

2 Narrative and the Emergence of a Consciousness of Self

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In this chapter I explore the hypothesis of a new level of consciousness that emerges in early childhood together with a new sense of self situated in time and in multiple social realities. It is proposed that this level is made possible by human communicative discourse, specifically linguistic and especially narrative. Essential parts of this proposal are the constructs of developing systems, emerging levels, the expansion of the child's consciousness, and the concurrent related sense of self in the social world.

The Problem of Conscious Awareness and the Consciousness of Self

In developmental psychology the issue of conscious awareness has not been successfully addressed. Issues of cognitive development have been approached from the perspective of positing internal mechanisms that can explain changes in behavior with age. The phenomenology of the individual and the experiential perspective of the child, which are essential to the issue of conscious awareness, have been systematically ignored. It is my belief that this is a prime weakness in explanations of early developmental change in such currently puzzling areas as theory of mind and self-and-other understanding. Taking the perspective of the child's experience in the world is, I think, essential to understanding these developments. Such an approach takes us beyond the simplistic assumptions of the mind as a well-formed information-processing system unchanging in development to an awareness of radical change in both structure and function of mind over developmental time, influenced throughout by

uniquely human capacities for affiliation, communication, social relations, cultural conventions, and linguistic genres. This understanding and approach to the problem are supported by new emphases on the importance of postnatal neurological development and organization that last into the childhood years.

The standard epistemic model of cognitive development, which rests on the conception of a fully finished brain equipped at birth with the mechanisms for constructing theories to explain the world and solve logical problems, can no longer be accepted. (Note that this was not Piaget's epistemic model; rather, modern cognitive development in rejecting stages and structural change has implicitly incorporated these assumptions.) In place of the epistemic or theory-constructing child I propose to substitute the *experiential child*. The child in this view is not seeking truth or a coherent explanation of the world (at least not at the outset) but understanding of phenomena relevant to his or her own experience of events in a particular circumscribed world, which includes the people and objects significant within those events. In this framework, I believe it is possible not only to address the problem of the development of consciousness but also to make headway toward its explication, if not its solution.

The approach I am taking is broadly compatible with that of nonlinear dynamic systems theories that have come to prominence in developmental psychology since the 1980s, but with a provenance that reaches back to earlier systems principles established by Bertalanffy (1968). Experimental designs and mathematical analyses that could handle complex interplays among sets of variables that operated in dynamic systems have been proposed by a number of advocates of this approach (Thelen & Smith, 1998; van Geert, 1998). Like others who applaud the systems idea in the abstract, I recognize that it is often difficult to apply in the concrete world of experimental science, especially in an area as ill-defined as consciousness is at the present time. Because of the nature of the problem, a systems approach to the development of consciousness is necessarily conceptual.

Yet a radical shift in perspective is gained by turning from the search for the single unique cause of some development to recognizing that we are dealing with an *ongoing self-organizing developing system*, within which small changes in some variables may affect the organization of the system in important ways, which sometimes result in the emergence of a new variable or a new level of behavior or cognition. Variable pathways to a common end point, and variable end points from a common starting point, such as are observed in cognitive domains, are important indications of developing systems. The concept of *emergent levels*, a construct that appears necessary to the explanation of developing biological systems, becomes understandable within this conceptual framework, and its importance can be given due weight (see MacWhinney, 1998, for examples in the area of language).

Lacking the construct of emergence, it appears that the child must *begin with* the materials and the tools by which to construct, or to change, concepts,

beliefs, the knowledge base, logic, or theory (or whatever structure seems appropriate to the discourse). Interaction between organism and environment—Piaget's (1970) solution—has come to seem inadequate to the complexity and abstractness that contemporary researchers have identified as the necessary mental basis for the infant's and child's behaviors. Internalization—posited by both Piaget and Vygotsky—has come into question as being both vacuous and too dependent on external knowledge sources for current cognitive theories.

It is my belief that the principles, if not the empirical practices, of systems thinking will help us to move beyond these origin-seeking dead ends and the innatist origins to which they seem to point (see Gottlieb, 1997). In particular, to take the insights of both Piaget and Vygotsky (1963) into account in modeling development in a social, linguistic, cultural, communicative world, it is essential to see the individual child as a self-organizing intelligent system that incorporates and responds to varied sources of information and challenge. The metaphor of *making sense* captures the process of succeeding levels and spirals of knowing within different domains, each with vertical positive feedback effects and horizontal reverberations across the system as a whole.

