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THE RELATIONAL ORIGINS OF MORALITY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

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Any theory of moral development depends upon the conception of morality that informs it. In what follows, we elaborate a relationalist approach to morality and moral development. We begin by examining how different approaches in moral psychology have their origins in different conceptions of morality. We then outline a moral relationalist conception of morality. From this viewpoint, moral values are neither universal reflections of a biological, social, or spiritual world, nor are they relativistic creations of particular cultures or social groups or individuals. Instead, moral values and beliefs are emergent properties of *relational experience*. A moral framework is a *symbolic* system of *strong evaluation* that has its *origins in relations between people* and is *justified with reference to diverse goods that arise within intersubjective experience*.

From a moral relationalist perspective, morality is not a fixed or objective structure that exists independent of human experience; instead, that which we call "morality" is an embodied relational *process*. It is the continuously-evolving evaluative dimension of *relational action itself* (Bidell, this volume; Kitchener, 1991; Piaget, 1965/1995; DeVries, 1977). Consequently, there is nothing to point to outside of the relational experience as an ultimate moral standard. Instead, as an aspect of our *being-in-the-world*, morality evolves as people seek to solve social problems over time. Moral rules and standards are justified discursively with reference to different moral goods that arise within intersubjective experience. As a result, *moral conflict* becomes the rule rather than the exception in social life. Moral relationalism holds out the possibility that moral conflicts within, between and among people can be reconciled, resolved or transcended over time through the developmental differentiation and dialectical integration of opposing values over time.

In offering a constructive approach to moral conflict, moral relationalism offers an alternative to universalist (Kohlberg, 1981, 1984; O'Manique, 1990), relativist (Lukes, 2008), or even pluralistic (Graham et al., in press) conceptions of morality. Moral universalism maintains that moral acts or principles are constant across time and place. Unlike moral universalism or absolutism, moral relationalism acknowledges the existence of meaningful differences among diverse moral frameworks. Moral relativism maintains that the moral legitimacy of an action or rule can vary as a product of cultural context or conceptual framework. From the standpoint of relativism, different moral systems can arise from opposing principles that are both equally valid and incommensurable with each other. It follows that a thoroughgoing relativism has no clear way to resolve

moral conflict: moral deliberation ceases where incommensurability begins. In contrast, from a relationalist framework, moral conflict marks the initiation rather than the termination of moral discourse (Mascolo & Kallio, 2020; Graham et al., in press-a). Moral relationalism suggests the possibility of genuine *moral progress*—that is, the possibility that new moral conceptions can evolve and develop as parties seek novel ways to resolve and transcend moral conflict through deep engagement and the dialectical integration of opposites (Basseches & Mascolo, 2010).

In what follows, having articulated the moral relationalist framework, we then outline a relationalist approach to the empirical study of moral development. In so doing, we examine empirical research that addresses (a) the *processes* through which strong evaluations (i.e., moral values and standards) emerge, function and develop both between and within individuals; (b) how strong evaluations *mediate* patterns of thinking, feeling, and action in individuals and communities; and (c) how individual patterns of moral thinking, feeling and action undergo *developmental transformation* within social activity over time. We illustrate the discursive construction of novel moral possibilities through a dialectical analysis of a narrative description involving the transformation of a white supremacist (Mascolo, 2017). We conclude with a statement of how a relationalist approach to morality illustrates and builds upon an understanding of psychology as an intersubjective human science.

The Concept of Morality in Moral Developmental Psychology

As shown in Figure 16.1, the study of moral development has a long history, embracing a variety of different conceptions of morality. In their groundbreaking study of honesty in children, Hartshorne and May (1928) argued that moral action depended more on differences in *situations* than in differences in of the *qualities* of the children themselves. Their study helped lead to a long-standing rejection of the idea that moral life was organized around traditional notions of *virtue* and stable moral *character*. Instead, their study helped to usher in the *socialization* perspective in moral development—the idea that the development of morality is a process tied to particular situations and the internalization of local values. The conception of moral development as the socialization of local norms is expressed in current literature in the form of literature on moral socialization, conscience (Kochanska, Koenig, Barry, & Kim Yoon, 2010; Thompson, 2014), and the development of moral emotions (Dahl, Campos, & Witherington, 2011; Malti & Dys, 2015).

In his structural-developmental approach, Piaget (Piaget, 1965/1995) offered an alternative conception of moral development based upon Kantian ethics and a relational understanding of social life (Kitchener, 1991). Piaget maintained that what made an action *moral* was its *intent* and not its consequence. This conception motivated research assessing transformations in the structure of moral thinking from a *heteronomous* concern with obedience to the *autonomous* capacity to understand that rules are changeable based upon consensus. For Piaget (1965/1995), moral autonomy has relational origins in social interaction and develops as a product of reflection on the structure of social interaction itself. Carrying forward Piaget's ideas, Kohlberg (Kohlberg, 1984) founded a conception of based upon Kantian and Rawlsian principles of *autonomy, justice,* and *fairness.* Kohlberg argued that moral thinking had its early origins in social and pre-social forms of thinking before moving toward increasingly moral forms of thought based on principles of fairness and justice. While many of the assumptions of Kohlberg's stage theory have been called into question (Gilligan, 1982; Puka, 1994; Turiel, 1983), research assessing developmental changes in socio-moral thinking in a variety of moral, conventional and personal domains continues to flourish (Killen & Rutland, 2011; Narvaez & Lapsley, 2014; Walker, 2014). Structural-developmental theory continues to approach morality largely in terms of principles of *rights, justice, and welfare* (Killen & Nucci, 1999).

Critical analysis of Kohlberg's work also spawned a deep recognition of the importance of *culture* in moral life. In embracing the role of culture in the genesis of moral systems, cultural theorists acknowledge that the moral frameworks embraced in different cultures are organized around
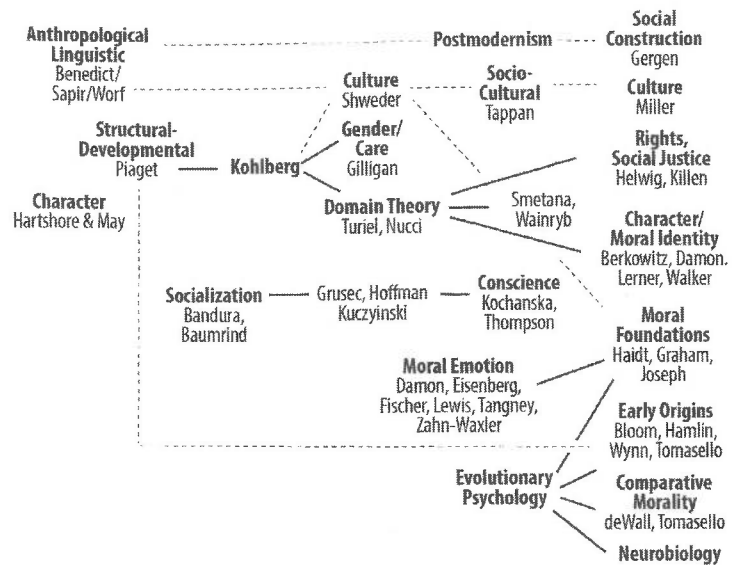
Figure 16.1 The Historical Landscape of Moral Developmental Psychology

different foundational conceptions. Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, and Park (1997) suggested that cultural systems of morality can be organized as a trichotomy depending on the primacy of *autonomy*, *community*, or *divinity* as foundational principles. Anthropologists (Benedict, 1956), cultural theorists (Miller, 2015), and social constructionists (Gergen, 2009; McNamee, 2015) have demonstrated how local variations in moral values arise in discursively mediated interaction.

The Evolutionary Turn

In recent decades, a large literature has amassed around the goal of "naturalizing morality" (Sinnott–Armstrong, 2008; Wilson, 1975). The basic premise is well expressed by Haque (2011) who writes, "experimental approaches within fields as varied as psychology, anthropology, sociology, economics, game theory, neuroscience and evolutionary biology demonstrate that human morality is fully grounded in the natural world and, thus, part of our evolved nature" (p. 151). The aims of the scientific study of morality range from identifying evolutionary foundations of moral capacities (Graham et. al., 2011) through providing knowledge that can inform moral decision making (Flanagan, Sarkissian, & Wong, 2008) to the possibility of justifying moral judgments on empirical or biological grounds (Casebeer, 2003; Rottschaefer, 2000).

In their moral foundations theory, Haidt, Graham, Joseph, and their colleagues (in press; Graham et al., 2011; Haidt & Joseph, 2007) have developed a particularly influential framework for understanding moral development built upon evolutionary foundations. Within this framework, humans are biologically equipped with a series of *moral foundations*—innate intuitions that underlie moral experience, action and development within different contexts and moral communities. Each moral foundation has its origins in a different set of evolutionary adaptations (e.g., attachment and protection for the *care/harm* foundation; reciprocal altruism for *justice/fairness*; group cohesion for *loyalty/betrayal*; efficiency in-group decision making for *authority/subversion*; disgust for *sanctity/degradation*; and resistance to dominance for *liberty/oppression*). While moral intuitions are universally

available to people in all cultures, diversity arises from the ways in which cultures draw upon these intuitions to create different moral systems.

Moral foundations theory, building on cultural theorists, has called attention to the need to extend the range of moral concerns beyond the Western values of individual rights and social welfare (Kesebir & Haidt, 2010). This theory has generated an impressive body of research that links the moral intuitions associated with each proposed "foundation" to differences in political ideology, cultural attitudes, and emotions that mediate moral judgment; cultural systems of moral judgment; attachment styles, and criminal activity. However, consistent with the desire to naturalize morality (Wilson, 1975), some evolutionary theorists (Haque, 2011) maintains that *morality* itself has evolutionary origins and is a property of our biological nature.

