the fact that a conventional rule applies, that some social roles are in play or that some moral requirement has been flouted, be formulated in a satisfactory manner? This question can be broken down in the following manner: (a) how should this type of experience be characterised both psychologically and constitutively? (b) How does this competence for perceiving social facts emerge in child development and what are its cultural variations, if any? (c) Are there particular forms of pathological breakdown of such social competences, that is, distinct impairments of the apprehension of the social environment, which might help us understand their specificity?

That part of the project will involve a comparison with the experiential view of the norms of mind put forward in Prof. Soldati and Dr. Dorsch's subproject.

4. With respect to (a) one possibility consists in arguing that the social world appears as a “taskcape” (Ingold 2001), whose properties can be apprehended as affordances and resistances, that is, opportunities and constraints for perception and action (Gibson 1979). Affordances emerge from the coupling between the behavioral and cognitive capacities of a given individual and the objective properties of his or her environment – a coupling grounded in the long-term attunement proper to ontogeny as well as in the short-term attunement proper to situated action (Stavros Valenti & Gold 1991). Gibson’s notion of affordance however is intimately connected to his model of ecological perception and it is not clear how it can be adapted to account for social and relational properties of objects and situations. One task of the project is to clarify the nuts and bolts of this adaptation (see Deonna 2006 and Goldie 2007 for such an attempt).

5. With respect to (b), what makes possible the experience of, and the sensitivity to, the affording features of a given social “object” results from the “attention-directing interactions” of attention holders, mainly caregivers. Those lead the child to discover, in the layout of his or her environment, the socially hierarchized scope of choices and sense of possibilities (Loveland 1991). Cultural variation in the degree of saliency of social affordances like relationships, situations or rules, and in the role that those affordances play in the prediction and explanation of behaviours indicates that the social entities are not only recognizable and mind-independent “objects”. They are also “good forms”, that is, *valued* objects of joint attention, shared emotions and social referencing. The differential degree of salience of social objects is then at the heart of the process of enculturation. Culture might be argued indeed to consist in attentional commonalities that mediate the perception, qualification and recognition of salience, define what information is relevant in which situation, and inhibit opportunities for action (Nisbett & Masuda 2003). Agents who are socially competent have thus learnt to “be affected” through the “education of attention” and received the incentive to recognize some social affordances as worthy of being acted upon.

6. Learning how to be affected by the social world and to see what should happen next as well as what I ought to do next requires complex cognitive mechanisms. One of the aim of this subproject is to flesh out those mechanisms, which could be specified, so to speak by default, in psychopathology. Autism and Psychopathy might cases at hand. To take the former as an example, autism is a pervasive developmental disorder, characterized among others by the unsensitivity to social cues and a great difficulty in seeing what should be done in such or such situation. One prevailing account, called the “weak central coherence hypothesis”, is that people with autism have a deficit in holistic processing and information hierarchization (Frith 1997). Whereas normal adults and children, even as young as three months, process incoming information in its context and pull together different inputs for higher-level meaning, people with autism give priority to surface and detail-focused processing. Such exemplar-based processing of fragmented sets of information, in going from one contiguous detail to the next, impedes the top-down, concept-based recognition of global patterns necessary for the binding of social information (Happé 2000). The dramatic impact of this deficient processing of relevant information on the social life of individuals with autism indicates that fully-fledged members of society have to have the ability to bypass irrelevant, surface details to perceive the salient commonalities of the social situations in which they are ‘embedded’. This selective social perception is what the project aims to examine.

Institutional framework

The research for this PhD project will be accompanied and supervised by philosopher Dr Julien Deonna (based at the Universities of Geneva and Lausanne) and by sociologist Dr Laurence Kaufmann (based at the University of Lausanne) from the University of Lausanne. Dr Kaufmann is the beneficiary of a three-year FNRS grant entitled “The psychological foundations of the social: empirical studies on naïve sociology” (1.10.2004-30.09.2007) whose goal is to better understand, thanks to the kind of experimental studies used in developmental psychology, the way in which children recognize and process socially relevant information such as rules, relationships, and hierarchy. Dr Deonna and Dr Kaufmann are the founders and organisers of a multidisciplinary *Master’s Course on The Emotions* based at The Collège des Humanités, Sciences Humaines et Sociales (SHS), EPFL. They have strong institutional and collaborative ties with the NCCR in the Affective Sciences funded by the FNS. Both of them are committed to bring together relevant knowledge from philosophy, psychology and sociology in advancing their research.

