1.3 *ETHICS, AXIOLOGY, AND LOGIC*

1.3 *ЭТИКА, АКСИОЛОГИЯ И ЛОГИКА*

FOREGROUNDING THE RELATIONAL DOMAIN — PHENOMENOLOGY, ENACTIVISM AND CARE ETHICS

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Despite the emphasis on the relational and interpersonal domain found in the phenomenological tradition, a genuinely relational phenomenological ethics is still a desideratum. The aim of this paper is to call attention to care ethics as an already developed relational moral theory built on the idea of the centrality of the relational domain and to suggest a reason why phenomenologists and care ethicists should care more about each other. The argument proceeds in three steps. First, we focus on the phenomenological views of the lived body, intersubjectivity and mutual incorporation. Second, we discuss the current applications of the phenomenological insights in the so-called enactive approach to social cognition and pose the question of its ethical implications. The final section introduces the ethics of care as a current relational moral theory and highlights some points of commonality between care ethics and phenomenology. The paper concludes that the dynamics of care and mutual concern central to the ethics of care might be well analysed and further developed in terms of phenomenological and enactive views of intersubjectivity. Care ethics, on the other hand, might provide a well-elaborated framework for developing a phenomenological ethics ascribing a central place to the relational and interpersonal dimension of moral phenomena.

Key words: Phenomenology, care ethics, phenomenological ethics, enactivism, the lived body, intersubjectivity, relationality.

АКТУАЛИЗИРУЯ РЕЛЯЦИОННЫЕ СФЕРЫ — ФЕНОМЕНОЛОГИЯ, ЭНАКТИВИЗМ И ЭТИКА ЗАБОТЫ

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Несмотря на то, что реляционные и интерперсональные сферы заложены в феноменологической традиции, подлинно реляционная феноменологическая этика все еще испытывает дефицит внимания. Задача этой статьи — обратиться к этике заботы как уже оформившейся реляционной моральной теории, построенной на идее центральной реляционной сферы, и предположить основание необходимости большей взаимной заботы феноменологов и этиков. Аргумент развертывается в три шага. Во-первых, мы фокусируемся на феноменологических воззрениях о живом теле, интерсубъективности и взаимном включении (incorporation).[1] Во-вторых, мы обсуждаем современные приложения феноменологических идей в так называемом энактивистском подходе к социальным когнициям и ставим вопрос их этических последствий. Последняя часть вводит этику заботы как ныне существующую реляционную моральную теорию и высвечивает некоторые точки общности между этикой заботы и феноменологией. В статье делается вывод, что динамики заботы и взаимного участия (mutual concern), центральные для этики заботы, могут быть хорошо проанализированы и далее разработаны в отношении феноменологических и энактивистских позиций интерсубъективности. Этика заботы, с другой стороны, может подготовить создание хорошо разработанной конструкции для будущей феноменологической этики, центральное место в которой будет приписано реляционному и интерперсональному измерению морального феномена.

Ключевые слова: Феноменология, этика заботы, феноменологичская этика, энактивизм, живое тело, интесубъективность, реляциональность.

INTRODUCTION

My main motivation for writing this paper stems from the fact that, despite the emphasis on the relational and interpersonal domain found throughout the phenomenological tradition, a genuinely relational phenomenological ethics is still a desideratum. Under these circumstances, it seems useful to me to call attention to care ethics as an already developed relational moral theory built on the idea of the

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[1] «This process may be described (1) from a dynamical agentive systems point of view as an interaction and coordination of two embodied agents; (2) from a phenomenological approach as a mutual incorporation, i.e. a process in which the lived bodies of both participants extend and form a common intercorporality.» (Fuchs, & De Jaegher, 2009, 465-486) — *Прим. ред.*

centrality of the relational domain. In this paper, my modest aim is to suggest a reason why phenomenologists and care ethicists should care more about each other. I also aim to show how that relates to the foregrounding of the relational domain in both philosophical traditions.

