Inside Human Practices

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Abstract. I suggest that we imagine a practice as consisting of two (or more) levels: on the ground level the participants do whatever performances constitute the core of the practice, on the upper level they evaluate each other's ground-level performances as appropriate or inappropriate, correct or incorrect. In this sense, practices are essentially rule-governed, and the rules do not come from without, but are an integral part of the practices. They are integral to them to such an extent that they need not have the form of explicit prescriptions, they often remain implicit to the actions constituting the practice. The rules tend to interlock into complex edifices, which we can, as it were, enter. We can dwell inside such arenas of rules; and participating in a practice can usually be depicted as just operating within one of such arenas. The thing is that being "inside" usually means being able to carry out actions that are not available "outside". We live most of our lives within such normative practices (and their solidified forms, *institutions*), whereby we become not only *organisms*, which display various kinds of *behavior*, but rather also *persons*, who carry out *actions*.

Practices

Individuals of many animal species display behavioral patterns that are relatively rigid. If you observe a garden spider, you may be sure that, if not already doing so, it will soon start weaving its web, and it is often possible to predict some details of exactly how it will go about this. Likewise, a butterfly will be seeking flowers in order to feed on flower nectar. But the more you consider species closer to us humans - *viz*. the larger mammals - the less predictable the patterns become. Thus, even bears or chimps display what can be seen as relatively stable behavioral patterns, but their behavior is more flexible than that of spiders or butterflies, and hence even the details of their

behavioral patterns are much less predictable. And when it comes to us humans, the predictability is almost illusory.

The thing is that our behavior is incomparably more volatile and flexible than that of any other animal species. As Dennett (2018) puts it, "we—and only we—must live in a world of our own creating that is orders of magnitude more complex and replete with opportunities (the degrees of freedom) than the lifeworld of any other living thing" (p. 7). This flexibility has its positive side: we are very good at adapting to all kinds of environments and withstanding changes even when they are abrupt. But it also has a negative side, connected to the fact that we must learn both how to deal with our environment effectively and how to interact with our peers in a cooperative way. A consequence of the flexibility of our behavior is that we can deal both with nature and with our community not only in effective and useful ways, but also in ways that are detrimental, if not directly disastrous.

Hence the enormous flexibility of our behavior is not only our greatest blessing, but also our greatest curse. And I suggest that the weapon we have developed to fight this schizophrenic situation are *rules*. Rules give us cues for adopting the manners that are beneficial. We ease each other's behavior into channels that are communally favored, either because they lead to effective dealing with nature, or to respecting social conventions. But the existence and omnipresence of rules within our communities inevitably structures our behavior into complex patterns, and these I think we can appropriately call practices.

What is a practice? Rawls (1955) tells us that it is "any form of activity specified by a system of rules which defines offices, roles, moves, penalties, defenses, and so on, and which gives the activity its structure" (p. 33). According to Rouse (2007):

> a practice is maintained by interactions among its constitutive performances that express their mutual accountability. On this normative conception of practices, a performance belongs to a practice if it is appropriate to hold it accountable as a correct or incorrect performance of that practice. Such holding to account is itself integral to the practice and can likewise be done correctly or incorrectly. If done incorrectly, then it would appropriately be held accountable in turn. That would require responding to it in ways appropriate to a mistaken holding-accountable and so forth (p. 48).

The term has also been used in many other (somewhat different and sometimes less clear) senses. Schatzki (2001), for example, writes: "A central core (…) of practice theorists conceives of practices as embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organized around shared practical understanding" (p. 11). This is very general, and I am going to use the term in the more specific sense of Rawls and Rouse.

On my understanding, then, we can imagine that a practice consists of two (or more) levels: at base, or on the ground level, the participants do whatever performances constitute the core of the practice, while on the upper level they evaluate each other's ground-level performances as appropriate or inappropriate, correct or incorrect. Of course, the existence of the upper level will have an on-going influence on the ground level: the participants make their contributions with the knowledge that they can be found correct or incorrect. (Then we can have a further level, on which the participants evaluate each other's first-level evaluations, and then yet another on which they evaluate the second-level evaluations ...[1])

In this sense, practices are essentially rule-governed, and the rules do not come from without, but are an integral part of the practices. This does not mean that there must be some explicitly articulated rules that the participants of the practice follow. It just means that their performances are found correct or incorrect by their peers (as components of the specific practice) – in which case, I think, it is natural to talk about "implicit rules". Hence we see that practices are intimately connected with correctness, which, in turn, is connected with rules, so we must clarify these concepts.

