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‘Context of Commonality’ or Why Sharing Is More than Attending*

Abstract

This paper attempts to suggest that subjectivity should be viewed as extroverted and world-oriented rather than exclusively as introverted. It further suggests that subjectivities congregate in social surroundings, and that this type of experience is primary. If this is true, the question arises as to whether we cannot conceive of intersubjectivity as a method of possibly bypassing the gap that, according to skeptics, the problem of other minds has created. The paper then discusses the concept of the plurality of the self as a counterpoint to individualist and isolationist assessments of the mind that regard it inaccessible; however, this paper also states that not every joint attending is proper sharing. With more complex objects of attention, such as cultural artifacts, a version of mutual knowledge (for which the term ‘context of commonality’ has been coined) is necessary on the part of co-attenders and co-agents for this interaction to be considered shared experience.

Keywords

problem of other minds, we-ness, sharing, joint attention, joint action, ‘context of commonality’, culture

> “The capacity to experience situation from a perspective broader than one’s own is perhaps the greatest human accomplishment. It lifts the single organism out of the singularity of its own perspective by creating a community with its language partners. This community, its interests, and the processes that constitute it become a new perspective from which a situation can be taken and transformed. It liberates us from the tyranny of our own expectations by providing the necessary resources to lift our expectations into consciousness.” (Frisina, 2002, 116)

Introduction: The myth of encapsulated mind and introvert subjectivity

Modern authors publishing on philosophy of mind and the study of consciousness frequently make use of ‘myth’ (see e.g. Radman, 2007a, 268) in connection with the major object of their concern. The word is basically used in two senses: for scientists referring to the still enigmatic nature of the mind or identifying a common misconception about it. When discussing ‘myth’ in this context, I will be using ‘myth’ in the latter sense particularly in reference

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to the widespread interpretation of mind being encapsulated, closed "within," or residing "inside the head." And if one continues with this interpretation, mind is hidden, isolated in privacy, situated in subjectivity, and inaccessible for observation from any perspective, except first-person narrative.

This is particularly true of our understanding of the *subjective* mind, of which we habitually conceive as having an exclusively inward orientation, and thus, hidden, inaccessible, and elusive. We are so accustomed to this concept that we have difficulty imagining that (radical) alternatives are possible. Yet to consider this the only way to make sense of subjectivity is unfounded. Namely, I believe that the "first-personness" that is believed to capture the uniqueness of subjective experience is not only limited to exclusively singular qualitative experience, but that it has ability of *sensing beyond itself* (Radman, 2007b). In other words, I assume that the mind is a potent renderer of the sense of worldly perspective and that there exists of a vast society of minds just by the virtue of subjectivity. It seems that to preserve the mind's personal dimension, we somehow presume "feels" are devoid of any possible relation to otherhood. But a subjective feel is not subject to itself; feels are about whatever concerns us. Contrary to what many authors have accepted as true, feels have their intentional objects – they are *about* happenings in the world, particularly those happenings in the world of interpersonal relations.

Though elaborating on the kind of turn would require extensive discussion, for the current purpose I will outline an argument in simplified form: Subjectivity is not for its own sake and neither (or only exceptionally) is mental self-referential; that is, its primary function is to experientially select from the endless amount of data what is reality for the organism. So instead of "reporting" on the innermost states, they help us recognize what counts as relevant for the organism in the organism's environment, serving as a guide in *making sense of reality*. Therefore, I am inclined to make the following claim: *subjectivity is extraverted* (Radman, 2013, 2007) in that it reveals what minds are "about" by following the intentional targets of agents' acting in the world rather than being preoccupied with the qualitativeness of innermost experience. This move clearly suggests a shift from speculative accounts on the elusive nature of qualia toward more transparent manifestations of the mental as they develop in the behavior.

If we make convincing the notion of subjectivity being extroverted, we may create a new theoretical option that enables us to recognize the mind's embeddedness, and specifically, its situatedness in social surroundings, as constitutive of mentality. If seen this way, we realize that my subjectivity is then conjoined with yours and those of others. As a result, it is now possible to state that *my subjectivity is not destined to isolationism but, rather, lives a dynamic and intensive social life*.

We then realize that mind is already on such an elementary level, essentially world-oriented, and that the human world is predominantly a social world. We also see that subjective feels are not for their own purpose but can be seen as having a role in coping with environment, particularly interpersonal relations. Subjectivity is for the sake of helping us adjust during social surroundings in which we do not relate as detached beholders but always as embodied beings with strong personal attitudes. We should not let its subtlety deceive us of its scope and impact; even pure qualitativeness may have its worldly extension, and I claim this to be the case (this is, however, an issue that cannot be discussed within this paper).

In the philosophy of mind we have a cohabitation of two global approaches: one which stresses the irreducibility of *subjectivity*, that experience has a solipsist quality accessible to only those who know "what it is like" to be in that state; the other is *intentionality* – one of the key terms in the philosophy of mind – which refers to the mind's capacity to be "about" mundane affairs, enabling us to cognitively cope with the world. These two premises are obviously in conflict because according to them mind is both irreducibly subjective and private but also essentially world-oriented. The scope of this paper can only cite this intriguing duality of which we seem mostly unaware; yet it is worth noting the existence of such a dichotomy (if not an utter inconsistency). But we can also question such a theoretical construct and ask if subjectivity is "within," is there a way out (Radman, 2013)? Surely there are many ways to answer this question but a particularly productive one is to consider the range of themes that fall under the heading of interpersonality and social cognition.

In the following, I will expound the consequences of assuming the mind is basically extraverted for the philosophical problem of *other minds*. Afterward, I will briefly consider the notion of the *plurality* of the self as a counterpoint to the individualist and isolationist views of the mind that render it inaccessible. Finally, I will outline a concept of *commonality* as a precondition for the complex forms of sharing that are typical of cultured beings.