Such assertions raise special challenges for the study of morality. What does it mean to say that *morality* is a property of our evolved nature? We suggest that there is nothing problematic in suggesting that *capacities* to make moral judgments build upon evolutionary foundations (Graham et al., 2012), or that forms of symbol-mediated norms can be identified in non-human animals (de Waal, 2010). It is reasonable to assert that descriptions of "what is" have *implications* for judgments of what "should be" (Flanagan et al., 2008). However, there is a deep difference between proposing *evolutionary foundations for the construction of moral systems* and the idea that those moral systems themselves *are a property of our evolved nature*. The first statement speaks to bio-evolutionary foundations for the construction of moral values; the second runs the deep risk of suggesting that *what should be* exists somehow in "nature," and that *what should be* can be determined by scientific observations of *what is*. Such a statement would, of course, commit the naturalistic fallacy of inferring an "ought" from an "is" (Allchin & Werth, 2017; Wilson, Dietrich, & Clark, 2003; Teehan & diCarlo, 2004).[1]

The Relational Framework of Moral Relationalism

In this section we articulate a theory of action and experience from a relationalist point of view, which provides a basis for understanding *moral* action and experience. As we articulate below, this relationalist conception of "experience" departs from those put forth in many of the aforementioned theories of moral development. As a result, it provides a different theoretical starting point for morality and moral development. Specifically, the relational conception maintains that structures of action and experience—moral or otherwise—are *emergent* products of *relations* that occur between and among *biogenetic, personal-psychological, social-relational,* and *cultural-symbolic* processes. From an relational framework, although these levels and processes are *distinct* from each other, they are nonetheless *inseparable* as casual processes in the development of individual psychological structures. The relational approach stands in contrast to (a) nativistic approaches that maintain that core structures of knowledge are innate (Mikhail, 2007; Spelke, 1990; Spelke & Kinzler 2013; Bloom, 2013); (b) conceptions that separate the roles of genes and environment as causal processes in development (Blokland, Mosing, Verweij, & Medland, 2013; Haidt & Joseph, 2004); (c) models that represent human action in terms of fixed or trait-like structures (Sutin, McCrae, & Costa, 2011); or (d) approaches that identify particular processes as primary organizers of psychological functioning, such as cognition (Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 2014), emotion (Hume), language (Han, 2014), evolution (Haques, 2011), biology (Churchland, 2011), social construction (Gergen, 2009) or culture (Mesquita, Boiger, & De Leersnyder, 2016). In what follows, we outline the relational framework and examine how biogenetic, psychological, and cultural concepts are understood within that framework.

Biogenetic Processes

At the *biogenetic* level, humans function as *adaptive organisms* that operate to meet organic needs within particular ecological niches. As biological units, organisms are living systems that regulate

their internal states as a means for adapting to their physical and ecological environments (Di Paolo, Buhrmann & Barandiaran, 2017). Psychological processes arise as higher-order configurations of biological processes that, operating as a whole, exhibit emergent properties (e.g., consciousness, memory, representation, etc.) not found in their base constituents when those constituents function in isolation (Mascolo & Kallio, 2019; Graham et al., in press-a; Richardson & Stephan, 2007). As higher-order biological systems, psychological processes serve adaptive functions (Thompson, 2007). At the most general level, psychological processes allow organisms to operate on the basis of *representations* of their circumstances—both internal and external— rather than on the basis of biophysical stimulation alone. While processes that operate at the biogenetic level bias psychological development, they do not operate independent of processes that occur at psychological and socio-cultural levels of functioning (Lerner & Overton, 2017; Lickliter & Honeycutt, this volume).

The Psychological Individual

At the *psychological* level, psychological processes are *meaning-mediated* operations that function to bring *experience* in line with personal needs, goals, standards, and *concerns* (including moral concerns). By *experience*, we refer to any form of phenomenal awareness, broadly conceived. *Meaning* consists of the *structuring of experience* over time, which occurs in both symbolic and non-symbolic forms (Mascolo, Basseches, & El-Hashem, 2014). A person's actions are composed of multiple meaning-bearing processes that mutually influence each other over time. Among these, the *emotion process* is most basic. Emotions are *felt modes of engaging* the world—*embodied evaluative appraisals* of the relation between a person's motives and her world (Rosaldo, 1983). In any given context, humans appraise the significance of events relative to the full range of a person's motives, desires, and concerns. The bulk of appraisal activity occurs outside of conscious awareness. Non-conscious appraisal processes, however, play a central role in organizing conscious awareness. When non-conscious appraisals register significant changes in one's relation to the world, those appraisals generate *affect*—changes in *feeling* and other *bodily states*. Affective changes thereupon se*lect those same unconsciously evaluated events for conscious awareness* (Lewis, 2001; Mascolo, Li, & Fischer, 2003). In everyday life, while we tend to think that our actions are under conscious control, we fail to see that the capacity for conscious control is always already prefigured to a degree by processes that occur outside of awareness (Freeman, 2000).

As relational beings, persons are embodied and embedded agents (di Paolo & De Jaegher, 2015). As agents, persons—as organized wholes—are able to exert control over their actions. However, persons are not autonomous in their capacity for control. The capacity for control is embodied in relations between conscious and unconscious processes, emotional and representational processes, as well as automatic and deliberative processes. As embedded beings, human action always occurs within contexts which play direct roles in the production of thinking, feeling, and action. Thus, from a relational view, it is not possible to understand individual action by focusing on individual psychological processes, individual persons in isolation, or minds that operate as distinct from bodies and their ecological contexts.

Intersubjectivity Within Social Relations

Social-relational processes involve joint action that occurs between at least two people (Shotter, 2017). At the social-relational level of human functioning, individuals engage each other in *intersubjective, symbol-mediated* interaction. *Intersubjectivity* refers to the capacity to coordinate and share experience and evaluations between people (Bråten & Trevarthen, 2007; Matusov, 1996). The concept of intersubjectivity is central to a relational understanding of persons (Tomasello and

Vaish, 2003). It is through the existing capacity for intersubjectivity that persons are able to gain access into each other's experience and understandings. This proposition is supported by research demonstrating (a) neonatal imitation and emotional contagion (Meltzoff & Brooks, 2007); (b) the ways in which infants and caregivers coordinate their actions and emotional experiences in face-to-face interaction (Martin, Sokol, & Elfers, 2008; Scholl, 2013), and (c) the capacity for empathy and multi-modal emotional modulation between people from early ages (Bråten & Trevarthen, 2007).

The discovery of mirror neurons in the brains of monkeys provides particularly compelling evidence regarding the capacity for intersubjectivity (Gallese, 2005). Mirror neurons fire both when a monkey performs a goal-directed action and when monkeys observe other monkeys performing the same action. The existence of mirror neurons in monkeys suggests the existence of basic brain processes that mediate the coordination of experience between organisms. Through the mirror resonance process, the *sight* of a caregiver's *smile* could evoke the *act and experience* of smiling in the observing child. Over time, the intersubjectively shared state provides the basis for the child's apprehension that actions and experiences of the caregiver are *like me* (Gallese, 2005; Meltzoff & Brooks, 2007). The basic experience of self and other are founded upon such primordial forms of intersubjectivity. More advanced forms of self and social understanding build upon this intersubjective base.

The concept of intersubjectivity provides a basis for resolving long-standing philosophical and psychological questions related to the capacity to gain access to "other minds" (Overgaard, 2006). Contemporary psychology remains strongly influenced by the common belief that what we call "experience" is a kind of private or subjective state that is encased within the minds or interiors of individual persons. If experience were a kind of private state, then any individual's inner experience would by definition be unavailable to other people. Only the experiencer herself would have access to that state or could know for certain what she was experiencing. In the mid-20th century, Wittgenstein (Wittgenstein, 1953/2009) advanced powerful arguments refuting these ideas. Wittgenstein argued that, if human experience were truly "private," it would be impossible to develop *shared language* to refer to those experiences. The situation would be as if each of us had a private box—containing something that might be called a "beetle"—into which only we ourselves could ever look. In such circumstances, without the ability to refer to some sort of *public* criteria to define the meaning of the word "beetle," it would be impossible to determine what, if anything, was inside of each other's boxes. That is, if experiences were truly "private," there would be no way to develop shared ways to refer to those experiences.

However, we do use words to refer to our experience; and public criteria do exist that allow us to coordinate the meaning of experiential terms—namely, the public and bodily expressions of experience (e.g., writhing in pain; sobbing in grief, etc.). For Wittgenstein, the expressions of experience are not behaviors that are merely more-or-less contingent on "inner" experience—they are the public *manifestations* of those experiences. If this is so, then it becomes possible to "read" the experience of others directly from public expressions of those experiences (ter Harke, 1990). Indeed, it is only through reference to such *public* manifestations that communities can develop a common language to refer to experience. It thus follows that the everyday assumption that our experiential life is *a priori* subjective and cut off from others is erroneous. As humans, we are not encased minds that must break into the hidden inner life of others (Carpendale & Racine, 2011). We enter the world with a primordial capacity for intersubjectivity with others. It is upon that intersubjectivty that psychological development builds (Carpendale, this volume).

Cultural-Symbolic Processes

At the level of the *socio-cultural group*, social organization emerges from the ways in which people use available resources (e.g., physical, social, symbolic) within particular ecological and socio-

cultural contexts to create means (e.g., practices, ideas, technologies) for meeting basic (e.g., food, shelter, protection) and emergent (e.g., social identity, career, education) needs. A *culture* consists of a system of symbolically-mediated meanings, values, and practices distributed throughout a given social group (Mascolo, 2004). Of the various forms of symbolism, *sign* systems (i.e., words, language) play a particularly important role in the creation and dissemination of culture. Signs enable people to generate, represent, and share relatively arbitrary, socially-shaped meanings throughout a given community (e.g., the concept of *mother*). The meanings that signs represent are *arbitrary* in the sense that they could be constructed otherwise depending upon different social circumstances and purposes. Using signs, humans are able to bring different ways of understanding into existence (e.g., *stepmothers, adoptive mothers, surrogate mothers*, etc.); when we act upon such novel forms of meaning, our actions become transformed.

