The Social Self, Social Relations, and Social (Moral) Practice

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Abstract

The primary task of this thesis is to explain what the relationship between social practice and the socially emergent self is, and to concurrently explain why this relationship is of significance to an accurate theory of social practice itself. A subsequent aim of this is to explain how the socially emergent self can be used to account for individual engagement in moral practices. Building on George Herbert Mead, it is argued that the social process through which the self emerges moulds the individual's capacity to engage with social practice. It is argued that combining Mead's theory of the socially emergent self with relational sociology provides a theoretical framework that can account for how intersubjective and historically situated social practices are taken on by the individual, to the extent that she can engage in such practices both reflectively and pre-reflectively. What is more, this theoretical synthesis is able to account for how social practices are engaged with in an incredibly routine and 'ordinary' manner, while also accounting for individual variation in this engagement. This theory is then applied to moral practices. It is contended that individual engagement in moral practice is not altogether different from engagement in social practice generally, and thus the theory offered here also accounts for how individuals are able to engage in moral practice in both a routine and an individualised manner.

For Sally and John

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

<u>General Introduction</u>

This thesis has the overall aim of explaining the relationship between the socially emergent self and individual engagement in social practice. A subsequent aim is to explain how the socially emergent self can be used to account for individual engagement in moral practices. The primary task of this thesis is to explain the relationship between social practice and the socially emergent self, and to concurrently explain why this relationship is of significance to an accurate theory of engagement in social practice. It will be argued throughout that the socially emergent self plays a key – and often overlooked – role in how the individual engages with social practice. It should be stressed immediately that this thesis will not (indeed cannot) provide a theory of social practice *per se*. Rather, it is argued that the social emergence of the self plays a role in the individual capacity for engagement in social practice. It will not be argued that how the self emerges necessarily produces certain practices, for reasons that will be explained shortly.

Following the likes of Pierre Bourdieu (1992) and Hubert Dreyfus (2014), it will be maintained that much of social practice is engaged with by the individual pre-reflectively. It will be argued that the individual's capacity for proficient and pre-reflective engagement in social practice is intimately tied to the social emergence of the self. This is because the self emerges as the individual takes on and internalises the attitudes that others take towards her. A large portion of these attitudes are taken towards one's engagement in social practice, meaning that an intersubjective understanding of engagement in social practice is both a cause and an outcome of the socially emergent self. What is more, the cognitive mechanisms through which the self emerges gives the individual the ability to engage with social practice pre-reflectively.

However, it should not be doubted that the individual is able to reflectively engage with her social practice, both before and after it has occurred. This reflective engagement in practice can also be accounted for through the social emergence of the self, as the capacity for reflective engagement with the self is an outcome of the process of social emergence, as described by George Herbert Mead (1967/1934). It

will hence be argued that the social emergence of the self is integral to our engagement in social practice, and that social practice is integral to the emergence of the self. If this is shown to be the case, as will be attempted throughout this thesis, then it follows that accurately accounting for engagement in social practice requires an explanation of the emergence of the self.

This thesis is based on three main premises. Firstly, social practice is largely engaged with by individuals in a routine manner. I follow Bourdieu in arguing that, this last point notwithstanding, social practice is inherently 'fuzzy' in the sense that there are no definite boundaries surrounding how practice will unfold in a particular social circumstance. Any attempt to discern formulable rules of social practice inevitably fails to account for both the sheer complexity of social practice and the individual's engagement with it as she encounters both routine and novel circumstances. At best, we can say that individuals *tend* to engage in social practice in certain ways.

With the previous point in mind, it must be asked how we can account for the individual's (often pre-reflective, yet individualised) engagement in the fuzziness of social practice. This leads to the second premise. It will be argued that, in social theory terms, we can only really account for individual engagement in the murkiness of social practice through an explanation that goes no further than social relations. It is through social relations that individual engagement in social practice - and the capacity for individualised 'virtuoso' (to borrow Bourdieu's term) engagement in social practice - emerges.