1. Bypassing the problem of other minds in interpersonal way?

The idea that mind is not locked in isolation, that subjectivity does not exist as an exclusively inner state nor is irreducibly imprisoned "within," has only met resistance because the mainstream thought holds steadfast to the concept of the mind being encapsulated "within the head."[1] This relates to the problem of other minds (POM) – a much discussed issue in the philosophy of mind that mostly focuses around the *difficulties* in reading (other) minds. The consequence of treating the mind in an isolationist manner is that what was difficult now becomes impossible. If nothing of selfhood can be attributed to otherhood, then *other* minds may only appear to as *alien* minds.

There are reasons for maintaining the idea that other minds remain necessarily opaque to the external observer, but I will mention two aspects I consider "guilty" of the skeptic's version of POM. First, is a kind of hidden essentialism – an assumption that mind is an entity that can be delineated and *located* within the physical world (the latter being typical of many misconceptions that tend to physically place it "in the head," "in the body," "in the surroundings," etc.). Another aspect is the qualitative dimension of consciousness that binds it to irreducible singular individual experience, consequences of which lead to a theoretical image of mind as isolated in subjectivity, whose only plausible version is a solipsist privacy of which one can only grasp if one knows what it is like to be in that state (comp. Nagel, 1974).

Several other frequently discussed aspects in the philosophy of mind have strengthened the insistence on mind's irreducible conscious status, whose log-

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I will here omit the possible need to discuss why the idea of mind-within-the-head has been taken seriously in philosophy at all, even by those who are critical of it and want to overcome it, e.g. by "extending" it. The very idea of the extended mind actually implies that there is something like core (within-the-head) mind, which means that mind can also function in an unextended way. But I think it is wrong to claim anything like that. All mentality is, by virtue of intentionality, world-oriented, and thus the contrasting of extended vs. core (unextended) mind is a dubious premise.

ical implication is isolationism which, in turn, reinforces the inaccessibility of POM. I will briefly mention some of these:

– The *hard problem of consciousness* (Chalmers, 1995; Harnad, 1995; Shear, 1996, 1997) was designed to make us aware that phenomenal experience has no physical or any other equivalent, and thus (as we may, even indirectly, conclude from our actual perspective), cannot be shared. The explanatory gap that this difficulty creates, if applied to our current topic, leaves mind separated by caveat, which no scientific methodology can bridge.

– The gist of the discussion on the "*what is it like to be*" phenomenon (Nagel, 1974) is that there is no formula for the subjective feels that can account for the quality of subjective experience. How something really feels can only be determined by fulfilling the condition of being in that state. The "what it is like to be" question can be answered only by "knowing" how it feels to be in that state. Again, there is no possibility of mental transposition from one state to the other.

– Further, emphasis on the *first-person perspective* has created an additional impression that the most authentic form of phenomenal consciousness cannot be expressed in any other form but the methodology of the most immediate witnessing of how something feels to the feeler. Because the third-person perspective cannot capture the subjective feels of the first-person perspective, there is virtually no possibility that otherhood can be accessed from the external point of view.

– Finally, an aspect of "mineness," which Edmund Husserl calls "pure consciousness" or *Erlebnis* (Husserl, 1983; see also, e.g., Shear and Jevning, 1999), which is a result of phenomenological reduction, seems to amount to the supposition that minds can only be known from the internal perspective.

All of the above fuels the idea that mind (and particularly its conscious part) is a phenomenon residing encapsulated within individuals, and to obtain insight, we must decipher hidden motives and goals of action, to which we, however, have no immediate access. For mind researchers, this poses the problem known in philosophy of mind as the *access problem*. It, again, is closely affiliated with a more general discussion on "mind-reading" or mentalizing. There are two major forms of mind-reading: theory theory (TT) and simulation theory (ST). Both share the purpose for learning about other minds is to get an understanding of plans, goals, beliefs, desires, hopes, wishes, etc., as a driving force "behind" the manifest actions, but they differ in explanations in how this is to be achieved. TT basically reflects the conviction that in order to figure out what is going on in other people's minds, we need a (common sense) theory that helps reconstruct "otherness" in terms of own understanding. ST method of reading other minds is to simulate the mental states of others "as if" they were our own. Gallagher (2007) and Gallagher and Hutto (2008) rightly criticize both TT and ST by claiming that we neither infer nor postulate or in any other way recreate (unconsciously or by speculation) what is occurring in "other minds" because there are more immediate ways of understanding than what motivates minds in thought. This aspect is well captured by Shaun Gallagher when he says that

"(…) in most intersubjective situations we have a *direct* understanding of another person's intentions because their intentions are explicitly expressed in their embodied actions, and mirrored in our own capabilities for action. For the most part this understanding does not require the postulation of some belief or desire that is hidden away in the other person's mind, since what we might reflectively or abstractly call their belief or desire is expressed *directly* in their behavior" (2005, 224; emphases added).

The idea of intersubjective "reading" of minds reemerges in the following:

> "In most intersubjective situations, that is, in situations of social interaction, we have a *direct* perceptual understanding of another person's intentions because their intentions are explicitly expressed in their embodied actions and their expressive behaviors. This understanding does not require us to postulate or infer a belief or a desire hidden away in the other person's mind. What we might reflectively or abstractly call their belief or desire is expressed *directly* in their actions and behaviors" (Gallagher and Hutto, 2008, 20–21; emphases added).

Although in these quotes the term 'directness' may appear straightforward and unambiguous, it is far from self-understood (see e.g. Radman, 2012), and for that reason, deserves closer examination. Gallagher and Hutto are correct in recommending a shift from analyzing mind as internal processing toward recognizing how mind is manifested in action. Indeed, as I have suggested elsewhere (e.g. Radman, 2005), and want to stress here again, there are enough valuable theoretical reasons to think of *mind as a way of "enworlded" doing*, and as something *dynamic* rather than static, as a *process* rather than structure.