The image is not so much of bootstrapping as of ratcheting up; each new level of understanding reached reveals new sources of knowledge and evokes a new effort at organization within and across domains. An analogy can be invoked with the acquisition of succeeding levels of visual perspective made possible with the achievement of new levels of locomotion, with first sitting up, then crawling (new vistas appear), then cruising (again, new perspectives on old scenes and newly viewed objects), then walking freely (no longer tied to secure supports). The world was there all along, but the view from the infant's eyes was constrained by locomotor possibilities and thus the sources of knowledge of the physical world were only gradually made accessible (see Adolph, 1997; Campos, Bertenthal, & Kermoian, 1992). The analogy can be both applied and extended to the knowledge that is available at each step of the sequence. The crawling child has knowledge of the room at a 16" distance from the floor but has only a fleeting view of anything higher, thus has no reliable memory/knowledge of levels above. But the existence of supporting structures in view provides the motivation for boosting the self to the cruising level, where such knowledge is accessible and where it can scaffold further excursions to new boundaries, which again makes new views and subsequent knowledge of the scene available.

Problem of Consciousness

How can we address the problem of consciousness, then, within the framework of the experiential child? The sketch of the growing awareness of the world

available as succeeding stages of locomotion are achieved suggests an accompanying awareness of the possibilities of self-movement within the world. Such awareness in all likelihood is no different in kind from the awareness of other primates and, indeed, of other mammals. That is, it is awareness of self-movement in the world and of aspects of the world previously encountered or similar to other encounters. The same may be said of awareness of other people and their movements.

Many researchers agree that a new level of conscious awareness, call it social awareness or social consciousness, ensues when the infant is about nine months old and develops further over the next three or four months (Tommasello, 1995). This level is characterized by the onset of joint attention between adult and child. The infant follows the adult's gaze to fix attention on what the adult is looking at, follows the adult's use of a finger-point to direct attention, and begins to use finger-pointing on his or her own in the expectation that the adult will attend to the infant's target. These developments appear crucial to the onset of word learning and further language development. Some observers consider this level of social awareness to be uniquely human and uniquely suited to establishing communication in language.

Yet at this point in development infants do not even pass the mirror recognition test, which suggests a limited level of self-awareness. In the mirror recognition test a mark is surreptitiously placed on the child's nose or forehead and the question is whether the child, seeing his or her image in a mirror, will attempt to touch or rub out the mark visible there on own face (passing) or on the mirror image (failing). In tests with other primates, chimpanzees typically pass this test, although monkeys do not. Thus children below the age of about 18 months appear not yet to have reached the level of self-awareness exhibited by (adult) chimpanzees.

Many people, however, believe that when children pass the mirror test they have reached an important milestone that indicates a level of self-consciousness, which is also evidenced in symptoms of shyness, embarrassment, and shame. Howe and Courage (1993) believe on the basis of this and other evidence that the 2-year-old has achieved a "cognitive self," a characterization that implies an objective sense of self, an object that can be represented mentally and thought about. Is this then the onset of or the maturation of a characteristic level of human consciousness or is there more to be described and explained?

In the experiential view put forth here this level of self-awareness, while a real achievement in comparison with the earlier, more limited, social awareness, is only another ratcheting up toward a new view of self, other, and the world, equivalent perhaps, in the earlier analogy to the stage of cruising with support. Indeed the metaphor of cruising with support during the preschool years seems particularly apt. In the case of consciousness the support is pro-

vided by parents, peers, and other adults who, using language, provide a verbal support for children to explore their experience in a new way, with new perspectives borrowed from those offered by others. With these introductory remarks we reach the central part of this essay on the role of narrative in the emergence of consciousness, and in the following sections I consider this issue from the point of view of levels of representation, which rather nicely fit the levels of social and self-awareness sketched thus far and extend to the levels not yet reached.

Beginnings of Narrative

The origins of narrative in human life and its implications for human conscious awareness have been considered from several perspectives in the psychological, anthropological, and developmental literatures. As already noted, the idea of origins is elusive at best within a systems framework where new levels of competences, skills, or knowledge systems may emerge over time from the recombination of earlier appearing elements. Some of the contrasting views of narrative emphasize the point.

Bruner (1990) has written persuasively about the importance of narrative in human lives, and the beginnings of narrative in the life of the child. In the course of this discussion he implicated an innate disposition to narrativize events and to impose meaning on people's actions, to attribute mental states, that is, to have a theory of mind. Bruner views this general claim as a radical turn away from the computational mind of contemporary cognitive science by emphasizing human meaning making as the essential cognitive characteristic of the species.