On the third premise, it is argued that the self has notable importance for explaining how social relations mould individual engagement in social practice. It will be argued that this is because the self emerges from social relations. This argument is made through a synthesis of the Meadian explanation of the socially emergent self and relational sociology. It will be argued that Mead's theory needs the conceptualisations of relational sociology to be able to account for the intersubjectivity and historicity of the norms and expectations of social practice which are so integral to the emergence of the self in Mead's terms. Yet, it is equally the case that relational sociology requires Mead's framework for the socially emergent

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self in order to account for how social relations mould individual engagement in social practice.

Mead's theory (when critically combined with other approaches to the self) allows us to understand the self as emerging from the taking on of attitudes taken towards oneself, and towards one's engagement in social practice. For Mead (1967/1934), the underlying capacity of the human organism for reflexivity intersects with the social emergence of the self to form the individual's capacity for reflective engagement as she takes on the attitudes that allow her to reflect upon herself. But it is also through this internalisation that the attitudes of the 'generalised other' come to shape the individual's engagement in social practice. The socially emergent self comes to be integrated with the internalised attitudes of others that come to shape the individual's pre-reflective engagement with the social world. It is argued alongside Jürgen Habermas (1995) that it is thus through this Meadian process that the individual becomes able to engage with social practice pre-reflectively.

However, while this may go some way to explaining the routineness of much of social practice, it is also necessary to consider Mead's theory of individuation in order to account for the individualised virtuoso manner in which social practice is engaged with. The beauty of Mead's theory is that it considers the arrival of the individual at her own subjective standpoint on issues of shared social concern to be the outcome of the self which emerges socially from differentiated positions within a social context. This allows us to see how the individual self can be simultaneously the product of internalised social attitudes while also being an individualised source of social action (Habermas, 1995). This allows us to understand how the individual is able to engage with the shared social practices of a particular social context as an individualised social virtuoso. The Meadian basis of the theory of the self offered in this thesis allows us to account for how the individual is able to navigate her way through both routine and novel circumstances with skilful precision, while also leaving a significant role for the kind of reflectively-led practice through which the individual is able to plan and reflect upon her social practice.

At this point, the aim of explaining the relationship between the self and social practice will be complete. However, the thesis closes with an application of the theory to individual engagement in moral practice. Through a combination of theories

of the self provided by Mead (1967/1934) and Charles Taylor (1991), it is maintained that moral sources play an inherent part in the emergence of the self in modern society. The application of the theory just outlined explains why this is the case, but it also explains why moral practices are engaged with and maintained. In line with the above theory, it is argued that this indicates why and how moral theory requires a sound grasp of moral practice.

Indeed, a major question for a social theory of morality is how we can have discernible ethical norms within a society, while accounting for moral variation between individuals (Bauman, 1993; Morgan, 2014). It is clear that there are distinct and shared notions of right and wrong within a society, yet individuals can vary on particular aspects of these notions. For example, it is generally held in contemporary Western society that killing another human is wrong. However, there is disagreement about the applicability of this ethical norm regarding questions of euthanasia. On the one hand, some argue that euthanasia is absolutely wrong. On the other, some support a universal right to choose a medically assisted death. Between these two positions, others may not necessarily disagree with euthanasia in principle, but fear the practical implications if it were legalised. Others may support the practice in extreme circumstances only (Singer, 1993). The question then arises: how do we account for this individual variation without overlooking the significance of the social in shaping individual engagement in moral practice?

It is argued here that this problem for the social theory of morality is a specific manifestation of a perennial problem for social theory more generally. For Habermas (1995), the problem for social theory is this: if we see individualisation as being determined by social structure, then individual action is nothing more than a further extension of social institutions, meaning that the individual is essentially passive in the individual variations that differentiate her from others in her society. However, if the individual is seen as an autonomous source of action that acts as something other than the product of a particular society, then it becomes impossible to explain routine social practices.

But, Habermas continues, the work of George Herbert Mead provides us with the conceptual framework to approach this problem in a way that accounts for individual engagement in social practice as emerging in relation to, rather than determined by,

social context. By foregrounding the self as something that emerges by taking on the attitudes of others, Mead is able to consider the individual self as a 'mediated process of socialization and the simultaneous constitution of a life-history which is conscious of itself' (Habermas, 1995:153). In this way, the individual self can be seen as an active participant in her emergence as a distinct individual self, which is formed in relation to an intersubjective social context. Thus, before moving on to its specific manifestations in shared ethics and individual morality, it is necessary to deal with this more general problem of accounting for individual variation in social practice within a shared social context in relation to the theoretical framework offered by Mead.