The Concept of Morality in Moral Relationalism

As discussed in the opening of this chapter, from a moral relationalist perspective, moral values, rules, and statements are neither *objective* properties of the world nor *subjective* properties of individuals or cultures. Instead, moral values are emergent properties of *relational experience*. In this sense, the relational approach to morality departs from evolutionary views by denying that morality is "found" in nature, though it maintains that the capacity for morality includes bio-evolutionary foundations. It builds on structural-developmental approaches that see development as progressive, increasingly differentiated and integrated, and further articulates and elaborates the relational origins and processes of this development, while also capturing the dynamic interaction between cultural process and moral development at the individual and group levels. As we detail below, from a moral relationalist perspective, moral frameworks are *symbolic* systems of *strong evaluation* that emerge and develop *historically* as a product of *relations between and among people* within particular *socio-cultural and ecological contexts*. Moral life is not a primarily *cognitive* affair, but is instead a *human* process founded upon relations among affect, cognition, desire, and evaluation as they occur within lived experience. As symbolic systems of strong evaluation, moral values gain their legitimacy through appeals to different conceptions of the *good* that arise within relational experience itself. At the socio-cultural and ecological level, different moral frameworks are organized around different moral values that arise as social groups organize themselves in order to address shared social and cultural problems. Conflicts among moral values arise spontaneously in the course of moral development as it occurs both within and among individuals and communities and as a product of shifting social and cultural circumstances. In what follows, we elaborate on the basic premises of a relational account of morality and its development.

From Symbolism to the Negative ("Not There")

In his famous *Definition of Man* [sic], Kenneth Burke (1966) defines the human as a symbol-using animal. Symbols are representational vehicles (e.g., words, symbols, images, etc.). Using symbols, we are able to make one thing stand for something else. For Burke, the importance of symbol use could not be overstated: humans are generally unaware of "just how over-whelmingly much of what we mean by 'reality' has been built up for us through nothing but our symbol-systems." Humans are symbolically able to create their "realities" through their capacity to create the *negative*—that is, to represent that which is *not there*. For Burke, we *live* in the symbolic world of the negative—the world of the "not there." Yet, as Burke (drawing on Bergson) notes, "there are no negatives in nature" (p. 498). All that exists in the "natural world" is the *positive*—that which

is *there*. Our worlds are mediated by the *not there* whenever we notice a missing button; wonder what we will have for lunch; or long for a peaceful world.

With their capacity to represent the *not there*, symbol-systems provide a foundation for the emergence of genuine moral judgment (Burke, 1966; de Waal, 2014; Tse, 2008). Moral judgments are judgments of what *ought* or *ought not* to be. The concept of *ought* implies some comparison between a *present* state and some absent, imagined, or ideal state. To represent an *ought*, an organism must go beyond the information given and represent a valued alternative to that which is present in direct experience. To say, "You should not hit your brother" requires us to compare the *current* state of affairs (e.g., Madge hitting her brother) to some other *imagined* state of affairs (e.g., Madge inhibiting her action).

Moral Judgment as *Strong Evaluation*

If symbols enable oughts, and hence moral judgment, what is the content of these oughts? In other words, which oughts and judgments count as moral oughts and judgments? Kesebir and Haidt (2010) have argued that, in 20th-century Western psychology, the category of moral was largely restricted to concerns about rights, justice and welfare. However, both traditionally and in contemporary moral scholarship, the concept of *morality* has encompassed a wide variety of concerns, spanning issues related to virtue and character; the good and the worthy; justice and rights; compassion and care; authority and duty; higher and lower; the sacred and divine; the pure and the polluted. If the concept of morality cannot be defined in terms of any single class of moral concerns, how are we to determine the meaning and scope of the moral domain?

One way to approach this issue is to define moral concerns in terms of what Charles Taylor (1885, 1989) has called *strong evaluation*. Humans are *evaluating* beings who act on the bases of the value or significance that events have for them. Taylor (1989) distinguishes between *strong* and *weak* forms of evaluation. In weak evaluation, we weigh options on the basis of whether they will advance our pre-reflective desires. In strong evaluation, we reflect upon the worth of our desires themselves. In weak evaluation, I seek to decide whether an ice cream cone or a slice of chocolate cake is more likely to satisfy my appetitive desire. In strong evaluation, I reflect upon the *worthiness* of my desire for sweets in the first place. From this framework, a *wanton* is a person who engages only in weak evaluation; a *person* is one who is able to make choices mediated by strong evaluation.

Moral rules differ from other types of social norms in the sense that they identify conditions experienced as *universalizing* and *binding*. Moral values and rules are experienced as *universalizing* in the sense that they apply not simply to me, but to all persons who could find themselves in a target set of socio-cultural circumstances. We use the term *universalizing* rather than *universal* to refer to universalization as a *process* of identifying the range of applicability of a given set of moral evaluations (e.g., this rule or value extends to such and such persons or situations beyond myself), rather than to a fixed property of moral systems themselves (e.g., this rule or value is one that many people hold as moral). The process of universalizing a value involves identifying its sphere of applicability beyond the particular persons and local circumstances. The range of applicability of a value or rule is one that requires social deliberation and is not something that can be simply assumed. A second discriminating feature is that moral values and rules are experienced as *binding* in the sense that once identified, we have an obligation, commitment or duty to act in accordance with them within their range of applicability.

The Origins of Moral Values in Relations Between People

From a moral relationalist perspective, moral values—strong evaluations—arise from *relations between and among people* as they interact to meet individual, social and collective needs. In both

societies and individuals, moral development is founded upon the basic capacity for evaluation. Any organism capable of valenced experience thus engages in some form of weak evaluation. Moral development builds upon the pre-symbolic capacity for social partners to engage each other's evaluative experience within diverse forms of relating that arise in joint action (Point 1 in Figure 16.2). With the capacity for symbolization, social partners become able to construct, define, represent and share their evaluative experiences explicitly in discursive activity (Point 2). The capacity for shared symbolic representation allows communities to reflect upon diverse forms of weak evaluation and consolidate them into *strong evaluations*—that is, *moral values* or *moral goods* (Point 3). Moral *systems* (Point 4) correspond to organizations among shared and contested moral values structured with reference to a series of core or abstract principles (e.g., *justice, care, virtue*, etc.). Below we elaborate each of these four points to demonstrate the process of how moral systems emerge and function between and within individuals.

Moral development has its early origins in the intersubjective capacity for individuals to coordinate evaluative experience within diverse forms of joint action. In development, the most basic form of relational activity occurs between a caregiver and an infant. Within pre-linguistic interaction, when a caregiver experiences a crying infant, as a result of the operation of something akin to the mirror resonance process, the infant's actions (e.g., crying, vocal tone, etc.) evoke empathic or sympathetic feelings on the part of the caregiver. Such emotional states motivate and organize actions directed toward tending to the needs that motivate the infant's expressed state. As a result, a *form of relating* emerges that might be called tending to need. This relational form is defined in terms of relation between caregiver's *empathic expression of care* and the infant's *expressed need*. The joint production of this form of relating is indicated at Point 1 in Figure 16.2.

In pre-linguistic modes of interaction, infants and caregivers are able to coordinate experiences and actions in relation to each other. However, young infants (and, perhaps, early hominoids in the early periods of cultural evolution) are unable to represent jointly coordinated experiences as *objects* of attention. Pre-linguistically, while I might feel your pain, I might not be able to represent either your or my experience as an instance the symbolically shared concept of "pain."
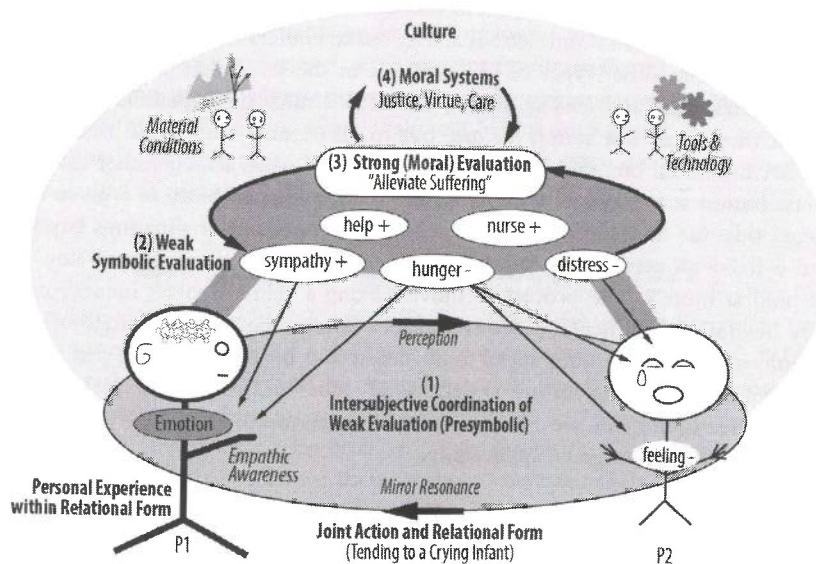

Figure 16.2 The Relational Origins of Moral Life

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Weak evaluations lodged within pre-symbolic experience are made *intelligible* with the capacity for *sign-mediated exchanges* with others. In development, caregivers routinely respond to the evaluations expressed in children's bodily actions using words that communicate socially-shared meanings. For example, in the context of feeding infants, Western parents tend to respond to a child's vigorous acceptance or rejection of food with evaluative phrases such as "does that taste *good*?"; "oooh, that's *yukky*, huh?." Over time, as children are able represent their experiences in terms of shared evaluative categories, they gain the capacity to express and share those evaluations in social discourse. The symbolic representation and expression of weak evaluations is indicated at Point 2 in Figure 16.2.

With the capacity to use symbolic means to represent and communicate evaluative experiences that occur within any given form of relating, the stage is set for the construction of *moral values* and *goods*. Moral values are strong evaluations that arise as communities reflect upon and evaluate the weak evaluations of everyday life. As *evaluations of evaluations*, moral values reflect a kind of *reflective stance* toward the pleasures, pains, and potentialities of everyday life. In so doing, communities transform weak evaluations that arise in pre-reflective experience into strong evaluations—moral goods, values, standards, and rules. For example, in reflecting discursively upon the *good* and *bad* that arise in relations involving care and need, communities construct moral goods (care, compassion) and moral rules such as "alleviate suffering" or "act out of compassion." In this way, at the most basic level of individual and societal development, moral values arise as second-order *reflections* on first-order evaluations that arise within relational experience. This process is indicated at Point 3 in Figure 16.2.