But we may ask: Why innate? The implicit answer accepted by a number of social-cultural theorists seems to be that there is no *identifiable origin or source* for how children of two or three years come to interpret others' intentions, to form canonical scripts, to understand and compose stories of their own. Thus it seems to Bruner and others that there must be a disposition that is built into the human mind, ready to be triggered by the social world, in infancy or at latest when language becomes available. There is surely something to this story, but it leaves us hanging. What is the nature of this disposition? Is it located somewhere in the brain? How did it get there? Is there an evolutionary story to be told about this? And for those of us who resist the proliferation of innate *content* knowledge, an innate theory of mind or narrative frame does not seem much preferable to an innate language of thought. But what is the alternative?

Building on the evolutionary story proposed by Merlin Donald (1991), I have adopted the idea of *levels* of representation that compose the hybrid mod-

ern adult mind. (I will explicate this at greater length in following sections.) Here let me note that Donald's third tier of memory or representation emerged with the language capacity to form narratives, a capacity that is tied also to the formation of large social groups and cultural complexes (see also Dunbar, 1993). Narratives emerge as *social forms*, which include explanatory myths, among other genres that support the coherence and cohesiveness of the community. In this framework narrative making is a specifically human characteristic. However, it is *not an individual capacity* but a social-cultural one. It results from a long historical process of the development of social communicative skills at different levels (motoric and linguistic) and of concurrent development of group construction of communities. These are complex system developments that go beyond individual participants, wherein narrative emerges as an *explanatory format* of the cultural group. Carrithers (1991) provides a similar explanatory framework, which situates story within the complex of social institutions that are essential to human culture, although he does not provide the same evolutionary dynamic that Donald's theory does.

Hendriks-Jansen (1996) goes further within a systems framework of individual development, wherein he sees the infant embedded in and surrounded by cultural narratives, narratives that underlie the ways that parents view their roles and the role of the child within the family and larger community. The child then "grows into" these narratives; our contemporary cultural narratives and myths serve in this way, just as those of other eras and places do. There is no special need for the child to be innately disposed to make stories, although of course among the human potentials that develop in the early years of life must be those that make it possible to enter into and adopt others' stories as one's own. These potentials are revealed in the study of how young children adapt in their social worlds.

Examining what we know about the development of narrative making by parents and young children, I am led inexorably to a systems view compatible with those of Donald, Carrithers, and Hendriks-Jansen. Moreover, it is a developmental view that sets narrative not aside as some kind of special individual human gift but as part and parcel of the wide-ranging developments that take place during the critical years when the child can enter fully into the linguistic world but is not yet a participant in formal schooling. These developments include awareness of self and other, of the wider world beyond self, of past and future; in traditional cognitive developmental terms, they include theory of mind, perspective taking, autobiographical memory, and self-concept. This view then suggests the close connection between narrative and the emergence of a specifically human level of consciousness. It is possible, I believe, to draw these connections more tightly.

Hybrid Levels

The idea of levels of knowing is not novel in cognitive psychology; it is found in notions of implicit and explicit learning, of implicit and explicit memory, and of episodic and semantic memory, among other cognitive domains. In evolutionary epistemology (Campbell, 1974/1982; Oakley, 1983; Plotkin, 1982) the idea is elaborated further. Not all of these theorists are speaking to the same issues. For example, Campbell attempts to conceptualize all levels of knowledge in terms of a Darwinian evolutionary model of generate-select-replicate, although the selective forces differ at different levels. In contrast, Plotkin views different forms of knowledge gathering and storing as emerging at different points in evolutionary history, with evolution "handing on" the knowledge-gaining-and-preserving process from genes to learning at later points that involves more complex organisms.

Donald's model is related to Plotkin's, but he sees the sequence differently. He starts from the general primate level of cognition, which he views as "episodic." The point here is that the nonhuman primate is tied to the *here-and-now individual experiential level* of memory. Albeit living in a social community, individual primates at this level do not learn significantly from one another (according to Tomasello [1990] they engage in emulation, not true imitation). They do not call up memory at will, but rather memory is evoked by environmental conditions. The specifics of this description may not hold up as we learn more about primate group living, but we may accept the general picture. The state Donald described for the nonhuman primate is not unlike the cognitive state of the human infant, who, however, is more helpless and more dependent upon adult caretakers than other primate infants (and dramatically more so than adult primates for whom the description is meant to apply). In addition, the human child is surrounded from birth by cultural artifacts and linguistic discourse, which makes any analogy from primate to human infant somewhat questionable. For example, it was noted earlier that chimpanzees typically pass the mirror recognition test, while it is not until 2 years of age that most toddlers have passed it.

