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A Neo-Meadian Approach to Human Agency: Relating the Social and the Psychological in the Ontogenesis of Perspective-Coordinating Persons

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Abstract

How can human agency be reconciled with bio-physical determinism? Starting with a discussion of the long standing debate between determinism and agency, we argue that the seeds of a reconciliation can be found in George Herbert Mead's ideas concerning social acts, perspectives, differentiation, self-other interactivity, and conscious understanding. Drawing on more recent reformulations of Mead's ideas, we present an integrated account of the ontogenesis of human agency. Human agency, we argue, should be conceptualized in terms of distanciation from immediate experience, and we show how social interactions, institutions and symbolic resources foster the development of agency in increasingly complex ways. We conclude by situating our work in relation to other developmental accounts and the larger project of theorizing and empirically supporting a compatibilist rendering of human agency as the "determined" self-determination of persons.

Keywords: Mead, agency, position exchange, role exchange, intersubjectivity, distanciation

A Neo-Meadian Approach to Human Agency: Relating the Social and the Psychological in the Ontogenesis of Perspective-Coordinating Persons

Many psychologists and philosophers now treat as passé canonical tensions that have endured since Thomas Hobbes' famous seventeenth-century debate with Bishop Bramwell concerning the compatibility of free will and determinism. Most contemporary recommendations to move beyond this classic tension confidently assert a scientifically established compatibilism that understands free will as human self-determination, and treats such agency as entirely consistent with biophysical determinism and sociocultural constraints. For the most part, the underlying suggestion is that persons have evolved and developed as bio-cultural hybrids whose emergent psychological capabilities enable them to self-determine. More particularly, these self-determining capabilities have been, and continue to be constituted, both phlogenetically and ontogenetically, through persons' activity and interactivity within their biophysical and sociocultural world (e.g., Bickhard, 2004, 2008, in press; Dennett, 2003; Donald, 2001; Martin, 2003, in press; Martin, Sugarman, & Thompson, 2003; Martin, Sugarman, & Hickinbottom, 2010; Searle, 2001, 2007). In consequence, persons ought now be understood as both determined and determining in that they are emergent within both phylogenesis and ontogenesis in ways that require appeal only to known and plausible evolutionary and developmental processes and scenarios.

Thus, Dennett (2003) suggests that our biophysical, cultural, and socio-psychological evolution tells us that new kinds of things can and do emerge in the world through evolutionary and developmental processes that are entirely

explicable, and which require no postulation of other worldly or otherwise mysterious origins. Dennett goes on to say that people:

> have evolved to be entities designed to change their nature in response to interactions with the rest of the world […]. From the engaged agent's perspective, things change over time, and agents change to meet those changes. But of course not all change is possible for us. There are things we can change and things we can't change, and some of the latter are deplorable. There are many things wrong with our world, but determinism isn't one of them, even if our world is determined. (p. 93)

Dennett forges a contemporary, scientifically informed compatibilism between determinism and agency, in which determinism does not imply inevitability for human agents whose evolved nature (as language and culture capable, reasoning, and moral beings) is to be self-consciously reactive to their circumstances. Persons, according to Dennett, are self-determining agents with a "subjectively open future" (p. 93) and a constantly emerging nature. In consequence, despite the fact that at any instant there is exactly one physically possible future ("The physics involved are eternally changeless, so the micro events are always the same" -- p. 90), for persons as self-determining agents, the future may be variegated:

> It may contain some patterns that are like the patterns of the past, and it may contain others that are entirely novel. In some deterministic worlds, that is, there are things whose natures change over time, so determinism does not imply a fixed nature" (p. 91).[1]

[1]Note that any determined future that includes the agency of persons, while

In somewhat similar vein, at least with respect to persons as self-determining agents, John Searle (2001, 2007) offers a transcendental argument for self-determination that stresses the rational agency of persons. Searle argues that:

> We have the first-person conscious experience of acting on reasons. We state these reasons for action in the form of explanations. The explanations are obviously quite adequate because we know in our own case that, in their ideal form, nothing further is required. But they cannot be adequate if they are treated as ordinary causal explanations because they do not pass the causal sufficiency test […]. They are not of the form A caused B. They are of the form, a rational S performed act A, and in performing A, S acted on reason R […]. I am claiming that the condition of possibility of the adequacy of rational explanations is the existence of an irreducible self, a rational agent, capable of acting on reasons. (2007, p. 57)

To conclude, as Searle does, that his analysis requires the positing of an irreducibly self-determining agent requires nothing mysterious or immaterial. It requires only that we take seriously the biophysical and sociocultural constitution of the

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determined, may not be entirely predictable. Ironically, the more we understand about our own determinants, the more we become self-determining. For example, the more we know about the causes of illness, the more we can intervene in illness. The more we know about the genetic determinants of our biological being, then the more we can begin to intervene in our own genetic make up. Determinism at a biophysical level can become self-determination at a cultural-psychological level. But that self-determination does not escape determinism, rather it is built upon determinism.

psychological capabilities of persons – that is, their evolutionary and developmentally acquired capabilities of acting within the relational and linguistic practices, including practices of reasoning, extant in their worldly contexts and experiences.[2]

