

A Meadian Approach to Radical Bohmian Dialogue

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ABSTRACTS

Issues of communication and the possibilities for the transformation of perspectives through an experimental dialogue resulting in a mutual, open, receptive, and non-judgmental consideration of the other are addressed in this paper from transdisciplinary theoretical and conceptual standpoints. The warrant for cultivating this type of communicative ability is based on arguments resulting from the assumption of widespread confusion and conflict in intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, and ecological relations across the globe. I argue that there are two distinct classes of “reasons” for this proposed practice of dialogue. First is recognition of the need for human individuals to engage in a regular and systematic “social maintenance” of embodied consciousness to forestall the continuous colonization of the past/future on the living present that embodied consciousness entails. Second is the teaching of a skill to creatively and respectfully engage with others in a mutual transformation of perspectives. This paper addresses the general problem of perspectives and reflexivity at the root of the communication phenomenon and by extension – to its scale and to its pathologies in individuals and collectives. It is argued that suspension of judgment, assumption, and habit (broadly) helps interlocutors to recognize the possibility of holding one’s history in a tensional abeyance and to focus on the living present independent of habitualized and reified identities and the embodied manner in which we unconsciously carry ourselves as social or “universalized selves” in social situations.

Keywords: GH Mead, dialogue, communication, intersubjective, David Bohm, transdisciplinary

INTRODUCTION

The general problématique addressed in this paper concerns communication and the possibilities for the transformation of perspectives through an experimental

form of dialogue, explored by the author (Francovich, 2013), in which people suspend their immediate habitual response to one another, and allow speech to arise without plan, intention, or judgment. Such a learned way-of-being together may result in a mutual, open, receptive, and non-judgmental mode of intersubjectivity¹ and facilitate the ability and desire to deeply listen. Warrant for cultivating this dialogical capacity is evident in breakdowns and despair in intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, and ecological relations across the globe. I argue that there are two distinct classes of “reasons” for this proposed practice of dialogue. First is recognition of the need for human individuals to engage in a regular and systematic “social maintenance” of our habitual embodied consciousness² to forestall its continuous colonization of the past/future in the living present. Second, and most crucial for civil society, is the mentoring of natural relational abilities and the teaching of skills to creatively and respectfully engage with others in a mutual transformation of perspectives. In order to credibly forward my thesis I will address the general problem of perspectives (relational difference) and reflexivity (embodied reflective consciousness) at the root of the communication phenomenon and by extension – to its scale and pathologies in individuals and collectives.

COMMUNICATION & DIALOGUE

Communication as an idea generally assumes pre-existing things, selves, or subjects and then grapples with the problem of connecting them via messages or shared meanings (Peters, 2000). My argument, building on the work of George Herbert Mead, and then extending Mead’s work to the dialogic thinking of David Bohm, is that selves are themselves a dialogic tangle of perspectives emerging from a pluralistic universe of perspectives. Communication problems do not inhere only in incommensurate meanings or interpretations but more foundationally in the mistaken belief that our descriptions and perceptions of the world are accurate representations of an objective and singular reality. I argue that our ordinary perceptual and epistemological beliefs about the world and each other create an artificial beginning point for any interaction predicated on ontological differences that do not hold either scientifically or aesthetically (Altman & Rogoff, 1987; Corradi Fiumara, 1990; Dewey, 2005; Madzia, 2013b). These assumed ontological differences can also become significant barriers to our taking responsibility for our actions situationally, at increasing levels of scale and with increasing amounts of power and/or privilege. Differentiated roles and identities can anonymize our participation in human relationships (Natanson, 1966) as well as our relationship with the broader biological and ecological environment. This pattern of anonymous role identification is built up in individuals and society in such a way that participation and an openness to the “other” is forestalled. We don’t hear and have forgotten how to listen.

Our inability to “listen” to the other can result in a “benumbing” (Corradi Fiumara, 1990) that may leave us fundamentally unable to effectively respond to others and/or to take responsibility for our own ongoing behavior.

That which we are *not* capable of listening to reaches us in any case, in ways that may induce passivity or unutterable torpid states whereby we are increasingly restricted to ever more mechanistically territorial contentions, whether in favour of or against something. (p. 83)

The dialogue practice outlined here is predicated on the ethical necessity of promoting behavior that does “take responsibility” for its actions and on the view that action itself is an always relational and ethical movement (Joas, 1996). Communication based on a strategy of negotiating functional differences that is framed through an ethic of radical response-ability may be a much more fruitful practice than existing discourse based on disciplinary and traditional separations.

I argue that current strategies for navigating social interactions imply a promise to smoothly and effortlessly untangle us from the paradox of language through a virtually continuous switched on capacity for differentiating self from other in a timeless space. Our culturally and historically developed reflective capacity calibrates our movement and orders our perceptions and ideas according to the generally acceptable scheme of ontological separation (and all it entails) assuring membership, coherence, and meaning. We habitually defer the existential present to the conceptually rendered “objective world” distilled from a complex and holistic participatory field of relationships. This is tragic in that the best of reflective consciousness has demonstrated in both art and science that this is simply not the case – we are not *ontologically* separate from each other or from the environment; and space is not empty and divorced from time. Whitehead (1938) observed in talking about the reluctance of his colleagues to seriously take up the implications of relativity and quantum theories that

The state of modern thought is that every single item of this general doctrine [Cartesian/ Newtonian paradigm] is denied, but the general conclusions from the doctrine as a whole are tenaciously retained. The result is a complete muddle in scientific thought, in philosophic cosmology, and in epistemology. (p. 132)

Whitehead’s observation remains pertinent today particularly as it relates to mainstream social science and questions of communication and selves. While “general conclusions from the doctrine as a whole” may, from a quantum physicist’s or philosophers point of view, be in error; they nonetheless are remarkably robust and effective. This paper in no way minimizes either the robustness or effectiveness of rational abstract thought based on a binary Aristotelian logic (Nicolescu, 2002) or what Finkenthal (2001) understands as a “Galilean-Newtonian” perspective that has come to operate within a singular (and controlling) methodology he calls the “mathesis universalis” (p. 5). Rather the intent is to situate abstract thought properly as a subset of a larger phenomenon that can take account of its utility but at the same time limit its effects – particularly in the realm

of intersubjective communication. This larger phenomenon is understood here in human terms as embodied relational coherence emerging as a function of shared activity rooted in local situated contexts.

For the sciences in general I argue that the existential self is itemized along with other disciplinary categorizations and recedes as unproblematically assumed or marginal to the more abstract and “appropriate” concerns such as, for example, neuroscience, computation, ethics, economics, or political action – talking seriously about consciousness³ is often treated as a distraction and methodological cul-de-sac, taking us away from real issues and problems of the day (Schrug, 1980; Stacey, 2012). What comes to matter is the objective 3rd person perspective – objects and icons – symbols, categorizations, brands, and popularized meanings. Consequently the embodied, the ordinary, and the local recede from view. Membership in what Taylor (2007) calls the neo-liberal global “imaginary” requires that we generally accept the notion that we are separate from each other, from the earth and from the cosmos; and that we hold as mattering most the ideas of economy, excellence, and “freedom” – all this rendered through the lens of private property and the tradition of western colonialism.

I argue that the mitigation of communication difficulties within the self, in dyads, and in groups requires an intention or disposition to listen (Corradi Fiumara, 1990; Lipari, 2014) and learn and that the possibility of recognizing this disposition is rooted in a pre-linguistic embodied sensitivity and awareness of the relational “space”, its place in human interaction, and its value in terms of group cohesion and survival. My use of the term “space” is expressed by Cooper (2005), where, in following Merleau-Ponty, he observes:

Space, any space, is much more than the container of things; it “is not the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the means whereby the positing of things becomes possible” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 243)... Connection and relationship are the vehicles that human agency carves out of pre-objective space so that its latency can be re-lated through the meaningful arrangements of the things and objects that make up the human world. The pre-objective world thus reminds us of the fundamental significance of the relationality of things rather than the things themselves. (pp. 1693-1694)

The experimental dialogue proposed below is intended to bring this “pre-objective” disposition or sensitivity to awareness and to cultivate its presence as a habit.