Donald projects a novel emergent level of learning, knowing, communicating, and transforming representations within the evolutionary history of hominids, namely, the level that he calls *mimesis* or mimetic representation. This level began with the capacity for motoric imitation and for self-cued memory and carried the hominid line far in the direction toward symbolization, by enabling the learning and practice of skills, recall and recombination of motoric activities, the use of motor gestures as shared communicative forms, and the capacity for both synchronous and complementary roles in activities. Donald sees this as a necessary preliminary stage to that of language itself.

The next transition to symbolic language, with the central function of narrative making, emerged only with *Homo sapiens* about thirty-five thousand years ago and was accompanied by a rapid acceleration of cultural growth. (The date for modern human morphology is well established, although controversy rages about the exact dating of different levels of speech and language evolution.) The growing capacity for rapid speech processing during this period of evolution made possible the much broader communication of information within a community of language users. The social-cultural function of speech and its primary product at this point, narrative, contributed to the cohesive and coherent structure of the group. We can project a newly emerging *cultural consciousness* on this basis, incorporating within it a new consciousness of time contained within narrative.

Finally, with the invention of written language forms in historical times the knowledge-spreading possibilities became infinitely greater, across civilizations and aeons of time, with repercussions for individuals in terms of storing knowledge not in individual minds but in external forms that can be consulted as prosthetic memory and representation devices. According to Donald's theory, it is only in this most recent stage that logic and scientific theorizing have been or could have been developed. Thus, in this theory, narrative precedes and perhaps structures theorizing and logic making.

In many ways Donald's theory dovetails rather nicely with the early stages of cognitive and linguistic development in human infancy and early childhood (as suggested in Nelson [1996]). What I would like to emphasize here is a point that applies to both the evolutionary and developmental versions of the levels hypothesis: that the different levels of knowing and remembering each continue to exist for individual knowers as one kind emerges from another. Event representations and mimetic representations both support and are independent of linguistic representations. These earlier levels may be changed in function and form as they interact with other levels and as each succeeding level takes on some of the functions previously served by a preceding one.

The eventual emergent adult mind is, in Donald's terms, *hybrid*, a layered construction of different ways of learning, communicating, and problem solving via different representational types. It is easily demonstrated both informally and through empirical research that humans employ all of these representational modes, simultaneously or as complementary sources of information. The hybrid mind is capable of representing simultaneous composites in everyday life or in attending to performances such as the opera, where visual scenes, action, music, and language all combine to produce a singular effect. Of course one may selectively attend to a single level, a practice called concentration, whether on text or tennis, where distractions from other representational modalities are screened out of awareness.

Setting the Stage for Narrative in Childhood

I turn now to the central question addressed in this chapter: the relation of narrative, self, and consciousness as they emerge in the life of the child. As Bruner (1990) has emphasized, one can conceive of narrative as incorporating two dimensions—in his terms the *landscape of action* and the *landscape of consciousness*. The former landscape is equivalent to the event sequence in Labov and Waletzky's (1967) analysis of narrative and the latter to their idea of the importance of evaluation in the narrative. One can also distinguish along similar lines between plot and the motivations that inspire and devolve from the actions within the plot. Other similar divisions have been made in the narrative literature. However, the divisions are not neat; plot involves motivations and assessments of actions; evaluations may be revealed in the language used to describe the action as well as in a summing up of its meaning. But for our purpose we can think of the landscape of action as the sequencing of actions to make a coherent and cohesive event. And we can think of the landscape of consciousness as the revealing of the mental states of the actors that are associated with the action, including their goals, their perspectives, their beliefs, their emotions, and so on.

In addition to these two understandings, Carrithers (1991) has claimed that understanding a cultural narrative requires knowledge of the culture's institutions, history, and social organization (one could add its geography and numerous other cultural knowledge aspects). Further, time enters as essential to narrative understanding not only in terms of the order of events—its sequencing—but also in terms of the location of the event itself in social-cultural or individual time. These are all basic to the foundation of the simplest narratives of self and other, as well as to the culture's myths and stories, from *Cinderella* or *The Cat in the Hat* to *Oedipus Rex*. When and how do these constituents become part of the child's understanding of the world, and when and how might they come together to establish the beginnings of narrative competence? And how, if at all, do they bear on the emergence of a new level of consciousness or self-understanding?

