

Development of Social Cognition

Lesson 5_part II

Valentina Fantasia,
PhD

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“(...) sviluppare una teoria della mente umana che tenga conto che i soggetti pensanti non si limitano a pensare ma si *muovono, costruiscono, toccano e sperimentano ed interagiscono*”.

A. Duranti, 2000

Embodied and second person approach to engagement



Moving away from mainstream socio-cognitive approaches

- 1970s: M. Donaldson's invocation of a 'human sense' to modulate Piaget's abstract logic
- Discovery' of infant sociality by Snow, Trevarthen, Tronick, Shotter, Reddy
- Attempts to turn away from the individualism, internalism and a-contextuality of aspects of Piagetian and Chomskyan approaches

Embodiment

"One sees the environment not just with the eyes, but with the eyes in the head on the shoulders of a body that gets about" (Gibson 1979: 222)



Reddy, V (2008):

- The social in social cognition not merely as supporting or permitting, but also **as constituting it**
- The typical development of social cognition originates in second-person **engagements** which involve the infant
- Emotional involvement of the infant as a crucial experience for cognition development

What is engagement?

[video](#)



Engagement as ...

“How we gain psychological knowledge about others ... when we allow ourselves to feel the sympathetic response that the others’ actions and feelings invite”

(Reddy & Trevarthen, 2010)

Engagement as ...

2:28 Reddy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-49XIh6hE4>

Experiencing Engagement

- Engagement gives you access to information that is otherwise much less obvious
- Interactions are grounded in contingent and responsive coordination of affective responses and attention
- *Engagement as being moved by the other*
(Buber, 1958; Macmurray 1991; Reddy, 2008)

Engagement as

- **A continuum:** Stern's (1985) sense of vitality affects as a continuum of emotional engagement rather than categorial affects

Does engagement occur not only with persons but also with objects?

- Artefacts are structured by the intelligence, the bodies and the desires of persons; and the object world is introduced to infants very early by adults
- Infants spontaneously engage with objects with their full attention, (body von Hofsten, 1982), and interest (Van der Meer et al, 1995)

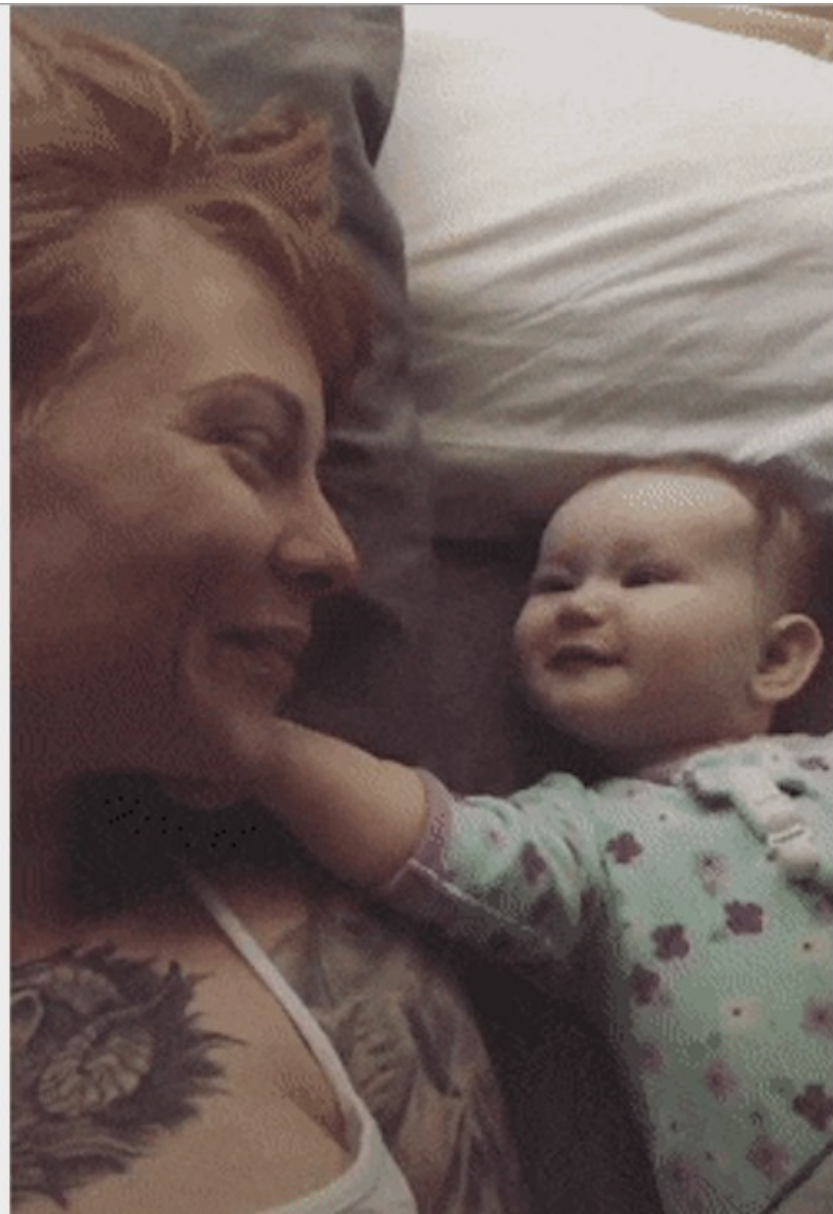
So what is the difference between second-person and third-person relations?