COMMUNICATION: SAMENESS & DIFFERENCE

However the claim that mitigating communication difficulties should result in “‘happy communication’ without asymmetries and tension” is, following Marková (2003), p. 96), rejected. The capacity for honest open communication requires the ability to navigate the context of the other (as we are navigated) and this necessarily points to tension, difference, and uncertainty. Being able to stay in community with this uncertainty has been recognized as a key component to healthy

attachment in infancy and the growing ability to engage in “collaborative *contingent* communication” (Siegel, 1999, p. 70, emphasis mine). In fact, the literature on attachment is significant in helping us chart the course through the development of sensation and perception to the emergence of conceptions, language, and identity (Ammaniti & Gallese, 2014; Cozolino, 2006; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Our identities and the identities of objects in our world persist – indeed we urge their persistence, yet we also must adapt to the continual flux of events and the unfolding future. My argument utilizing Taylor’s social imaginary as well as the specific focus on embodied habits reflect this tension between order (what is the “same”) and disorder (disturbance by what is “different”) with both in the context of change and an overall processual view of reality. As will be discussed below one of the major impediments to developing a sensitivity to relational phenomena as adults is the inability to creatively exist amidst the uncertainty and contingency of everyday life; life in a diverse but widely connected society where social roles and identity are understood as the legitimate tools and markers of social stability. The logic of this social imaginary is binary and unequivocal – one either is or is not. From an epistemological perspective (as opposed to a strictly sociocultural perspective) the ability to think and reason in logics different than either/or signals a transformation in cognitive and perceptual skills that point to an ability to subsume the polarization of a substance ontology to one of process, change, and uncertainty (Emirbayer, 1997; Gebser, 1985; Rosen, 2004). One of my general assumptions is that beginning from a processual and relational ontology better accounts for human communication dynamics than does beginning with a substantive ontology. This will also be expressed as one of the key implications of this overall argument in relation to early childhood education and the learning process in general.

Given this primary assumption and problématique a key question then goes to understanding not only why this state of affairs persists and why the seemingly rational and scientific view of the necessity of open and receptive communicative interaction is apparently so difficult to achieve but also *how* it persists in the daily and ordinary consciousness of human lives. Answering these questions and positing a practical method of dialogue that may mitigate this communication difficulty is the purpose of this paper.

WHY DIALOGUE ISN'T WORKING

There is little evidence to suggest that a mere knowledge of the requirement of a communicative disposition toward openness results in much material change in communicative efficacy. Efforts at teaching and practicing intergroup dialogue, for example, continue and while evidencing some effectiveness (Dessel, 2011), there is still no widespread recognition of the practice as consistently and widely successful. Many people of good will find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to listen to and/or understand others that hold radically divergent perspectives,

world views, or moral/ethical frameworks (Povinelli, 2000). Why, one wonders, can't human beings more readily learn this?

The conceptual frame offered here consists of a theoretical analysis of the hypothetical local and immediate experience of normal interlocutors in dialogue. Characterizations of "immediate experience", "normal interlocutors" and "dialogue" will be worked out below in the context of Mead's general philosophy of organisms and minds and with reference to Bohm's physics inspired work on communication. It should also be noted that the dialogue technique discussed here is not necessarily consistent with current methods and theories driving intergroup dialogue. My investigation of dialogue does concern a particular kind of social situation (the Bohmian inspired dialogue circle) but not an intergroup dialogue designed to work with or solve any specific problem or issue (see for example National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, 2014). Rather I position the work discussed here at a level "below" intergroup dialogue and argue that it serve as a prerequisite for successful intergroup dialogue as conceived by the NCDD and others.

While I feel it necessary to spend a considerable amount of energy on opening up the topics of the sociality, perspectives and the Meadian self I do not intend to fully characterize them except as they are relevant to my thesis about interpersonal dialogue. However this beginning technical discussion is necessary to lay a foundation for the brief discussion of the work of Bohm (1980, 1992, 1996) which, in encompassing his interpretation of quantum physics and its explication in the context of inquiry into consciousness and dialogue, is quite problematic in clearly connecting his work to psychosocial and sociocultural interpretations of normal human communication. This concern is particularly heightened in light of how organizational consultants and other popularizers of Bohm's work (see Isaacs, 1999; Scharmer, 2007; Senge, 2005), have necessarily simplified and glossed over what to my mind are more relevant naturalistic/theoretical elements of his thinking.

Mead's (2002) development of the concepts of sociality, perspectives, and time as the naturalistic and pragmatic ground for the emergence of language and reflective consciousness are used to open up Bohm's dialogue praxis. Bohm's (1996) insight that proprioceptive body awareness (i.e., the body's capacity to feel itself) is analogous and/or complementary to what he called the capacity for "proprioceptive thought" (p. 24) is the key move in relating Bohm's work to Mead's naturalism and at the same time preserving Mead's commitment to the construction of selves and social worlds through language. I interpret proprioception through the lens of Mead's sociality as the ontological, biological, physiological, and embodied mechanism underlying gesture/response signaling between organisms that has led to the evolution of human reflective consciousness and the development of language.

Bohm's interest in the "wholeness" of these functions is consistent with Mead, Dewey, and others in recognizing that our reducing phenomena to the binary

logic of the excluded middle (if A, then not A) necessarily denies the holism that subsumes perspectival reductions (or atomism). Holism is argued as a processual ontology and perspectival reductionism as a substance ontology, and as noted above, both are necessary. However, I am starting my analysis from the perspective of holism.

Initially, and supporting this general *problématique* around communication, I will develop two themes - first I will argue Mead's plausible hypothesis concerning the structure of sociality, perspectives, and self/other relationships; and second, I will frame this argued "self and self/other" in the context of social membership and contemporary interpretations of social behaviors. Both of these threads will help characterize "normal interlocutors" as ordinary people engaged in ordinary interactions and the overall conceptual scheme of "dialogue" as the reciprocal but conflicting or tensional intersection of individual perspectives. The discussion of "immediate experience" will be explored through the consideration of Mead's notion of sociality, time and time's constitutive role in the development of organisms, selves, and social worlds. It is my view that practical issues in communication effectiveness arise from the complex interaction or movement of individual perspectives, sociocultural beliefs, and historical horizons as they are continually enacted in our daily relational experience. Effective dialogue between and among interlocutors, I argue, makes ordinary intersubjective interaction extraordinary – it makes problematic the everyday taken-for-grantedness of habitual interaction patterns and strategies.

My thesis is that a dialogical and disciplined social practice of body awareness can result in this problematizing of intersubjectivity; which in turn can radically alter the sociocultural and historical horizon taken up within the individual as habit and, as such, those automatic behaviors at the root of communicative intransigence. What is at stake in this process is an altering and reframing of roles and identities as commonly understood and enacted in everyday life – a perturbation of what is "normal" so as to encounter directly the "different". What is necessary, I argue, is a much more porous, flexible, and accommodating subjectivity that is not easily susceptible to being fixed or branded by either the self or the sociocultural milieu.

WORKING WITH MEAD

At the root of efforts to understand social phenomena is the question and problem of consciousness and the linking of consciousness with embodied evolved structures that we objectively know as our "selves". Individual human experience, language, and socio-historical cultural phenomena are all indexed in one way or another to bodies and the sentient and self-aware experience of living. George Herbert Mead was vitally interested in this relationship and spent the major part of his intellectual career pursuing its coherent account. My use of Mead's work on sociality, perspectives, and the emergence of the self are meant to illuminate key

aspects of Bohm's ideas about dialogue and set a foundation for interpreting as well as provide theoretical explanations for some of Bohm's, to my mind, more casual assertions about the nature of thinking and thought. The discussions on sociality, perspectives, selves, and society comprise an extended argument for taking seriously the phenomenology of ordinary interactions.