Implicit rules

What is a rule? What may come to mind is a sentence such as "No trespassing" or "Do not use the lift in the case of fire". However, if our language games are also practices (and I hold that they are practices *par excellence*), then they presuppose rules; hence it cannot be the case that rules presuppose language.

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[1] Can these levels go all the way to infinity? Are all evaluations again evaluated as correct or incorrect? Rouse thinks so, which makes the normativity of practices, in his eyes, self-encapsulated. I think otherwise (Peregrin, 2021; forthcoming-a, Chapter 6).

Thus, as rules are to be constitutive of language, they cannot themselves be articulated in language – or at least not all of them. Hence, not all rules can be prescriptions that are to be interpreted and obeyed. As Wittgenstein (1953) puts it: "When I obey a rule, I do not choose. I obey the rule blindly" (§ 219). In other words, not all of them must be "explicit", at least some of them must remain somehow "implicit". But what is an "implicit rule"? This is a crucial question, which I have addressed elsewhere (Peregrin, forthcoming-a). Let me summarize my answer.

As I argued, rules cannot be just regularities: the mere fact that the people of some community tend to eat at noon does not make this into a rule, it is not the case that they *should* do so. For there to be a rule there must be some other, crucial ingredient. What is this mysterious ingredient? My answer, which I adopted from Brandom (1994), is that it is *normative attitudes*.

Normative attitudes are practical (not just psychological) attitudes that we assume towards people's behavior; attitudes that typically consist of either supporting or repressing the behavior. Importantly, they target only *kinds* of human behavior (rather than the specific persons involved)[2]. This means that if I merely try to prevent others from assaulting *me*, it is not yet a normative attitude; it becomes such when I try, more generally, to prevent everybody and anybody from assaulting anyone else[3]. And it is arguably the case that children entering human communities are initiated into the art of normative evaluation, which they come to understand as crucial for our social life (Peregrin, forthcoming-b). Thus, many of the things we do we not only just do, but we do them whilst constantly monitoring their correctness.

These normative attitudes may coordinate across a society; and I suggest that such a coordinated cluster of normative attitudes can be seen as the most rudimentary form of implicit rule. If plus/minus all members of a community oppose assault (whoever the culprit or victim), we can say that this community has the rule that one should not assault other people, that assault is wrong. In this way, primitive rules can exist wholly

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[2] See Giromini (forthcoming), who calls this feature of normative attitudes their *projectivity,* for a discussion.

[3] Of course the target need not be *this* general. It might be that I prevent anybody from assaulting anyone *who is too weak to defend themselves*. Or it may be that I prevent anybody *save the chief*, from assaulting anyone else. There may be exceptions that do not concern specific individuals, but rather rule-delimited roles.

without the support of language; and there can also be rules that, the other way around, support language. True, when language is in the picture, then the creation and updating of the normative infrastructure of human communities is much smoother and more effective; it is, however, no mystery how rules and language could have achieved their current elaborated forms by leaning on each other. Rudimentary kinds of rules (resonating normative attitudes) helped establish rudimentary forms of language, which then helped establish less rudimentary kinds of rules etc. Thus, before there were explicit, linguistically articulated rules, as we know them from our current societies, there must have been some implicit, "unwritten", rules. Notice that the notion of rule I am adopting is therefore quite wide: I hold that where there is a correctness, there is a rule. This is because implicit rules may be nothing more than the coordinated rendering of some things as correct (and others as incorrect) in terms of normative attitudes.

If we portray the patterns of social interaction as "games", then we can say that our games differ from those of other animals in that they consist not only of moves, but also of our "normative monitoring" of the moves, which constitutes the superstructure of rules that arches over the space in which we make the moves. (Just like chess consists not only of its moves, but also of the inevitable observance of its rules.) At the same time, the attitudes make our interaction self-reflective in the peculiar way which, in my opinion, warrants them being called "practices".