My argument proceeds in three steps. First, I focus on the phenomenological views of the lived body, intersubjectivity and mutual incorporation. Second, I take a look at the current applications of the phenomenological insights in the so-called enactive approach to social cognition and open up the question of its ethical implications. Finally, I introduce the ethics of care as a relational moral theory and discuss the points of commonality between care ethics and phenomenology.[2]

EMBODIMENT AND MUTUAL INCORPORATION

One of the most fruitful and influential gains of phenomenological philosophy lies, beyond doubt, in the exploration of the lived body and its constitutive role for the intentional life. Phenomenologists argue that the capacity for being intentionally related to the world is inseparable from being incarnated in the world. There is no inner theater of the mind into which images of the outside world are projected. Perceiver and perceived co-participate in perceptual fields as meaningful configurations in which the lived body exists as a momentum towards the world (Küpers, 2015). Our existence as embodied beings is not and can never be an immanently closed one. Instead of generating independent inner representations of the external world, we incorporate things in our environment. The lived body extends to the objects it interacts with and it does so by forming action-perception loops. The lived body coordinates to its environment, both forming a unified field of sensorimotor coherence (Fuchs, & De Jaegher, 2009). To move one's body, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, is «to aim at things through it, or to allow one's body to respond to their solicitation, which is exerted upon the body without any representation.» (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 140)

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[2] This paper doesn't aim at a historical treatment of phenomenology. My main focus here is on current approaches and discussions following up the heritage the phenomenological tradition. For an instructive historical overview of phenomenology of sociality and intersubjectivity see e.g. (Szanto, & Moran, 2016) and (Salice, & Schmid, 2016).

The lived body extends not only to the things that make up the world, but also to the bodies of other people. As is well known, phenomenologists do not aim to solve the so-called problem of other minds, but rather to dissolve it. As soon as one admits that the self is essentially embodied, as soon as it is no longer treated as the Cartesian *res cogitans*, the apparent problem of other minds disappears. Phenomenologists make the case that our contact with others is much deeper than any objectification or explicit knowledge. It is there, like our relationship to the world, by the mere fact of our bodily existing:

> I experience my own body as the power for certain behaviors and for a certain world, and I am only given to myself as a certain hold upon the world. Now, it is precisely my body that perceives the other's body and finds there something of a miraculous extension of its own intentions, a familiar manner of handling the world. (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 370)

My body-experiences and bodily embedment expand and incorporate the perceived body of the other and its embedding environment. The other's body influences my own bodily movements and sensations, and vice versa. It reaches out, as it were, to my own body, and my own body reaches out to the other's body. «Everything happens as if the other person's intentions inhabited my body, or as if my intentions inhabited his body.» (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 191) This joint embodiment creates a dynamic interplay forming a process of «mutual incorporation» (Leder, 1990, 94). Intentionality can never be a mono-logical affair of the isolated mind or the individual, rather it is shared and developed collectively by a community of incarnated subjects (Küpers, 2015).

Thomas Fuchs and Hanne De Jaegher recently offered an elucidating phenomenological analysis of mutual incorporation which they define as «the reciprocal interaction of two agents in which each lived body reaches out to embody the other» (Fuchs, & De Jaegher, 2009, 474). They illustrate the descriptive situation with an example of a tennis game. A skilled tennis player not only incorporates the ball and its trajectory, as it is the case in the process of unilateral incorporation (cf. Dreyfus, 2002), but also her opponent's position, posture and movements. The player feels the thrust and direction of the opponent's stroke. With this, her own body's reaction is already being prepared. In a fluent phase of the game, even before one player strikes the ball, the other player's reaction unfolds, and this already influences the first player's initial action. In both players the lived body is, as it were, fluctuating between the incorporated body of the other and their own embodied position. They both experience the holistic development of the situation

co-constituted by their bodily movements (Fuchs, & De Jaegher, 2009, 474).