If we turn our theoretic minds away from where essentialist dogma locates the source of the mental, and allow for a geography of the mental that includes public space, we might gain an insight that reveals the mind as a function of living organisms engaged in diverse forms of interacting in order to socially "survive" by exploiting means of joint acting.

Action is, by its nature, not (or only exceptionally) auto-oriented. With our hands ready to *reach* out and *touch* objects and other persons, with their expressive capacity to convey complex meanings by *gesturing*, with their ability to establish understanding by *pointing* and to facilitate embeddeness by *grasping*, we already exceed the boundaries of the physical body and facilitate our presence in the world. With talking, with which we link to other speakers in conversation, and with our messages directed to all those who matter to us in the context of life, with reading and performing, we extend the interactive domain onto the narrative and cultural (refer to the last section for an expansion on this). In the realm of the symbolic sharing, this can be widened to include absent companions and fictional objects.[2]

No matter what sort of sharing we are engaged in, what is important to realize, for the current discussion, is that our research methodologies become more varied so that they serve not only those who are exclusively interested in the conscious mind's qualitative experience but also those who understand mind as a *pragmatic function* that unfolds in mutual exchange in which we live and work together, communicate, exchange, listen, talk, question, provoke, touch, fool, lough, quarrel, help, assist, hug, have sex, etc.

If subjects are to be viewed as co-agents, who not only connect and co-operate, but also co-feel and co-understand, then subjectivity too may be seen as co-agental or actually *co-subjective*. And minds too can be captured as shared through intersubjective exchange.

When we take into account the case of *empathy*, we have not completed the list of essential aspects of intersubjective behavior, but we have at least enumerated some that are relevant for understanding minds as being expressed in sharing rather than being encoded in individual minds, isolated from others.

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That sociality is in that sense an "extended" phenomenon that may include objects existing only in the minds of people, is an intriguing aspect that, however, cannot be elaborated further in this paper.

Thanks to the capacity to empathize, we establish unity with others without having to translate or simulate or consciously interpret what other people are signaling. Heinz Kohut has described empathy as "a fundamental mode of human relatedness, the recognition of the self in the other." It is, as he further says, "the accepting, confirming and understanding human echo" (Kohut, 1978, 704, 705), or in yet other words, it is "the resonance of essential human alikeness" (ibid., 713; see also Jardine, this volume).

Whatever we do in a shared manner, we deal with embodied "other" *beings* (rather than merely minds) with whom we exchange during social interaction, in a wide spectrum of possibilities, from corporeal to cultural: by touching and talking, by gesturing and grasping, by doing things together, by helping and assisting, by eating and sleeping together, by playing sports and watching movies, by dancing and tasting wine, by quarreling over politics and discussing philosophy, etc. Why should we be interested in the (hidden) nature of others' mentality in the first place? Even if, by some miracle, we could read the mental story of others, we would probably mistrust our findings for the same reason we mistrust words in favor of body language because we claim the body "cannot lie." So, it is not mentality as declared but as "proven" in observable behavior that we believe more.

What theorists consider troubling, real agents see as no problem at all. What philosophers of mind focus on and consider important seems irrelevant to the people they observe participating in interactions. Does this mean real agents know better about other minds than theorists do and are able to eventually decipher the riddle of the POM, which theorists merely posit? This question cannot be answered undoubtedly. The problem of other minds, as it is articulated in philosophy, is of little or no relevance for real agents involved in sharing. If real agents held the same concerns articulated by the proponents of POM, they would probably be hesitant to take any course of action.

Can interpersonality (in some simplified way for the current purposes) be viewed as a mode of overcoming the gap in understanding other minds as articulated by POM? Maybe a way to answer this would be to say that interpersonality does not solve POM simply because it never meets the issues (at least not in the form) that the latter sees as crucial. What is important for the representatives of POM is obviously not seen as relevant to those whose interest is in investigating how social relations shape human mentality and cognition. However, this may be plausible only if one can show that interpersonality is something so elementary that there are no gaps between individuals to be bridged, no mental intimacies hidden behind barricades of the observable that have to be simulated or speculated about in order to be sensed. Because embodied practices, ranging from skilled motor coordination to shared narrative and other symbolic activities, create a medium in which the "meeting of minds" is both natural and productive, longing for the yet more private conscious intimacy appears to be a somewhat inappropriate voyeuristic temptation to glimpse at the world not meant for disclosure to the public eye.

We may say because we are "always already" social, we are mentally equipped to cope with others during joint activities so that the attempt to additionally decode the hidden causes and motives of their behavior never seems necessary or useful.

From the perspective of those concerned with intimacy of phenomenal consciousness, this sort of "outing'" may be considered as a betrayal of mind's authenticity, which one tends to think of as *the* representative form of it. Yet, mind's pragmatic presence in the world should be viewed as natural mode of mentality. *Mind's life is more communal and extroverted than it is individualist and introverted.*

2. Plurality first

One of the earliest (and most underestimated) voices that drew attention to the profound fact that human development from its earliest stages onward is marked by a strong influence of interpersonal relations was Lev Vygotsky (cfl. 1978; see also Wertsch, 1985). His theory was that there is no cognitive development without social interaction. In his view, the social (interpsychological) comes first and is a precondition for the full cognitive ascent acquired by the individual in an intrapsychologivcal way. The idea reads, in summary:

"Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals" (Vygotsky, 1987, 57).

More recent research seems to reconfirm the profundity of social sharing shaping individual minds from the earliest phases of development:

"A primary, perceptual sense of others is already implicit in the behavior of the newborn. In neonate imitation, which depends not only on a contrast, in some sense, between self and non-self, and a proprioceptive sense of one's own body, but also a responsiveness to the fact that the other is of the same sort as oneself […] infants are able to distinguish between inanimate objects and people" (Gallagher and Hutto, 2008, 21).