What I find important is that our rules tend to interlock into complex edifices, which we can, as it were, enter. We can dwell inside such arenas of rules; and participating in a practice can usually be depicted as just operating within one of such arenas. The thing is that being "inside" usually means being able to carry out actions that are not available "outside".

It is the ever-present "eye of the beholder" of normative attitudes that provide for our human life form, which has alienated us from all other species. We live most of our lives within the normative practices (and their solidified forms, *institutions*), whereby we become not only *organisms*, which display various kinds of *behavior*, but rather also *persons*, who carry out *actions*[4].

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[4] See Peregrin (forthcoming-a, §9.3).

Turner's criticism

Probably the most influential critic of the employment of the normative concept of practice for explaining human societies is Stephen Turner (Turner, 1994). And Turner (2001) appears to attack the very notion of practice I have laid out above. He argues that a practice cannot be constituted by implicit (or, as he says, "tacit") rules, for then to participate in such a practice would presuppose deciphering the rules and coming to follow them, which is arguably not the case. Learning to live in a human community, according to Turner (2001), is not picking up tacit rules, but rather acquiring a know-how, which may be different for different individuals:

> Different children will have different experiences on the way to mastery [of the ability to perform simple arithmetical tasks] and the cognitive architecture will be a product of the path and the experiences along this path that the child takes from its starting point to the goal of mastery of the cognitive task. The purposes of children will vary as well. There may be a complex heterogeneity with respect to the goals. Some children may wish to avoid the embarrassment of being brought before the blackboard and humiliated for making mistakes. Other children may have a more positive experience of mastery and pride in achievement (p. 134).

However, I do *not* propose that participating in a practice involves adopting the rules constitutive of the practice in the sense of bringing them in front of one's mind's eye and following them. One learns to inhabit the normative arenas of rules just like one learns to inhabit a tangible one: by getting hands-on experience. One explores it and gets bounced off by its barriers - be they tangible barriers or the virtual ones made up of the normative attitudes of one's peers.

For the normative arenas to exist there must be the requisite correctness. And Turner does not seem to deny that there are correct ways of doing things. What I am arguing is that this correctness is wholly a matter of coordinated normative attitudes; and coordinated normative attitudes are nothing else than implicit rules. The participants of a practice, after they learn to inhabit the normative arena (as a matter of know-how), must learn to assume the normative attitudes that underpin the arena, for the fully-fledged participants of a practice not only submit to the rules, but rather also take part

in maintaining them. Again, this need not be via deciphering the rules - it is clear that in many cases we know what is correct and are able to assume the normative attitudes without being able to spell out the corresponding rules explicitly. (We come to know this by acquiring a sensitivity to the social friction, generated by the normative attitudes of our peers and serving us as a feedback to orient our behavior.)

Turner insists that there are very different concepts of correctness and rules. In the case of arithmetic, for example, Turner (2001) writes: "There are right answers, and the point of the various experiences with students having various prior experiences is that the experiences taken together transform the child cognitively in such a way that the child is able to perform the cognitive task correctly." This can be contrasted with another kinds of correctness, such as that of "beachdressing":

> Beachdressing practices differ from country to country and place to place. They differ more or less systematically. What is appropriate in one place, or for one sort of person, is not appropriate for another. There is no place in which one can look up these 'rules.' One may be entitled, from this, to conclude that there is among beach-goers in particular places some sort of tacit 'code' which forbids certain kinds of attire or defines appropriate attire. But this is a very peculiar sort of conclusion. It seems to be little more than shorthand for saying that if one does various things, some people will express disapproval (p. 136).

Indeed, what I propose is that implicit rules that are constitutive of practices may exist only in terms of normative attitudes, *viz*. in terms of "expressing approval and disapproval" (of a specific sort). One learns to steer clear of the barriers of disapproval, and it is, no doubt, mostly a matter of a know-how, so different people may master this in terms of different skills. Hence it is not a matter of retrieving tacit rules and using them as the ultimate guidelines. However, the ever-present "eye of the beholder" changes the nature of our activities in such a way that we can talk about a wholly new form of life.

Language and meaning

Let us now turn our attention to human communication and to human languages - because our crucial practices tend to be inconceivable without language.