Deonna’s research has focused essentially on the emotions and their objects (Deonna, 2003). It has been argued that the emotions and other affective phenomena are the chief means through which agents access the significance and values that objects, events and processes have in their environment. Being capable of apprehending our environment in evaluative terms is, we hypothesize, a necessary ingredient in the acquisition of the capacity to apprehend the world in ‘social’ terms. Deonna has attempted to formulate a theory of the emotions in which he argues that they allow for a quasi-perceptual apprehension of values (Deonna, 2006).

Kaufmann’s recent work has defended a kind of “social naturalism” that apprehends basic social “entities” as cross-cultural saliences standing out in the experiential, perceptual and action fields of ‘society bearers’ (Kaufmann & Clément, 2007). By resorting to philosophy of language, she has investigated semantic deference as a central means for transforming ontological fictions (God, nation) into thing-like, quasi-tangible entities (Kaufmann 2006). She has also proposed a critical assessment of John Searle’s theory of reasons for acting by hypothesizing that social norms have the same *mind-to-world* direction of fit within practical reasoning as beliefs have within theoretical reasoning: they have to adjust to the impersonal, objective features that characterize the external reality (Kaufmann, 2005).

Timetable

This sub-project aims at conducting its research with one doctoral student. We do not think it advisable at this point to give a definitive PhD outline for the candoc. The PhD will focus on a specific subset of the issues depending on the candidate's strengths and interests.

PhD timetable (to be modulated according to the candidate's interests):

Months 1-12: Work on the ontology of social entities in relation with PR (Meta-)Metaphysics.

Months 13-24: Work on the elaboration of the apprehension of social fact through experience in close collaboration with PR Boundaries of the Self.

Months 25-36: writing of the thesis.

General Institutional framework and international collaborations

The present project will rely on a number of ongoing research projects within the host institutions and will fit into a network of national and international collaborations.

At the national level, the project will rely on ongoing interactions between its members (Workshop *Knowledge, Value and Justification*, Geneva, dec 4-5, 2006; workshop *Contemporary Research in Philosophy*, Lausanne, mar. 24, 2007 ; workshop *Naturalizing Epistemic Norms and Values*, 2e Congrès de la Société de Philosophie des Sciences, Geneva, mar. 29-31, 2007). It will connect up with the ongoing project on Norms and Reasons at the University of Geneva (conducted by Prof. Engel) and the value section of the Geneva-based SNF-project on properties, starting this summer (notably with Dr. Dorsch's work on the epistemology of aesthetic values and G.-A. Töndury's work on the justification of modus ponens). It will also benefit from some of its members' active collaboration with the NCCR in the Affective Sciences funded by the FNS.

At the international level, the project will fit into a number of existing collaborations: with the project *Knowledge, Mind and Value* at the University of Stirling, the project on *Communication* at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Copenhagen, and the *Centre for the Study of Mind in Nature* at the University of Oslo, and the Institut Jean Nicod (CNRS/EHESS/ENS) in Paris. Collaborations with individual researchers will also take place, along the lines of the 2006 international conferences at Fribourg (*Normativity of Reasons, Phenomenology of Agency*) and Geneva (*Knowledge, Value and Justification*) already mentioned: an invitation of Duncan Pritchard (Stirling), a workshop on normativity and the mental with Asa Wirkfors and Kathrin Glüer (Stockholm and Uppsala) are planned for the academic year 2008-9.

Significance of the project

The present project deals with new issues at the intersection between several areas of philosophy: ontology (including ontology of social objects), epistemology, philosophy of mind, meta-ethics, philosophy of action, and opens up opportunity for interaction with sociology and cognitive science. Its contribution will be to explore new hypotheses in those subjects, notably by connecting several lines of research on norms that have mostly been conducted in an isolated way. The project also aims at providing first steps towards a general philosophy of norms.

The project will provide an institutional framework for the development of its member's current research, enhance the integration of their results, and form three young researchers selected on an international and competitive basis.

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