The idea of fundamentality of social interrelatedness can also be found in quite a different theoretical source: Jean-Luc Nancy's *Being Singular Plural* (2000). The author provides a brief reminder on Rousseau's, Nietzsche's, Marx's, and Heidegger's ideas on societal relations of individuals but concludes that "No one, however, has radically thematized the 'with' as the essential trait of Beings as its proper plural singular coessence" (Nancy 2000, 34). It is also thinking that begins "from the 'with' as the *proper essence of one whose Being is nothing other than with-one-another* [l'un-avec-l'autre]" (ibid.; italics in original). As he further explains:

"'With' is the sharing of time-space; it is at-the-same-time-in-the-same-place as itself, in itself, shattered. It is the instant scaling back of the principle of identity: Being is at the same time in the same place on the condition of the spacing of an infinitive plurality of singularities. […] We are each time an other, each time with others" (ibid., 35).

How are we to understand the very idea of plurality with reference to the singular, Nancy clarifies in the following:

"According to these conditions, Being as being-with might no longer be able to say itself in the third person, as in 'it is' or 'there is'. Because there would no longer be a point of view that is exterior to being-together from which it could be announced that 'there is' being and a being-with of beings, one with the other. There would be no 'it is' and, therefore, no longer the 'I am' that is subjacent to the announcement of the 'it is'. Rather, it would be necessary to think the third-person singular in the first person. As such, then, it becomes the first-person plural. Being could not speak of itself except in the unique manner: 'we are'" (ibid., 33).

His comprised formulation reads: "[…] a singularity is indissociable from a plurality" (ibid., 32). And also: "Community is bare, but it is imperative" (ibid., 36). If one would dare to freely rephrase Nancy's saying in phenomenological terms, one could say that we are "always already" plural or, more straightforwardly: Plurality first!

The view, however, clashes with the dominant stand according to which we seek mind's origin and nature by looking in the opposite direction, toward the irreducibly individual mental constellations that no other mind (neither ordinary nor scientific) can access or capture. This traditionalist account, as outlined in the previous section, is based on a sort of *essentialist view* according to which in order to capture the gist of mentality, we must look for it within singular heads. If the essence of mind is an entity located within the confines of the body (as critically remarked above), in order to grasp it, we must peer into individual minds (heads) and use all our theoretic powers to decipher as many minds as there are individual heads. The impossibility of this sort of mission creates the "problem" according to which otherness exists in endless singularities.

Inspired by the idea that mind is socially conditioned (Vygotsky) and that plurality is what marks human mind (Nancy), if we tried to develop something like interspection – a methodology of enquiring other minds (analogous to introspection of individual ones), we would tune our theoretical insight not to particularized expressions of the mental but rather to all the numerous aspects that transcend it. In many respects, other minds are very much like ours, as they all engage in acting that takes place in the space of interaction where subjectivities meet, confront, and exchange. We judge what is *in* the mind (or *on* the mind) according to what mind performs and how it is expressed in behavior.

Paraphrased crudely, I could then ask my fellow philosopher, an advocate of the problem of (in)accessibility of other minds: You are looking for *my* mind? Well, then *see around* (instead of looking inside me)! Interested in what characterizes my mind or what makes it specific? Then talk to me, listen to me, observe what my body signals, watch my gestures, mimics, smile, recognize my emotions, see why I wonder and what makes me angry, what puzzles me and why I behave in a particular way, see what I do and achieve with my acting, analyze my deeds, etc.

If mind is not an essence, stuff, or matter hidden behind the observable (as pointed already above), we should acquaint ourselves with the idea of viewing it as *a way of doing*. Mind is not a structure or state but a process mostly occuring "out of our heads" (comp. Noë, 2010): in the surroundings and above all in the interpersonal world. If we accept this as, at least, a working hypothesis, then we are advised to redirect our methodology away from introspection – from trying to figure out innermost and hidden traits of mentality (of which we expect to provide us with the mind's authenticity code), to recognition of expressive forms in behavior that are significant of minding. In both cases explanatory guesswork is required, only in the former case is it mostly limited to speculation, while in the latter it is seen as world-oriented life process, better suited for investigation.

At this point, I believe it is not unjustified to recall E. M. Forster's (1927) famous quote (taken up also by Antonio Damasio, 1999, and Daniel Dennett, 1992): "How can I tell what I think till I see what I say." In a sort of free-interpreting analogy I might also say: How can I know what is in my mind till I see my bodily reactions, listen which sounds convey meanings, how feelings "come to word" in bodily language, etc. In a similar vein, Gallagher would say (interpreting Merleau-Ponty's view on the role of speech) that "sometimes I do not know what I want or intend to say before I say it" (2008, 77). It seems then that what is not accessible to introspection can become available if it is expressed in the public space – not only to others but also to the speakers themselves.

Without ambition to get into a more detailed discussion on introspection, let me just emphasize one aspect that I consider relevant in this context. Namely, I believe that the reason why the "inner eye" of introspection is insensitive, or even blind, when it comes to self-observation, is because the mind in general, and also that of an external observer, is so biased with experience of the world "without" that it requires great effort to access the internal realm in a naïve way. In other words, the dominance of "plural experience" is so overwhelming that it biases any attempt at introspection. In yet other phrasing, any attempt to approach the virgin soil of singular subjectivity stumbles over plurality, which is always already there before any introspective step is undertaken.