It is a triviality to say that the individuals of any social species - ants, wolves, primates - interact with each other. And humans, of course, are no exception. It is also quite clear that human interaction has been elevated to an entirely new level, especially thanks to language. How does this "new level" come into being? This question may sound almost trivial: we have become able to invest the sounds we emit with *meanings* and thereby we have become able to communicate via exchanging our thoughts.

But how is it that we are able to invest sounds with meanings? One possible answer is that we are able to forge *symbols* and words of our languages are such symbols, which we have made to stand for their meanings. This is a picture of language which Quine (1969) criticizes as the "museum myth".[5]

However, there is an alternative picture of the source of meaningfulness of our words which I prefer to follow. According to this alternative picture, the words become meaningful via becoming vehicles of our increasingly complex "language games" (Wittgenstein, 1953). This is sometimes called the *use-theory of meaning* (Peregrin, 2011), according to which meaning is not an *entity* represented by its linguistic expression, it is rather the *way* in which the expression is standardly employed in our linguistic activities[6].

Here I will concentrate on a subspecies of the use theory, namely *inferentialism*.[7] This theory of meaning maintains that the meaning of an expression is its inferential role, *viz*. the role conferred on the expression by the inferential rules that govern the sentences containing the expression. This presupposes that our language games are – more or less – governed by rules.

Brandom pictures our social life as a navigation through a (very complex) network of normative relationships, the backbone of which is constituted by the commitments and entitlements people keep acquiring and losing (Brandom, 1994, Chapter 1; 2001,

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[5] I have presented my criticism elsewhere (Peregrin, 2001; 2011; 2012).

[6] Wittgenstein was not alone in propagating the use-theory; in the later twentieth century he was joined, for example, by many neopragmatistic philosophers of language, such as Quine (1960) and Davidson (1984). Recent decades have thus witnessed the competition between representational and use-theoretical approaches to language.

[7] Inferentialism has been articulated as a philosophical doctrine by Sellars (1949; 1953; 1969) and especially Brandom (1994). For my personal contribution to inferentialism see Peregrin (2014).

Chapter 5). Especially this holds for our language games. Thus, for example, if you assert that *Fido is a dog* you are committing yourself to justifying this assertion (giving reasons for it) if it is challenged (if the reasons are asked for); and entitling others to repeat this assertion deferring its justification to you. This is connected with the fact that one of the important language games we play is what Brandom calls "the game of giving and asking for reasons" (also known as GOGAR)[8].

In this way we reveal the reason why it is *inferential* rules that are so crucial. Brandom maintains that inference can be understood as commitment-preservation (or, in its other version, as entitlement-preservation). Saying that *Fido is an animal* is inferable from *Fido is a dog* is saying that commitment to the latter already involves commitment to the former. And also a reason is necessarily something that is inferentially linked to what it is a reason for. To give a reason for a claim, such as *Fido is an animal*, is to give a (more obvious) claim from which it is inferable, such as *Fido is a dog*.

What I want to claim is that looking at our language as, first and foremost, a set of vehicles for our rule-governed language games is to bring to the fore the concept of practice - for the language games are typically nothing else than varieties of such practices. The linguistic communication presupposes not only the basis of exchanging linguistic utterances, but also the superstructure of their evaluation, possibly of the evaluation of the evaluation etc. As Sellars (1974), puts it, to become a competent practitioner of the human language games, *viz.* a speaker of language, an individual, apart from becoming able to produce appropriate "languagings", must also "acquire the ability to language about languagings, to criticize languagings, including his own" (p. 424).

Meanings as roles

Here again, we must appreciate the role of rules which are maintained by the evaluative superstructure, especially their role of erecting arenas in which we can produce novel kinds of actions. That systems of rules form spaces in which we can carry out novel, unprecedented actions is not hard to see. It is only within the space delimited by the rules of football (or a similar game) that you can *score a goal*. It is only

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[8] See Peregrin (forthcoming-c).

within the space delimited by the rules of chess that you can *check an opponent's king*. It is only within the space delimited by the rules of a civil code that you can *own your apartment* or *rent it*. And it is only within the space delimited by the rules of language that you can ask questions, describe something, gives orders etc.