Not surprisingly, philosophers like Dennett and Searle defer to evolutionary and developmental theorists and researchers to instantiate scientifically verified and plausible details of the evolutionary and developmental accounts they assume with respect to the origins of persons as self-determining agents. In recent years, a number of social, developmental psychologists have taken up the enormously complex task of documenting relevant aspects of the ontogenetic development of persons as self-determining agents (e.g., Barresi, 1999, in press; Bickhard, 2004, 2008; Falmagne, 2004; Harré, 1998; Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004; Tomasello, 1999, 2008). Such accounts tend to converge on the central idea of persons as "social developmental emergents" (Bickhard, 2008, p. 36). For Bickhard (2008), persons are constituted developmentally "in and of a social/cultural emergent level of reality. Human society and persons coconstitute each other, both developmentally and occurrently" (p. 36). Following suit, Martin, Sugarman, and Hickinbottom

[2]Note that acting on the basis of reasons often involves reasoning about what would occur if a given course of action were or were not taken. In this way, anticipated, possible consequences of particular actions and non-actions enter into the reasoning that is the basis for acting. Determinism is the basis for much reasoning and human agency because it is by reasoning about the determinants of behavior that humans become their own agents. We know that stimuli determine our behavior, and so we hide desirable and distracting stimuli when we want to avoid interruption. Yet, even when we misunderstand the determinants, these misunderstandings still feed into our actions. What is thought might happen becomes a determinant of what does happen because people are reacting to and reasoning about possible futures.

(2010), define persons as "embodied, reasoning, and moral agents with self-consciousness and self-understanding, as well as social and psychological identity, who have unique capabilities of language-use, and are distinctively culture-capable" (p. 273). Moreover, in common with Dennett (2003) and Bickhard (2008) "these various defining characteristics and capabilities of persons are emergent within the worldly activity of biological human beings embedded in, and interactively coordinating with others and objects in, the biophysical and sociocultural contexts that make up their life world" (Martin, et al., p. 274).[3]

However, despite broad agreement that human agency can emerge out of deterministic processes, it remains unclear exactly how this emergence might occur. In the present article, we articulate a recently developed neo-Meadian approach to the ontogenetic emergence of persons as self-determining agents that is directly relevant to the kinds of theorizing just considered. This is an approach based on the social-psychological theorizing of George Herbert Mead during the early part of the twentieth century (Mead, 1932, 1934, 1938), and extended during the past few years by each of us, working mostly independently (Gillespie, 2005; 2006a, 2006b, in press; Martin 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, in press). What we understand as unique to Mead's approach and our extension of it are two features of direct relevance to

[3]The concept of emergence employed herein is simultaneously an ontological and epistemological one that connotes the arising of new forms of being and knowing enabled by more basic levels of being and knowing. Beyond this general definition, any particular instance of emergence calls for a more detailed explication of particular levels and kinds of being and knowing and how they inter-relate to create new forms of being and knowing. Our concern herein is to provide just such an explication of the ontogenetic emergence of the self-determined agency of developing persons.

human agency understood as the self-determination of persons. First, despite some contentions to the contrary, this is an approach that explains the emergence of both selfhood and agency in ways that do not assume the prior existence of either or both selfhood or agentive capability. Secondly, this approach offers a reasonably detailed account of a specific developmental trajectory that explains how participation in social acts and practices results in more abstracted, psychological capabilities of perspective taking and perspectival consideration and reasoning that are among the most important conditions for agentive, self-determining persons.

We begin with a brief recapitulation of Mead's ideas concerning social acts, perspectives, self-other interactivity, differentiation, and conscious understanding. We then move on to the main part of our paper in which we bring together ideas that each of us has written about independently into a more integrated, complete account of the ontogenetic development of human agency as the self-determination of persons. We conclude with some general remarks about our work in relation to other developmental accounts and the larger project of theorizing and empirically supporting a compatibilist rendering of human agency as the "determined" self-determination of persons.

Mead's Perspectival Social Psychology of Selfhood and Human Agency

George Herbert Mead (1932, 1934, 1938) developed an approach to the social psychological development of persons as agents that emphasized the holistic acting of persons within their biophysical and sociocultural world. In both phylogeny and ontogeny, it is the activity and interactivity of persons in the world that drives evolutionary and developmental processes through which biological

human beings emerge as social persons with social and psychological identity, rational and moral agency, and complex capabilities and understandings of perspective coordination, culture capability, language, and self-determination. Throughout our lives, we act towards, and in relation to objects and other persons based on our cumulative history of direct, practical experience with them. The perceptions and perspectives with which we orient to the world, and use as a basis for coordinating our worldly activity, are a consequence of this cumulative history. It is by learning to coordinate our activity and interactivity with the actions and perspectives of others that we develop as psychological beings with self-understanding, and purposeful, agentive capability.

All organisms are in a perspectival relation to their environment (Mead, 1932). Mead describes how grass is food in relation to the stomach of the cow, how places reverberate with the smell of recent goings on in relation to the finely tuned olfactory capability of a dog, and how a wooden table is food in relation to the woodworm. In each such case, the organism is not only in a perspectival relation to the world, but, trapped in such a relation. The cow cannot see the grass as anything but food. Humans, on the other hand, are at the intersection of more perspectives and accordingly are more able to distanciate from any one perspective. Indeed, humans, are unique in the extent to which they can distanciate from any one perspectival relation to the world, and this, Mead argues, is the basis of human agency.