Different moral goods and values arise as social groups seek ways to resolve diverse problems that arise between and among people within that social group. Table 16.1 displays a series of *relational problems* that arise as social groups seek ways to meet individual and collective needs. Relational problems arise within different forms of relating which bring forth different classes of emotional experience. Moral values and systems arise as ways of resolving the problems that arise within different forms of relating. The forms of relating that motivate and constrain the construction of moral values are *emergent* processes. While some forms of relating are likely to arise in virtually all cultures and all times (e.g., *care* and *protection*), other forms of relating can arise only within particular social and cultural circumstances (e.g., concerns about *property rights* require the emergence of sedentary societies that raise question about the control over land and resources). The construction of strong evaluations thus occurs across many ways of relating, and hence is generative of a wide range of possible moral goods and values.

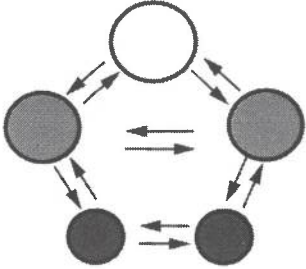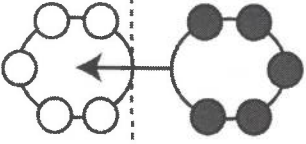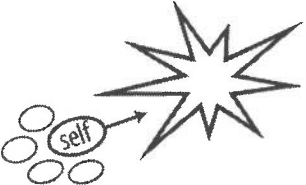## How Social Organization Structures Moral Life

Moral systems consist of organized sets of shared and contested moral values that are distributed throughout a given social community. Moral systems arise as social groups consolidate valued solutions to the problem of meeting individual and collective needs. Moral systems tend to be organized around a small number of foundational principles. For example, moral systems in the United States tend to be organized around individualist principles of *autonomy, justice, equality*, and *rights*. Traditional Chinese society is organized around Confucian values of *hierarchy, filial piety, duty*, and *propriety*. Despite these dominant frameworks, moral diversity prevails both within and between societies. While the ethos of *rights* and *justice* is prominent in the US, it operates in tandem with systems based on *care, virtue, community*, and so forth. Similarly, moral diversity also exists within individual persons' moral frameworks. Individuals moral frameworks tend to exhibit areas of both cohesion and contradiction.

Table 16.1 The Emergence of Moral Values in Diverse Forms of Relating

	Relational Problem	Form of Social Interaction	Dominant Emotions	Emergent Moral Values
1	**Basic Verbal and Nonverbal Communication.** How do I respond in communication?	Communicative / meaning ↔ meaning / Responsivity	Distress, Fear of Isolation	Responsiveness
2	**Boundaries vs. Intrusion.** What is me/mine vs. you/yours?		Pain, Anger, Fear, Dignity	Boundaries and Identity; Mine versus Yours; Ownership
3	**Asserting and Restricting.** What are the limits of my agency?		Frustration, Anger	Autonomy/ Rights vs. Oppression
4	**Distributing Resources.** How do we divide goods?	?	Anger, Jealousy, Pride, Shame	Justice, Fairness, Equality, Merit
5	**Giving and Receiving.** How do we respond to debt?	?	Gratitude, Entitlement, Anger	Reciprocity, Duty/Obligation, Vengeance
6	**Responding to Need.** How do I respond to your pain and need?	empathy / pain / care	Compassion, Empathy, Sympathy	Care vs. Disregard
7	**Social Evaluation Relative to the Good.** What is "good" and "bad"? What is a "good" or "bad" person?	Self +/-	Pleasure, Pain, Pride, Shame, Guilt, Honor, Disgust	Virtue vs. Vice; Good vs. Bad; Moral Purity vs. Pollution; Character

Table 16.1 (Cont).

Relational Problem	Form of Social Interaction	Dominant Emotions	Emergent Moral Values
8	**Making Group Decisions.** Who can make decisions in a group?		Fear, Dependence	Authority vs. Subversion vs. Diffusion
9	**Protecting the Group.** How do we protect group integrity?		Fear, Loyalty, Pride	Group Loyalty vs. Betrayal
10	**Relating to the Divine.** How do I relate to the cosmos?		Awe, Fear, Spiritual Connection	Sanctity vs. Blasphemy

Although moral systems consist of organized sets of moral values, within any given society, it would be a mistake to think of moral values as *prior to* the moral systems of which they are a part. Just as there are not *first* individuals, *then* dyads, and *then* cultures, there are not *first* weak evaluations, *then* moral values and *then* moral systems. No single process or level of functioning is prior or primary in the relational construction of moral life. Within groups, moral values evolve within cultures that are themselves structured by material conditions, technologies, and patterns of social organization. In this way, historical, material, political, and socio-economic processes operating at the level of the group or culture play a central role in structuring the types of social relations from which moral values emerge and develop. To appreciate the profound ways in which culture structures moral values (rather than only the reverse), it is helpful to examine, however crudely, how moral systems have changed over the course of cultural history. Anthropologists divide cultural history into a series of epochs in terms of transformations in social organization brought about by changes in technology. Table 16.2 displays how technological changes produced changes in social organization and moral life over the course of human history.

Dating back 100,000 years, the first humanoids were hunter-gatherers. Hunter-gatherers traveled together as small bands organized largely by kinship and friendship. Settling for small periods of time (days to months), Relying upon available natural resources, foragers roamed constantly in search of plants and animals. In light of their continuous movement, their lifestyle was simple. They could carry few items and thus could not amass surplus food or objects. As a result, social

Table 16.2 How Technology and Social Organization Structure Relationships and Moral Life

	Hunter-Gatherer (Egalitarian)	Agrarian (Authority/Duty)	Western Industrial (Autonomy, Rights, Equality)
Dominant Moral Values	• Mutual Dependence • Sharing of Resources • Egalitarian • Absence of Strong Authority • In-Group Loyalty	• Authority and Hierarchy • Duty by Social Position • Discipline and Obeisance • In-Group Loyalty	• Individual Boundaries • Autonomy, Rights • Equality, Fairness, Reciprocity • Tolerance, In-Group Loyalty • Ownership, Initiative, Merit
Socio-Cultural-Ecological	• Reliant on Natural Resources • Technology: Simple Tools • Kinship-Based Bands • Constant Movement • Sex-Based Division of Labor • Animistic Religious Beliefs	• Agriculture/Sedentary • Technology: Plow • Specialization of Labor • Hierarchical Social Structure • Deep Inequality (Elite/Serf) • Territorial Boundaries • States, Empires and Armies	• Industrial/Commercial • Technology: Machines • Democratic Government • Capitalism/Private Property • Specialization/Division of Labor • Environmental Degradation • Science and Rationality
Relational	• Egalitarian • "Dividuals"	• Social Hierarchy • Master/Slave • Received Identities	• Social Contract • Independence, Initiative, Merit • Equality, Justice, Tolerance • Self-Chosen Social Identities
Personal	• Relational Selves	• Agency vs. Dependence	• Individualized Selves
Biogenetic	• Biologically analyzed differences produce division of labor by sex	• Increase in reproduction and population; increased disease in highly dense populations; animal basis for labor and production	• Cultural transformation of physical environment and biological substrata (e.g., nutrition; health care; eye glasses, birth control, etc.)

relations were largely *egalitarian*. There was little division of labor, except by sex. By virtue of their strength and size, men tended to assume the task of hunting, while women engaged in gathering and child rearing. The need for continuous movement limited the number of children that could be raised at any time. Infanticide and abortion were common. In the absence of

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authority, within group conflict was addressed largely through social pressure; individuals and groups often resorted to violence and murder to solve larger disputes.

Beginning around 10,000 years ago, humans began to assume a more sedentary existence with the discovery of agriculture. Horticultural societies developed with the discovery of agriculture; pastoral societies with the capacity to herd animals. The technological advent of the plow ushered in agrarian society, and the capacity to use animals in the service of agriculture. This innovation ushered in a massive transformation in social organization in the form of division of labor; elite landowners and dependent peasants; and moral systems based on *authority, hierarchy, duty,* and *caste.* While populations increased, massive inequality became the rule. The agrarian way of life remained steady (until this day in many places) until *industrialization* and commercialism began to overtake agriculture as a central source of economic life. Shades of industrialization could be identified as early as 1000 years ago, but did not begin to surge until the *industrial revolution* in the 1800s. The advent of machines ushered an ethos of individualism and capitalism in Europe, and with it the ethos of rights, freedom and justice typical of contemporary Western societies.

Even a brief examination of cultural history shows that material and technological processes that operate within groups play a profound role in organizing social life. The material and technological means available to hunter-gatherers produced forms of social life where principles currently viewed as foundational to moral life (e.g., rights, authority, the sanctity of life) were either irrelevant or simply failed to arise. Organization at the level of the group structures social life as a product of the moral values and moral systems that arise and are consolidated through social exchanges. Moral beliefs are neither universal principles created by the mind, foundational beliefs instilled by biological evolution, prescriptions from God, nor subjective constructions of individual persons or cultures. They are emergent systems of strong evaluation that arise between people as they struggle with the local exigencies of time and place.

Moral Development From a Relationalist Perspective

In the previous sections, we articulated a theory of morality from a relationalist perspective. Here we build on this theory of morality to describe how morality develops within individuals. We begin by illustrating how moral development is embedded in relationships, unfolding and emerging in everyday interactions that occur among people. We then illustrate developmental transformations during infancy, childhood, and adulthood from a relationalist perspective.

The Moral Embeddedness of Everyday Life

Moral meaning is an aspect of everyday life, and not simply of extraordinary life. Virtually all social action occurs against the backdrop of socio-moral standards and meanings, however implicit or explicit. Children are socialized into the moral life of the community through their immersion in discursive encounters with others. The everyday process of moral socialization is illustrated in a series of family interactions drawn from an ethnographic research project on the moral socialization of helping among elementary-school-aged children in Boston, MA. As part of this research, six families were video-taped during their mealtimes. From these recordings, transgressions that involved both parents and children were identified. Transgressions were identified through accusations and accounts—the common speech acts through which moral responsibility is assigned and negotiated in talk (Sterponi, 2009).