SOCIALITY

Mead's integration of mental experience with physical bodies (organisms) was an early example of what feminist and physicist Barad (2007) has termed "ethico-onto-epistem-ology" (p. 185) or a joining together of naturalistic interpretations with discursive interpretations of reality – an effort to wed materialist and idealist frameworks into a holistic theoretical framework and to forge a link between metaphysics and empiricism. Mead's work in general (Chang, 2004; Gunter, 1990) concerned the emergence of reflective consciousness and the social self/other as a natural process available to objective scientific analysis and rooted in the material processes studied by physicists and other natural scientists. According to Joas (1997),

Mead considers a cosmology, in the sense of a comprehensive scientific view of the world, possible if it is not conceived of as a theory of nature which is independent of humanity, but is rather understood from the perspective of a nature which is unfolding itself through the universalization of action and of cognition. (p. 186)

The problem for Mead was in linking cognition to biology *through* consciousness and not remaining outside reality as if consciousness was an impartial and neutral observer of the world as it "is". Mead had to find a theoretical perspective that could explain consciousness as constitutive of reality and not separate from it. He did this through his work on sociality – particularly as expressed in his last work *The Philosophy of the Present* (2002) but woven through his entire oeuvre and particularly in the *Philosophy of the Act* (1938).

Mead (2002) observed that

The social character of the universe [is what] we find in the situation in which the novel event is in both the old order and the new which its advent heralds. Sociality is the capacity of being several things at once. (p. 75)

For Mead sociality is a principle underlying all phenomena that changes – it reflects the "adjustment" of the past (the old order) of an entity to the creative and "living" present (the new) with its implications for the future. It also includes the phenomenon of emergence as both a quality in and of experience and the natural world as well as an explanandum for manifestation itself. Mead describes sociality as composed of two dimensions (Mead, 2002, pp. 98-99). First is the temporal capacity for a thing to be both more and less than itself at the same time

– more in the sense that any “present” is adding on to the past and “less” in that any present and past has not yet become what it will be. The ‘thing’ holds all this in its continual occurrence as a thing. Any object, any particle, any organism, any “thing” is always implicated in a complex transition between being, from an observer’s perspective, what it was, what it phenomenologically is, and what it will become. Mead is interested in the nature of “organisms” not as static objects, or as theoretical models, but as phenomenological entities that are in process or experience and by virtue of their manifestation create the temporal field.

The second dimension is the realization that sociality is also always already plural (see Buchler, 1990) – that is, there are always “systems of things” arising together which suggest that “the nature of the individual is in varying degrees the expression of the natures of other members of the system or society” (Mead, 2002, p. 98). Whether it is particles, atomic structures, molecules, tissues, organisms in general, or humans, these various manifestations are always in, as it were, community and understood by observers (selves) as timeless structures and available to scientific inquiry. Sociality is also at the root of Mead’s definition of a perspective (described below) which is an instance of sociality.

The physical or material world of the scientist – the “matter” and “time” of physicists, played a central role in Mead’s utilization and understanding of relativity theory as validation for his theory of sociality. He learned from and used the work of Whitehead on a number of fronts. Whitehead’s concepts of *occasions of experience*, *prehension*, *percipient event*, and *consentient set* (see Griffin, 2007) all served to help Mead “ground the spatial and temporal structures of the perceptual world in our concrete experience of passage” (Cook, 1993 p. 142). Mead went beyond Whitehead’s process driven naturalism however in his inclusion of consciousness as an ‘objective’ element in the processual universe (Cook, p. 144). Sociality reflects the continual adjustment of perspectives where the perspective is understood as “the world in its relationship to the individual and the individual in [its] relationship to the world. The unambiguous instance of the perspective is the biological form and its environment or habitat” (Mead, 1938, p. 115). Sociality, as I interpret it, subsumes under this definition of perspective, any instance of manifestation – any particle, atom, molecule or other physical structure – each of these is in relation to its environment and is fundamentally installed as a moment in the entire field. Miller (1973) goes on to describe the perspective as the coincidence of “the percipient event [organism], an act of adjustment, and a spatiotemporal ordering” (p. 20). Reality is understood by Mead not as a Parmenidean universe of objects in empty space but a tangle of perspectives with which human bodies and reflective consciousness participate. Consequently sociality is understood broadly as an argument for the ubiquitous presence (in the universe) of a perspectival/relational intercourse generative of both matter and meaning (Barad, 2007). More narrowly applied, sociality grounds the pragmatic and scientific analysis of action, behavior, speech, and thought. Mead’s work has obvious parallels with recent empirical research (Ammaniti & Gallese, 2014; Siegel, 1999, 2007) and

theorizing (Barad, 2007; Deacon, 2012) uniting physical interpretations of matter and biological processes with social interpretations of relationship and meaning.

Mead's sociality serves as an explanatory context for the emergence of organisms and environments, and finally the appearance of selves, language, and reflective thought. His overall scheme is supported by a coherent discussion of temporality as evidenced by perspectives and supported by his interpretation of relativity theory and the overall problem in physical science regarding the inclusion of perspectives in the study of the "objects" of science (da Silva, 2007; Perinbanayagam, 1986). At the root of my interest in Mead's work is the realization of these theoretical elements in the phenomenology of the body and the self, in relationships between ordinary interlocutors in everyday experience and in the effects of social worlds on that experience. What is asserted here is that an *awareness* of both emergence and sociality is a possibility for dialogic interlocutors and that this awareness may be a solvent to habitual unconscious behavior.

The "self" as conceived here follows Mead (1934; 1938; 1981; 2002) in suggesting the self as the ongoing result of social organization; and that social organization is itself the ongoing result of a universal process of sociality encompassing, what to Mead's generation were understood as material (objective) and mental (subjective) domains. Mead taught that language, as originating in the purposeful activity of organisms and emerging in humans as the development of the significant symbol, both creates and is carried by the phenomenon of reflective thought that is the basis for interpretation, understanding, and explanation characterized as the self. He observed that the self necessarily is composed such that subject/object distinctions could be made and acted on individually (experientially and subjectively) and collectively (objectively). However this function did not emerge ex nihilo but follows from sociality and the evolutionary emergence of perspectives.⁵

PERSPECTIVES

For Mead the "perspective" is an objective and empirical instance of the metaphysics of sociality. His work demonstrates a plausible scenario for the emergence of both mental phenomena (cognition) and consciousness. However, at the heart of the conversation concerning subjectivity is the problem of consciousness in relation to and in contrast with the so-called "objective" nature of physical facts – that is, the empirical availability of these "facts" in the common world from the vantage of a rational and objective observer. At the heart of this problem are contested views on the nature of reality – specifically as revealed to human beings though the spatial and temporal world of our sense experience modified by language. Quantum physics has problematized the view of a "block universe" that exists spatially and temporally in four dimensions extending infinitely out and away from observers. This view depends on an "exteriorization" of reality thereby putting consciousness of reality "outside" its manifestation in thought and inside it in terms of matter (see Barad, 2007, p. 173). This is an untenable view.

Mead worked to establish an objective basis for mental phenomena and consciousness that did not require a transcendent (exterior) or mystical/magical property to explain it. In developing this line of thought he utilized theorizing and conceptual frameworks from others – most notably the work of Whitehead on the “naturalization” of experience in time.⁶ Mead (1981) writes,

The percipient event [the organism] establishes a lasting character of here and there, of now and then, and is itself an enduring pattern. The pattern repeats itself in the passage of events... These recurrent patterns are grasped together or prehended into a unity, which must have as great a temporal spread as the organism requires to be what it is whether this period is found in the revolutions of the electrons in an iron atom or in the specious present of a human being. (p. 307)

What Mead was getting at here was a way to communicate that reality is composed of these “percipient events” amidst their contexts or “consentient sets” such that, depending on the type and order of entity, would suggest a “perspective” that would reveal reality in such a way that it would accommodate the event. Prehension is Whitehead’s notion of a primordial process whereby an object or an organism always carries forward from the past into the present a history or pattern of expression (similar to sociality). It is a characterization and interpretation of endurance or persistence through what Whitehead understood as “pantemporalism” (Griffin, 2007, p. 133) and Mead (following Bergson) understood as “duration” or “passage” (Mead, 1936, pp. 311-312). For Mead and Whitehead this analysis serves as the basis for the emergence of a holistic awareness as a complement to mechanical sensation. Again, this thinking is consistent with contemporary (if not contested) understanding of how matter and meaning intertwine (Barad, 2007; Deacon, 2012).