According to Mead, humans live in a temporally and spatially extended environment. For Mead (1927, p. 170), the locus of reality is in the manipulatory

area, or in immediate activity. While many non-human animals are relatively trapped in their immediate activity, responding reflexively to stimuli within their situation, humans, Mead argued, live in a larger environment. When in any given situation, humans are aware of other spaces and times. Spaces beyond the immediate zone of perception are real for us and can motivate action. Thus, within any particular situation, human beings can be motivated by the perspectives of others. Moreover, recalled pasts and imagined futures are woven into our perception of immediately present situations such that we can act not on the basis of what is, but on the basis of what might be, or even, what might happen if we don't act a certain way. It is, according to Mead, by inhabiting this extended environment, in which other perspectives, other situations, and other times permeate the present, that humans find their agency. It is only within such an extended environment that self-determining choices become possible.

The concept of emergence takes on a very particular meaning within Mead's scheme. While objects in the world might have relatively stable properties or aspects in relation to a given perspective, when two perspectives intersect emergence can ensue. For example, a cup of coffee is usually part of a perspective oriented to mental stimulation, but, if one is working outside on a windy day, then, the cup of coffee can emerge as a paper-weight. Within human interaction, which entails the interaction of perspectives, emergence is relatively common. Farmers may neither like nor want their crops of potatoes, but they do not throw them away. The farmer sees the crop of potatoes from the perspective of potential buyers as desirable and is thus able to cultivate what he or she does want for personal

consumption. In the relation between the farmer and the buyer, the potatoes emerge as valuable. Finally, selves are also emergent in this general sense.

According to Mead, our sense of self emerges through interaction. In particular, our sense of self emerges out of the relevancy that our actions have from the perspectives of others. To become a self, for Mead, entails becoming other to oneself. Mead argues that as we come to see ourselves from the perspective of other organisms we distanciate from ourselves and become self-reflective selves. Seeing ourselves from the perspectives of others means that we can act toward ourselves as if we were an other. In the same way that we might ask another a question, give a command, or issue praise, so by taking the perspective of the other, we can act in this way toward ourselves. Significant symbols are, for Mead (1922), the entwining of both the perspective of self and other into a single meaning (Gillespie, 2009; see also Vygotsky's concept of the sign, as discussed in Zittoun, Gillespie, Cornish, & Psaltis, 2007). The word 'give,' for example, is a significant symbol that combines the perspective of giving and getting. In a similar way, the word 'run' conjures both the feeling of running and the image of someone else running. By virtue of associating disparate perspectives within a social act, significant symbols enable the movement of thought between perspectives within the given social act.

Mead brings together his theorization of agency and emergence to analyze how we deal with a problematic situation. Mead (1903, p. 101-102) describes how in the process of thinking through a problem there is a "kaleidoscopic flash" of alternative possibilities, alternative pasts and futures, and alternative social perspectives. Our minds move between the perspectives within the social problem,

supported by significant symbols. In thinking, we are, he argues, seeking to combine and integrate perspectives so as to generate the emergence of a new idea or new course of action that will get us out of the problematic situation. Thus, it is not only the ability to think through a situation in terms of various perspectives, but also the ability to integrate and coordinate them such that new relevancies emerge, that are central to a Meadian conception of agency.

So far, we have detailed what agency is from a Meadian perspective. But, how do humans manage to distanciate from their immediate situation? How do possibilities that may never materialize become active within a given situation? How are humans able to see a given situation from the perspective of others? And how are these diverse perspectives brought into coordinated inter-relation such that creative emergence and thus agency might ensue?

Of particular importance, Mead (1932, 1934, 1938) held that it is only by acting toward ourselves as others do (that is, learning to react to our own actions as others have reacted and do react) that we recognize and understand ourselves as objects and authors of our own activity. As we learn to coordinate our acting with the acting of others, we differentiate and develop our selves and our abilities to self-determine. Eventually, we not only understand the perspectives (i.e., action orientations and possibilities) of numerous particular others, but also those perspectives explicit and implicit within the broader, more generalized social, cultural practices in which we are immersed and participate from birth. For Mead, the psychological lives of persons are forged in infancy and early childhood interactions with caregivers, in childhood play and games (especially those

involving the coordination of positions, roles, and perspectives within phases of coordinated, cooperative activities), and in the gradually expanding vortex of social interactivity and intersubjectivity that comprises and fuels our ontogenetic development.

Mead maintains that social psychological phenomena such as meaning, mind, and self emerge within individual and collective interactions and coordinations nested and structured within social practices and conventions. Both our individual psychologies and our sociocultural practices and institutions are in a state of continuous, conditional interaction within which both are constantly emergent. Because the world consists of individual and collective perspectives ("The perspective is the world in its relationship to the individual and the individual in his relationship to the world" – Mead, 1938, p. 115), it is through taking and coordinating perspectives that are available within our worldly interactions with others that we develop psychologically as selves and agents. Thus, mind, selfhood, and agency are "not initially there at birth, but arise in the process of social experience and activity […] in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process" (Mead, 1934, p. 135). Mead's basic claim is that the mechanism for the development of self-consciousness and selfhood is "the individual becoming an object to himself by taking the attitudes [perspectives] of other individuals toward himself within an organized setting of social relationships" (1934, p. 255).