It is important to realize how much the inferentialistic approach to language and meaning differs from more traditional approaches. According to representationalist theories of language, meaning is something that already exists in the outer, extralinguistic world or in the inner, mental world, and is to be represented by expressions. In contrast, the inferential role, which is what meaning is according to inferentialism, is something that is constituted along with the constitution of language. And the theory of practices presented here helps us explain how it is constituted.

Importantly, this does not mean that language is a self-encapsulated game severed from the extralinguistic world. As many rules of our language games incorporate the world, also the roles may be intertwined with it, and may depend on the actual or possible states of the world. A report, for example, is correctly assertable only if what it reports actually is the case. (However, note that this incorporation is not of the kind claimed by representationalist theories.)

Consider the meaning of a sentence such as *This is an animal*. Its meaning is given by various inferential relations to other sentences, such as that the sentence is inferable from *This is a dog* and that the sentence *This is not a table* is inferable from it. But this is still not enough: we need at least a rule that makes it correct when I assert this sentence pointing at a dog and incorrect when pointing at something else. This is not, strictly speaking, an inferential rule. (Though we can, metaphorically, picture it as an "inference" from the world to language.) But it is these kinds of rules that provide for the direct interconnection of language and the world.

In a way similar to how the systems of rules of our language games determine the roles for our linguistic sounds, so too do systems of rules and practices determine roles for many other items of our social life, and indeed for ourselves. Entering the space of chess, I may become a player of the game (and carry out the specific actions available inside, like checking the opponent's king), and the various pieces of wood that I control become pawns, rooks, knights etc. Entering the space of my university I become the professor, while other people become my students, and still others become teachers, IT specialists etc. The roles may be dynamic, and the roles we assume as persons are

essentially dynamic. Brandom (1994) describes them, in effect, as bundles of *commitments* and *entitlements* we gain and keep or lose. These, according to him, constitute the social landscape through which we navigate and which we keep mapping, in order to know our way around.

Inside of Practices

Hence from the inferentialist viewpoint, a practice is a social activity that is carried out in an arena delimited by rules (which are not necessarily explicit). The constitutive presence of rules makes the participants and vehicles they use to carry out the activity (such as various extracts of sounds in the case of language) acquire various *roles* (e.g., a certain sound extract may acquire the role of a report that it is raining). The roles do not derive from the ways the vehicles are used *de facto*, but rather *de jure - viz*. vis-à-vis the rules that govern them.

Practices of this kind have the peculiar property that we have already metaphorically depicted as opening an inner space. It is only within the spaces, within the rules-buttressed arenas, that we may carry out the new kinds of actions the practices make available for us. At the same time, it makes the rules into Janus-faced entities: we may look at them from outside or also from inside, and as with many other things having an inside, these may be very different views. In particular, the rules, viewed from the outside, are just arbitrary stipulations, while viewed from the inside (i.e. after we subscribe to them) they are authoritative determinants of what we may do.

What are we talking about when using the inside/outside metaphor, what is behind it? What is it that the metaphor brings to light? What is it that the "inside" and "outside" metaphorically depict? To explain this, we must return to normative attitudes and to their linguistic expressions (which we can begin to articulate after the constitution of language). Take the positive attitude towards greeting older people, which would originally have been manifested by an approval of those who did greet older people and scorn for those not doing so; and after the onset of language by utterances like "Older people should be greeted".

Suppose we observe a community and find normative attitudes of this kind. In other words, we make an observation that can be articulated as "The natives hold that older people should be greeted". This is a straightforward description of the community; and

this corresponds to what it means to approach a rule "from outside". We see that this rule happens to be accepted by the community, we may like it or not, but in any case we can imagine that another community might have a different rule.

Imagine, in contrast to this, that you are a member of the community, and you evince the normative attitude, or urge "Older people should be greeted". This is not a description; you *endorse* greeting older people. It is what you accept *should be,* so any alternative (such as that you should not greet older people, or perhaps should greet only some of them) is inconceivable. (How could it be that I should not greet somebody whom I should greet?) This is depicted as being "inside" rules: a rule taken thus forms a pillar of the arena in which you currently dwell.

