

AN INTERACTIONIST ACCOUNT OF ACTION: A REVIEW OF SHAUN GALLAGHER'S ACTION AND INTERACTION

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Dear editor,

The orthodox accounts of social perception in the territory of philosophy of cognitive science are theory theory and simulation theory. Theory theory involves understanding other minds resorting to a *theory* for theoretical inferences; that is, understanding other minds is identical to theorizing or inferring others' mental states. Simulation theory holds that to understand other minds, an individual simulates others' behaviors and experiences by resorting to internal model; that is, understanding other minds is identical to running one's own simulated internal model. In the last twenty years, the orthodoxy has been challenged by the third approach, commonly called non-inferentialist or direct social perception. The third approach literally holds that *we can see mind in action directly*, without appealing to a theory or a model as an intermediary. Philosophers center on the dubbed unobservability thesis anchoring the crux of the orthodoxy, that is: the necessity of inferring or simulating others' mental states is due to the latter of which in any case is unobservable. Thus, critics of the orthodoxy need to show that the unobservability thesis is redundant or the directness of social perception is strongly valid.

The philosopher Shaun Gallagher is one of the notable supporters of the third, innovative approach and the derivative interactionist view - to act is to interact with others, e.g., in a dyad, triad, quad.... In his monograph *Action and Interaction* published in 2020, Gallagher summarizes his overall evaluation of direct social perception and interactionism combining two major sources: infant developmental psychology of intersubjectivity (in Part II) and socio-political philosophy of intersubjectivity (in Part III), so to speak (Gallagher 2020). Gallagher's project deserves to be scrutinized carefully. We admire his long-standing endeavor towards a unifying theory of interactional action. Meanwhile, we have seen the seemingly discordance between branching theoretical components, especially between the inherently biological, developmental view of intersubjectivity and the inherently sociological, organizational view of intersubjectivity. It should be noted that each view has its historically deep-rooted yet radically different pedigree in philosophy and psychology.

The plan: first we outline basic contents of the book. The book mainly has three parts: Part I "Action" involves Chapter 1-3, focusing on the nature of action; Part II "Interaction" involves Chapter 4-7, focusing on the deep connection

between action and interaction; Part III "A Critical Turn" involves Chapter 8-10, focusing on significant implications of social practices and institutions for interactional action. Then, we attempt to present two shortcomings in Gallagher's "interaction theory" project. What we want to show is that, it is far from clear how the interactional action approach would go.

In the "Introduction" Gallagher proposes that the nature of action which is deeply rooted in interaction. He presents his motivation, in a word, "to work towards an understanding of how our encounters with others carry us into actions, and continue to shape our actions, and therefore our basic cognitive capacities, we need an account of social interaction" (1). To achieve is goal, in this book Gallagher then borrows from a wide range of disciplines, including phenomenology, developmental psychology, neuroscience, critical theory, organization studies, German idealism and so on. Besides, it should be noted that there is no "Conclusion" in the end of the book. The author offers no conclusion with detailed specifications: which to some extent indicates the book might be better seen as an adventure of converging ideas rather than a mature philosophy of action and interaction.

Part I: in Chapter 1 "Actions and Abstractions" the author argues that actions are always situated in its ongoing occurring surroundings. Thus, an analysis of action cannot be abstracted away from actual situatedness. Gallagher even goes further, he says, he is arguing not simply action should be understood in context, but that situatedness constitutes one part of an action (17). Chapter 2 "Time in Action" talks of the temporal scale of action; that is, the nature of action involves an intrinsic temporality. Chapter 3 "Action, Intention, and the Sense of Agency" concerns the experiential and agentive aspect of action. Action is executed and can be experienced by an agent. In this chapter Gallagher goes on to discuss the sense of self-agency. In short, in the first part Gallagher analyzes the nature of action in three interrelated aspects: situatedness, temporality and the sense of agency. All of the three aspects of action thus suggest that action is more than simple bodily movement; and, agentive action is a result of contextualization owing to its temporally dynamical settings.