Following Mead, Gillespie (2005, 2006, 2009, in press) and Martin (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, in press) recently have attempted to clarify how the emergence of

self-consciousness and self-determination during ontogenesis involves the simultaneous positioning within, taking of, and coordination of multiple perspectives (defined as orientations to situations with respect to acting within them) within conventional sequences of social interaction and practices. From these more recent writings, it is possible to extract a distinctive neo-Meadian theory of the ontogenesis of human agency.

The Emergence of Selfhood, Perspective Coordination, and Agency

The neo-Meadian theorizing of Gillespie (2005, 2006, in press) and Martin (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, in press) asserts that it is the positioning and interactivity of the developing individual with others and objects within conventional social practices and processes containing different perspectives that fuels the emergence of selfhood, psychological forms of perspective taking, and agentive self-determination. Such emergence is a very gradual process. Perspective taking is not so much an ability that emerges, but rather an understanding of the social world that grows gradually. The processes that we describe are social, interactional, and institutional supports that scaffold and guide this gradual emergence, coaxing it on to ever more abstract forms. The developmental pathway envisioned in this work is depicted in Figure 1, and consists of a graduated movement from social positioning within concrete, physical, here-and-now exchanges and practices to imaginative, abstracted, and psychological forms of perspective coordination and self-determination, which may be spatially and temporally removed from the current situation and circumstances of the developing human agent. It is this gradual achievement of spatio-temporal distantiation from the pressing immediacy of

current circumstances that places the actor within an expanded matrix of actual and imaginal perspectives and possibilities, at the intersections of which agentive activity emerges. Thus, the six points depicted in Figure 1 are not stages, because they never are left behind, but instead cumulate as continuing scaffold for further developmental emergence. Moreover, this is a developmental pathway that is simultaneously personal and public, cognitive and social. It is an interactive pathway that supports an unfolding pattern of being and knowing that envelops persons interacting within their biophysical and sociocultural world in graduated ways supportive of increasingly complex forms of perspective taking, distanciation from immediate situations, and thus agency.

Insert Figure 1 about here.

Physical and Perceptual Interaction, with Assisted Tactile Exchange (Tactile Experience and Perceptual Recovery)

The worldly interactivity of the neonate and infant already exhibits basic features that signal very initial forms of agentive possibility. Through orienting and reorienting to objects and others, especially the faces of caregivers (Trevarthan, 1982, 1992), the infant achieves an early kind of perceptual recovery, as when mother's face or breast are "lost" and then relocated (initially with the assistance of mother). The close, tactile contact between caregiver and infant also provides a responsive interactivity within which caregivers interpret the movements of infants and react in culturally sanctioned ways, such as when mother presents the breast

contingent on the whimpers and mouthing's of her baby. Such tactile interactivity itself is surprisingly multifaceted and ripe with developmental potential, as it involves the infant in a complex of touching and being touched by both another person and objects such as clothing and furnishings. Although initially scaffolded by the physical support of caregivers, the child quickly takes greater initiative with respect to re-orienting to, signaling to, and reaching out for others and objects. Such early interactions are multi-sensory and display a mixture of assistance and infant-initiation. Together, they initiate the infant into a world that both supports and resists her actions, and offers an immediate, concrete basis for connecting her movements to the actions of others and the realities of objects. It is these very early forms of interactivity that seed possibilities for increasingly complex and participatory forms of worldly coordination with objects and others.

Nonetheless, even at this beginning of the journey along the path to agentive capability, at least three agency-relevant features of the child's experience should be remarked. Through the perceptual recovery of others and objects, the infant begins to differentiate between things that are susceptible to such recovery (e.g., mother, assuming she remains perceptually available) versus things that are not (e.g., a bird flying past a window), and becomes pre-reflectively attuned to the possibility of its own initiation of such recovery (Russell, 1996, 1999). Through others' responses to what they interpret as the infant's signals for attention, nurturance, and interest, the infant experiences sensory connections between others' movements and actions and his activities (Bigelow, 1999). And, finally, through varieties of physical contact and touch, the infant senses differences among his own body, the bodies of others,

and objects of varying degrees of resistance and manipulative possibility (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Rochat & Hespos, 1997; Rochat & Striano, 2002). In all of these ways, during early infancy, the physical interactivity and tactile exchanges of the baby within the biophysical and sociocultural world yield a sense of immediate presence as a distinct bodily object and locus of action and sensation in the world. It is this basic experiential sense of relational being that allows the infant increasingly to position itself with others and objects in a world of ongoing interactivity.

Assisted Position Exchange With Others and Objects within Routine Interactions (Situated Remembrance and Anticipation; Basic Position Recovery)

As mentioned earlier, Mead (1934, 1938) understood the emergence of psychological being (meaning, mind, and self) as occurring within interactions and coordinations embedded within social practices. As the infant gains mobility and a sense of her own body and immediate experience in interaction with others and objects, she occupies and alternates among various positions within conventional social interactions. Her transactions within the world become coordinated within such routine social practices as holding and being held, giving and receiving objects, following and initiating actions, chasing and escaping from others, looking at and looking away (e.g., peek-a-boo), being fed and feeding, being given and giving, hiding and seeking, and a myriad of other interactions involving repetitive sequences of alternative, related positionings (Gillespie, 2006; Martin, 2006). In all of these interactions, the child (with the assistance, as needed, of more experienced others) coordinates her actions with those of others, learning to respond appropriately to, and eventually to initiate sequences of interactivity with which she has become

familiar. For example, when a ball is rolled to the young child, she learns to stop it and roll it back. When Daddy feeds her, she may take the spoon and feed Daddy. She also adopts and learns to alternate routine positions in common childhood games such as peek-a-boo and hide-and-seek.