In the process of mutual incorporation, we experience that there is not just one center of gravity localized in one's own lived body, but two or more of them continuously oscillating between activity and receptivity. We may say that the interactional «in-between» becomes the source of the operative intentionality of interacting partners. Each behaves and experiences differently how they would do outside of the process. Another remarkable feature of mutual incorporation concerns its temporal structure. The interacting partners bring in their individual dispositions based on acquired inter-corporeal practices. However, the development of interaction can change the dispositions of interactors. Hence, the meaning of the experienced situation is co-created and developed in a way not necessarily attributable to interacting partners considered in isolation.

On the basis of this analysis Fuchs and De Jaegher highlight three key features of mutual incorporation: 1) The «in-between» becomes the source of the operative intentionality of interacting partners 2) Meaning is co-created in a way not necessarily attributable to either of the partners 3) Whoever is within the interaction is already affected by the other (Fuchs, & De Jaegher, 2009, 477). Here, the importance of the interpersonal relational domain, brought to the fore by classical phenomenological accounts of intersubjectivity, gains clear and concrete content.[3]

PARTICIPATORY SENSE-MAKING AND MORALITY

Over the last decade, the phenomenological views of incorporation and mutual incorporation were fruitfully applied and further developed by the advocates of the enactive approach to social cognition. Enactivism is a transdisciplinary research program initially proposed as an alternative to mainstream cognitive science in the mid 1990s (Varela, Thompson, & Rosh, 1991). Whereas traditional cognitive science conceives of the mind as a computer-like input-output system and regards cognition as a set of

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[3] Mutual incorporation is of course only one part of a wide spectrum of phenomena which phenomenology examines under the rubric of intersubjectivity. Nevertheless, here it is enough to refer to this particular example in order to show the phenomenological interest in the related area.

internal mental representations of external objects, enactivists take up the heritage of phenomenological philosophy and reverse the picture by stressing that cognitive agents participate actively in the generation of meaning through their bodies and actions. Cognitive agents «make sense» of their environment by enacting the world. Hence, in the enactive view, the cognitive agent and the significant world in which the agent acts are to be seen as mutually co-constituting, since «sense-making» consists in the interaction between an adaptive autonomous system and its environment by which the environment takes on a significance or meaning for the system (Di Paolo, & Thompson, 2014).

Enactivism also challenges another dominant trait of traditional cognitive science, namely its methodological individualism. Mainstream cognitive science takes the individual agent as a proper unit of analysis not only for understanding the mind, but also for understanding social phenomena. Enactivitsts, on the contrary, follow phenomenologists by calling attention to the interpersonal relational domain and stress that social interaction constitutes a proper level of analysis in itself. They argue that interactions are processes with a rich structure only apparent at the relational level of collective dynamics. The earliest proponents of the enactive approach to social understanding, Hanne De Jaegher and Ezequiel Di Paolo, have introduced the notion of «participatory sense-making» to characterize how social interaction opens up the possibility of sense-making processes being shared among interacting agents. They define participatory sense-making as «the coordination of intentional activity in interaction, whereby individual sense-making processes are affected and new domains of social sense-making can be generated that were not available to each individual on her own.» (De Jaegher, & Di Paolo, 2007, 497) From this view, it can be said that social beings act as interacting sense-makers, generating and transforming meaning together in and through interacting.[4]

Enactivists transpose the phenomenological insights concerning incorporation and mutual incorporation into the domain of empirical science and do not share the transcendental-philosophical claims of phenomenology. Nevertheless, their theories can be seen as enriching and complementing classical phenomenological analyses. Several contemporary theorists, such as Thomas Fuchs, Hanne De Jaegher or Shaun Gallagher,

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[4] I give a more detailed presentation of the enactive approach to social cognition elsewhere (Urban, 2015a).

showed that the synthesis of phenomenological and enactive views of intersubjectivity provides an extremely fruitful basis for a criticism of the dominant 'theory of mind' approaches in the social cognition research. Most contemporary social psychologist and neuroscientists tend to reduce the meaningful engagement between subjects to cognitive inferences or simulations that a passive observer can make about mental states of other people based on their external behavior. Meanwhile, advocates of the enactive-phenomenological approach conceive of mutual incorporation as the phenomenal basis of social cognition and highlight the interactional, perceptive, and embodied dimension of intersubjectivity.