Mead (1981) noted in absorbing and then applying the work of the then contemporary physics of relativity as articulated by Whitehead that

The conception of the perspective as there in nature is in a sense an unexpected donation by the most abstruse physical science to philosophy. They are not distorted perspectives of some perfect patterns, whose reality is to be found in a noumenal world. They are in their interrelationship the nature that science knows. (p. 308)

Mead’s next step in this process of employing Whitehead’s thinking in his understanding of how biological organisms can host the emergence of selves was to note that

Any such structure [for Mead an organism] stratifies nature by its intersection into its perspective and differentiates its own permanent space and time from the general passage of events. Thus the world of the physical sciences is swept into the domain of organic environments, and there is no world of independent physical entities out of which the perspectives are merely selections. In the place of such a world appear all of the perspectives in their interrelationship to each other. (p. 308)

This analysis allows Mead to broaden his discussion to include the behavior of organisms in environments and the obvious role of perception and sentience in activity. His thesis is that organisms act purposefully toward ends and are driven by their histories, their biological structures, and their creative adaptation to events in time. Time consequently becomes a central focus.

Mead argues that "...reality exists in a present. The present of course implies a past and a future, and to these both we deny existence" (2002, p. 35). For Mead our existence and our experience occurs within a "specious present"⁷ that is defined in part as "the immediate field conditioning possible action" (Mead, 1938, p. 228). The "immediate present" is thus that experience that our body and our awareness delivers to us of our involvement in activity – and this activity is conditioned by, as argued above, what has previously occurred and what may, or is intended, to occur. These experiences of the immediate past and the immediate future within the immediate present, along with our differentiation from "objects", lay out the template for an eventual cognitive, conceptual, and abstract landscape of an infinite past and an infinite future (Mead, 1938). This social imaginary creates the abstract field within which science (and now common sense) operates in imagining the "actual" or "real" nature of objects in timeless space – and the so called reality at an "instant". Using Mead's interpretation of temporality as fundamentally embodied - our experience is "of" time as we enact it rather than "in" time. We, like our animal kin, are emerging as perspectives that hold our various "living presents" as the contexts for our activity. It is exactly to this experience of the living present that the dialogue practice discussed below is aimed at and that runs counter to the global imaginary that distances us from our bodies, from one another and from the earth as a living system of which we are an emergent part. Mead's interpretation and analysis of perspectives and his discussion of the emergence of the social "self" is, I believe, a coherent and logical explanation for how human beings have evolved from a nondual wholeness of embodied reflexivity into a time and space fractured subject/object consciousness capable of abstract thinking.

Similar to Dewey and Bentley's (1949) analysis of organism/environment relations subsumed under the "life process" (p. 104), Mead argues for a nondual interpretation of our experience and analysis of duality or self/other relations. As he argued above there is no separation between physical and organic (living) perspectives or entities. Mead (1938) observed:

The nature of the environment of the biological form is its relationship to the form, what we term the logical determination of the environment by the form. On the other hand, the form is that which the environment does to the form, what may be termed the causal determination of the form by the environment. The spatial mapping-out of the world from the standpoint of the physical thing is the setting and bounding of it, while the volume of the thing is the effect of this setting and bounding the thing itself. (p. 200)

The organism emerges with its environment through its adaptive activity – its adaptive activity is co-determined by its physical structure⁸; and the environment of the organism emerges with the organism by affording it context within which its structure can act. This mutuality is another example of sociality or “the capacity of being several things at once” (Mead, 2002, p. 75).

What appears to habitual reflective consciousness is a world that *seems to be* already there – whole and complete, what is not commonly understood is that collective consciousness, or language, has constructed that social world – and what we see are residuals of that world carried over via our mind’s prehensive capture of the past. We have “an” experience (a memory or image) of a world as opposed to direct experience of the world (see Gadamer, 2013, pp. 58–64). Habitual reflective consciousness has fragmented the nondual world of spacetime and the unity of the organism/environment relation into an historical tableaux within which we mostly live. This, following Mead, is illusory in that the partial perspective that is human reflective consciousness now assumes the role of a synoptic perspective that can apparently potentially see everything as it is and at an “instant” in time – seemingly an omniscient perspective. Our conceptual partitions (Latour, 1996) have simplified and occluded the complex reality of the living present.

The presumption that reflective consciousness can know the entirety of reality is at least partly born from the fear and insecurity of an embodied awareness of the multiplicity of perspectives. The uncertainty, chaos, and/or Apeiron of the multiplicity of intersecting perspectives that constitute this inferred reality are shocking and destabilizing to our evolved and historical pattern of living that is delivered to us as norms and traditions in a coherent social world (see Rosen, 2004; Wood, 2012).

However, as Mead understands, we have no choice but to act on our reflective capacities and to learn about the world as it emerges for us through a scientific or reflective endeavor. But for Mead this is not an institutionalized scientism (Joas, 1997, p. 201) but an activity carried out freely in the living present – it is a way of being and being together with others that is, at its core, present to issues at hand and relying on the history and anticipated future only as it serves the problems in the living present. Mead’s work both demands and affords the practice of getting as much to the “bottom of things” as one can. His naturalism in conjunction with his philosophical and phenomenological insight continue to insist on a reasonable if not rational account of human consciousness (Joas, 1997).

Mead does not deny the verisimilitude or utility of abstract thinking and being – he celebrates it; but he does recognize it as abstraction (or as an “imaginary”) that occurs within the ambit of language and reflective consciousness and as such reflects the relative perspectives of human beings (as opposed to “true” statements about an absolute reality) as enacted socially. The trajectory of science and its role in the emergence of technology has been described well by Arendt (1958), Habermas (1981); Latour (1993), and many others (certainly by Marx) and is predicated on the development of methods of logical inference and the

objectification and commodification of material and abstract instrumental processes. These analyses, along with a host of methodological debates in both the social sciences and humanities continue to populate modern discourse. A current interpretation by Lanier (2013) offers a compelling argument as to the effects of abstract and virtual-to-concrete modes of operation in his metaphor of the “siren servers” (e.g., Google, Amazon, Twitter, Wal-Mart) that are currently aggregating and rationalizing information from dynamic, individual, and local sources. My general point is that western and Greek based epistemological, technological, and economic methods and structures have effectively colonized global communities, cultures, and psyches and continue to do so at a rapid rate (see Corradi Fiumara, 2013). One of the consequences of the general trend is an alienation from both the earth as a living responsive system and individual bodies as carriers of this embodied set of relations. As will be discussed below the impact of these trends on infant experience and early childhood education are significant and can, I argue, be partially mitigated by employing a radical process of social learning through the dialogue circle.

Mead’s analysis of the organism/environment relationship necessarily includes us as organisms being able to reflect on and discuss this state of affairs. In order to do this and at the same time remain honest to the discussion of the nondual nature of the context of our experience as organisms independent of reflection we must (I argue) develop concomitant perceptual abilities that afford us the ability to participate in the wholeness we are reflectively maintaining that we are composed of and as. In this effort I follow Bohm (1992; 1996), as will be discussed below, in the effort to understand the role of “thought” as potentially obscuring the emergence of creative action.

SELVES AND SOCIETIES

A final step in reviewing Mead’s work is discussion of his basic thesis of the self predicated on the gradual and increasing, but always already present, complexity of society. The phenomenon of collectives of human beings interacting at varying levels of scale and through common sense interpretations of time are assimilated by individual persons through language as both identities and beliefs – as norms, rules, and traditions – in Mead’s lexicon this represents the “Me” aspect of the self or the “generalized other”. The “Me” is gradually built up into the complex and heterogeneous phenomenon we know today as the self in all its guises – identity, ego, role, personality, performer/performed – all with their concomitant histories, attitudes, habits, and various frames and contexts for interaction. While pragmatist influenced sociology has typically investigated human interaction in terms of its relationship to social aggregates, variously from micro-interactions to macro-structures or macro-structures to micro-interactions (Goffman, 1983; Strauss, 1993), mainstream psychology has attempted to understand interaction as a consequence of properties and

functions in the body and the mind and then outward to others (Reed, 1998). In all these cases language, thinking, and ideas are the context for our interpretations.