Through being positioned, and positioning herself, within different phases of routine sociocultural practices such as these, the young child comes to associate particular action tendencies and possibilities with particular phases and locations of conventionalized interactivity. She gradually comes to recall and anticipate being in positions interactively related to, but different from the positions she actually is occupying. When the child is able to imagine being and acting in one position (e.g., hiding), while actually being and acting in another, related position (e.g., seeking), she effectively engages in an early form of pre-reflective, situation-bound perspective taking. She literally occupies one set of action possibilities, while anticipating occupying a related set of action possibilities (Martin, Sokol, & Elfers, 2008). In an important sense, the relations between the two sets of action possibilities (i.e., the two perspectives) is one of partial co-constitution. In other words, each set of action possibilities partially comprises the other, as when the seeking child considers and imagines possible hiding places based on past experiences when hiding. Such basic embodied, embedded, and enactive forms of repetitive, conventionalized, and coordinated interactivity provide concrete, relatively immediate experience in being in more than one perspective or action framework at more or less the same time. The awareness of actions, habits, memories, and anticipations associated with a given situation while occupying and

acting in a related situation is the hallmark of coordinated position exchange and pre-reflective perspective taking. During this segment of the developmental highway toward full-blown agentive capability, the young child already has achieved a modicum of spatiotemporal distance from his current action and location, at least to the extent that in acting appropriately within particular situations he is reaching forward in anticipation of what is immediately likely to follow.

Position Exchange with Assisted Role Exchange Within Practices (Self-Other Differentiation; Imitative Coordination; Action 'Consequenting')

As the developing child begins to use language, she is able to hear herself more or less as others hear her, and according to Mead (1934, 1938) is able not only to act toward herself as others do and have done by recalling and anticipating positions within routine sequences of interactivity such as those described above, but she also is able to act toward her own articulations as others do and have done. The ability to act towards self as if self is another is a byproduct of significant symbols. As described above, Mead (1922) theorized language in terms of the association and coordination of otherwise disparate perspectives within a social act, As such, language (or significant symbols) enables the movement at a psychological level between different perspectives within the given social act. In beginning to respond to herself as both an object and a subject, the child not only furthers the differentiation of himself from others, but also enables a growing separation of action possibilities and orientations from actual positions within sequences of interactivity. Such possibilities and positions now contain both positional-relational and linguistic-symbolic aspects and coordinations. In this way, the developing agent

begins to move toward more psychological orientations and perspectives that may be less closely tied to specific positions within interactive sequences. Such developmental accomplishments and distinctions are reflected in the child's shift from informally structured positional play to more formally structured participation in games with multiple, coordinated roles[4] (Mead, 1934, 1938). More generally, the child is now able to participate in role exchanges, where roles are informed by the broader sociocultural context. Whereas position exchanges involve movement within more or less immediate, here-and-now situations and practices, role exchanges require movement across positions defined by roles, expectations, and normative cultural practices. Since roles derive their meaning from their embeddedness within sociocultural rules and practices, they go well beyond the immediate situations in which role plays are enacted, and may be facilitated greatly by verbal and performative coaching by other, more experienced interactors.

Thus, frequently with the assistance of others (peers, parents, other adults), the child who participates in role exchanges begins to enter into more abstracted, rule-governed social practices that reflect vocational, economic, political, and personal traditions of living extant in her broader communities. Childhood games like "cops and robbers" are early examples, but so too are children's re-enactments

[4] Social positions refer to actual locations within fields of activity. Each social position entails a distinctive social situation that frames the associated perspective. In addition each social position entails related social positions that co-constitute each other (e.g., buyer-seller, giving-getting, speaking-listening, etc.). Social roles, on the other hand, refer more to the expectations and norms associated with more institutionalized social positions (i.e., mother, father, doctor, teacher, bus driver roles)

of multi-character narratives made popular through children's stories and films. In these and many other more-and-less immediate interactions, children not only coordinate their own actions with the positions and actions of other actual and imagined characters, but do so according to shared, sometimes verbalized understandings of relevant social functions, responsibilities, expectations, and social-psychological features that accompany and define specific ways of acting and experiencing characteristic of the social roles being enacted.

In addition to enhancing self-other differentiation, the more spatiotemporally abstracted understandings and imaginings that now enter into the child's coordination of perspectives and action possibilities enables an additional separation between actual and anticipated consequences. With increased experience in enacting particular aspects and features of various social roles, and not enacting others, children begin to experience and consider actual and possible consequences of their role-related actions within a broader, more abstracted system of social practices and coordinations that define the life of their communities. Events that do not occur inform the child's social understanding, just as do events that occur. The developing child is still unable to articulate most such "dawning awarenesses." However, greater differentiation of self from others, an increased appreciation of more abstracted social-psychological features and characteristics of actions and actors, and the ability to imagine the possible consequences of actions all prepare the child for a much more psychological form of perspective taking and coordination.