True, other minds are never fully transparent to us, but neither are they vacuous. In all the numerous versions of human collaborative action that individuals join to perform various tasks, and in doing so, the problem of other minds, as presented in the introduction, becomes increasingly irrelevant and plurality is established as a natural mode of singular existences. The isolationist singularity dissolves as we take the roles of co-workers and collaborators, co-authors, co-editors, co-producers, etc. We also act as co-drivers and co-pilots, co-players, co-actors, co-dancers, co-readers, co-presenters, etc. People co-exist, cohabitate, and cooperate; they are coordinators and co-founders; they act as co-agents and co-attenders, etc.

Because we take up all these roles naturally and effortlessly, we never (or indeed seldom) think of other people as abstract co-minders but rather as co-agents that share the same interests and motivations, engaged in similar tasks or forms of behavior. For instance as pedestrians, we walk together and take the same routes with so many others; as passengers, we travel with others who are heading toward the same destination; as students, we share the same venues and lines for food; as roommates, we share living space; as an audience member, we are attentive co-listeners and co-observers; as members of a research team, we are co-examiners; and as members of an army, we are co-fighters, etc. In all the different forms of joint action, the classical problem of "other minds" seems to fade out and converts to the issue of "other agents," where essentialists' ambitions dissolve as the focus shifts toward interpersonal behavior.

The German expressions for labeling co-agental unity are, for instance: *Mitmensch*, *Mitbürger*, *Mitarbeiter*, *Mitbewohner*, *Mitspieler*, *Mitschüller*, *Mitfahrer*, *Mitstreiter*, etc. People who act within a given situation in which they are driven to act together and in a coordinated way, perform actions to which expressions can be applied, such as: *mitmachen*, *miterleben*, *mitbekommen*, *mitfahren*, *mitfühlen*, *mitteilen*, etc.[3]

The term "*we-ness*" (first used by George Klein) that accounts for the feature of the mental that transcends singularity and provides a sense of belonging to the communal as a natural state of mind, can only be properly attributed to humans. Animals act collectively but possess no we-ness.

"The apes are engaged in a group activity in I-mode, not in We-mode. As opposed to the chimpanzees' group activity in I-mode, human children, from soon after their first birthday, work in We-mode, forming a joint goal with their partner" (Tomasello, 2009, 63).

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In spite of this, many still think that no matter how rich our evidence of human mutuality, co-existence, and co-operation is, in order to study mind we are advised to first see how it performs on the inner stage of mental happenings. No matter how pronounced its socially embedded form may be, many insist that the true nature of the mental lies hidden behind the façade of the observable, and because that realm remains inaccessible, we are left with a *myth* as a "solution."

John Searle talks about "we-intentionality" and argues that it cannot be reduced to "I-intentionality." He then poses an intriguing question: "How can it be the case that We-intentionality can move individual bodies if the content of the 'We' is not the same as the content of the 'I,' which constitutes doing one's part of the collective effort?" (Searle, 2010, 50).

The relevance of what is understood by the concept of we-ness is now being used by neuroscientists who also are aware of the importance of interpersonal, social relations. It seems evident that enough scientific support has been found within the empirical research for the claim that "we live, develop, learn and organize our nervous system in connection with a community of fellow beings" (Ginsburg, 1999, 91).

In Klein's view, it should be quite natural for "I" to also identify with "we," as it is natural for any cognitive organism to feel "both separate and a part of an entity *beyond itself*" (Klein, 1976, 178; emphasis added).

Yet I tend to claim that we-ness is not expressible only in the first-person plural. The sense of "we" is not granted only by the same grammatical form. If I say, for instance, "*I* know what *you* mean" or if you say "*I* feel *your* pain," there is a reference to we-experience with means other than the grammatical "we."

In any case, it is worth noticing that this feeling of going "beyond itself," as represented in the idea of we-ness or "we-agency" (Pacherie, 2011), provides "[…] a strange sense of *personal enlargement*; a sort of swelling out, becoming bigger than life, thanks to participation in collective rituals" (McNeil, 1995, 2; emphases added).

Symbolic practices are the kind of "collective rituals" that create more complex forms of sharing, where we-ness is established as a form of personal "enlargement" in a way characteristic only of humans. This kind of jointness is where objects of attention and elements of action are cultural artifacts dealing with what requires some sort of common knowledge as a precondition for any meaningful interpersonal exchange.

3. Context of commonality

The aspect of going "beyond itself" in "collective rituals" (which creates the network of social exchange in which individuality is enhanced to encompass otherness and separateness is overcome by means of interpersonality) has been discussed recently in various fields, such as developmental and cognitive psychology, philosophy of mind, and cognitive science.

Research on the phenomenon of gaze-following, pointing, touching, and the like, has provided us with important insights into the most profound forms of interpersonality and has shown us how these forms create the basis for social communication, understanding, and knowledge. However, while pinpointing on the subtle aspects of joint attention, such as gaze-following, we seem to remain largely unresponsive to more complex forms of interpersonal exchange, in which objects of shared attention are not cognizable without sufficient background knowledge. As adults we still follow gaze unreflectively and automatically, as infants do, but we also engage in more complex forms of perceptual sharing, which cannot be meaningful unless those who attend to it know more than what is contained in sensory input.

Let me give a fairly simple example: Imagine members of a family looking at photographs in the family album. As they thumb through, they recognize places and familiar faces, they rediscover past episodes, and in such a way refurnish actuality in terms of what is captured in images of the past. Often, a wide range of emotions is involved: sadness, nostalgia, curiosity, surprise, disappointment; but there is also humor and laughter. However, for an external observer, say a stranger not acquainted with the family and its past, we can hardly expect that any similar reactions will occur. He or she may indeed be attentive and even try to show interest but, obviously, those who are unfamiliar with the context cannot participate the same way as others who know the circumstances well. Decisive in this process is not attention itself; what matters more is whether the object one is attending to appears meaningful or not and that, in turn, depends on the degree of familiarity. Unless one is acquainted with the particular family and its past (as documented in the aforementioned photographs), sharing, in the proper sense of the word, is unlikely to occur at all. Those who are unaware of this factor and do not take into account that experience can only be shared if co-attenders are sufficiently familiar with the context, risk not only boring the beholders but also increasing the chances of a misunderstanding. This is sufficient to conclude that *jointness does not come automatically with attention* (as the very expression "joint attention" may suggest and as one may conclude from the studies of gaze-following).