We have good evidence that children can understand and represent the sequence of familiar repeated events, which involves several related actions, by 1 year of age. They understand the scripts of their own worlds, in terms of general event representation, and will protest if an action is omitted. Experimental evidence (e.g., Bauer & Mandler, 1990) has shown that at about one year children can remember brief sequences of novel events (two or three actions) over several days. By 3 years of age they can verbalize a number of familiar scripts in reliable sequence (Nelson & Gruendel, 1981). These event representations derived from personal experience then may form the basis for the *canonical events* from which narratives are made; they are not themselves

real narratives but only event sequences. They are the way things are and should be, but thereby no explanation or evaluation is expected or required. Thus at some time between 1 and 3 years of age we can assume that the basics of the *landscape of action* are understood, although the specifics of temporal location and perspective remain in doubt. The relation of this level of event knowledge, based on direct experience, to the level of knowledge about events relayed only through language is an area that is little understood but that may provide an important key to understanding language and cognition, in both development and evolution.

How the landscape of consciousness enters into the child's representations and narratives is much more obscure than the landscape of action. When in the course of infancy and childhood children become cognizant of intentionality, that is, of their own and others' mental states, is a topic that has been studied intensely over the past 15 years under the rubric of children's "theory of mind." Some theorists (e.g., Trevarthen, 1980) claim that infants have the same capacity as anyone to express and interpret emotions and goals of others. Others (e.g., Tomasello, 1995) see a turning point at 9 months, when infants begin to tune in to another's attentional state and to share attention, thus becoming launched into the world of interpreting others' actions in terms of their mental states. Still others (e.g., Gopnik & Meltzoff, 1996) view the child as operating with a primitive kind of theory of mind from birth and engaging in a series of reconstructions over the next four years until a mature theory that matches that of the cultural environment is in place. However, there is room for skepticism regarding the degree to which young children are reading other people's minds rather than their behavior, as well as the extent to which children are aware of their own mental states (Nelson, 1996). Such awareness would seem to mark a new level of consciousness beyond the social and self levels of the earlier periods, described previously.

Other mechanisms have been proposed to explain an emerging awareness of mind on the part of the child, but to review them all would take us beyond our present concerns. What seems important is that the infant is embedded in a social world from the outset of extrauterine life, and the evidence indicates that there is a slow awakening over the succeeding years to the perspectives of other people. This evidence, briefly summarized earlier, is considered here in relation to the development of narrative understanding. The shared attention that Tomasello notes at 9 months (and that he sees as a critical causal mechanism of specifically human cognition) is an indication that the infant is newly aware of a class of social signals (gazing, pointing) to which he or she was previously indifferent. Other evidence of growing *awareness of sharing the world of others* follows closely: intentional babble and then first words modeled on adult forms; games with reciprocal roles; primitive kinds of symbolic play modeled after the adult's real or play actions; and attempts to take on the adult's

role in bathing and feeding, for examples. These are all primitive forms of intersubjectivity and provide the necessary basis for the interpretation and acquisition of language, but they remain on the *level of action*. They appear as good evidence of an *emerging* level of mimesis, as described by Donald. Mimesis enables learning to produce forms modeled by others and form an internalized model so that it may be recalled (mentally or in action) and used for future productions, transformations, and recombinations. These abilities do not require taking a perspective on events that is not one's own and that is not confined to the here and now of present activity.

Although the research on memory, categorization, and language use from 1 to 2 years of age indicates growing abilities in these cognitive functions, there is also persuasive evidence (Nelson, 1989) that for the child of 2 years the only *temporal differentiation* is that of the present activity and everything else that has been entered into memory as a representation of the experienced world. These "temporally unfixed" representations may consist of sequences of events, of people and their routines, or of places and their associated objects. Others may be less organized, consisting of scraps of this and that, the kind of thing we all have noodling around in our heads, recognizable when encountered but not part of our easily accessible world knowledge or episodic memory. An important part of this claim is that the young child's view is *singular*—there is only one perspective on the world, his or her own. There is only one reality, that of the directly experienced world (Nelson, 1999). This is a very difficult perspective for us as adults to take, given our multiply experienced and representational worldviews. It is, however, essential to understanding how a different level of conscious awareness may emerge as narratives of the social and cultural community become accessible to the child.