The first example unfolded among members of the Sanders' family. Seven-year-old Betsy was angry about being video-taped and wanted her mother to play a card game with her in her room, out of the camera's view. The mother suggested that they play the card game at the kitchen table:

1 BETSY: I don't want the camera to see it!
2 MOM: It's only for a few minutes—and then
3 BETSY: either with me or with, not
4 MOM: I want to do what's good for Allison right now. So.
5 DAD: Okay, you know, you don't have to force it
6 BETSY: Mama, I don't want to do this in front of the camera
7 BETSY: ((walks up to camera and blows on the lens))
8 MOM: here, will you take your knife ((handing Betsy the knife))
9 BETSY: ((takes the knife from her mother))
10 BETSY: She's not going to want somebody seeing
11 —she doesn't want us playing Old Maid in front of the camera
12 That's not what she wants us to do
13 MOM: Okay
14 BETSY: She doesn't want to see Old Maid
15 She doesn't want to see Old Maid
16 MOM: No, you don't think so?
17 BETSY: I do not think so
18 MOM: Okay

In line 1, Betsy appealed to her own *preferences* in order to reject her mother's intention to have the family filmed. In response, the mother justified her intention—not by denying the legitimacy of Betsy's desires—but instead by denying that her suggestion really conflicted with them. However, when Betsy posed the ultimatum in line 3, Mom invoked the well-being of another person —Allison—to justify her stance. With this utterance, Betsy's previous appeal to her own desires was transformed. Specifically, this utterance established a contrast between Betsy's "wants" (line 1) and Mom's "wants" (line 4). This juxtaposition implicitly accuses Betsy of prioritizing her personal interests above those of another. At line 5, the focus of the transgression shifted again as Dad accused Mom of "forcing it." This utterance excused Betsy's behavior by re-assigning responsibility to Mom. Again, in this turn, Dad did not deny Mom's appeal; instead, he challenged its priority in this situation. Betsy's final series of justifications incorporates many of these same features. When Betsy appealed to Allison's interests, she challenged Mom's accusation that she had failed to think of Allison. Importantly, she does so by redefining her action to demonstrate that she in fact was thinking of Allison. In this example, the nature of the moral accusation shifted over the course of the interaction. This analysis also illustrates how the repetition of particular concerns (i.e., competing desires, needs and rights) over the course of the interaction marked the importance of these moral concerns.

A second example, from the Connor Family, introduces another concern that permeated the moral interactions, namely, concerns about *equality*. In this episode, the mother was spooning ice cream into bowls for her 8-year-old son Jimmy and his 8-year-old cousin Robert. As she sets the ice cream bowls down in front of each boy, she says:

1 MOM: They are both the same
2 (Sets ice cream bowls down in front of each boy at the table)
3 They are both the same
4 I don't want to hear someone's is different—
5 JIMMY: —Robert's is different—
6 MOM: —OK?—
7 No
8 Robert's is not different

9 ((Boys start eating their ice-cream))
10 MOM: What do you say?
11 Guys?
12 JIMMY: Thank you
13 ROBERT: Thank you

In this episode, anticipating that the boys might perceive her actions as problematic, Mom offers a pre-emptive account for her action. In saying "they are both the same," she appeals to the equality of distribution. In elaborating, "I don't want to hear that someone's is different," Mom discredits the validity of any such accusations before they could be voiced. Nonetheless, Jimmy issued the very accusation that Mom had warned against. Importantly, he did so in a sing-song voice, suggesting an awareness that his utterance was accusatory, while at the same time knowing that it was not necessarily a valid accusation. Mom, however, denied the facts of Jimmy's accusation in a serious tone: "Robert's is not different." In turn, her prompts, "What do you say?" and, "Guys?" foregrounded Mom's sense of the "real" problem in the situation—how the boys *received* her service: rather than accusing the server, the boys should be giving thanks for the service.

These two examples illustrate how interlocutors discursively negotiate moral meaning against the backdrop of both implicit and explicit cultural conceptions of the good. In these examples, interlocutors continuously redefined, recast, and re-interpreted the moral meaning of each other's actions. In so doing, interlocutors offered different moral concerns as unquestioned *terms* of negotiation—as intersubjectively shared *moral goods*. Although they were invoked as givens, their meaning and significance were dynamically constructed over time between persons. The seamless embeddedness of moral categories in ongoing interaction indicates their status as implicit and contextualized understandings rather than explicit propositional knowledge. Over time, as moral categories recur across a diversity of interactions, they increasingly come to mediate children's moral actions.

Developmental Transformations in the Structure of Moral Action

How do these moral categories come to mediate children's moral actions over the life-course? How does the capacity for moral action emerge and how does it develop through childhood and adulthood? In this section, we examine the development of moral functioning from a relationalist perspective. This means that development is conceived not as changes in structures of moral thinking, feeling, or action considered *separately*, but instead as *integrated* structures of meaning, feeling, and action as they operate within particular interactions and socio-cultural contexts. We begin by providing an alternative to neo-nativist perspectives that argue that infants come into the world equipped with innate structures of moral knowledge. We then illustrate how moral development occurs from infancy to adulthood.

Neo-Nativism in the Development of Moral Judgment in Infancy

Recently, neo-nativist researchers have produced impressive evidence suggesting that infants are able to engage in precocious forms of social evaluation as early as three months of age. Hamlin, Wynn, and Bloom (2007, 2010) habituated young infants to puppet shows in which a protagonist attempted to achieve a goal (e.g., climb a hill). Another puppet either *helped* (i.e., pushed up the hill) or *hindered* (i.e., pushed down the hill) the protagonist. Depending on the study, when given a choice, infants either looked longer (3 ½ months) or reached for (5 months) puppets who *helped* rather than those who *hindered*. In an especially striking study, Hamlin (2014)

habituated two groups of 4 ½ month-old infants to helper and hinderer scenarios. She then showed infants a second show in which a puppet from the first phase was itself either helped or hindered by new puppet. When given a choice, infants not only reached for the puppet who *helped* the previously *helpful* (good) puppets, they also selectively reached for new puppets who *hindered* the previously *hindering* (bad) puppets.

Based on these and similar findings, Hamlin (2013) argued that infants enter the world with an "innate moral core" which functions as an inherent part of human nature. In so doing, Hamlin makes three basic claims about the moral life of infants. First, (a) infants make judgments about the *moral goodness* of third party agents; (b) these judgments are mediated by an understanding of the "mental states" of third party actors; and (c) infants exhibit the capacity to "punish" or make *retributive* judgments about the "antisocial" actions of third person protagonists. While the findings of this well-designed research are strong, we examine the ways in which philosophical presuppositions about the nature of psychological processes bias the researchers toward nativist interpretations. In so doing, we offer a reinterpretation of nativist claims from the standpoint of moral relationalism. Specifically, we argue that the tasks faced by infants in these studies are not as complex as they might seem, and thus do not require the postulation of innate ideas, and the capacities that infants evince in these studies are grounded in relational rather than nativist bases.

The first claim (a) holds that infants' judgments are judgments about *moral goodness*. To Hamlin (2014), "moral evaluation" refers to the ability to identify and *dislike* those who are uncooperative/unempathetic/unhelpful" (p. 186, emphasis ours). While we agree fully that infants are capable of making *evaluative* judgments (weak evaluations), we are not convinced that these judgments should be regarded as *moral judgments*, that is, as *strong evaluations*. That infants may "dislike" those who are "uncooperative" or "unhelpful" suggests the operation of pre-reflective affective evaluations. As argued above, such weak evaluations differ considerably from judgments of what *ought* and *ought not* to be that emerge with the onset of the semiotic function over the second year of life.

The second claim (b) is that infants are able to read the "mental states" of others. The merits of this assertion depend on what it means to speak of "mental states." The traditional mentalistic conception of "other minds" separates external behavior from "inner experience." Intentions, desires, and feelings consist of mental states that are hidden behind overt action. From this view, indicated in the left panel of Figure 16.3, the task of the infant becomes one of making inferences about states that lie behind the barrier of outer behavior. If such states were hidden, it would indeed be difficult to see how young infants could make such inferences if the capacity to do so were *not* innate. However, the problem of "other minds" begins to fade the moment we adopt an intersubjective framework (Iacoboni, 2009). Given the participation of the mirror resonance system, infants enter the world with a capacity for intersubjective engagement. Infants and caregivers are deeply responsive to each other's emotional acts and expressions. Viewed from this perspective, it becomes easier to understand how infants come to understand the actions of others without invoking detailed innate knowledge systems.

Our account proceeds from three basic propositions: First, given the participation of the mirror resonance system, infants are able to experience the dynamic, self-initiating, and contingent activity of caregivers in fundamentally different ways than they do action on objects (Moore & Barresi, 2017). As a result, they are able to discriminate objects from agents from a very early age. Second, however, the infant concept of the other as agent need not be a mentalistic one (Fenici, 2015; Moore & Barresi, 2010). A caregiver's intentions, feelings, and desires are not located *behind* her actions; they are expressed *in the actions themselves* and understood within the context of coordinated experience. Goals and intentions are expressed in the directedness of a person's gaze and actions toward their objects, while feelings shine through facial, vocal, and bodily expression. Third, as a result, it becomes possible to understand the infant's engagement with the Other not as a task of making inferences about hidden mental states, but instead as
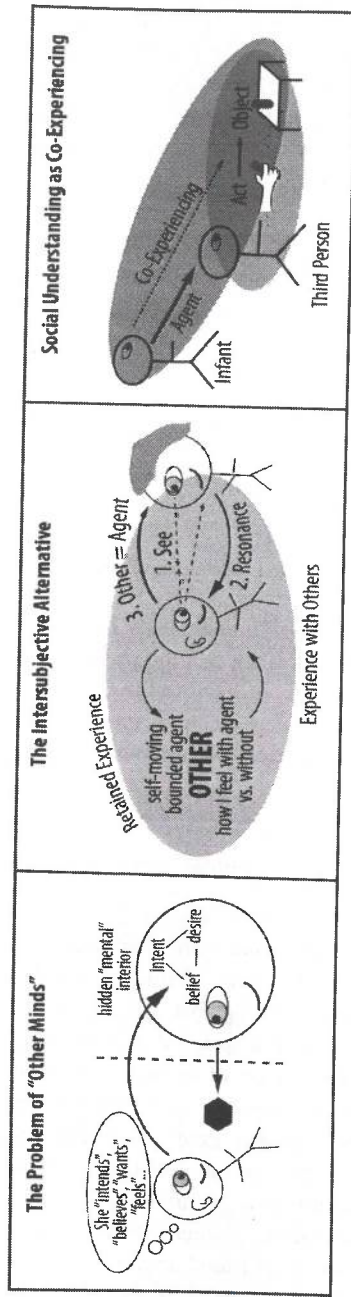
Figure 16.3 Intersubjectivity and Social Understanding

a form of *witnessing* or *co-experiencing* the other's ongoing actions (see Figure 16.3, right hand panel). The process is similar to watching a movie. When watching a person in a movie walk past objects in a room, we do not typically imagine what is going on inside the protagonist's imagination; instead, we identify *with* the protagonist and experience the room as if we were walking through it ourselves. From this perspective, infants do not so much put themselves in the *mind* of the other as much as they put themselves in the other's *position*, and then co-experience the other's actions along with them (Moore & Barresi, 2010).