Instead of following this frequently discussed line of thought in contemporary phenomenology, however, I would like to focus on another possibility of developing the above-considered views of mutual incorporation and participatory sense-making. Giovanna Colombetti and Steve Torrance (2009) recently argued that the enactive-phenomenological shift of attention from the individual to the interpersonal relational domain has profound repercussions for our understanding of emotions, values and ethics. Investigations of mutual incorporation and participatory sense-making teach us, among other things, that what each of us does in relation to another, if it is to be fully characterized, must be described in inter-individual relational terms. Colombetti and Torrance consequently argue that we must think of the ethical character of a given situation as, at least in part, emerging out of the inter-relations between the participants in the situation. Since different styles of interaction, with their varying affective overtones, make an ethical difference, the ethical qualities of interactions themselves have to be taken into account as an autonomous target of ethical appraisal (Colombetti, & Torrance, 2009).

The important lesson to be taken from Torrance's and Colombetti's expansion of phenomenological and enactive views of intersubjectivity is that the inter-relational and inter-affective domain has to gain a more central place in our thinking about morality. In particular, their approach invites us to see the ethical content of a given situation as emerging as much from the relations and interactions of the participants as from the autonomous decision-making or original authorship of the subjects themselves. It suggests that we de-emphasize the traditional ethical notions of individual autonomy and deliberate activity of the individual rational subject. Moreover, such a relational approach

to moral phenomena provides sound reasons for a criticism of dominant ethical theories, such as Kantian or Utilitarian ethics, for being too exclusively focused on the single agent. Viewed from the relational perspective developed on the basis of phenomenological and enactive insights, the major ethical theories seem to be lacking sufficient exploration of the moral salience of the participatory, collective dynamics of human relations and interactions as opposed to the ethical significance of individual actions and their aggregations (Colombetti, & Torrance, 2009; Urban, 2014; Urban, 2015b).

CARE ETHICS AS A RELATIONAL MORAL THEORY

As far as I know, a relational ethics of the type hinted aptly by Torrance and Colombetti has not been developed in the phenomenological tradition (cf. Sanders, & Wisnewski 2012). Nevertheless, such an ethics has been proposed and successfully elaborated in a rather different philosophical tradition, namely in feminist moral thought. Over the last three decades, a number of moral theorists, such as Sara Ruddick, Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings, Virginia Held, Joan Tronto, and many others have argued that mainstream approaches in moral philosophy have focused too much on individuals while ignoring the moral significance of human relationships. They have also argued that the moral concepts developed by mainstream moral theories were ill suited for dealing with persons understood in relation to one another. Against the background of criticism, these ethicists have proposed a relational transformation of moral concepts and provided arguments explaining why persons are best understood in relational terms. The relational transformation of moral philosophy has inspired the development of *care ethics*, which has gradually evolved into an influential current of contemporary moral philosophy.

Care ethics is rooted in a fundamentally relational view of human beings conceiving persons as mutually interconnected, vulnerable and interdependent beings. In contrast to the still dominant image of the autonomous rational individual, care ethicists typically visualize moral agents in terms of the relation between caregiver and cared for, in order to stress ethically significant aspects of human relationships, such as reciprocity, dependency or asymmetry. However, care ethics does not restrict itself to the realm of intimate relationships. On the contrary, it advocates abandoning the boundaries between traditionally separated domains of the private and the public and

applies the relational ethical paradigm to agents, such as communities, nations or states.