The Emergence of Narrative in Childhood

The description just offered, based on my best reading of the developmental literature, implies that at 2 years of age the child has only a few of the rudiments that enter into narrative, mainly the landscape of action, the child's own perspective on canonical events. Lacking are temporal perspective and location, the cultural background of events not one's own, awareness of the internal states that motivate action, and the capacity for understanding the "trouble" in events that requires interpretation and problem solving (although children themselves of course experience motivations of desire, love, sadness, happiness, anger, and so on, and recognize the symptoms of these in intimate others); understanding remains on the level of action. During this early developmental period language is being learned and used but is not yet a *vehicle for conveying the representation of narrative* either from the child him- or herself

or from another to the child so that the child can represent the representation in his or her own mental space. These moves require further development of the rudiments of narrative as well as their integration into a whole genre. Children's first narrative productions occur in action, in episodes of symbolic play by groups of peers, accompanied by—rather than solely through—language. Play is an important developmental source of narrative, through which children may become accustomed to transforming scripts into narratives with semiplots, plots that present “trouble” but unfold in real time without prior planning. The landscape of consciousness may also emerge dramatically in play in the form of expression of emotion and differing perspectives on the same action.

The most studied sources of children's grasp of narrative structure are conventional stories (read or told) and personal narratives told around, to, or with young children. Miller (Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra, Mintz, 1990) has documented the extensive exposure of very young children in low-income families to the narratives of adults with adults about their personal lives, as well as about the children's experiences. Engel (1986), Fivush (1994), Hudson (1990), and others have documented the ways in which parents and children construct narratives of past experiences that they have shared, emphasizing the different styles of talking in these accounts from more elaborative and narrative to more repetitive. The researchers have found that children move from contributing one or two bits of information about an experience to more equal co-construction of the narrative about it. Yet, as Fivush has emphasized, throughout the preschool years the vast majority of the evaluative comments or information contributed comes from the parent, not from the child. This accords with studies of children's story productions during the same period (2½ to 5 years) that show that when asked to tell a “made up story,” many children produce what looks like a script, without either motivation or problem, or may insert some anomalous element into the “story” without otherwise altering it (Seidman, Nelson, & Gruendel, 1986). When given practice in storytelling, however, children tend to settle on a familiar gender-specific format (Nicolopoulou & Weintraub, 1998). In many ways, then, throughout the preschool period children seem to remain focused on the landscape of action even as a narrativelike genre is emerging in the form of the ability to sequence episodes based on experience or on other people's relatings.

Three essential components of narrative discussed previously remain weak or nonexistent in most of the narrative productions of the 3- to 5-year-old preschooler: temporal perspective, the mental as well as physical perspective of self and of different others, and essential cultural knowledge of the unexperienced world. It is these aspects, not the simple sequencing of episodic events, that incorporate the power of narrative for both personal and cultural growth. How then do the skeletal kinds of emerging narrative skills lead into the fuller and more enriching and “humanizing” aspects of the mature genre,

in the process establishing a new consciousness of self, of others, and of self in time, place, and society? An *emerging new conscious awareness of self and world*, like narrative itself, is neither an either/or thing nor dependent upon one causal element in the developmental scheme, but evidence suggests that experience with forms of narrative contributes importantly to this new level of consciousness.

A possible alternative to the role of narrative is children's achievement of a theory of mind, an achievement that has been measured primarily in terms of understanding that beliefs (one's own and others') can be false and that typically is found at about four and one-half years of age. This understanding is important to comprehension of many narratives from real life as well as from fiction, which raises the question of the direction of the causal relations. Preceding this achievement (as standardly measured), naturalistic home-based family studies show that children are attuned to other people's states of ignorance, their emotions and desires, and will demonstrate understanding that other people's likes and desires may be different from the child's own (e.g., Dunn, 1988). Such observations indicate a gradually emerging understanding of different perspectives on the world of experience, perspectives that are revealed especially in narrative discourse and that are not discernible in actions alone. It appears that narrative and theory of mind are intimately intertwined in development.