This requires that we consider Mead's arguments for the socially emergent self in a little more detail. Following Mead (1925; 1967/1934), it will be argued that the self is not present at birth *per se.* Rather, the self emerges from the human capability for self-consciousness. The essential basis for selfhood, according to Mead, is the capacity for the individual to be both a subject and an object for herself. The individual human subject must be able to recognise herself as a subject who is able to reflect upon herself as an object in order to become a fully developed self. The starting point for this process is that human beings are conscious of the world around them: they experience the outside world and are able to have thoughts about that world (Schutz, 1970). At the most basic level, the individual is able to be aware that she is experiencing something, such as pain or fear. It is from this basis that the human individual emerges as a self, as she comes to be reflectively conscious of herself as experiencing the world (Mead, 1967/1934). From here, she gradually becomes able to engage with herself as an object. She begins to be able to take the attitudes that others take towards her, and turn them towards her self. She becomes a subject who is able to look upon herself as an object from the attitudes of others.

Social interaction is integral to this process. The individual can only become both an object and a subject for herself through social interaction, because it is through the attitudes others take towards her that the individual becomes able to reflect upon herself as an object of the attitudes of others. These attitudes can only be taken on through social interaction, because it is through social interaction that we come to understand the meaning that others' gestures carry towards us (Mead, 1967/1934). In the process of taking on the attitudes of others towards oneself, the individual self

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also takes on generalised attitudes towards objects of social significance within her social context (for example, attitudes towards property, gender, and parenthood). In becoming an object for oneself in relation to attitudes others hold towards oneself, generalised attitudes towards the shared social world are brought into an individual's existence as a self. This means that, through the social interaction that allows the self to emerge as a self, the shared attitudes of a particular social context are brought into the experience of the individual. Indeed, because the shared understandings that make one's social world intelligible (Schutz, 1970) are integral to the emergence of the self, these shared understandings are integral to how the individual is able to engage in practice.

It will thus be argued that it is through social relations with others that one's self emerges. Indeed, following the arguments of relational sociologists, it will be argued that social contexts are comprised of individuals and the social relations between these actors (Elias, 1991; King, 2004; Burkitt, 2015). It will be maintained that the individual human being, when she exists in society, as humans generally do (Elias, 1991), is shaped by social context in the sense that she is shaped by her social relations. This is because individuals act in relation to each other. How the individual acts in relation to other actors is shaped by shared practices within her social context. The particular form that these practices take at a particular point in time and space are the outcome of a socio-cultural history of social relations that precedes the individual (Schutz, 1970). These practices are taken on by the individual as she emerges as a self by taking on the attitudes of others towards herself. It is both through social relations that the self emerges, and through the self that social relations are extended. Because it is through social interactions with others that the formation of the self occurs by the individual taking on social practices, it can be said that the individual emerges as a self through social relations. Building on this, it can be argued that it is as a result of the social emergence of the self that the social relations that constitute a particular social context are brought into the individual's engagement in practice.

King (2000; 2004; 2006) argues (rightly in my view) that individuals in a society are so deeply embedded in social relations that collective practices are brought to bear in even our most personal actions and interactions. It is our social relations that comprise the social context that influences the individual's capacity to engage in

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practice. However, while this seems like an accurate description of social life, it falls short of fully explaining how social context shapes this engagement with practice. This embeddedness needs to be explained in terms of the socially emergent self.

By offering a robust outline of how the self emerges socially, it will become clear that the individual becomes deeply embedded in the social relations that constitute her social context because her self has emerged as a product of these same social relations. She has emerged as a self because she has taken on the attitudes of others towards her self and towards shared issues within her social context. Her self has emerged in relation to shared understandings of practice, meaning that these understandings become internalised by the individual and thus shape her engagement with practice. That is, generalised attitudes towards social practice come to be integrated into the individual's experience of the world to the extent that they come to mould her pre-reflective engagement in practice. Or, as Habermas (1995:179) put it, it is through the emergence of the self that 'the behavioural expectations of one's social surroundings... have, as it were, migrated into the person'.