In contrast to that history Mead's view of social interaction can be first understood as happening naturalistically amongst bodies (i.e., sociality) – then social selves (i.e., perspectives), and consequently our experience begins with affective and haptic involvement. Mead understood this as “contact” experience and held it as the basis for our experience of reality. “Final perceptual reality, however, always presupposes actual or possible manipulatory contact, i.e., it presupposes matter” (Mead, 2002, p. 124). However, this is a problem for any sociology or scheme that abstracts human action to aggregate (and abstract) categorical conceptions of the world and its contents. Shilling (2012) observed that “Lived experience is not necessarily normative experience, and people's encounters with society are also mediated by feelings, prompted by *internal physiological processes*, which may encourage them to feel ‘ill at ease’ with and oppose social norms” (p. 251, emphasis mine).

Mead's work interpreted phenomenologically (see Rosenthal & Bourgeois, 1991) as well as emerging literatures on embodied reflexivity (Pagis, 2009), the sociology of the senses (Vannini, Waskul, & Gottschalk, 2012), and existential phenomenology (Todes, 2001) all hold a place open for a pre-reflective embodied intelligent awareness. Pagis (2009) notes that “On one end of the continuum are symbolic internal conversations that are distanced from bodily experience. On the other end are embodied processes that monitor the nonverbal semiotics⁹ of second –order sensations” (p. 279).

Vannini et al. (2012) write that

The embodied self is both the material basis and reflexive outcome of perceived sensations and sense-making practices. In this way, sensations and sense-making body forth a sensuous self; a performative, reflexive, perceptive, intentional, indeterminate, emergent, embodied being-in-the-world. Just as interactionists conceive of the self as an empirical and agentic product of reflexive action, experience, and performance, so too the sensuous self emerges in somatic experience, fashioned by the practices and rituals through which we gain a sense of ourselves and the sensory order in which we live. (p. 85)

This view brings us closer to a workable interface between individuals as organisms/bodies and selves as social actors. Existential phenomenologists have confirmed both Whitehead and Mead in articulating that the body expresses what can be understood as *non-conceptual perceptual knowledge* of its world (Dreyfus, 2001, 2002; Merleau-Ponty, 2002; Todes, 2001). The body's initial and ongoing imitation and adaptation to its own and others' behaviors manifests as “performative sensing” (Reed, 1996b; Vannini et al., 2012, p. 124) establishing continuity and coherence through time. This pattern of biological adaptation and habitual response is transduced/translated to our social worlds via the reflexive and active operation of the social self as outlined by Mead.

The contemporary separation, confusion, and conflict between embodied experience and social identity is, as argued above, the result of an enlightenment informed science and social/economic theory and practice that have, on the strength of their Galilean-Newtonian foundation (Finkenthal, 2001, p. 5), developed a pervasive “social imaginary”¹⁰ (Taylor, 2007) concretized as a global, industrial, and class stratified mass economy. This imaginary privileges substance over process and mind over body – the result of a “shift from the enchanted to the identity form of presence” (p. 193). A primary assumption of this paper is that, along with the bulk of humanity’s entrainment in this social imaginary, mainstream social theory, sociology, and social psychology have also abetted this transduction of embodied experience into a persistent and conceptual abstraction privileging substance over process (Dewey, 2005; Gadamer, 2013; James, 1996; Shilling, 2012). This argument is coupled to the observations above that outline the relatively recent evolution in global culture of objective, abstract, analytical, and instrumental reason. If, in following Pagis above, we understand this general epistemological/ontological characterization of thinking and embodied reflexivity as existing on a continuum then one would have to say we are significantly pulled to the side of abstract thought, virtual representations, and concretized identities.

The habit of reflective consciousness as given over to scientism’s social imaginary has, according to Mead (2002) reduced the present to an “instant” (p. 61) and in so doing erased from legitimate discourse the experience of the living present of the average person. What has necessarily been sacrificed are the so called “secondary qualities” of our lived experienced – the products of our senses, our feelings and emotions, and our local and embodied beliefs about the world. The dialogue approach considered here is concerned with the possibility of opening up the living present to an awareness of habitualized social identity and its relationship to the discursive characterizations of sensation, feeling, emotion, and perception nested in the social/self field. Given that our interpersonal daily transactions with others occur within the context of phenomenological experience it seems reasonable to focus on the nature of this experience as both discursive (conceptual) and embodied (non-conceptual). I argue that we can approach “direct” experience¹¹ of the living present under the appropriate conditions of a more aesthetic and disciplined participatory involvement (Dewey, 2005, p. 50).

Of course experience occurs in the context of the discursive practices and discursive environments of the socially constructed self in its social worlds (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000) but the frisson and directness of embodiment is almost always occluded (I argue) by the move toward conceptual and political/cultural order as more or less continuously rendered through language and concretized in our habits and in our identities (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Given that our activity is lived at both local and global scales as the social imaginary described by Taylor (2007) then “we have both a sense of security in believing that it [order] is really in effect in our world and also a sense of our own superiority and goodness deriving from our participation in it and upholding it” (p. 182). Rather than recognizing,

as Madzia (2013a) observed of Mead; that “the human mind is an outcome of the appropriate brain-body-world coupling” (p. 210) we persist in separating consciousness from bodies and our thoughts from our deeds. Proximity to and involvement in embodied experience (the living present), I argue, perturbs the social self – it challenges and acts as a corrosive on identity, and to the sense of certainty that a stable coherent identity (or suite of identities) offers. The social or “conscious” self as an emergent of the biological individual (Mead, 2002) can be directly disturbed or antagonized when thwarted in its normal and mostly unconscious functioning vis á vis one’s own direct body experience (Bohm, 1996).

To the extent that experience in and of the living present may be confused with, or subsumed by “an experience” – or our habits, histories, discursive practices, social artifacts and/or institutional and cultural patterns of normative regulation, we may become actively (either consciously or unconsciously) resistant to the direct experience afforded by our perceptions and our bodies’ always and ongoing involvement in the immediate world. Taylor (2002) observed, “Experience is that wherein our previous sense of reality is undone, refuted, and shows itself as needing to be reconstituted” (pp. 281-282). This undoing and refutation *as a sensory and perceptual event* is difficult for the social self to accommodate. We appear to resist direct experience in proportion to its threat to our identity and the stability identity offers. Joas (1997/1980) writes of our problematic ongoingness observing that “In the action-problem the individual’s experience collides with the socially recognized interpretation of the world, which is also deposited in the prejudgmental structure of his own thinking” (p. 205). The problem here is in our automatically taking up these interpretations and unconscious habitual modes of being into our bodies through the mostly unconscious socializing processes of culture (e.g., education) and then being unable and/or unwilling to resist their ongoing and colonizing influence.

I approach the problem of communication and generative intersubjectivity from the standpoint of Mead’s sociality and his phenomenology of individual perspectives and argue that it is through the direct engagement of perspectives in the experimental dialogue discussed below that transformational change can happen. This change is effected primarily by disturbing and re-patterning habitual behaviors unconsciously enacted in mundane communicative encounters. It is precisely these “habits” that are those aspects of perspectives interpreted as having been shaped and conditioned by the individual’s milieu and history and serve as the prejudicial context (Gadamer, 2013/1975, p. 283) for interaction and the sense of an (at least in part) already “known” correct judgment of the situation by the individual in the interaction. Certainly this foreknowledge is a useful and economical application of mind to interactions when the context is relatively clear and the interlocutors relatively known. However, in the heterogeneous and cosmopolitan environment of the present day these anticipatory judgments about the other may become corrosive to collaboration and generative engagement. Tavory and

Timmermans (2014) note that “Every interpretant that emerges in the process of human communication refracts the sign-object through the lens of the interpreter’s particular proto-theoretical categories, preconceived notions, habits, and preferences” (p. 28). Bohmian dialogue may well serve as a vehicle for illuminating and changing these refracted embodied conditions.