Then and Now, Self and Other

One of the most striking inferences to be made about the cognitive status of the very young child is his or her isolation from other times and others' worlds of experience. By "other times" I mean the time of the specific past and the envisioned future beyond the now of the present activity space. It is not that the child is not aware of the not-now; the implication is that for the child there are but two temporal spaces—the present and the nonpresent. As for experiences other than one's own, when action is the only realm of communication and representation these are necessarily blocked out. Piaget calls this egocentrism, but it is an egocentrism that simply lacks perspective because there is no possible alternative view but one's own. There are no insights into another's life because there is no vehicle except shared actions through which experience can be shared. The claim here is that shared experiential narratives are the symbolic vehicles, available only to humans, through which such insights are gained, including the important insight that the other has a past and a present that differ from one's own, as well as the accompanying insight that one's own past is unique to oneself.

This last-named important insight rests on the critical role of contrast in

establishing conceptual awareness. The point here is a variation on the developmental process of differentiation and subsequent integration posited by Werner (1957). A state of consciousness of self-as-actor in activities shared with others does not require an awareness of self with a unique status, unless and until it is represented as differentiated from the others' experience of the activities. Only then can the child view the self as having a specific experiential history that is different from others and thus a specific personal past and possible specific future. When this conceptual contrast is made between self and other it opens up a new level of conscious awareness beyond the locked-in *self-in-the-now world* that began in infancy and expanded in only limited ways in the subsequent two or three years. To the extent that this analysis is right these are indeed profound developmental changes.

Let me examine these interrelated propositions more closely by sketching how this widening of temporal, social, and cultural-spatial perspective might proceed in the context of narrative experience. Consider a very simple example of a 2-year-old looking at photographs with his mother. This example is part of one from Nelson (1996, pp. 166–167; original data from Engel's 1986 study of mother-child talk about the past):

- C: Mommy, the Chrysler Building.
 M: The Chrysler Building?
 C: The Chrysler Building?
 M: Yeah, who works in the Chrysler Building?
 C: Daddy.
 M: Do you ever go there?
 C: Yes, I see the Chrysler Building/picture of the Chrysler Building.
 M: I don't know if we have a picture of the Chrysler Building. Do we?
 C: We went to . . . my Daddy went to work.
 M: Remember when we went to visit daddy? Went in the elevator, way way up in the building so we could look down from the big window?
 C: big window.
 M: mmhm
 C: (pause) When . . . we did go on the big building . . .
 C: mmhm, the big building. Was that fun? Would you like to do it again? Sometime.
 C: I want to go on the big building.

In this example Mother was bringing out pictures of past events (visiting grandmother, etc.) and attempting to get the child to talk about these "memories," without much success. Something in the situation, however, evoked in the child a memory of an expedition and he said, "Mommy, the Chrysler Build-

ing." Mother responds that they don't have a picture of the Chrysler Building but reminds him of the trip they took to the Chrysler Building. She then puts the events in order (plot), including the scraps proffered by the child (e.g., "Daddy"), and gives it an evaluation (fun). She also suggests they might do it again in the future. She has made it into a specific event, a narrative, with a high point and an evaluation. True, it lacks much in the way of intentionality and repeats the child's own experience, rather than providing a new event or point of view, but it makes a whole of the bits and pieces and sets the child's vaguely offered remembrance into a specific episode.

This kind of recalling provides a narrative structure for the child's own remembered past. In my study of crib monologues (Nelson, 1989) I found that Emily at 2½ years had begun to master the forms for recalling the experience of a day past in a narrative format. Even earlier Emily had begun to verbally repeat parts of routines on the format of "what will happen tomorrow." The landscape of action to fit narrative has begun to emerge by this age, at least for many children. It is notable that it emerges, at least as far as the evidence thus far indicates, with respect to the child's own experience, which is forecast and rehearsed with him or her by parents. These stories are not, however, located in any specific past. The not-now begins to be filled with specific semiplots, but they are not ordered among themselves.

These semiplot episodic reports have given rise to the claims that children of 2 years have autobiographical memory or, at the least, that they have episodic memories (Howe & Courage, 1993). Other evidence, however, documented particularly by Miller and colleagues (1990), has shown that children of 2 to 4 years often "appropriate" someone else's story as their own. Miller provides observations of appropriation by a child from a parent's account. For example, one small boy who was told by his mother in a cautionary way about having fallen off a stool when she was young retold this story later as his "when I fell off the stool." Miller also reports children in preschool freely appropriating another child's story as their own. These cases provide suggestive evidence that children's stories may be undifferentiated as to whose stories they are, that is, whose experiences they are. The conclusion follows that these verbal retellings are not personal or autobiographical, because they are not differentiated from a nonspecific past and a social generalized world. They are stories based on the child's life experiences, but they are no more personal than are any other stories.