Just as the showing of a family photo album to strangers may turn into a "catastrophe," so too can the telling of a joke to a member of another culture (or trying to translate the joke into another language), which may fail to generate the expected reaction. Humor is very much culture dependent. We all hear the same words, but those who laugh understand what the words are about. Nothing is funny unless you share enough background knowledge of a particular culture, which allows you to understand the joke. Similarly, bringing somebody unfamiliar with baseball to a game may result in total disinterestedness. In all these cases, attention alone will not be enough. If we are attentive, but not sufficiently informed, proper sharing cannot take place.

Because I am not into baseball, I am bored at baseball games (apologies to all true baseball fans) and so is a non-Wagnerian (say, a rapper) at Bayreuth music festival. If you are a Wagnerian, *Tristan and Isolde* is a monumental musical rhapsody of emotions, whereas to those who never developed an affinity for that kind of music, this musical "happening" is simply long and dull. Further, if you are not into numismatics you will be bored having to attend to many tiny "jewels" from a collection proudly presented to you, and it would be impossible for you to share enthusiasm that a true fan of coin-collecting shows while attending to "the same" objects of observation. Not only competence or knowledge shapes the way and degree of sharing but also interests and expectations. For instance, many young people today have little interest in politics. No matter what political issue you present to them, they will remain unaffected and unable to sense the supposed relevance of the subject you present to them.

Sharing thus presupposes what I would like to call a *context of commonality* (CC). CC is a set of background and foreground knowledge, rules and habits, language and narrative practices, professional know-how and institutional regulations, cultural and symbolic activities, traditions and history, ideologies and religious beliefs, but also personal interests and affinities. CC is relative to virtually any category that refers to human behavior, knowledge, and forms of living. If the category is age, we know that those who belong to the same generation (sharing the same CC in that regard) understand one another fairly well and communicate easier among themselves when compared to those who are members of other generations ("the young not understanding the old and vice versa"). The same object, or problem, that you present to representatives of both groups will be interpreted and understood differently as will the very act of sharing.

I believe we need the concept of CC in order to show that human sociality is not only present at the elementary level of joint attention, such as gaze-following, touching, and pointing, but that it also takes the form of more complex cognitive interactions, such as those described above. Introduction of the CC concept should thus increase the awareness that forms of jointness, for the cultured beings we are, are not exhausted with examples of interpersonality habitually taken in the recent time to illustrate it. Unlike the latter, where the cognitive organism is biologically conditioned to react automatically, and is expected to almost always work, in more complex forms of joint action, as is the case with cultural experience, sharing may or may not be brought about, depending on the level of acquaintance, competence, agreement, motivation, etc.

Human sharing is heavily context-dependent and when given a sufficient degree of commonality, sharing will likely make sense and be productive for the participants. If adequate CC were lacking, the more or less mechanical interacting would be deprived of what essentially constitutes we-ness.

For instance, if you find yourself in a foreign country and lack the specifics that constitute particular CC concerning geography, social life, and culture, you will feel isolated, or "lost," and possibly suffer from nostalgia. Thus, though you may be interacting with people in your new surroundings, it may still prove to be of little relevance compared to the feeling of cultural belonging, which in this case is lacking. That is, lacking one sort of CC makes you a foreigner in one set of social surroundings while possessing a different kind of CC makes you "feel at home" in another.

Further, things may appear "strange" if a particular CC is not known to you and they may be "great" if you share the proper CC. Contexts change according to spatial constellation, institutional setting, *Zeitgeist*, and the like. For instance, there are kinds of commonality conditioned by the very physical surroundings within which people interact. Places determine not only behavior but also expectations agents develop by entering new locations. For example, by trespassing in a hospital, you are likely to instantly switch and adapt to the specific set of rules and atmosphere that can be represented in corresponding CC. They who are unfortunate to be patients will seek and find understanding among themselves and will often claim that others cannot really share the same feelings. There exists then symmetry among the sick and asymmetry between them and others who are not. Similarly, another kind of place – a church – dictates a specific code of behavior to which all those entering it normally abide. In spite of declared tolerance, there exists a sort of cohesion among those who share the premises provided by the religious CC, just as there is (another) one that connects non-believers.

Young men and women joining the army are actually forced to obey strict rules of conduct set by the military CC. Those who accept it can adapt and even be successful in what they do, whereas others are destined to either fail or make compromises that are difficult to bear.

Though it may appear odd, losses and tragedies – both constant companions throughout life – bond people and intensify their feelings of belonging more than ordinary situations. There is an element of empathy that reins the atmosphere at funerals and there is a dimension of solidarity with those suffering in war conflicts. But just as the healthy can never "understand" the sick, those who are safe cannot quite "know" how it feels to be a war victim. In these cases, like in all others, whatever one undertakes in a joint manner depends very much on whether agents share sufficient common experience in order to mutually understand, coordinate, and cooperate; conversely, misunderstandings and conflicts emerge if individuals fail to either conform or respect the appropriate kind of CC.

Generally, someone acting within one type of CC makes that person be in discordance with a contrasting CC. Illiterate and literate, poor and rich, village and urban people, atheists and religious, leftists and rightists, sick and healthy, unemployed and employed: They may all be involved in joint actions, but this situation is significantly different if they belong to one group (i.e., share the former CC in the binary listing) or an opposing one (i.e., being affiliated with the latter type of CC). Thus, those who were unfortunate to experience the horrors of war keep in touch even during peacetime because those who were spared from such experience may have great difficulty in sharing that type of CC. Therefore, veterans, as a rule, will not be understood by pacifists, and vice versa, even if the involved are close family members. This particular CC will prove more robust than any supposedly more elementary (e.g., biological) element. In more general terms, one could say that life experiences make us what we are and they, in turn, pattern CCs, which are varied and are applied in respected situations.