Mead’s work, as outlined above, has served to lay a foundation for the remainder of the paper. Sociality is presented as the ontological/metaphysical ground of the argued objectivity of perspectives (Mead, 1927). Perspective’s then do a double duty of explaining the wholeness and unity of embodiment and manifestation in general as well as help explain the development of reflective consciousness and its development and place in social worlds alongside embodied participatory involvement. Current social problems related to aggregates of human beings (selves) in diverse social, cultural, and economic worlds can be traced, investigated, and perhaps mitigated using the dialogue offered by David Bohm.

BOHM’S PERSPECTIVE

David Bohm (1917-1992) was a theoretical physicist and philosopher who argued for an alternative view of the cosmos predicated on a non-canonical view of quantum physics insisting on an unbroken wholeness, or an “implicate order”, that subtends manifestation and the “explicate order” (Bohm, 1980). Later in his life he wrote about consciousness, communication, and physical embodiment as expressions, vehicles, and/or conduits for this wholeness. The scope of his work discussed here will be limited to his thinking about communication and the practice of generative dialogue (Bohm, 1980, 1992, 1996). Bohm, like Mead, was interested in the processes implicated in the phenomenon of human consciousness and he also connected his thinking to a naturalistic account of the world. While his quantum physics is beyond my capacity to review and situate here it does reveal a striking similarity to the current work of thinkers like Barad (2007) and to Mead’s basic thesis on the emergence of perspectives through sociality. I interpret Bohm’s implicate order as analogous to Mead’s metaphysics of sociality and to what Corradi Fiumara (1990), pp. 11-17) understands as listening over and against speaking. Her analysis (following Heidegger) of the pre-classical Greek use of the words *logos* (roughly translated as speaking-into-being and a noun) and *legein* (or gathering, opening, and listening – a verb) points to human experience as situated in the cosmos with embodied capacities for translation and experience. Bohm’s discussion of the implicate order was, under this reading, not simply an esoteric theory of hidden variables in quantum theory but a speculative and abductive effort to link what we know about thought and language to what we know about the physical universe.

THOUGHT, THINKING, & COMMUNICATION

Bohm's work coupled with the framework for the development of reflective consciousness offered by Mead supports the hypothesis that intentional dialogue can help rewrite or transform habitual social behaviors. From Mead's social psychology perspective we see habits and norms as necessary outgrowths of a coherent interpretation of society. From Bohm's perspective we see these habits much more explicitly indexed to the operation of thought and language in ordinary experience and as interpreted through a more thorough going physical interpretation of the nature of human thinking. Bohm's experience as a physicist had apparently trained him to seek explanations consistent with the experimental findings of physics, chemistry, and physiology. Bohm (1996) complements Mead's argument for a meaningful naturalism and suggests that

The essential thing is that the body process is a movement, beginning with an impulse and going on to a result, and *you sense it as it develops*. Now thought is also a movement - if it is a process, it is also a movement. But thought doesn't treat itself as a movement. It treats itself as truth - as just being there, telling you the way things are. (p. 81)

Basic to Bohm's view is that reflective consciousness is the relationship between the nature of symbolic thought, particularly the way it fragments or "divides everything up" (1996, p. 9), and its context. He understands the context for thought as "wholeness" (Bohm, 1980). However his idea of wholeness does not admit to its being an "object" or an object of thought - i.e., something that can "actually" be divided. Rather, wholeness is argued as "an unbroken and undivided whole movement, and that each 'thing' is abstracted only as a relatively invariant side or aspect of this movement" (p. 60). Mead's work on sociality and perspectives is, I believe, consistent with Bohm's understanding of wholeness. Sociality is an expression of a "movement" that manifests itself as temporal¹² and for human beings as selves (perspectives) being conscious in and of "thought". Where this movement as expressed in proprioceptive response is relevant to dialogue is in its fundamentally relational and social ontology. I cannot "gesture" to the world without the world already providing the "response". The world cannot respond to my gesture without me already first initiating the movement. We are both in the movement together all the time, and in this sense we are "one".

However interpreting "thought" as extrinsic to human ideation or "thinking" is problematic. The verb to "think" appears to unproblematically index "thought" as its past participle and so is commonly understood as a product of thinking and as a content of thinking (i.e., "thoughts"). Under this reading thinking is solely the business of brains and selves. Not so for Bohm - he understands thought as the context of and for thinking and as such as larger than any individual thinker. His interpretation is similar to Heidegger (2004) who tells us that one significant reading of the history of the verb to "think" is related to the "Old English noun for thought [or] *thanc* or *thonc* - ... a grateful thought, and the expression for such a

thought” (p. 139). He goes on to relate our thinking as a listening and a gathering of experience - “For in giving thanks, the heart in thought recalls where it remains gathered and concentrated, because that is where it belongs. This thinking that recalls in memory is the original thought” (p. 145). Thought, as I am interpreting it here, reflects the social imaginary¹³ and the “material” out of which language, our identities, and our ideations are formed and realized.

The idea of fragmentation is used by Bohm to characterize the habitual and automatic nature of both thought and its embodiment through “reflexes” or operations in the body as a consequence of the history of rational and logical expression. Experience conditions our bodies and for Bohm (1992) is ubiquitous, “Thought works by conditioning. It has to get conditioned” (p. 120). This conditioning results in “reflexes” which become automatic responses to stimulus. This happens both on a solely physiological level (non-conceptual perceptual knowledge of the world) and at the level of thinking. For Bohm (1992) thought itself divides the world and freezes us into an “identity” which then

gets in the way of the need to change our reflexes. Once we identify with something, our reflexes *are* that way – it is very important, ‘necessary’. And we will want to preserve that identity even though it may involve ideas that are false. (p. 167)

Bohm explicitly connects language and thought with the same ontological “movement” naturalism ascribes to physical processes which he in turn connects to his basic thesis of the implicate order and the movement underlying all phenomena. His metaphysical position is that we (as individuals) ultimately do not need “identity”. He says

If there is something which is infinite – the universe or something beyond the universe – I am somehow grounded in that... Therefore, whatever I am *that* must be the source of it. *That* is unknown – but it reveals itself. We don’t need the notion of an identity... (p. 167).

For Bohm (1996) the mystery of communication is the creative emergence of what he understands as “participatory thought” such that “in true participation, thought may establish distinctions, but there is participation *between* those distinctions – between people, between thought and feeling, between anything” (p. 89) and consequently a conscious realization that these are not separations (cf. Dewey & Bentley, 1949). Bohm (1992) writes that “The creative act [e.g., dialogue] simultaneously alters some of the reflexes and also produces the expression, in words or some other means, which will enable thought to take it up and move in a different way from there on” (p. 150). We thus become proprioceptively aware of the operation of thought and are able to work our way out of the conditioning and habits of “literal thought” (Bohm, 1996, p. 88). Bohm suggests the possibility of re-inscribing the movement of thought through the conscious suspension of proprioceptive response within the process of gesture and response responsible for the creation and maintenance of the social self. His articulation of a

creative and generative “thinking together” is, unlike most academic conversations that trade in “literal thought”, playful, contingent, and surprising – it does not start from the premise that something is “known”.