Martin Buber's (1956) attempt to differentiate two different modes of knowing:
the I-You and the I- It.

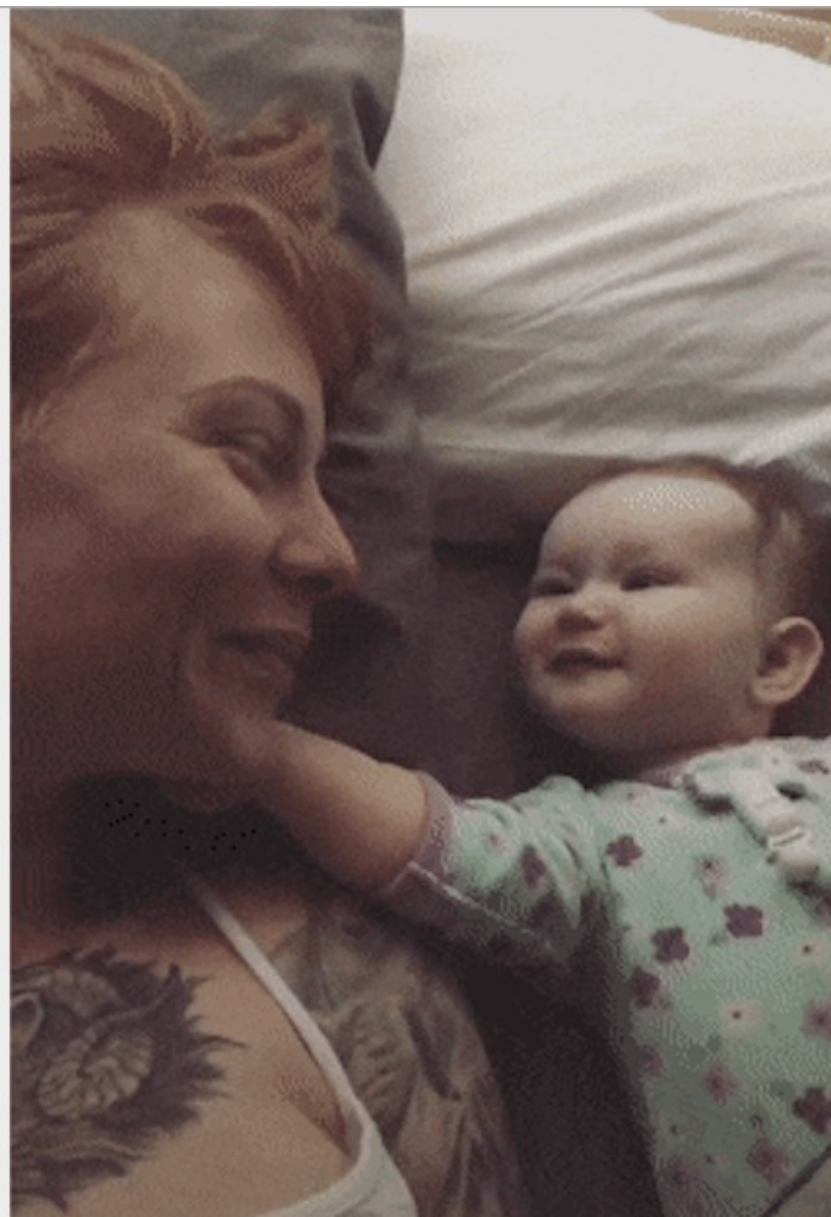
A second person relation involves the experience of **being addressed by another**, of being seen as a You by another person, and of the mutuality that is generated in seeing the other as a You in turn.

