

The pragmatic turn of the embodied cognition and Mark Rowlands' category of "the moral subject"

The main objective of this research is to take a pragmatic, embodied, and empirically informed approach to Mark Rowlands' category of the moral subject. In his book *Can Animals Be Moral?*, he argued that there are no definitive philosophical obstacles for considering some animals as being capable of acting morally. An anthropocentric definition of the moral agent states that it has to be an entity that operates from *the reasons* (as analytical philosophy understands them) and is able to bear moral responsibility for her actions. In one of his arguments, Rowlands used a thought experiment to illustrate the consistency of *the moral subject* category within analytic philosophy requirements. The philosopher presented an example of Prince Myshkin (From Fiodor Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*), whose action can count as moral even though he lacks mentioned properties.

When considering recent findings derived from affective and social neuroscience, moral psychology, cognitive psychology, and comparative approach to studies concerning the roots of prosocial and moral behavior, a hypothesis could be put forward that empirical data can significantly strengthen Rowland's thought experiment. Consequently, it can lead one to conclude that the existence of the moral subject is more than a hypothetical conceptual proposal. These findings point out that emotional states are the primary cause of actions both in humans and in the realm of non-human animals. To support or provide falsification of that claim stated above, the author of the project will analyze diverse and convergent findings and theories concerning the evolutionary-based nature of emotions and their crucial role in decision-making processes. The research project aims a) to analyze empirical findings from the broad range of cognitive sciences regarding the nature of reasoning and the role of an affective dimension in everyday decision-making, b) attempts to ground the term of the acting moral subject in the pragmatistic embodied cognition conceptual framework, c) to investigate findings pointing to the existence of properties involved in moral action both human and other species as well, d) to formulate a concept of embodied morality which do not require from necessity the possession of natural language skills.

This research project goes in line with Frans de Waal's "Russian Doll" theory on the evolutionary roots of morality, the sentimentalistic, neurophilosophical theories of Jessie Prinz and Patricia Churchland, and the pragmatic approach to embodied cognition as well. It is also consistent with Charles Darwin's intuitions about quantitative but not qualitative differences between *Homo sapiens* and other species. It focuses on analyzing "the acting agent" and the notion of *the reason* (as being distinct from *the cause*). These categories are thought to be the main obstacles to acknowledge the moral dimension of animal behavior.

Research is divided into five modules. In the first module, I will introduce and adopt a pragmatic version of the embodied cognition' theoretical framework to further examine the conceptual aspects of the morality phenomenon. This section will be supplemented with considerations on the role of language and reasoning in the moral domain from the standpoint of embodied cognition paradigm. The second module will focus on the distinction between the terms *behavior* and *action* with arguments for replacing, at least in some cases, the descriptions of animal activity towards others with the latter one. I will also introduce the concept of the *perception-action loop* as a device to identify instrumentally rationalistic subjects of action. The third module will be devoted to emotional aspects of morals and the investigation of the necessary cognitive capacities of an acting subject (and neurochemical correlates underlying them), which are essential to give her actions moral characteristics. In this part, I will focus on neurophilosophical theories arguing for the emotional construction of morality and the function of emotions in creating meaning, categorization, and evaluation of events. I intend to demonstrate that at least some non-human animals possess such capacities. The fourth research module will be devoted to investigating empirical findings into animal properties that are to be involved in moral actions both in humans and in other animals. The fifth module will formulate a more inclusive and empirically informed definition of the embodied morality and morally motivated action.

The research project results could provide an essential inside for understanding morality as an evolutionary, biologically grounded phenomenon. It can contribute to wiping out superficially outlined divisions between human experience and those of other species. It can bring a new inside into understanding morality as a natural phenomenon that we may share in primary forms with other species. Its significance could extend beyond philosophical debate into law-making, bioethical discussions, and everyday practice in animal proceedings.