A theme running through various interpretations of dialogue is the notion of continual interplay or interaction and suggests to me that the terms play and action are synonymous (Joas, 1996, p. 167) and that play precedes interaction (i.e., the work of actors). The understanding of play as dialogue and dialogue as play is fundamental to the connection between reflective consciousness and the ongoingness of the embodied subject. Much as we “play” with each other as interlocutors in our speech so too are we within ourselves engaged in a “play” between body and the conscious self. Gadamer (2013) characterized “play as the clue to ontological explanation” (p. 106) and suggested:

The movement of playing has no goal that brings it to an end; rather, it renews itself in constant repetition. The movement backward and forward is obviously so central to the definition of play that it makes no difference who or what performs this movement. The movement of play as such has, as it were, no substrate. It is the game that is played – it is irrelevant whether or not there is a subject who plays it. The play is the occurrence of the movement as such. (p. 108)

Gadamer’s description of play is very much in line with Bohm’s thesis of “movement” and Mead’s (2002) sociality where “the social nature of the present arises out of its emergence... [that] process of readjustment that emergence involves” (p. 73). Bohm (1992) echoes this idea in his discussion of the incoherence of ordinary temporal experience where

we seem to be moving from the past toward the future. I’ve said, though, that that *experience* isn’t making sense because the future doesn’t exist. It isn’t spread out before you. And the past is not there behind you. All you have is the present. (p. 232)

So “play” is something that happens in the present and is generative and creative. To the extent that we “squeeze” the present between the past and the future we restrict the freedom and the value of creative emergence both in our body’s expression and in the “participatory thought” that may arise in dialogue.

DIALOGUE

Bohm’s understands dialogue as that activity wherein the possibility of human interlocutors being able to “create something new together” (p. 2) is achieved. His work with dialogue was devoted to understanding and helping create the skills and contexts for this activity. What I am characterizing as a practice to perturb and destabilize the social self is an intentional dialogue that focuses specifically on inhibiting, through the cultivation of proprioceptive body awareness, the habitual responses to the speech and affect of others in a social situation (the dialogue circle). I understand this process as the intentional disruption of the normative and/or habitual activity of social interaction in order to surface the

emergent creative “play”, or movement, of co-present interlocutors. The relationship between my phenomenologically rooted proprioceptive sense and the receptivity (or lack thereof) of the other is, as argued above, the non-dual ground or field out of which my awareness of both my proprioceptive sense and my response to the other emerge. For Bohm this ground is understood as the implicate order; for Mead, sociality.

The purpose of this dialogue technique is to partially regulate the non-conceptual perceptual knowledge of the body and “unlearn” the automatic and prejudicial recognition of the other through suspension of physical response. The practice is intended to mitigate prejudice and judgment prior to or conjointly with an experience of the other, as well as help reclaim the sense of a more or less direct experience of the living present. Bohm believed that it was through this exercise that one could, eventually, develop a capacity of “proprioceptive thought” through the proprioception of the body (Bohm, 1996, p. 25). This practice is similar to meditation techniques that likewise focus on the inhibition of normal conscious processes (e.g., the occurrence of thoughts) for purposes of developing sensitivity to (characterizations vary) some essential experience of being or becoming (see Loizzo, 2014; Lutz, Dunne, & Davidson, 2007; Pagis, 2009). Bohm’s emphasis in his discussion of dialogue was on the phenomenon of human communication and the integration of human communities through conscious dialogue and the development of a radical self-responsibility.

The practice itself consists of a group of people sitting in a circle and allowing speech to arise without plan or intention – with each participant suspending responses and judgments, listening deeply when something is said, and respecting the immediacy and originality of the other (Francovich, 2013; Gunnlaugson, 2014; Isaacs, 1999). Typically an object is used to mark the permission to speak – any participant may gesture to receive the object when they have something to say. Whoever has the object then has the attention of the group and individuals in the group are directed through the principles as discussed prior to the dialogue to attempt to suspend body response, listen carefully, note their judgments, and keep their attention on the speaker. As discussed throughout this paper the embodied processes/responses resulting from social interaction are subtle. The point of the dialogue is to develop awareness around these responses and begin to link their occurrence with the type and quality of thinking that happens when we are supposedly “listening”.

My general theoretical claim is that much as it is believed that reflective thought arises through the inhibition of unproblematic activity (Koschmann, Kuutti, & Hickman, 1998), a technique such as this variation of Bohmian dialogue is an “inhibition of the inhibition” effected through proprioceptive suspension. These built up inhibitions are understood here as habitual and patterned modes of knowing and thinking that are normatively sensible (even required) and always retrospectively unproblematic. Bohm sees this field or domain of the social self and its knowledge of the world as quite problematic. He observed that

This knowledge, or thought, knows all of that content, but it doesn't know what it is doing. This knowledge knows itself wrongly: it knows itself as doing nothing. It therefore says, "I am not responsible for any of these problems. I'm just here for you to use. (Bohm, 1996 p. 52)

Thought has become uncoupled from the body and we tend to live almost wholly within the flow of its representations (the Kantian imaginizing of perception (see Todes, 2001, p. 96)) with our bodies' behaving unconsciously according to the social forces at play. Bohm wrote "You cannot pay attention to what is outside the representation" (p. 59). What is "outside the representation", I argue, is the direct experience of the body. He follows this up by noting that it is only when something goes wrong that we notice what is outside it - similar to the dynamics of the first order inhibition that creates our "standing back" (Todes, 2001, p. 289) or distancing from the involvement of direct perception. This 'breakdown' in our representation structure is a mixed blessing. It is disturbing and/or it can open us up to a different way of experiencing the other through a re-patterning of thinking (i.e., changing neurological structures) that may be associated with the breakdown of prejudicial and overlearned perceptions and judgments.¹⁴

A practical example of this intentional inhibition of response can be found in the difficulty of arresting one's normal response to others in the dialogue circle. The injunction is to not "respond" in typical and habitual ways. This includes smiling, nodding, frowning, making empathetic noises, etc. The suspension of these habits of interaction is disturbing (and difficult). When one becomes aware of the impulse to perform an expected illocutionary act (for example nod one's head) but then suspends that action there ensues for many an experience of discomfort and/or panic at not upholding one's necessary part in the conversation – *even though the reason for doing this has been thoroughly worked out*. It is in this space of not-responding and being aware of not-responding that we are trying to reshape our ability to listen to and see the "other" in the dialogue. It is also here that we begin to experience an explicit awareness of our responsiveness and responsibility to the other. What we are trying to do in the practice of intentional dialogue is to "pay attention to what is outside the representation" and in so doing take direction from the 'breakdown' of normal ways of being together (see also Garfinkel, 1963). We consciously break the pattern of smooth comfortable group communication. We make ourselves breakdown to see what's behind the representation.

Given that movement or process underlies all manifestations including that of "thought" then in order to get to the assumptions driving and/or occluding our encounter with the "other" we need to "suspend the activity, allowing it [thought] to reveal itself, ..." (Bohm, 1996, p. 73). This process is intimately linked to our physical experience of embodiment - to the "natural contingency of perceptual things" (Todes, 2001, p. 280) and the usually un-reflected upon skills of proprioception and body awareness linked to the social field. The task is to develop this capacity of feeling toward thought itself. Can we be 'aware' of thought in the same way? Bohm suggested that an avenue to this goal is to develop a coupled awareness of body states to 'thoughts' or 'assumptions'. Once this is practiced we may

begin to see the difference between a body feeling coming from something ‘real’ – which is to say “actually there” as expressed by an “other” and a body feeling coming from a pattern of assumptions or habits. What is key is that ‘thought’ makes distinctions but they are not ‘separations’ and our non-separateness in relation to the “other” is a communion of true understanding.

Dewey (2005) wrote that

Recognition is perception arrested before it has a chance to develop freely. In recognition there is a beginning of the act of perception. But this beginning is not allowed to serve the development of a full perception of the thing recognized. It is arrested at the point where it will serve some *other* purpose, as we recognize a man [sic] on the street in order to greet or to avoid him, not so as to see him for the sake of seeing what is there. (p. 54)

So the challenge in intentional interpersonal/intersubjective communication is to *not* arrest perception prior to its full aesthetic experience of the other. But this is hard. We resist this incursion into the realm of the solid and the known – this opening to uncertainty. Again, Dewey suggests that “The esthetic or undergoing phase of experience is receptive. It involves surrender. But adequate yielding of the self is possible only through a controlled activity that may well be intense” (p. 55).