Second person: engaged participants

Third person: observers



Second person: engaged participants



Third person: observers



How does this relate to socio-cognitive development?

1. different impact on the infant's experience of engaging with others
2. experience of mutuality and emotional connection crucial in infancy
3. crucial difference in how we conceive of and study infancy – particularly intentionality

What is necessary for second-person relations in infancy? Three things: infants need to be *open to*

1. infants need to be *open to engagement* with others
2. infants need to have *others who recognise them as persons*
3. infants need to be *able to recognise the recognition* of the other *and respond to it*

1. *Infant openness to engagement with others*

Interest in and an ability to act towards others from birth

- Direct gaze preferred within a few days of birth (Farroni et al, 2002)
- By 5 months mutual gaze leads to enhanced word learning (Parise et al, 2011)
- being called by their own name leads to enhanced attention to objects (Parise, Friederici & Striano, 2010)
- by 6 months mutual gaze leads to enhanced gaze following (Senju & Csibra, 2008).

2. *Having others who recognise them as persons*

Direct dialogic addressing (intersubjective) rather than treating the infant as an object

- Face to face intersubjective exchanges or proto-conversations (Trevarthen, 1977)
- Tactile engagements (Kaertner et al, 2010)
- Acknowledgment of changes in the infant's affective state

Colwyn
Trevarthen:
infants early
engagements



3. The ability to recognise others' recognition

- Recognition of the contingency of others' responses to their own actions

3. The ability to recognise others' recognition

– Contingent coordination of affects – smiles, gaze, verbalisation

- Infant distress at the lack of response to their initiatives (Cohn & Tronick 1983; Markova & Legerstee, 2006; Fantasia et al., 2016)

Ed Tronick: Still-face paradigm

- Infants and adults - are emotionally moved by others' attention and actively seek to move each other.

→ **Positive shyness and clowning/showing-off**

(Reddy, 2008; Reddy & Mireault, 2019)



3. The ability to recognise others' recognition

- The infant does seem to recognise when she is recognised as a conversational being from very early in life (Nomikou & Rohlfing, 2011)

Recognising the others' recognition: an issue

How do infants understand others' minds?

- ToM: minds are opaque – they need inferences to be understood
- Infants are observers – respond to others' actions without awareness

- Infants can anticipate others' actions, e.g. when they are being picked up (Reddy et al., 2013; Fantasia et al., 2016)



- Infants can anticipate others' actions, e.g. when they are being picked up (Reddy et al., 2013; Fantasia et al., 2016)
- Compliant responses to others' directives in the second half of first year (Reddy, Liebal, Hicks, Jonnalgadda & Chintalapuri, 2013)

Embodied approach to understanding others's minds

- Minds are embodied; mind *is* the way the body expresses attention, intention and emotion and while conceptualising mind is a complex and developmentally late achievement, perceiving it is a simple achievement within engagement (see discussions in Leudar & Costall, 2006; Reddy, 2008, Schilbach et al, 2013).

Embodied approach: to sum up

- Intersubjectivity: results from process of sharing and construction of meanings, including ruptures and repairs (Trevarthen, Hubley, Bruner)
- Interaction arises from the encounter with the other, every time we are "moved" by someone else (Reddy, Costall)