A final concern (c) includes the idea that infants seek to retaliate against the "bad" actions of others by invoking an ethos of *retribution*. This is expressed in the finding that infants prefer protagonists who either help helpers or hinder hinderers (Hamlin, 2014). However, if this interpretation is correct, on some level, infants must be able to understand (a) that the initial hinderer was "morally bad" because he stopped another puppet from achieving his goal; (b) someone who is morally bad should be punished; (c) not returning a wanted ball would constitute a punishment. Again, if we think of the task before the young infant as requiring such complex forms of representation, it is easy to understand why one might take the skills that mediate these actions to be innate.

Viewed from an intersubjective view, however, the infant's task is less daunting. In Hamlin's study, imagine what happens if we view put ourselves in the *positions* of the characters before us, and *co-experience* their actions as if *we* were performing them (the right panel of Figure 16.3). If we see a Giver return a toy to a former Hinderer, we might become confused. If we *identify with* the Giver, we put ourselves in the place of playing with an unpleasant character (the Hinderer). We may want to avoid being put in this situation. In contrast, if we see a Taker keep the Hinderer's ball and run away with it, we no longer have that problem: the Taker takes us away from the unpleasant Hinderer. Given a choice between the two, we might prefer the Taker. We might prefer the Taker not because we endorse the retribution he takes against the "morally bad" Hinderer, but simply because he takes us away from the unliked character. The point is not that this particular interpretation is necessarily correct, but instead that by drawing on the richness of infant relational experience, there may be no need to postulate complex innate machinery to understand how infants evaluate the actions of others. Moral modes of functioning build upon the evaluative richness found in intersubjective experience itself, even in infancy, and we need not take recourse in the view that morality is itself innate.

The Development of Integrative Moral Action in Childhood

A great deal of moral development research has traditionally focused on changes in either implicit or explicit moral thinking. Such research naturally raises questions about the relations between "moral thinking" and "moral action." However, from the standpoint of an integrative theory of development, moral thinking is not something that can be separated from moral action. What is typically called "moral thinking" is itself a form of action—that is, a form of representational action that tends to be evoked in the context of an interview instead of in everyday interpersonal activity. Moral action—like all action—consists of integrative structures of cognitive, affective, and motoric processes. Moral actions develop gradually as their cognitive, affective, and motoric components undergo structural transformation. In this section, we examine developmental changes in the structure of moral action as it occurs within discursive relations with others. In so doing, we use Fischer's (1980; Mascolo & Fischer, 2015) Skill Theory as a tool for identifying the types of structural changes that occur as moral action takes shape within discursive activity.

Building upon evaluative structures that develop in socio-affective interactions in infancy, genuinely *moral* action emerges as children's actions become increasingly mediated by symbolic representations of what ought (or ought not) to be, which begin to emerge in the second year of life. In so doing, children gain the capacity to represent concrete "oughts" and "ought nots" and use those
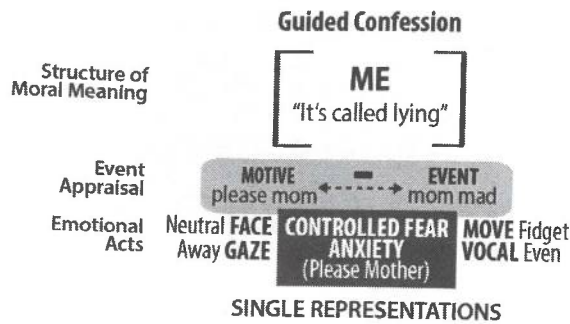
Guided Confession

Structure of
Moral Meaning

ME
"It's called lying"

Event
Appraisal

MOTIVE
please mom ← - - - - → EVENT
mom mad

Emotional
Acts

Neutral **FACE** | **CONTROLLED FEAR** | **MOVE** Fidget
Away **GAZE** | **ANXIETY** | **VOCAL** Even
(Please Mother)

SINGLE REPRESENTATIONS

Figure 16.4 The Integrative Structure of Moral Action in Social Interaction

standards to guide and inhibit action. The bottom panel of Figure 16.4 depicts the structure of a 2 ½ year-old girl's activity in interaction with her mother after being given a "time out" for lying.

Figure 16.4 displays the integrative structure of moral action (cognition–emotion–action) in a young child interacting with her mother. The top (bracketed) portion identifies (a) the structure of the individual's *conscious understanding* of the event, which functions at the level of single representations. The middle panel (b) identifies the *event appraisal* that forms the emotional basis of the child's moral representation. Appraisals reflect the evaluative (±) relation (dotted arrow) between an individual's motives (MOTIVE) and perceived circumstances (EVENT). Appraisal processes are typically non-conscious and must be inferred from what is said and done within a given context. The bottom portion (c) identifies the *emotional state* (fear, anxiety) produced as inferred from patterns of emotional behavior that occur in the context in question. The *action tendency* associated with the emotion is indicated in parentheses (i.e., please mother). *Expressive acts* are indicated next to the bolded rectangle indicating emotional state and action tendencies.

> The child sits on the floor as her mother asks, "Why did you get a time out?" Looking away from her mother and moving her head and upper body from side to side while rubbing her torso with her hands, the child responded, "I said that my peas were all gone." Her mother replied, "You said your vegetables were all gone?" After the child said "yeah," the mother asked, "Were they all gone?" The child replied "no," slapping her hands on her knees and looking away on the word "no". The mother then asked, "So what's that called?" The girl looked downward and slapped her hands on her knees rhythmically for several seconds. Looking upward and away from the mother, she said, "It's call lying?" (with a questioning prosody). As the girl continued to look, the mother said, "You're smart. You gonna lie again?" Continuing to look away, the girl said, "Nope."

Drawing on skill theory (Fischer, 1980), this child's action functions at the level of *single representations* which begin to emerge around 18–24 months of age. The child responded to each of her mother's successive questions with a single utterance, each of which exhibits moral awareness (i.e., "I said that my peas were all gone" ... "It's called lying" and "Nope [I won't lie again]"). Throughout the episode, the child shows signs of anxiety (i.e., bodily movements), shame (i.e., gaze aversion when admitting her wrongdoing), and emotional regulation (i.e., gaze aversion; rubbing and bodily movement; slapping the knees). It is in the context of interactions like these that parents socialize *virtue* and *conscience* in children. In this context, the mother's questions
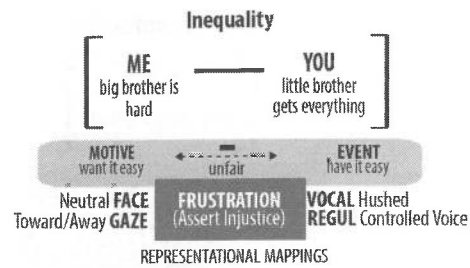
Inequality

ME big brother is hard		YOU little brother gets everything
MOTIVE want it easy	← - - - ■ - - - → unfair	**EVENT** have it easy
Neutral **FACE** Toward/Away **GAZE**	**FRUSTRATION** (Assert Injustice)	**VOCAL** Hushed **REGUL** Controlled Voice

REPRESENTATIONAL MAPPINGS

Figure 16.5 Expressing Injustice in Joint Play at the Level of Representational Mappings

provide a scaffold within which the child can connect one idea (e.g., "I said that my peas were all gone") to another (e.g., "It's call lying").

Figures 16.6 illustrates the integrative structure of moral action in a 6-year-old boy (A) while engaged in parallel play with his younger brother (B). The boys engage in a conversation about big and little brothers.

1 SAM: (Looking down at toys, speaking in gentle tone) You think [I'm just having a great] time being a big brother.
2 BOB: (Looking down while playing with his car, softly) I *am* a brother.
3 SAM: Yeah but a big ... I mean a big ... a *little* brother ... (looks at brother) you get *everything*!

Figure 16.6 shows the integrative structure of A's morally-tinged action at turn A2. In A1, the older brother commented on how difficult it is to be a *big brother*. The younger brother protested that he, like the older brother, is also a brother. Seeking to establish the difference between them, with mild frustration and perhaps jealousy, the older brother makes an evaluative comparison at the level of *representational mappings*. Representational mappings begin to emerge in high support contexts around 3.5 to 4.5 years of age. Using mappings, a child can hold in mind the *relation* between
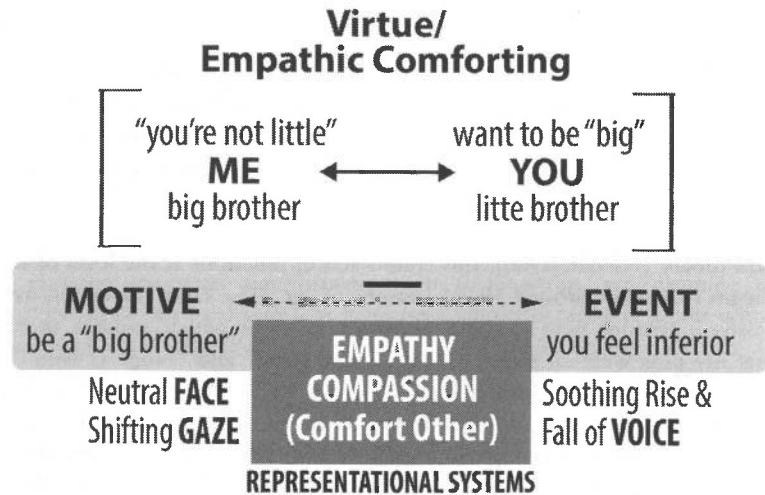
Virtue/
Empathic Comforting

"you're not little" **ME** big brother	←——→	want to be "big" **YOU** litte brother
MOTIVE be a "big brother"	← - - - ■ - - - → 	**EVENT** you feel inferior
Neutral **FACE** Shifting **GAZE**	**EMPATHY** **COMPASSION** (Comfort Other)	Soothing Rise & Fall of **VOICE**

REPRESENTATIONAL SYSTEMS

Figure 16.6 Enacting Virtue in Joint Play at the Level of Representational Systems

at least two representations. In the situation depicted in Figure 16.5, in response to the younger brother's statement that he too is a brother, the older brother articulates the distinction between the difficulty of his own status as a *big brother* as compared to the ease of being a *little brother.* "[you are a] *little brother* (mild emphasis). You get (looking up at brother) *everything* [rising tone and loudness].") This statement communicates a moral sense of *unfairness* and even *jealousy* toward what the older boy takes to be the preferential treatment of the younger brother.