What is important, we saw, is that the arenas shaped by rules make it possible to carry out brand new kinds of actions, and, in effect, to wholly change our form of life. Before we became the normative creatures we are, we were restricted by the limits of nature. This is no longer true - not because we have learned how to breach the laws of nature, but because we have organized our societies so that we face our natural limits collectively, redistributing their impact on us via our rules. Each of us, then, has more to do with our own rules than directly with the impact of nature.

Embodiment of practices

Some of the classics of the theory of practices put stress on the *embodiment* of practices; on the fact that we accomplish most of the practices not so much by our minds, as by our bodies. And as we saw, basing practices on rules appears, in the eyes of its opponents such as Turner, to go counter to this understanding, for rules appear to be something we follow, as it were, with our minds.

However, it is important to realize that on the account of rules proposed here, and on the account of practices built on them, rule-following and participating in practices may be much more of a practical skill than a theoretical mastery. As Sellars (1949) puts it: "The mode of existence of a rule is as a generalization written in flesh and blood, or nerve and sinew, rather than in pen and ink" (p. 299). The point is that evincing normative attitudes, which amounts to upholding a rule, is often not something we do on the basis of a rational deliberation, but rather *an aptitude acquired by means of education and enculturation*. And the same holds for submitting to the normative

attitudes, *viz.* following the rules: it is often not something we learn like a theory, but *a practical achievement we acquire on the basis of dwelling and acting within our normative arenas*.

I do not deny that we follow a lot of rules by reading and interpreting explicit instructions and obeying them. In a community where a language is up and running this may be the most standard way of coming to follow a rule. However, it cannot be the general way. As we have indicated, there must be a different model of rule-following that underlays this one. And the model is that of rules constituted by normative attitudes, adding up to normative arenas in which we live most of our lives.

Hence we can say that as most of the ground-level normativity is embodied, our practices as envisaged here are embodied too. True, the layer of embodied normativity may be overlain by layers of normativity that are linguistically bolstered and hence involve interpretation, but this is only made possible by the normative foundation of the bottom level. Hence I claim that explicating practices in terms of rules is compatible with their being embodied.

The phenomenon of embodied (or *situated*, as it is sometimes called) normativity has been intensively studied over recent decades (Rietveld, 2008; Merker, 2012; van den Herik & Rietveld, 2021). Rietveld (2008), for example, writes:

> [S]kills and concerns get their shape within a socio-cultural practice. Once they are acquired the relationship between body and world is modified. Situated normativity can be understood as the normative aspect of skillful action in context; of embodied cognition in unreflective action. Responsiveness to relevant affordances forms the core of the normative aspect of unreflective action. The phenomenology of this can be characterized as being moved to improve by relevant affordances (p. 996).

Practices and affordances

The quote concluding the previous section refers to the concept of *affordances*, and I think it is useful to illustrate the nature of practices in its terms. The concept was introduced by J. J. Gibson (1977; 1979). His idea was that we do not live surrounded by things, but rather by the opportunities to act. According to Gibson, what we -

primarily - perceive is not, e.g., a glass of water, but rather the opportunity to drink. These are the affordances presented to us by the environment.

The idea underlying the concept of affordance was that perception is often connected with action more directly than we tend to think. We may imagine that perception is something like the input into our cognition and action is its output, that the perception gets analyzed and on the basis of the results of the analysis we select an appropriate action. But Gibson urges that cognition is often wholly bypassed - that the perceptions lead to actions so immediately that we directly take the perceptions as opportunities.

Now, how do we know which actions are appropriate for given perceptions? Many such links, no doubt, are hard-wired into us by evolution. However, it seems to me clear that there are other affordances that are, as it were, soft-wired: acquired by upbringing and enculturation. (Not that they are a matter of explicit knowledge, this is not how affordances work, there occur implicit links just as in the cases of the hard-wired affordances.) Thus, while anyone seeing a baseball bat would see it as a potential weapon, a baseball player would see it also as something that can be used to score a home run.

It seems to me that the functioning of the systems of rules I am talking about can be elucidated by saying that they open up new sets of affordances. As we learn to live in the new arenas, we learn to perceive their affordances as such. This is the case of the arena of baseball: if we spend enough time in it, we learn to see a wholly new set of affordances - to which the possibility of scoring a home run belongs.