Again, mere physical interacting does not generate togetherness and, as we learn from Pacherie (2011), it may be symmetrical or asymmetrical.

> "Contributors to the joint outcome may be important or marginal, and coordination relations can be symmetrical or asymmetrical. Roughly, the sense of joint agency is the sense that one's contribution to the joint outcome is commensurate to the contributions of one's co-agents and that one's coordination relations with co-agents are relatively symmetrical" (Pacherie, 375).

However, what determines whether joint action is symmetrical or asymmetrical is not sheer existence of the object to which participants jointly attend but the standard of competence the co-attenders possess in regard to it. That is to say, joint action remains asymmetrical if CC is lacking; on the other hand, symmetry comes to expression if CC is provided for all agents involved in sharing.

A yet more general kind of conclusion may be drawn in that what the eyes register in gaze-following and what subjects involved in interpersonal interaction attend to while acting jointly is never a detached object, which happens to be an element of triangular structure and, by virtue of that alone, constitutive of sharing. The object, to which agents co-attend, particularly in more complex situations, becomes a partner in sharing only if it is in some sense cognitively relevant for co-attenders and co-agents. The level of acquaintance and competence defines the degree of sharing. If you and I have not acquired the same CC, it is appropriate to say that, from a cognitive point of view, we are not attending to the same object. That is, both of us may direct our attention to the object, which cognitively is not the same to both of us unless we adhere to the same CC. Only in the latter case can we say that the experience has a quality of sharing; thus, *sharing is more than attending*.

What follows from the aforementioned is that CC is a precondition for sharing. This is, however, less true for early gaze-following, which is biologically conditioned and, as a rule, happens automatically but primarily refers to other more complex forms of attention, such as those directed to cultural objects. In the latter case, co-attenders and co-agents must adhere to sufficient commonality, which may increase the possibility for interpersonal exchange, in the proper sense of the word, becoming joint.

The symbolic, however, should not be viewed as "added value" or part of a cultural infrastructure that is an exclusive privilege of humans. Symbolic behavior is overwhelming and can be found at different levels of complexity in life. Experiments have been made demonstrating that "the great apes have the capacity to operate at the symbolic level, and that this potentiality can be actualized with the conspiracy of a suitable medium and cultural environment" (Lock, 1978, 13). This "down-to-earth" symbolism is what I have in mind when I talk about CC and its role in defining objects of attention and action, but it is also the more complex forms of narrative practices and cultural activities we find exclusively among humans.

Just as sights meander toward the common object of attention in gaze-following, minds follow a co-speaker's intended meanings in narration. In joint action, one follows procedures that lead toward the completion of common goals. In social games, we follow obligations and expectations and create the world of things having social-ontological status (Searle, 2010). Once human agents as cultured beings and language-users have established a network of communal significations, nothing within that space remains innocent. Objects (to which we then attend) emerge as *bearers of cognitive fingerprints* in which they matter to us in a particular way. More often than not, "meeting of minds" happens over objects of common concern that are inhabited with our goals of actions, purposes, and expectations; memories and phantasies; appreciation and frustration. But above all, they are marked by emotions by which we respond to them (comp. Damasio's somatic markers hypothesis; 1994). Not only are objects to which we attend not cognitively innocent, they are also not emotionally neutral.

Those who share passion for mountain climbing, and those who adore diving or enthusiastically collect stamps; fans of old-timers, and those who are obsessed with tattooing; those who are into art-collecting, and those who collect minerals or butterflies; they all cultivate an emotional attitude toward their professional occupations and hobbies.

How things matter to us is thus less decided according to their physical features or their dictionary meanings but mostly according to emotional status they have gained in our memory and background knowledge. That too is an element of CC. Context of commonality is therefore nothing formal or neutral; it always reflects general affinities and preferences, inclinations and affections.

People connect and collect based on common motivations and interests, but they are also often in conflict with those who do not share them. "Reasons" for connecting, provided in CC, may be reasonable or they may be quite irrational; they can be logical or emotional. What people do together has much (positive) passion but also negative emotions when exposed to conflicting ideas or interests.

Jointness may end up in mutual understanding and support, or it can take a form of misunderstanding, disagreement, and conflicting interests. The latter is, unfortunately, as frequent as the former. Indeed, *there are many shades of sharing*, on whose opposing ends of the spectrum stay understanding and misunderstanding that then define the nature of objects we jointly attend to or act upon. Turning our theoretical gaze toward more complex (cultural) objects of interpersonal exchange makes us aware that there is so much more to be done in this domain.

Conclusions and further considerations

As mentioned previously, whenever bodies meet it is not a guarantee that a "meeting of minds" will occur. Togetherness does not occur automatically whenever subjects conjoin in attending and acting. Sharing presupposes understanding, and understanding is dependent on the set of cognitive instances we have defined here as the context of commonality. One of the major messages of this paper is just this: Being merely (physically) together and being attentive is insufficient for sharing, particularly if objects to which we attend or act upon are cultural artifacts. In other words, the carnal alone (no matter how cognitively potent it might be) is insufficient when it comes to human interpersonal relations that include more complex objects, which also come equipped with subjective attitudes, with associations, sentiments, reminiscences, expectations, guesses, goals, imagination, etc.