<u>Position/Role Exchange with Reflective Perspective Taking/Coordination</u>

(Simultaneity of Perspectives; Differentiation of Persons; Doing things with Words)

The child's development of distinctly psychological (in the sense of spatiotemporally distanciated) forms of perspective taking and coordination has been studied extensively by Robert Selman (1973, 1980) who also has been influenced greatly by the ideas of Mead (1932, 1934, 1938) concerning the social, interactive bases of perspective taking and coordination. Recently, Martin, Sokol, and Elfers (2008) have provided a neo-Meadian interpretation of Selman's (1973, 1980) theory of perspective taking in terms of what they term, "reflective intersubjectivity." Following and adapting Selman (1973, 1980), Martin et al.'s focus is on children's coordination of their own perspectives with those of others, a developmental process that involves the child taking up multiple perspectives simultaneously, recognizing and differentiating others as persons with perspectives other than their own, and using their developing linguistic capabilities to communicate these capabilities, recognitions, and differentiations to others. It is in these ways that perspective taking and coordination are accomplished independently of physical and physically-supported position and role exchange – a significant advance in the development of persons as psychological beings and agents.

More specifically, the child's graduated participation in the forms of reflective intersubjectivity that yield more psychological forms of perspective taking and coordination begins with the child interacting with others as distinctive individuals, a mode of interaction enabled by the self-other differentiations accomplished through experience within the position and role exchanges previously described. At

first, the child's own action orientiations (perspectives) predominate such interactions, with little apparent consideration of the others' perspectives. However, gradually the child comes to coordinate with others not only as distinctive individuals, but also as individuals who hold perspectives, social understandings, and interests different from the child's. Such a shift may be recognized in the child's attempts to convince others of the relative advantages of adopting the child's own, preferred ways of playing or interacting rather than alternatives apparently favored by relevant others. Still later, the use of such basic forms of negotiating is eclipsed by more fully intersubjective forms of coordination that demonstrate an understanding and willingness to coordinate and negotiate with distinctive others who not only have their own perspectives and interests, but are also aware of some of the ways in which these might differ from those of the child. A typical indication of such reflective recognition of perspectival reciprocation occurs when the older child's interactions display negotiations and coordinations that take into consideration the way in which the child is regarded by others – e.g., including apologies for possibly offending others. Obviously, such exchanges rely greatly on the child's acquisition of more complex, indexical and narrative forms of language to refer to events and occurrences in the here-and-now, and to make inferences from such events and occurrences, in combination with the child's now enhanced forms of social experience and understanding, some of which refer to imagined psychological and future possibilities that are imaginatively stimulated by and abstracted from the current situation.

Nonetheless, even with the abilities to differentiate others as psychological

beings who are coordinating their perspectives with those of the child, to consider a number of perspectives and possibilities simultaneously, and to do things with language that go well beyond the immediate confines of interactive situations, the older child typically still is unable to generalize and imaginatively coordinate perspectives and possibilities from relevant third person, societal perspectives that might be employed to position the child's particular interactive and intersubjective coordinations with others within potentially relevant, broader social networks and conventions. Appeal to such broader, socially sanctioned systems and the collaborative forms of deliberation and collective problem solving they make possible are important developmental milestones yet to come.

Imaginative Coordination and Generalization of Perspectives and Possibilities (Generation and Evaluation of Possibilities; Deliberate Planning and Problem Solving)

The final accomplishments that typify fully reflective intersubjectivity according to Martin et al. (2008) go beyond the intersubjectivity of interacting individuals to encompass third-person and societal perspectives that are used to mediate impasses in interpersonal negotiations and problem solving. Examples include children's interpretation of rules of a game to resolve disputes that arise in team competitions, or children's discussions of whether or not what has occurred to occasion disruption in their conversations and activities falls within acceptable bounds of larger group and social conventions. At more advanced levels, adolescents' problematic interactions with each other may be explicitly subjected to relevant social conventions and perspectives drawn from networks of societal

practices, institutionalized values, and ideological commitments. Such attempted coordinations and resolutions involve positioning adolescents' own self-understandings and those of their interlocutors within these larger social networks. Increasingly, the action tendencies, perspectives, and interests of individuals are consolidated in terms of distinctive individual identities capable of acknowledging alternative identities, commitments, and ideologies of other individuals and groups. With the aid of a wide variety of supplements to direct interactivity and intersubjectivity, some of which can be found in symbolic resources (Gillespie & Zittoun, 2010; Zittoun, Duveen, Gillespie, Ivinson & Psaltis, 2003) such as novels, films, on-line materials, and so forth, an increasingly abstracted set of perspectives associated with diverse traditions and ways of life[5] may be examined for possible ways of proceeding in joint, communal endeavors, especially as problems and difficulties arise that occasion disagreement and block progress.