The interaction between the boys continued as follows:

1 BOB: (Playing) No. I'm not a *little* brother. I'm big.
2 SAM: (Gently) I know you're not little, but (in a slightly sing-song "teaching" voice) you're … when someone is younger than another brother, they call that a little brother.
3 BOB Oh. (Slightly whining) I'm not (with rising intonation) *little* (looks toward O).
4 SAM: (Looking at Y) I know you're not little. But they call … if you're smaller than me they would call you a little brother … even though you're (gentle rising tone) *not little*.

Despite the big brother's frustration, at A3, the child gently attempts to explain the meaning of the *virtue-based* concept of "big brother." After the little brother said, "Well I'm not *little*" at B3, the big brother's emotional disposition immediately changed from one of frustration and jealousy to one of *sympathy* and *care*. At this point, the big brother's voice softened as he attempted to reassure his younger brother that the term "little brother" was just a name, and that in fact, the boy was "not little." In this context, the structure of the older brother's discourse approaches a *representational system*. Representational systems begin to emerge around 6–7 years of age in supportive contexts. Using representational systems, children coordinate at least two representational mappings into a single seamless structure. In the interaction represented in Figure 16.6, the older brother coordinates one representational mapping (i.e., the contrast between being a *big brother* and a *little brother*) with a second mapping (i.e., "if you're smaller [younger] than me they would call you a little brother, even though you're not little"). Thus, while the structure depicted in Figure 16.5 is mediated by a socio-moral sense of *unfairness*, the structure indicated in Figure 16.6 reflects moral orientations of *care* and *virtue*.

Beginning around 10–11 years of age, pre-teens begin to move beyond concrete meanings and gain the capacity to operate in the *abstract* tier of development. Using abstractions, older children can begin to represent generalized, intangible, and hypothetical aspects of events, people, things, and processes. Abstractions arise as pre-teens gain the capacity to coordinate at least two concrete representational systems into a *system of representational systems*, which is the equivalent of a *single abstraction*. The actions depicted in Figure 16.7 occur in interactions involving two pre-adolescent boys arguing over whether to move to the next "level" of a video game. As the boys completed their current level, Ron wanted to move onward to a higher level, while Larry wanted to remain at a lower one—presumably fearing that he might fail at the next level. In the following exchange, while Ron demeans Larry's choice of an easy level, Larry invokes the moral authority of *ownership* to force his way:

1 LARRY: (Sitting on floor, loudly; moves to face Ron; loudly, in an argumentative tone) No, no dude. We're playing my level.
2 RON: You picked the gayest level and I'm [allowed to have?] to have one …
3 LARRY: (Moves close to Ron, moves his torso toward Ron and shouts in his face) I don't care!
4 RON: I'll give you. I'll give you two for free. No, I want …
5 LARRY: (Moving his torso back and then forward toward Ron so that they are face-to-face with each successive word) Really? Really? Shut up.

6 RON: You shut up.

7 LARRY: (Continuing to move his torso back and forth rhythmically) We're playin' ... No we're playing the other one. (Points finger at Ron) Shut up. This is my room, my house. All this stuff is mine. This controller is mine.

8 MOM: (Knocks on the door.) Knock it off!

9 LARRY: Sorry. R: [Unintell] (In a lower tone) okay, no. We're playin' the one that we beat cuz that's the easiest one. All the other ones are so much harder.

10 RON: Press start press start [L: Make me!] Press Start

11 LARRY: I wanna do it myself. Yeah shut up. [R: Make me] L: Yeah, I will.

In this situation, Larry asserts himself in an argumentative manner, making mock aggressive movements toward Ron. Larry justifies his right to choose the level by invoking the abstract principle of *ownership*. Claiming ownership over the concrete objects being used (i.e., "This is my room, my house ... This controller is mine"), Larry abstracts across them (i.e., "This is my stuff"), and thus uses the abstract idea of *ownership* to justify his right to choose the level of the game. Although Larry invokes a moral rule, his move is self-serving; it functions primarily to assert his power.

Resolving Moral Conflict in Adult Development

One way that novel forms of moral thinking, feeling, and action arise in development is through the resolution of moral conflict (Basseches, 1984; Bearison, 1991; Inhelder, Sinclair & Bovet, 1974). Basseches and Mascolo (2010; Mascolo, 2017) introduce a dialectical approach to tracking the ways in which higher levels of development arise through the registration and resolution of conflict. A *conflict* occurs whenever two opposing elements—a thesis and its antitheses (i.e., opposing thoughts, feelings, values, etc.)—are brought into juxtaposition. In psychological development, the registration of conflict typically motivates an attempt to resolve conflict in some way. Conflict can be resolved through the *synthesis* of new structures of thinking, feeling, and acting that *transcend* or otherwise reconcile the contraction between thesis and antithesis. This process typically requires successive *differentiation* of both thesis and antithesis as they adjust to each other over time and the *coordination* of modified forms of thesis and antithesis into a new, higher-order structure that resolves the initial contradiction.

Figure 16.8 provides an example of the development of moral thinking through the successive resolution of socio-moral conflict (see Mascolo, 2017). This analysis is based on a story entitled "Confessions of an Ex-White Supremacist" posted to *The Experience Project*. The story describes how the anonymous writer came to renounce his White Supremacist identity through his relationship with an African-American woman (Azzi) whom he would later come to marry. Drawing directly upon the language of the text, the analysis tracks how conflicts between the writer's supremacist beliefs and his experiences with different African-American individuals resulted in a radical transformation of his moral ideology.

Step I describes the initial structure of the writer's identity as a White Supremacist. The foundational belief of this ideology is the need (1) to *honor* the superiority of the White race over all others, including (1.1) *Blacks* and Jews. The writer learned his ideology through his (2.0) identification with his *Supremacist father*. The writer spoke of his disgust with Blacks, and indicated that, as a wrestler in high schools, he would shower to "wash the filth" from his body after wrestling Blacks. The writer's initial state thus invokes one way of drawing upon the moral themes of *hierarchy*, *purity*, and *group loyalty*.
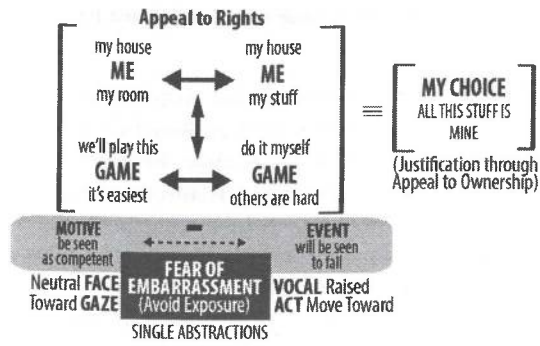
Figure 16.7 Moral Justification in Interpersonal Conflict at the Level of Single Abstractions (Systems of Representational Systems)
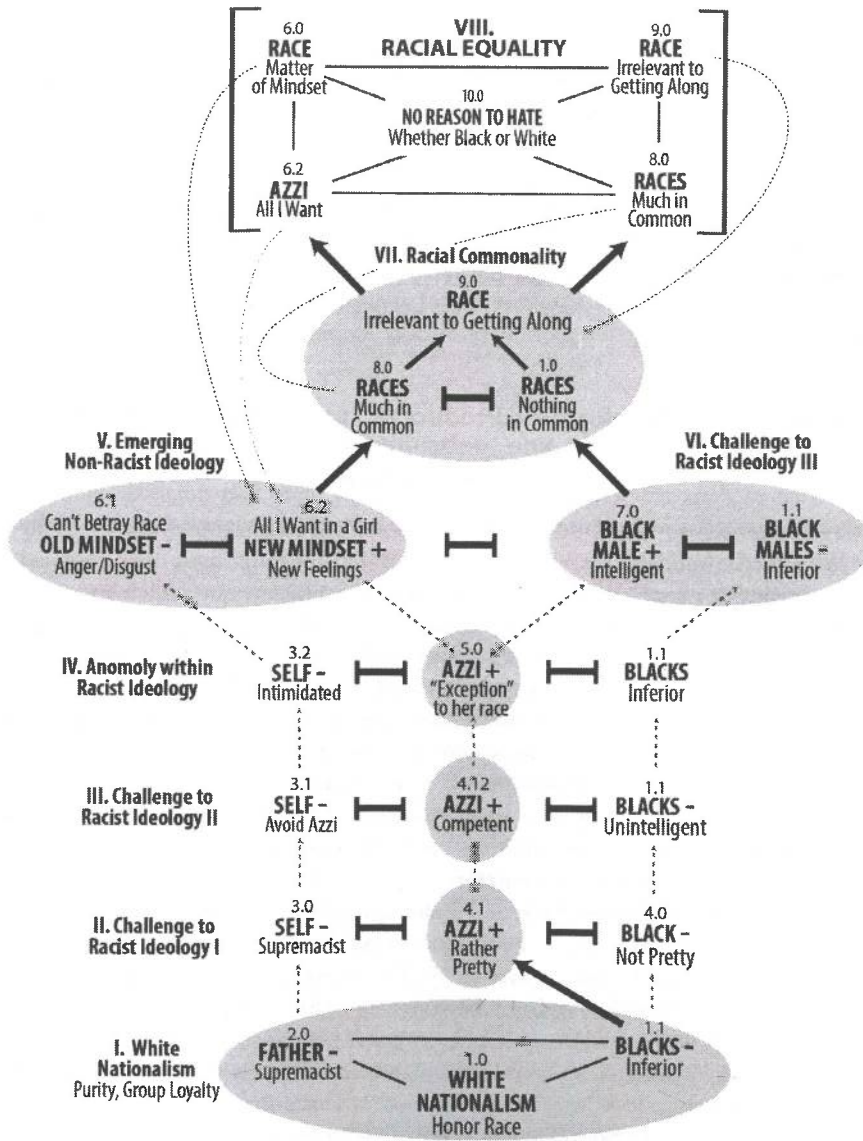

Figure 16.8 Moral Development in and Adult through the Dialectical Engagement of Moral Conflict

In Step II, we encounter the first challenge to the writer's racist beliefs (3.0). In college, he met a young Black woman (Azzi) with whom he was forced to collaborate on a project. While he experienced (4.0) the other Black girls as unattractive, he found that Azzie had a (4.1) "nice smile" and was "rather pretty." A second challenge occurred at Step III where the writer, upon collaborating with Azzi on a project, finds her to be intelligent. In Step IV, the writer recounts feelings of being intimidated by Azzi's intelligence. He begins to resolve the conflict between his ideology and Azzi's competence by thinking of Azzi as (5.0) "an exception to her race."