In order for "togetherness" to take place, co-attenders and co-agents must share enough knowledge (in the broadest sense of the word) of the object – an element of triangular interaction – in order to be sure they are referring cognitively to the same object in roughly the same way. The concept of CC has been developed just to account for the necessity of such background suppositions that prove decisive for shaping shared experience. One can then co-laugh if one is familiar with the context of a humorous situation, just as you can share grief up to the degree of personal involvement that correlates with that of others, and one can also jointly enjoy a piece of art depending on the aesthetic competence that co-perceivers share.

Culture is human beings' most complex and intense form of social exchange. Science and art are primarily social activities that bring about the most sophisticated products of the creative mind. These "works" inhabit our world and become objects of attention that can become a joint act if there is sufficient overlapping of individual CCs.

Contrary to what most contemporary research in this domain suggests, there can be an attending without genuine jointness, and co-acting without proper togetherness, if there is no appropriate CC creating a precondition for shared understanding. A further conclusion may be that CC is *formative* of the mind that is competent to cope with the socially conditioned world.

This paper is, in general, an attempt to plea for mind's extrovertedness and, as a more specific motivation, an invitation to recognize culture as a context that uniquely defines human jointness. Further, it is based on the conviction that mind itself is not a state but a process or, better, a *way of doing*. The doing is, however, not, or only exceptionally, self-directed; it is in the first line activity directed towards others – not necessarily in the sense of other minds but rather as *other* doers (speakers, listeners, workers, players, dancers, etc.) in whose behavior we recognize manifestations of their minds. In such a way other persons are not presented to us as elusive "other minds" but as lived "we" who co-attend, co-feel, co-act, etc., and whose mentality unfolds in a sort of interpersonal exchange.

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Zdravko Radman

'Kontekst zajedničkog' ili zašto je uzajamno iskustvo više od pažnje

Sažetak

Ovaj rad nastoji ustvrditi da se subjektivnost treba promatrati kao ekstrovertiranu i orijentiranu prema svijetu prije nego izričito introvertiranu. Nadalje se tvrdi da se subjektiviteti okupljaju u društvenim okruženjima, i da je takav tip iskustva primaran. Ako je to točno, otvara se pitanje nemogućnosti poimanja intersubjektivnosti kao metode mogućeg zaobilaženja jaza stvorenog, prema skepticima, problemom drugih umova. U radu se nadalje raspravlja o pojmu pluralnosti sebstva kao protuteže individualističkim i izolacionističkim razmatranjima uma koji ih smatraju nepristupačnima; no, također se tvrdi da nije svaka zajednička pažnja pravo uzajamno iskustvo. Kod komplesnijih objekata pažnje, poput kulturnih artefakata, verzija zajedničkog znanja (za koju je skovan termin 'kontekst zajedničkog') nužna je kod su-pazitelja i su-subjekata kako bi ova interakcija mogla biti smatrana uzajamnim iskustvom.

Ključne riječi

problem drugih umova, mi-stvo, uzajamno iskustvo, zajednička pažnja, zajedničko djelovanje, 'kontekst zajedničkog', kultura

Zdravko Radman

‚Kontext der Gemeinsamkeit' oder warum Teilen mehr als Aufmerksamkeit ist

Zusammenfassung

Dieses Paper versucht zu suggerieren, die Subjektivität sollte als extrovertiert und weltorientiert, und nicht ausschließlich als introvertiert angesehen werden. Es lässt weiterhin darauf schließen, dass sich die Subjektivitäten im sozialen Umfeld versammeln und diese Art von Erfahrung primär ist. Wenn dies wahr ist, ergibt sich die Frage, ob wir außerstande sind, uns die Intersubjektivität als eine Methode zur möglichen Überbrückung der Kluft vorzustellen, die, laut Skeptikern, vom Problem anderer Verstande geschaffen wurde. Ferner diskutiert der Artikel den Begriff der Pluralität des Selbst als Kontrapunkt zu individualistischen und isolationistischen Einschätzungen des Verstands, die ihn für unzugänglich halten; diese Arbeit legt jedoch auch dar, dass nicht jede gemeinsame Aufmerksamkeit ein richtiges Teilen ist. Bei komplexeren Objekten der Aufmerksamkeit, wie z. B. kulturellen Artefakten, ist eine Version des gemeinsamen Wissens (wofür der Terminus ‚Kontext der Gemeinsamkeit' geprägt wurde) vonseiten der Aufmerksamkeitsteilnehmer und Mitagierenden notwendig, damit diese Interaktion als geteilte Erfahrung berücksichtigt werden könnte.

Schlüsselwörter

Problem anderer Verstande, Wir-heit, Teilen, gemeinsame Aufmerksamkeit, gemeinsames Handeln, ‚Kontext der Gemeinsamkeit', Kultur

Zdravko Radman

Le 'contexte de la communauté' ou pourquoi le partage est plus que la présence

Résumé

Cet article essaie d'établir que la subjectivité devrait être considérée comme étant extravertie et orientée vers le monde plutôt qu'explicitement introvertie. On affirme ensuite que les subjectivités s'assemblent dans des environnements sociaux et que ce type d'expérience est primordial. Si cela est vrai, se pose la question de l'impossibilité de concevoir l'intersubjectivité en tant que méthode d'un contournement possible de l'écart qui est créé, selon les sceptiques, par le problème des autres esprits. L'article examine ensuite le concept de pluralité de soi comme contrepoint des appréciations de l'esprit individualistes et isolationnistes qui les considèrent comme étant inaccessibles ; cependant, on affirme également que chaque attention conjointe n'est pas un véritable partage. Chez des objets d'attention plus complexes, tels que des artefacts culturels, la version de la connaissance commune (pour laquelle le terme 'contexte de la communauté' a été inventé) est nécessaire chez les co-participants et les co-sujets pour que cette interaction puisse être considérée comme une expérience partagée.

Mots-clés

problème des autres esprits, nous-ité, partage, attention conjointe, action conjointe, 'contexte de la communauté', culture