But don't young children know the difference between their own experience and others'? Don't we all know whether something happened to ourselves or to someone else? There are many indications that children do not and that, indeed, we adults need to work hard to make this distinction. False memories provide the most dramatic evidence. Recent research indicates that children will report some quite outlandish events as having happened to them

if they have been given narratives about these events or even hints of narratives (Ceci & Bruck, 1993). Piaget (1968) reported a vivid memory of his own from early childhood, of a dramatic event that never happened. In this case he "remembered" his nursemaid "rescuing" him from an attempted kidnapping when he was less than 3 years of age, only to find out as an adolescent that the story had been made up by the nurse to impress his parents. His "memory," which he retained throughout life, included many specific details of the visual scene that never happened. How can this be?

Note that all the material noted here with which children work or on which adults rely comes from a verbal source. Narrative is the vehicle of communicating representations of events between people by verbal means. By Donald's theory and by the developmental account being set out here, the verbal-narrative representation is on a different level from the direct-experience-activity level. The verbal level becomes newly activated as the child becomes able to engage in narrativizing with others. But then what was first an actively experienced episode by the child has been turned into a verbal report, and verbally reported and exchanged narratives accumulate to form a store of stories, some mine, some yours, at first not differentiated as to source.

At some point then, it becomes important to differentiate mine from yours and, in so doing, to establish that there are different perspectives on the world, different specific pasts, and different specific futures. An example of this movement comes from Emily's monologues at 32 months (Nelson, 1996, p. 198). Here Emily reports an episode from her father, who cannot run in a marathon although he wants to, and she puzzles about why that is.

Today Daddy went, trying to get into the race but the people said no so he, he has to watch it on television. I don't know why that is, maybe 'cause there's too many people. I think that's why, why he couldn't go in it. . . . So he has to watch it on television . . . on Halloween day, then he can run a race and I can watch him. I wish I could watch him. But they said no no no. Daddy Daddy Daddy! . . . No no, no no. Have to watch on television. But on Halloween Day he can run, run a race. Tomorrow (he'll) run (???) He says yes. Hooray! My mom and dad and a man says "you can run in the footrace," and I said "that's nice of you. I want to." So next week I'm going to . . . run to the footrace and, and run in the footrace 'cause they said I could.

Emily's life has begun to expand beyond her own experience and into a world that she does not know and cannot predict or explain. Yet she still lives primarily in the here and now of her own understood routines. There is a growing awareness that not only do other people have feelings and thoughts like one's own, but also these feelings and thoughts may be different from one's own. Indeed, it is this *contrast* (as suggested previously) that makes one's

own feelings and thoughts visible and conceptualizable as such to oneself. Then the consciousness of self emerges as a unique entity, as a specific person different from other persons, with a continuity from babyhood to adulthood. Then the child can lay claim to his or her own stories and mark them with the markers of "I did that at that time" or "it happened to me." Other people's stories belong to them and not to oneself, and these stories can be seen as based on different intentionalities and different subjectivities.

Conclusion

A new level of consciousness emerges in the early childhood years that is based on the differentiation of the self-awareness of the early years and the self-and-other awareness of the transition period. The first is consciousness of the here and now, informed by previous experience but without conscious reflection on that experience. The strong hypothesis that emerges from this perspective is that the new level of consciousness is dependent upon language used to exchange views of self and other, primarily through narratives but also through commentary on the self by others, as well as on their own feelings, thoughts, and expectations of what might happen (Nelson, 1993). This new kind of consciousness is a different kind of *self-consciousness* that brings the self into the observed world where others have been playing out their roles in the child's view of the experiential world. This is James's or Mead's *ME* rather than the Experiencing *I* (Nelson, 2001). The *I* of the transition period can be self-aware and therefore bashful and embarrassed but is not yet capable of both acting and observing at the same time. Perhaps this sketchily presented development (see Nelson, 1997, 2001), with such profound implications, seems too weighty to place on the vehicle of narrative. Yet it is worth the effort to see how far such a proposal can take us in understanding the early development of self, language, and cultural consciousness.

In brief, the account here is that narrative emerges from and belongs to the community, but in the individual lives of children it is a vehicle through which consciousness of both self and the wider social and temporal world becomes manifest and gradually emerges as a new subjective level of conscious awareness, with a sense of a specific past and awareness of a possible future, as well as with new insight into the consciousness of other people.

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