

Material Symbols: From Translation to Co-ordination in the Constitution of Thought and Reason

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How, if at all, can embodied and ‘representation-lite’ approaches deal with traditionally cognitive phenomena? One key move may be to take very seriously the role of human activity and human-built structures in altering the way difficult problems are presented and solved. Our best practices and artifacts, on this view, enable many of the same basic strategies to tackle perception, action and high-level reason. An important challenge to this view depicts practices of ‘higher-level reasoning’ as themselves requiring the use of new forms of ‘de-coupled’ internal representation (for a sophisticated version, see Kim Sterelny’s *Thought in a Hostile World*) I explore this issue, with special attention to the cognitive role of words and public symbols. De-coupled ways of knowing, I conclude, do not demand de-coupled internal representations *in addition* to the resources provided by, respectively, standard perceptually-based knowledge and representations (internal and external) of the words and symbols themselves. In this way, de-coupled knowing is itself a kind of global skill, and one that is partially constituted by our activities with a variety of cognitive artifacts including words and symbols.