At this point in the development of individual and collective agency, adolescents are immersed in a matrix of perspectives that they use purposefully to generate possibilities for enacting projects and plans that they associate with their individual and communal identities. Narrative structures and content derived from many sources may be drawn upon to integrate and coordinate spatially and

[5] It is inherent in the nature of a narrative (fiction, film, TV, novels, life stories etc) that there is an interaction of perspectives. The protagonists see the world differently, are aware of different things, and the interaction between those awarenesses is a large part of the narrative. Accordingly, we could say that stories support perspective cultivation and integration. For example, think of a story such as little red riding hood. The movement of the story oscillates between the perspective of little red riding hood and the wolf – differentiating the perspectives, and also encouraging the child to see the situation from both points of view.

temporally distant perspectives to envision possibilities and form plans in the pursuit of what are rightfully regarded as important life projects. In these ways, stories, films, histories, and imaginings create a vortex of past and future consideration and anticipation in the present that enable the deliberately agentive activity of individuals in planning, charting, and creating their own futures through deliberatively coordinated, communal forms of agency that involve goal-directed, problem-embedded perspective and possibility formulation, and jointly coordinated, agentive interactivity.

For Mead (1934), the resolution of interpersonal, social conflict always requires reconstruction of both selves and societies, as theorized in Mead's perspectival approach to self development within the social process. Since the agentive self always responds to those social perspectives in which it has been forged, it always retains the possibility of agentive critique. The close relationship between the Meadian self and the social process means that explicit social criticism always entails implicit self-criticism and vice versa. For Mead, "social reconstruction and self or personality reconstruction are the two sides of a single process – the process of human social evolution" (Mead, 1934, p. 309). As persons and developing persons, human beings are embedded in an ongoing flux of perspectives that flows from and can be used to guide their worldly interactivity. As social beings, persons are constituted within their perspectival interactivity. In choosing, acting upon, and realizing possibilities for action and interaction that emerge at the interfaces of multiple perspectives, human agents continuously are involved in the ongoing creation of themselves and their societies. As adolescents and young adults imaginatively coordinate, frame, and generalize perspectives and possibilities through

deliberate planning and problem solving with others, they come to realize their potential as agents capable of transforming themselves and their world.

Rational and Moral Engagement With Others (Acting for Reasons, and with Consideration and Justification)

The realization of transformative potential through engagement in individual and collective problem solving that makes use of imagination and rational planning not only depends on sophisticated forms of spatiotemporal distanciation and consideration, but also brings into focus requirements for the exercise of moral agency. Given that many personal and social perspectives are deeply embedded within socioculural traditions and ideologies, when individuals engage with each other across such divides, they necessarily invoke communicative ideas, at least implicitly and often explicitly, as guides, constraints, and possibilities in their pursuit of broad levels of consensus building and communal problem solving. Such considerations are steeped in ethical and moral reasoning about such matters as equitable access to communicative resources, time, and authority. Even if formalized procedures and rules are eschewed in favor of pragmatic appeals to encourage the emergence of creativity that might result in novel approaches to context-specific challenges and conditions, individual participants must somehow maintain productive engagement with others that requires an openness to the possible advantages and disadvantages of a wide range of plausible perspectives.

At this advanced point in the development of the perspective taking and coordination that enable rational and moral agency, individuals must distance themselves from available perspectives and systems that have proven unworkable

so that a hypothetical space is opened up for the communal creation of new forms of consideration and action. To be able to act within such situations, individuals necessarily must use whatever rational and moral traditions are available to them through their own experiences and interactions with others, even as they recognize the need to go beyond these resources to create new possibilities for engagement and problem solving. It is the ability to remain committed and engaged within such contexts of ambiguity, uncertainty, and emotional upheaval that marks the exercise of an agentive personhood that is simultaneously connected to, yet transcends its more spatiotemporally constricted antecedent forms. Such capability is a graduated consequence of the developmental journey we have attempted briefly to describe here. Our neo-Meadian account began with the physical placement and assisted positioning of infants within basic and routine sequences of interactivity with others, charted the gradual emergence of less temporally and contextually constrained forms of perspective taking from earlier interactions involving position and role exchange, and achieved increasingly abstracted and sophisticated forms of rational and moral agency assisted by the spatiotemporal bridging and integration supplied by imaginative planning, open-ended problem solving, and cooperative engagement and creativity in the face of challenges not amenable to extant traditions of living and existing perspectival systems. The development of personhood through this developmental trajectory involved a gradual differentiation of self and others as psychological beings with first-person perspectives and experiences, together with capabilities of reason and moral concern that permit the critical consideration of a variety of immediate and more

distant perspectives and possibilities in choosing, planning, and coordinating perspectives and actions in difficult, challenging circumstances. Along the way, physical assistance, coaching, narratives, and moral systems came into play as increasingly complex sociocultural supports for the advancement of more and more complex forms of perspective taking, coordination, and distantiation[6] removed from the immediate situation, yet always connected to challenges and impasses located therein.

Consistent with the ideas of George Herbert Mead (1932, 1934, 1938), we have attempted to describe the emergence of both selfhood and agency in relation to the interactivity of individuals with others within a world that is simultaneously biophysical and sociocultural, and to do so in ways that do not assume the prior existence of either selfhood or agentive capability. We also have tried to retain Mead's emphasis on social acts and practices, even at more advanced levels[7] of the development of spatiotemporally flexible capabilities of imaginative planning and creative problem solving. In our opinion, it is this consistent emphasis on the dynamic, coordinating interactivity that constantly restructures persons within

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[6] The relation between the social and the psychological is not static – it develops with the development of the individual. As the individual becomes more independent of the environment, then they participate in more complex social processes, which further support the process of distanciation and decentration.