Because these shared understandings are every bit a part of who she is, the individual does not need to rely on reference to prescriptive rules of social interaction *per se*. Instead, individuals within a social context are able to act as 'virtuosos' (Bourdieu, 1977: 79). They are able to act appropriately in diverse and occasionally unique sets of circumstances. They do not have to engage in social interaction via reference to rules of what the right action to take is, any more than a very skilled footballer needs to refer back to rules of whether it is better to shoot or pass (Dreyfus, 2014). Most of the time, an individual, possessing a self that has emerged as a product of the social relations that comprise her social context, is able to act with an implicit understanding what proficient practice entails, to the extent that discursive engagement with her self or with her peers is not necessary. Following Giddens (1991), I will argue this is what it means to be acting through 'practical consciousness'.

Following the Meadian framework, the way that the self emerges means that the individual's engagement in practice is the product of the social relations that have informed her understanding of practice. However, as will be argued in greater detail,

because social relations allows for individuals to act in a virtuoso fashion, individuals are not simply reproducing a timeless set of social structures. Indeed, the major advantage of combining the Meadian framework of the social emergence of the self with relational sociology is that it allows us to account for individual differences within a shared social context. Firstly, relational sociology allows us to understand that, because engagement in practice is shaped by social relations, rather than unchanging structures, practice is not rigidly delimited. Individuals are able to act in terms of an implicit understanding of practice that can be applied variably according to the particular situation. Secondly, Mead's framework acknowledges individuation. As there are countless iterations of variation in the development of individual selves – in terms of the relational interactions from which they are shaped (Mead, 1925) – individual selves that emerge from a shared social context do not emerge the same. The varying standpoints in the social process from which the individual emerges as a self accounts for individualised perspectives on shared issues within a social context. In turn, this variation in the emergence of the self also means that the individual's reflective understanding of themselves varies. Combined, this will provide the basis of an explanation of individual variation in engagement in social practice.

Because the self emerges socially, most of the time we are capable of acting in terms of the 'practical consciousness', without reference to rigid rules or even reflectively engaging with oneself (Dreyfus, 2014). This is true for most of our moral practice also. People can do what is commonly held to be 'right' or appropriate in their society without much reflective engagement (Singer, 1993). We ensure that our pet is fed, we tend not to pick a fight with someone who accidently bumps into us, and so on, as a matter of routine rather than as a result of a calculation of the consequences or reflective engagement with the depth of the moral necessity of these actions. Indeed, most of the time such consideration would neither be possible or useful. If, for example, a pram went hurtling towards the road the right thing to do is to act, rather than to think about whether a baby has an innate right to life (Singer, 1993).

However, this is not to say that our social and moral practice *only* ever occurs through the practical consciousness. Particularly with moral issues, we often engage with debates and reflectively consider our views on an issue and how these views may alter our way of life. A contemporary example of this is the growing recognition

that we should consume a lot less meat in Western society than we currently do, as the production of meat causes all sorts of moral problems in terms of environmental destruction, food distribution and animal ethics. As eating meat is still the norm in our social context, taking the decision to eat less meat may not be a case of routine action. Instead, such action can be the result of reflective engagement with oneself and the often contradictory attitudes that have been taken on as the self emerges socially. This is not to say that the individual is only concerned with themselves and not with the moral content of the issue at hand. But when a moral issue is reflected upon by the individual, it is engaged with by the individual engaging with her self.

In short, this thesis aims to argue that the processes involved in the emergence of the self are essential to explaining engagement in social (including moral) practice, both in terms of practical consciousness and reflective engagement. It is through the social emergence of the self that the individual takes on general attitudes towards engagement in social practice. However, it should be born in mind that this thesis does not argue that the emergence of the self results in certain social practices occurring. Part of Bourdieu's (1992) critique of social theory is that it has attempted (incorrectly) to create models of social practice that are both descriptive and predictive. As we shall see, Bourdieu argues that attempting to describe social practice in a coherent model has nearly always resulted in social practices being shoe-horned into the model. For Bourdieu, any attempt to describe practice in its entirety will always undermine the coherence of the model. This is because social practice itself is not based on the kind of prescriptive logic that can be modelled. There is always a degree of uncertainty and murkiness to how social practice unfolds. Models can at best provide a static picture, while social practice is indeterminate, fluid, and continuously evolving in a way that cannot be captured by a fixed model. The major reason for this has to do with how practice is engaged with. Social practice is rarely instrumentally planned and implemented. Rather, social practice largely occurs without reflective engagement on the part of the individual: social practice is largely engaged with as individuals deal with diverse and varying social fields pre-reflectively. Indeed, part of the reason for applying relational sociology to understanding engagement in social practice is that it allows us to acknowledge the influence that direct relational actors have on immediate social