Step V marks the beginning of a shift in the writer's mindset. At this point, the writer describes a conflict between, on the one hand, his (6.1) feelings of disgust with Blacks and loyalty to his race, and, on the other hand, his (6.2) feelings of attraction and an awareness that Azzi is "everything he wants in a girl." Concurrently, at Step VI, the writer encounters another challenge to his racist ideology in the form of (7.0) and African-American male ("DC") who he experiences as friendly, open minded, and intelligent. At Step VII, the writer's acceptance of DC's sentiment that (8.0) "the races have a lot in common" contradicts his earlier sense of racial purity (1.1), leading the writer to agree that "race is irrelevant to getting along."

At this point in the narrative, while the writer has differentiated a series of beliefs that are antithetical to his initial supremacist ideology, these beliefs remain largely disconnected. His ideological beliefs remain conflicted until he is able to bring together his newly differentiated beliefs into a coherent system that resolve the pattern of contradictions that have accumulated. At Step IX, the writer is able to bring forward and coordinate his newly differentiated conceptions into a novel ideological structure based on *equality* of the races. Spurred by his (6.2) emotional desire and care for Azzi, the writer realizes that the (8.0) "races have a lot in common" and thus that (9.0) "race is irrelevant to getting along." As race becomes a matter of (6.0) "mindset," race provides (10.0) "no reason to hate."

Conclusions: Morality as a Product of Intersubjective Experience

Moral Second Nature

The relational approach to moral development stands in contrast with evolutionary approaches that seek to naturalize morality. Some advocates of this framework argue that knowledge about evolutionary origins of moral capacities can illuminate the processes by which moral systems are created. Others suggest that such knowledge may even be able to orient people toward the identification and even legitimization of moral values and frameworks. Still others adopt a strong view that maintains that moral life is best understood as an evolutionary product of the natural world. In their moral foundations theory, Haidt and Josephs (2007) offer a moderate view suggesting that evolution equips individuals with a series of innate moral intuitions which function as the foundations for moral development. While evolution instills moral intuitions, cultural differences in moral understanding arise from the different ways in which social groups build upon these moral foundations. Haidt offers his approach as a way to bring together evolutionary and social constructionist approaches to morality.

Evolutionary psychology (Haque, 2011) and philosophy (Casebeer, 2003), neuroscience (Churchland, 2011; Liao, 2014; Narvaez, 2014), and moral foundations theory (Graham et al., 2018) have become extremely influential in moral psychology. For example, researchers have shown that the values Haidt describes as "moral foundations" have proven to be extremely useful in explaining individual differences in the ways in which different groups of people make moral judgments (see Clifford, 2017; Wagemans, Brandt, & Zeelenberg). Nonetheless, it is unclear that what Haidt and his colleagues call "moral foundations" are best understood as innate properties of biological evolution. The practice of assigning separate developmental functions to biological and environmental processes

(Haidt & Joseph, 2007) is inconsistent with modern epigenetic approaches to development (see Lickliter & Honeycutt, this volume). To be sure, biological processes play a profound role in development. Nonetheless, structures of acting, thinking, and feeling emerge in ontogenesis through the interplay that occurs among processes within a multiply-nested epigenetic system. Thus, instead of assigning separate roles to biology and environment, it is more fruitful to seek to understand how structures of moral action arise as products of relations that occur between individuals and cultures.

While moral foundations theory suggests that moral development builds upon a series of innate moral intuitions, moral relationalism locates the origins of moral development in processes that occur *between people* as communities seek to resolve different types of *social problems*. This does not preclude a strong role for biological processes. As but one of many possible examples, biologically canalized differences in dispositions toward disgust are likely to play an important role in explaining individual differences in moral values related to purity and pollution. However, while such dispositions bias the direction of development, a disposition is not the same as a developed structure. In our view, despite precursors to moral action in infancy, to qualify as moral, an action must be mediated by some sense of what *ought* or *ought not* to be. While canalized by biology, such *oughts* are not found in our biological dispositions, but instead in the symbol-mediated processes of relating that occur between people.

As biological beings, humans are fundamentally a part of nature. However, morality is not a property of our *biological* natures, but is instead an emergent product of the capacity to use symbols to represent and construct visions of the way the world ought to be. Our constructed worlds are not "natural" products of our biology, but instead are symbolic products of the ways in which humans transform their "natural" worlds. In this way, as symbolic and relational beings, humans transform their biological *first* natures into a symbolic and cultural *second* nature (Burke, 1966). In the process of cultural evolution, we do not so much lose our first natures as we transform them into our second natures.

Intersubjectivity, Justification, and Moral Progress

Moral universalism maintains that there exist abstract universal rules that apply to all people across place and time. From this view, universal moral codes are grounded in some sort of authoritative foundation, whether it be objectivity, natural law (Kolakowski, 2003), a sacred order (Porter, 2014), human rationality, or a cherished principle (O'Manique, 1990). In contrast, *moral relativism*, holds that the legitimacy of any given moral code is relative to particular contexts, times, social groups, or cultures (Lukes, 2008). Moral relativism is repugnant to many people because it appears to offer no clear grounds for justifying one moral claim over the other. Through what process can moral claims be justified within a moral relationalist view?

From a moral relationalist perspective, moral values, rules, and propositions are justified not in terms of criteria external to human experience, but instead in terms of criteria that are lodged within and which emerge from human experience itself. Specifically, moral standards are justified with reference to the *goods* that arise within intersubjective experience as people work to solve social problems. From a moral relationalist perspective, regardless of the moral framework involved, when a moral claim is made, people seek to justify or ground that claim through reference to a more basic or encompassing *good*. Any universalist model of morality relies upon the ascribed authority of its central goods, whether that authority comes from God, rationality, the natural world, or the like. Moral relationalism locates the goods that ground moral claims within the goods that arise within *intersubjective experience itself*. To justify a moral claim is to anchor it to some good that can be located within shared experience. *Care* is justified with reference to the shared concept of *pain*; *rights* through reference to shared experiences of *intrusion* or *restriction*; *pollution* and *purity* with reference to the shared experiences of *disgust*. Shared does not necessarily

mean commonality or uniformity. Shared experiences can equally be contested, but even contested experiences presuppose an orientation toward one another. From this view, there is no view from nowhere—no moral vantage point that exists outside of the continuous and open-ended process of intersubjective experiencing.

Moral justification thus occurs by grounding moral values to goods that can be located within various forms of shared experience. Moral claims, as second-order strong evaluations (e.g., "people should act out of care") can be grounded with reference to (a) the first-order weak evaluations on which they are founded (e.g., "People should *care* in order to alleviate *pain*"); (b) other second-order strong evaluations (e.g., "People should embrace *compassion* because it is necessary to extend proper *care*"); as well as (c) higher-order moral systems and principles which are themselves grounded in other first- or second-order goods (e.g., "People should *care* about each other in order to create a *just society*"). It follows, however, that moral conflict between people, times, places, and cultures is likely to be the rule rather than the exception. If I justify an ethos of *care* and *compassion* in terms of the goods of alleviating *pain* and meeting *need*, you may justify *self-reliance* in terms of the good of *moving through pain*.

Citizens of Western societies tend to approach moral conflict from the standpoint of *moral pluralism*—the idea that there can existence multiple legitimate albeit contradictory moral principles, codes, and foundations. From this view, people seek to address moral conflict through rhetoric—by debating the merits of one good over the other, by convincing, by amassing data supporting one position or another, and by voting and other democratic means. Moral relationalism, however, holds out for the possibility of *moral progress* rather than mere pluralism. If moral statements gain their justification through appeals to different moral goods, and if these goods are properties of human relational experience, it follows that the conflicting goods that people embrace in different times, places, and cultures are not alien to one another. If moral goods arise in relational experience, then further relational engagement always offers the constructive possibility forging new ways of relating through which people can coordinate, transcend or otherwise reconcile competing moral values.

Note

1 The question of whether it is possible to have a "moral science" relies deeply upon one's conception of science itself. The traditional view of science, imported from the natural sciences, builds upon the concept of *objectivity*. This consists of the idea that scientific descriptions must be (a) based on *observable* phenomena, (b) *unbiased* in the sense of not adding or subtracting information from the event in question, (c) accurate descriptions of the world *as it really is*. Traditional science preserves a distinction between *facts*—unbiased descriptions of what is—and *values*—conceptions of how the world should be. From this view, the idea of a *moral science* would seem to be a contradiction in terms. The attempt to identify moral *values* objectively violates the fact/value distinction upon which the concept of objectivity is based. The possibility of a "moral science" becomes more plausible, however, if we abandon the objective/subjective dichotomy that gives rise to the fact/value distinction. We do not gain psychological knowledge by inspecting observable behavior and then making inferences about the subjective states and evaluations that lie behind them. We gain such knowledge through our capacity for *intersubjective engagement* (Mascolo, 2016). Moral values are not objective aspects of the world, but instead are emergent aspects of relational experience. A genuinely moral science would be one founded not on principles of objectivity and fealty to a natural order, but instead one that makes appeal to the ways in which moral values are arise from and are corroborated within intersubjective experience (Mascolo & Kallio, 2019).

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