Part II: in Chapter 4 "The Case Against Theory of Mind" the author returns to current debates surrounding social perception and offers several evidence-based problems concerning the deficits of the orthodox accounts as mentioned above. These problems include: developmental problem (i.e., to the theory theory, infants are too young to acquire a theory), matching problem (i.e., to the simulation theory, matching between the experienced state and the targeted state is a necessary but not sufficient condition for simulation), reuse problem (i.e., to both the orthodox accounts, re-use or re-combination of neural mechanisms posits a threat to the unobservability thesis), etc. (cf. 76-97). In Chapter 5 "Interaction" Gallagher conceives the interaction theory which could be built on three stages in a developmental view (mainly inspired by the developmental

psychologist Colwyn Trevarthen): primary intersubjectivity (0 to 9 months; young infants develop sensorimotor abilities in a dyad, e.g., mother-infant dyad), secondary intersubjectivity (9 months to 2 years; toddlers develop abilities of jointly attending and acting), communicative and narrative competencies (2 to 4 years; young children develop more sophisticated abilities of social observation and understanding). Chapter 6 "Direct Social Perception" then turns to the directness thesis Gallagher has defended from beginning to end. Now he enlarges the implications of *seeing mind directly* combining with interactional or communicative action. Chapter 7 "Communicative Actions and Narrative Practices" continues with digging the narrative scales (for example, cultural narratives like epic poetry, theatre, film, etc.) of the social situatedness of action. In short, in the second part Gallagher attempts to draw inspirations from developmental studies (key ideas include parent-infant dyad or bonding).

Part III: in this part Gallagher turns to what he calls social-cognitive issues of interactionism. In critical approach, recognition theory (contemporary representatives include the philosopher Axel Honneth) argues that the result of interaction is the establishment of mutual recognition between the agent and the other. One-sided recognition (first-person social observation or one-sided love, for example) can be a necessary condition of the final mutual recognition; besides, the ability of recognition can be practiced through education or upbringing. Chapter 8 "The Roots of Recognition" then briefly outlines basic theories of recognition. Gallagher points out the concept of autonomy finally becomes a relational autonomy, or a compound autonomy. Next, in Chapter 9 "Telling Actions" the author offers a mixed story of how social practices and institutions shape interactional actions and modulate cognitive processes. The critical side of interaction theory is compatible with the idea of socially extended cognition. In Chapter 10 "A Practice of Justice" Gallagher deals with several issues of practicing social justice, including: situated justice, distribution problem, the imperfectness of justice, and the constitution and sense of justice. In short, in the third part Gallagher attempts to draw inspirations from organization studies (key ideas include mutual recognition), so to speak.

This book in our view is full of interesting attempts to unite two radically different traditions of intersubjectivity: one is from developmental intersubjectivity, the key representatives include Trevarthen (1993); the other is from socio-political or critical intersubjectivity, the key representatives include Honneth (2007). In one place of this book Gallagher have noticed that Trevarthen was influenced by Jürgen Habermas; and Honneth also made references to Trevarthen's idea of primary and secondary intersubjectivity (cf. 187). It seems like both sides talk of the same thing from two different points of view. In some sense Gallagher simply intends to grasp this converging phenomenon of two kinds of ideas. Yet there is an explanatory gap on action generating in interaction between these two approaches (like the nature-nurture debate): on the one hand, in some sense developmental psychologists believe that the actions of

neonates and infants are based on genetics and neurobiology; thus, action owns a priori explanation of causes. On the other hand, critical theorists or sociologists hold that the actions of social beings are completely a result of socialization (and contextualization) in history; thus, action owns posterior explanation of causes. There is no place we can find where Gallagher has addressed appropriate proportions of a priori-posterior intersubjectivity and even presented a unifying explanation of interactional action.

Besides, on addressing other minds problem, it could be inferred that in this book interactionist's view is - *seeing mind in interactional action directly*. Yet Gallagher does not point out detailed specifications of the stratified systems of action and how these strata are integrated into one single thing. According to current views, there are at least three levels or dimensions of action: the what-, the why-, and the how-dimension. The what-dimension refers to contents of action, such like "She is eating *a salad*."; the why-dimension refers to intentions of action, such like "She is going *for* heart surgery."; the how-dimension supplements the first two dimensions, refers to the stylistic kinematics of action, such like "She was shouting *loudly*." Actually, at the stage of primary intersubjectivity, what young infants can perceive in a dyad is simply the manner or style of the caregiver, rather than more sophisticated contents and intentions. In a radical sense supporters of direct social perception may claim: *seeing intention in action kinematics, directly* (cf. Becchio et al. 2018). As a supplement, another infant developmental psychologist Daniel Stern (2010) presents the idea of vitality forms as one possible form of action kinematics at the stage of primary intersubjectivity (see also Gallese & Rochat 2018; Rochat & Gallese 2022); Krueger (2021) argues that once we can see mind in action directly, we can also see mental disorders in action directly.