As a normative moral theory, care ethics conceives of care as a core value and paradigmatic practice. Care ethicists make the moral value of care explicit through reflection on the normative content of the universal human experience of caring for and being cared for. The characteristic stance of persons in genuine caring relations requires both mutual concern — attending to and meeting the needs of the particular other — and mutual respect to the otherness of the other. Hence, caring relationship cannot be conceived as neither altruistic nor egoistic in the traditional sense of the terms (Pettersen, 2011). Care ethicists emphasize that a genuine caring relation involves «the cooperative well-being of those in the relation and the well-being of the relation itself» (Held, 2006, 12). This means, among other things, that a genuine caring relationship can never be reduced to the individual projects, properties, and intentions of the agents involved in it. Instead it requires a mutuality that gives birth to the relational domain that could not have been achieved by individuals alone. At the same time, what produces and sustains the required mutuality are various practices of agents involved in the relationship, making the relative autonomy of individual agents a necessary part of the game: «To care well requires the recognition that care is relational: no judgment about whether care is good can be accomplished from a singular perspective, not that of caregivers or care receivers.» (Tronto, 2013, 140)

A care-theoretical analysis of trust as a key aspect of caring relationships elucidates the fundamentally relational nature of care. Trust is

> a relation between persons, not a value achievable by persons in isolation. The value of trust cannot be divided into the value of the dispositions of the persons in the relation, or to the value of the relation to the individuals involved. […] For there to be trust between persons, such understanding must be mutual. (Held, 2006, 56 ff.)

Care ethicists also stress that trust often needs to be built and kept by ongoing practices of care. Trust is fragile and can be shattered in a single event. To rebuild it may take long stretches of time, or the rebuilding may be even impossible. It is striking how many similar points have been recently made on the basis of the enactive-phenomenological analyses of attachment and trust. Fuchs and De Jaegher argue, with special regard to social interaction between infant and mother, that the emerging emotion of trust is typically undivided and distributed among the individual participants of the

situation. Trust arises, as it were, from the «in-between» or from the over-arching process in which mother and her infant are immersed. Such distributed phenomena cannot be reduced to mere individual, private mental acts or properties. Of course the interaction process from which such distributed phenomena emerge may also involve breakdowns and mismatches. In this case reparation becomes a key process, since it conveys the experience that a miscommunication may end up in understanding again. Fuchs and De Jaegher emphasize that the repeated experience of successful repair will affect the infant's trust in others and their bonding capacity (Fuchs, & De Jaegher, 2009).

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that both advocates of phenomenological and enactive views of intersubjectivity and proponents of care ethics emphasize the importance of the relational and interactional domain. They rethink the concepts of the self and agency in ways enabling a novel reading of human relations in terms of the irreducibility of the relational domain. Both here and there, human beings are conceived as essentially embodied and embedded in multiple relational networks. Yet although the potential to a corroboration and mutual enlightenment between the two camps seems obvious, they have both developed separately thus far, with a general unawareness of one another.[5] It seems plausible to conclude that the dynamics of care and mutual concern central to the ethics of care might be well analysed and further developed in terms of phenomenological and enactive views of intersubjectivity. Care ethics, on the other hand, might provide a well-elaborated framework for developing a phenomenological ethics ascribing a central place to the relational and interpersonal dimension of moral phenomena. Considering the possible directions of future research, it might be instructive to re-examine the relationship between phenomenology, ethics and feminism in the philosophy of Edith

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[5] There are exceptions worth mentioning here. For example, Maurice Hamington has rightly emphasized the importance of Merleau-Ponty's thought for care theory (Hamington, 2004; Hamington, 2008). Hamington focuses particularly on Merleau-Ponty's analyses of embodiment, habits and emphatic resonance. However, he says little about the relational and interpersonal domain at the heart of my present account. Sarah LaChance Adams recently offered another interesting view of the points of commonality between the two philosophical traditions in her remarkable book *Mad Mothers, Bad Mothers and What a «Good» Mother Would Do* (LaChance Adams, 2014).

Stein (cf. Urban, 2015b, forthcoming). Another, more contemporary focus would be Anthony Steinbock's recent phenomenological work on moral emotions (Steinbock, 2014). This work seems to provide a promising starting point for the desired dialogue between the phenomenological account of interpersonal phenomena, ethics and care theory.

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