The all-important normative arena is that which can be called the space of meaningfulness. It is the arena built of the rules of our language games, especially GOGAR: it is this space, in which our extracts of sounds become reports that it is raining, questions about how much something costs, or evaluations of somebody's behavior. And not only do they become such linguistic tools, they become, for us, the *affordances* to report, to ask, or to evaluate.

And it is also good to realize that the tools we use to cope with our environment are complementary to the affordances offered by the environment. In the natural world, we use tools that are rendered useful by the environment, that respond to its affordances: we use hammer and nails because the things in our environment are neither all so hard that it is impossible to drive nails into them, nor are they all so soft that they would

not hold the nails; we have also a lot of things into which the nails usefully fit. However, with our normative arenas, there is a two-way appropriation: we not only use tools to fit the (normative) environment, but we also shape the environment to support specific tools (such as different sounds in the case of the space of meaningfulness). We *create* the affordances of the arenas; and hence we can create them so as to support the tools we also create.

Consider the sounds that are the vehicles of our language. The fine-grained differences between them do not play any substantial role within the arena of the natural world. (Who, aside from an English speaker, would appreciate the difference between, say, *He was bad* and *He was dead*?) However, we have built our arena of meaningfulness so that these differences are substantial, that they underlie the miraculously complex set of varying linguistic utterances that we can put to use to achieve, by their means, very different things.

Our normative agglomeration

To wrap up the picture presented here, let us run wild with our metaphor of practices as inhabitable spaces. From the bird's eye view, the spaces may appear to add up to a huge labyrinth of halls, arenas and chambers. While Wittgenstein (1953) urged that our language is like an "ancient city", we can generalize and say that this holds of the whole of our social life: what we have built out of our rules is "a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses" (§18). Some of such dwellings, like those built out of moral rules, or the arena of our language, are places of permanent residence; others, like, say, the arena of chess or that of a university, are entered and exited at will.

True, the topology of such a labyrinth may be different from those to be encountered in natural, three-dimensional space. It is the case that sometimes I can be in many different arenas at once, though other times being only in some of them, without being in the others. The hall of moral rules encompasses all other houses and mansions, and also the arena of language spreads widely. The arenas and houses are interconnected by an intricate network of paths, corridors and passages (so that the whole thing becomes a Wittgensteinian "labyrinth of paths" - §203)

What is important is that in this sense we have become, in contrast to other animals (including other social ones) genuine townsmen - though we may make occasional trips to the countryside where there may be a few normative shelters, we find that we have lost the ability to live elsewhere than in our normative settlements. Hence we live rather "unnatural" lives, which alienate us from other animals.

We can, and do, visit the normative settlements of communities other than our own one, and though they may differ in some respects from ours, we always recognize some basic similarities of architecture: there is always an arena of language (which we can learn to enter), there are mansions for various hobbies and there is some all-encompassing hall of moral rules. We may, and do, interconnect the foreign settlements with our own one, sometimes into huge agglomerations. In this sense, we have become animals of practices - and as practices are essentially normative, we have become a normative species.

Conclusion

The proposal for which I have offered support is that we explain the concept of practice in terms of the concept of rule. Not, however, the concept of rule as an explicit instruction, but as a much more general concept encompassing "unwritten" rules, which are implicit to human behavior. I suggest that practices are multilayered systems of action in which an upper level consists of evaluations of - *viz*. the assuming of normative attitudes towards - what is done on a lower level. The practices are thus essentially normative and in a peculiar way self-reflective.

The normativity of practices is thus compatible with their being embodied and being a matter of know-how. On a closer look, the practices appear like certain virtual arenas, which we build out of our implicit rules and which constitute the possibilities of brand new actions that wholly change our human form of life. We have embraced, in general, the possibility of becoming persons (rather than mere organisms) who act (rather than merely behave) and who accept responsibility for their actions, and, in particular, the multifarious possibilities of acting within the specific practices.

My conclusion is that the emergence of practices in human history must therefore be framed in the context of the emergence of rules and normativity. We are peculiar

animals who have raised our coexistence and cooperation to the heights of normative entangledness making each of us an inseparable part of our networks of correctness, of Kant's "kingdom of ends".

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