In conclusion, here we attempt to present two shortcomings of this book: (1) it is hard to see how both sides of intersubjectivity (the developmental and the critical) can be united into one single explanation of causes, considering there is an explanatory gap between a priori and posterior generating reasons; (2) the book lacks detailed characterizations of the levels of action per se within one theory of interactionism, although Gallagher talks a lot of the nature of action and the relationship between action and interaction.

The program proposed by Gallagher in this book still needs to be scrutinized further by contemporaries. Criticism aside, Gallagher has given a comprehensive and original interpretation of the relationship between action and interaction, thereby has developed his interactionist standpoint to a higher level. It is required reading for everyone who is interested in interdisciplinary studies of intersubjectivity and social cognition.

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'PSYCHOEDUCATION MANUAL FOR BIPOLAR DISORDER' BY F. COLOM AND E. VIETA: A BOOK REVIEW AND FUTURE SUGGESTIONS

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There is much evidence of the effectiveness of psycho-education in bipolar disorder: its importance in preventing depressive and manic episodes, reducing the length of hospitalizations and increasing adherence to treatment is proven (Rabelo et al. 2021, Joas et al. 2020). Psychoeducation also has a significant impact on improving the quality of life of users (Michalak et al. 2005).

The mechanism of action of psycho-education spans three levels of complexity:

- disease awareness (recognition of prodromal symptoms and adherence to treatment);
- stress management, avoidance of abusive behaviour and regularisation of lifestyle;
- promotion of general well-being and improvement of quality of life.

Colom and Vieta's handbook provides a largely standardised methodology of psycho-education for patients with bipolar disorder, proposing an activity divided into 21 sessions, each relating to a different topic (Colom & Vieta 2006).

The psycho-educational group is not structured as a simple teaching of contents and explanation of bipolar pathology, but stimulates, throughout socratic dialogue, the active involvement of the participants with their reflections and sharing of their own experience of illness. This aspect, also from personal experience in conducting psycho-educational groups, is essential and much appreciated by participants, who have the opportunity to share their subjective experience of illness with that of other people, thus not feeling alone in facing suffering.

Each chapter is structured in the same way, indicating the objective of the session, some useful hints, some information material for the patient, about the topics dealt with and the homeworks, which consist of questions anticipating the next session. This structure allows participants to consolidate the concepts expressed during the activity by reading the material and to prepare for the next one with the homework.

The manual is divided into five main blocks:

- awareness of illness: aetiological factors and triggers of bipolar disorder, mania and hypomania, depression and mixed episodes, outline of the course and prognosis;
- pharmacological adherence: sessions related to psychopharmacology (antipsychotics, mood stabilisers, antidepressants and anxiolytics), risks related to discontinuation of treatment;
- avoidance of substance abuse;
- early identification of new episodes;
- regulating lifestyle and stress management.

The protocol therefore envisages a programme of 21 meetings, held weekly, for a total length of about 6 months. This organisation may be difficult to maintain due to structural limitations, such as the lack of structured staff or the inability of users to attend all sessions. Therefore, the activity can also be realised in a shorter version, combining some topics in one session or avoiding some topics.

The shorter programme, of course, has disadvantages in terms of group cohesion, more concise treatment of content and 'modelling', a very important concept in psycho-education, i.e. learning behaviour through the error or positive actions of other participants.

To summarise, the advantages of introducing a psycho-educational group in an outpatient setting are various: promoting mutual help between patients, reducing stigma, improving intellectual and emotional insight, increasing the patients' social relationships, and it is a zero-cost intervention, only requiring qualified staff.

The Authors suggest a number of participants between 8 and 12 patients, as a larger group would probably not allow a good involvement of all users and could be dispersive. Nevertheless, considering the dropout rate, which is usually close to 25% (Gaur & Grover 2009, Zucca et al. 2017), it may be useful to start with a group of 15-16 people, which would end up being 10-12 over the course of the activity. The recommended age range is from 18 to 55, trying as far as possible to create a homogeneous group in terms of age and personality of the participants. The heterogeneity of the