practice, a point which has been clearly demonstrated by countless social psychology experiments, as shall be seen further on (Milgram, 1992).

This thesis argues that the social emergence of the self is integral to how the individual's practical and reflective consciousness emerges. As we shall see in the first chapter, it is through these two states of intentional consciousness that the individual engages in social practice. These modes of consciousness are moulded by the emergence of the self. As such, it can be argued that the capacity for the individual to engage in social practice is moulded by the emergence of the self, while acknowledging that the emergence of the self cannot necessarily be predictive of the outcomes of social practice.

One final point needs to be covered here. It may be asked why this thesis speaks of 'reflective engagement' without talking much about self-identity. After all, as Giddens (1991) argues, one's self-identity is the part of the self that we engage with. This point may be largely valid, and I do not doubt that self-identity emergence and construction has a role to play in reflectively-led action. Indeed, part of the initial intention of this project was to investigate this role. However, while this investigation was not fruitless, it gradually became clear that it would have been beyond the remit of this thesis. The amount of explanation required to explain the role of the socially emergent self in social practice – which is needed to provide the foundation for an explanation of the role of self-identity – proved to be a project in itself. It was therefore practicality, rather than academic dismissal, which has led this project to set self-identity to one side.

Chapter Outline

The aim of this thesis is to explain the role played by the self in individual engagement in social practice, by drawing heavily upon relational sociology. This argument requires three things to be carefully outlined. Firstly, it requires an explanation of the theoretical problem of social practice. Secondly, it will be argued that this problem needs to be addressed through two intersecting theoretical frameworks; the socially emergent self and relational sociology. These two

frameworks provide the pillars of the explanation of individual engagement in social practice offered here.

It seems logical to begin with investigation of why social practice has proved to be problematic for social theory. This will comprise the first chapter, which begins with an outline of the key terms that will be applied when discussing social practice, and an explanation of why these terms have been chosen. As well as explaining the terms 'action', 'social action' and 'social practice', the modes of consciousness through which practice is engaged will also be expounded. Much of what follows in this chapter will be centred on Bourdieu's (1977; 1992) critique of how social theory has approached practice. This is based on his reflective discussion of why modelling social practice is problematic, and why any attempt to do so inherently reduces 'the logic of practice' itself. The points made by Bourdieu will be applied to a critique of the use of 'rules' of social practice in social theory. Giddens (1979; 1984) theory of structuration will be used to extend this critique. Bourdieu (1977) will also be drawn upon to give impetus to the argument for seeing social actors as 'virtuosos' of social practice. The chapter closes by outlining the role of reflectively-led engagement in social practice.

Chapters two and three set out to detail the theoretical pillars of relational sociology and the socially emergent self. In terms of logical ordering, it makes little theoretical difference which is expounded first. However, as much of relational sociology has grown out of Bourdieu's critique of social practice (Thorpe, 2013), it perhaps makes more sense to begin with relational theory. The second chapter thus aims to outline why the arguments of relational sociology are so beneficial to understanding social practice in Bourdieu's terms. But doing so requires that we get to grips with many of the terms of relational sociology. As many of these terms are set in opposition to traditional terms of social theory, a large portion of this chapter will revolve around expounding the virtues of relational sociology over alternative modes of social thought. This brings us to questions of structure and agency, which are of the utmost importance in explaining why social theory has often struggled to deal with social practice, and why the approach to practice given here is illuminating.