[7] Position exchange in a broad sense is a uniting thread. Initially it manifests as touching and being touched, the reversibility of that basic action begins the process of differentiating the self out of the social world. Then, there are classic social acts – such as children's games and interactive routines. And, at more complex levels there are narratives, complex feats of organization, and moral dilemmas – each of which entails people shifting between perspectives and integrating them.

their societies that is the center-piece of Mead's social psychology of human agency.

Concluding Considerations

Several past interpretations of Mead's rendering of the emergence of selfhood and agency have expressed concern that Mead's account assumes the selfhood and agency that it claims to explain. Such concerns (e.g., Frie, 1997; Vessey, 1998) assume that the primary developmental mechanism operative in Mead's developmental theorizing is not perspective taking and coordination, but internalization – "it could never be the process of internalization which functions as the origin of mind for the power of internalization depends on there being already a reflexive relation to oneself" (Vessey, 1998, p. 6). However, the neo-Meadian approach to the development of human agency described herein does away with the requirement of a pre-existing "internalizer" who already has a sense of herself and others as subjects with distinctive perspectives. By explaining how more psychological forms of perspective taking arise within more basic physical and social processes of position and role exchange, perspective taking itself is provided with an emergent developmental history, one that is continuously interactive with a graduated differentiation of self from others and objects. In our opinion, the developmental sequences of position and role exchange we have described preclude any necessity of positing psychological forms of internalization as the prime movers of self-other differentiation, perspective taking and coordination, or the spatiotemporal distantiation basic to agentive capability.

Not only does the developmental primacy of position and role exchange in our account do away with any necessity of assuming pre-existent capabilities of

internalization or a pre-existing internalizer, it also replaces the pivotal role given to imitation in many contemporary developmental approaches, even those that in many other ways display a preference for theorizing about coordinated activity and interactivity (e.g., Hobson, 2002; Tomasello, 2008). The problem we see with imitation accounts already has been reflected in our response to Vessey's (1998) concerns with internalization accounts. If the act of imitation is accepted as a basis for the acquisition of some of most basic ways of acting in the world, human infants must already be capable of imitation – that is, they must be innate imitators[8]. We do not doubt that human infants may very well display innate tendencies to orient to others, perhaps particularly to the faces of others, as Trevarthan (1982, 1992) insists. However, rather than assuming the much "richer" innateness of the self-other differentiation and spatiotemporal sequencing that imitation requires, we believe that a more parsimonious, less speculative position is available if we assume that imitation emerges developmentally from infants' assisted participation in simple, repetitive sequences of interactivity within which they observe simple actions of others (smiles, nods, etc.) and are encouraged and assisted by others to follow their observations of such actions with similar actions of their own. Such early sequences of interactivity amount to very initial exchanges between the positions of "leader" and "follower," and imitation as a more generalized form of "following the actions of others" may be seen to emerge developmentally through such initial infant interactivity. What we hope to have accomplished with these brief

[8] For a useful critique of imitation as a basis for our earliest actions in the world as infants, see Anisfeld (1996).

considerations of how position and role exchanges can developmentally anchor the emergence of more complex forms of imitation and internalization, is an important facet of what we regard as the relative theoretical superiority of our neo-Meadian account when compared to more currently popular cognitive, theory of mind accounts (also, see Carpendale & Lewis, 1996). Through understanding positioning and exchange within coordinated interactivity with others (initially scaffolded by the direct, physical assistance of caregivers and others) as a developmental basis for more complex social-psychological processes such as imitation, self-other differentiation, perspective taking, and internalization, we are able to reduce the number of assumptions concerning innate, pre-given, and pre-existent capabilities that infants must have to engage productively in a world that is, developmentally speaking, biophysical and sociocultural before it is fully psychological. In Mead's (1977) own words, "A self can arise only where there is a social process within which this self has had its initiation. It arises within that process" (p. 42). What we have tried to do is to chart a developmental pathway within this social process that describes and explains how the coordinated interactivity of the infant, child, adolescent, and adult constitutes a gradually emergent unfolding of agentive personhood.

With respect to long-standing debates between determinism and agency understood as free-will, our position is that contemporary theorizing and research concerning the developmental emergence of persons in ontogeny is up to the task of explaining the emergence of self-determining agents with the suite of rational and moral capabilities typically attributed to persons. These are capabilities of

remembrance, anticipation, role and perspective exchange, intersubjectivity, social understanding, planning, problem solving, and concerned engagement with others that enable persons to act in the world in ways that warrant ascriptions of responsibility for their decisions and actions. If it is assumed that the determination of persons must include their own capabilities of self-determination, a viable rendering of the developmental emergence of such agentive capabilities should replace traditional impasses that have set agency and determinism in irreconcilable opposition. In offering our neo-Meadian theory of the ontogenetic emergence of agentive personhood, we have attempted to theorize the self-determination of persons as a developmental process that emerges within a determined biophysical and sociocultural world as a trajectory of chronologically ordered, increasingly complex, and spatiotemporally distantiated interactivities through which the developing individual coordinates with particular and generalized others and their perspectives.

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Figure Caption

Figure 1: The social scaffolding of progressive psychological distanciation in the development of human agency (self-determination)