So what we come to at the threshold of the body and reflective consciousness is the possibility of a mutual transformation – a dialogue. When we encounter the “other” we are not asked to encounter only their social linguistic self but their bodies, feelings, and the underlying fabric of the world they reveal. Every experience in time is an experience of these worlds. Manifestation in general and language and the self in particular progressively removes us (both the body and the mind) from the immediacy of this encounter as an experience of “undoing” (Taylor, 2002, p. 282) which can now be broadly conceived as an openness to the emergent and adaptive non-conceptual perceptual knowledge of the body as it moves through spacetime. As reflective consciousness has developed we have been able to alter our adaptation to these perspectival worlds. It is in that adaptation that we have failed to properly categorize the nature of the relationship between reflective consciousness and perception – and to this extent the dissolving and antagonizing of aspects of the self inhibiting this relational encounter may be interpreted as beneficial.

RADICAL DIALOGUE

As suggested above the practice of this sort of intentional dialogue may serve to facilitate more direct, meaningful, and creative conversation. One important context where the learned skill of listening and suspending that lie under the discursive elements of the dialogue can have an immediate and significant impact is in the practice of child rearing and early education. My experience

as an elementary school teacher, a director of early childhood programs, and as a father have all suggested to me that one of the major difficulties, if not impediments, to early childhood practices is the inability of teachers and caregivers to listen and suspend assumptions and judgment when interacting with children (Moore, 2014). It has also been my experience that when children live in an environment where these “listening” practices are consistently enacted then they too learn how to open up to others outside their family or intimate group in a non-defensive and respectful way. This is an empirical question only constrained by the historically limited design of learning research that focuses on content rather than process and speaking rather than listening (Moore, 2014; Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2012). Children spontaneously encounter the world in wonder and “not-knowing”. They are most often quickly schooled into identities predicated on “knowing” and the ability to explicitly manifest “not knowing” is curtailed. Their teachers (us) seem to always know or have to know – we don’t generally model or exhibit the humility, patience, or willingness to encounter the uncertain that are the hallmarks of a Bohmian dialogue. This dialogue practice would, in the long run, exemplify Van Manen’s (2013), “pedagogy of tact” assuring that those holding themselves out as teachers and influencers of young children could, indeed, exhibit a “pathic knowing” (Hébert, 2015) that would help develop a widespread capacity to listen and open to the other. Further, this sensitivity would help curtail the rampant arrogance of human beings in general and “scientists” in particular as we continue to assume that our capacity to speak, form concepts, and work with logical structures is the pinnacle of development rather than one perspective amongst a plurality of perspectives we cannot pretend to know prior to an authentic and even “scientific” encounter.

The past is carried forward into the present and held as Zizek termed it “the Symbolic Real” (Wood, 2012, p. 28) – This Real is the source of our expectations governing the present. I meet you (the other) as an already-given. Both known as (my assumptions) and always already Real. These are socially reinforced prejudices and existential (or phenomenological) and psychological/cognitive prejudices. And these characterizations can clash or contradict. However, because I bring my subjective prejudice into *all* interaction as an always already given self and so engage in a co-constitution of self/other with you I am also the primary source of my own conflicts. Suspension of judgment, assumption, and habit (broadly) helps me recognize that it is possible to hold this history in a tensional abeyance and focus on the living present independent of my habitualized and reified identity and the embodied manner in which I unconsciously carry myself as a social or “universalized self” in social situations. The basic hypothesis is that this suspension will perhaps open up the “real Real” (Wood, p. 28) just a little bit and we may as co-constructors of our perspective come closer to the source of generative

creativity – that is, the life-process independent of our primary distinction as self/other. Bohm’s dialogue practice in the context of Mead’s conceptual framework of human sociality may serve as a powerful stimulant to this creative experience and to social transformation in general.

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NOTES

¹ The terms intersubjective and intersubjectivity are used in this paper, in contrast to the term interpersonal, to highlight my emphasis on the phenomenological nature of interaction more than the common social-psychological use of the term “interpersonal” to characterize interaction. However both terms are, in my view, essentially trying to understand the same phenomenon.

² The term “consciousness” is highly problematic and will not be thoroughly worked out here. For purposes of this paper consciousness refers to the particular quality of mental experience that allows a “self” to know itself as an object and so to know objects in general as “not self”. I use the term consistently to refer to Mead’s general use of the term to indicate the arising of the human “self”. Consciousness is often conflated with “awareness” which is understood as the more general capacity of organisms to sense and react to stimuli. Consciousness as described here “rides” on awareness and is always embodied in that awareness and experience of living.

³ Obviously there are exceptions to this. I point to Damasio (2010) for example as one more or less mainstream scientist who has made consciousness a more or less respectable subfield.

⁴ The problem of contextualizing observation is acute. I follow Maturana (1988) where he says “observing is both the ultimate starting point and the most fundamental question in any attempt to understand reality and reason as phenomena of the human domain. Indeed, everything said is said by an observer to another observer that could be him- or herself” (p. 27). Maturana is (like Mead) situating consciousness as central to and constitutive of reality.

⁵ Although certainly one must be open to the emergence of something out of nothing if we are to remain consistent with at least two accomplished exponents of contemporary physical theory (see, Hawking & Mlodinow, 2010). However the notion of “nothing” is itself quite problematic from the perspective of reflective consciousness as an aspect of the physical universe – that is, it is a concept and cannot help but be circular in its overall ontology. Consequently Mead’s metaphysical notion of sociality (a second person view) is at least as explanatory in the social realm as nothing appears to be in the strictly physical realm (a third person view).

⁶ It should be noted that Whitehead did not escape the transcendentalism that Mead so assiduously avoided – One of Mead’s critiques of Whitehead concerned the characterization of “eternal objects” as a principle exerting a “control... lying outside [an event’s] occurrence” (Mead, 2002, p. 50).

⁷ Also used in various literatures and derived from Mead's term is the notion of the "living present". See Stacey's (2001, pp. 34-35) interpretation as the existential and phenomenological experience of being alive with a trailing edge of the past and a leading edge of the future always present in human experience to one degree or another. Unfortunately the term "specious" leads people to the wrong conclusions in casually reading Mead's term. He inherited this from previous musings in psychology and I have to think he would have enjoyed the term "living present". I will use the term "living present" throughout in direct reference to Mead's "specious present". Conceiving of time and temporal experience as indexed to the categories of past, present, future carries with it the baggage of a block universe theory of objects and subjects and continues to perplex and stimulate philosophical debate. Mead's view was wholly outside this frame of reference as he tried to articulate the theory of sociality and perspectives – with each perspective instantiating a universe of its own in reference to its own manifestation.

⁸ Note that this unity permeates all levels of analysis and could be understood in today's terminology as fractal like or exhibiting properties of a hologram. There is sociality "all the way up and all the way down".

⁹ The topic of non-conscious semiosis or a non-conscious semiotic is an important and natural tangent to this entire discussion but would take us too far afield. In my view Mead's broad interpretation of the 'act' maps well to Peirce's semiotic triad with both thinkers recognizing that meaning is found in the effects of the relationship between the sign (historical or embodied agent/being) and the object (environment or interlocutor).

¹⁰ I interpret Taylor's term - the "imaginary", as socio-culturally analogous to the various schemas defined by cognitive psychologists on the individual level (e.g., mental models).

¹¹ The term "direct experience" is problematic in both philosophy and psychology. Various models of consciousness and cognition argue that human consciousness does not and cannot experience the world directly but always and only through representations built up by the brain. My position is contrary to this and based on the general view of ecological psychologists and pragmatist philosophers. See for example, Adams, 2007, Heft, 2001 and Reed, 1996a, 1996b for excellent contemporary reviews of this perspective.

¹² This suggests the Nietzschean notion of the "recurrence of the same" (see Heidegger, 2004, pp. 100-110) or the possibility that consciousness may evolve toward being able to accommodate this wholeness in its apprehension of reality not constrained by time.

¹³ As should be clear by this point I am using the idea of the "social imaginary" as a cover for a host of both modern and postmodern interpretations for the phenomenon of human culture, society, normativity, networks, and activity.

¹⁴ Research in epigenetics, brain plasticity, and/or meditation is young and controversial. For some initial work in this area see Ammaniti & Gallese, 2014, Kabat-Zinn, 2005, Loizzo, 2014, Lutz et al., 2004, Meloni, 2014, Siegel, 2007.

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