It will begin to become clear in chapter two that the kind of relational sociology I will be utilising not only lends itself to, but also requires, an explanation of the socially

emergent self. The task of explaining this intersection will be deferred until chapter four. This is because understanding how relational sociology and Mead's theory of the self can be brought together to provide an explanation of engagement in social practice firstly requires a careful outline of Mead's framework, which will comprise chapter three. While Mead's theory will provide the essential basis for the theory of the socially emergent self used here, it is approached with a critical eye. It is argued that Mead's theory needs extending on two fronts to be useful in the aims of this thesis. Firstly, Mead's theory needs to be directed towards a more affirmative role for reflective engagement. It is argued that while Mead's theory lends itself to such a position, his theoretical framework needs to be extended if it is to fully account for the role of the self in individual engagement in social practice. Secondly, it is argued that the explanatory power of Mead's framework is inhibited by its inability to explain how understandings of social practice are able to transcend time and space across social contexts. This is remedied by the incorporation of the neo-hermeneutic approach to the self offered by Charles Taylor (1989).

Indeed, this neo-hermeneutic approach provides a major impetus for tying Mead's theory of the self in with relational sociology. It is argued that the concepts of relational sociology provide a sound means for explaining how social practices extend across long chains of social relations, which are historically situated. It is also argued that Mead's theory is can contribute greatly to relational sociology, as it can explain how social practices, which are shared via 'transactions' (Dépelteau, 2015), are brought into the experience of the individual and applied in her action. Expounding the virtues of this synthesis between relational sociology and Mead's framework for the self – and explaining its relevance to understanding engagement in social practice – is the task of chapter four. It is in chapter four that the theoretical pillars constructed in chapters two and three are amalgamated into an explanation of engagement in social practice set out in chapter one.

This thesis closes by applying the theory previously set out to moral practice. This fifth chapter has two functions. Firstly, it provides an application of the major arguments to a specific domain of social practice. In this sense, it aims to draw together what has been argued throughout. Secondly, it is argued that the theory offered in this thesis provides a firm means of understanding individual engagement in moral practice. Moral practices are taken to be not altogether different from other

aspects of social practice in the way that they are taken on and engaged with by the individual. That is, moral practices are brought into the experience of the individual via the social emergence of the self from social relations. This in turn moulds individual engagement in moral practice. It is argued that this provides a break from many traditional theories of morality, as it does not necessarily take moral practice as requiring any sort of deeply philosophical explanation. Indeed, the explanation offered here is much more of a sociological one. This finally leads us into a conclusion that summarises the major points of the theory offered here, their application, and their relevance to social theory.

Chapter 1 – The Problem of Social Practice

The aim of this thesis is to interrogate the relationship between the socially emergent self and individual engagement in social practice. As Schatzki (2001) has commented, social practice has come to be the centring point for much of social theory. This is because 'practice theories' have stated the case for practice as being the point of intersection between social context and individual engagement with that social context. It is through practice that shared understandings and norms are applied and transformed in individual action. It is the significance of social practice, and the difficulty of explaining it, that motivates this project. Fulfilling the aims of this thesis requires firstly that we situate the problem of explaining social practice in social theory, and secondly that we establish what is meant by social practice. These points are brought together in the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1992) and thus this chapter will draw heavily upon his work. As will be argued shortly, Bourdieu (1977; 1992) offers an illuminating exposition of the complexity of social practice and the intricacy of our pre-reflective engagement with such practice. In relation to this exposition of practice, Bourdieu offers a resounding critique of why explaining social practice has been so problematic for social theory. However, while Bourdieu understands social practice as indefinite, 'fuzzy', and largely engaged with pre-reflectively, he stops short of explaining precisely how such an engagement with the murkiness of social practice is possible. It is here that an explanation of the socially emergent self becomes necessary for an account of engagement in social practice.

A sound theoretical explanation of this relationship inevitably rests on a sound conceptualisation of the things on either side of the relationship. That is, before the significance of this relationship can be established, we must provide a robust account both of social practice and of the socially emergent self. As will hopefully become clear, the social emergence of the self is necessary to account for practice; but likewise, social practice is necessary to account for the self. In this sense, in terms of ordering, it does not matter much whether we begin by explaining the socially emergent self, or whether we begin by explaining social practice, as each is necessary to explain the other. However, as the secondary aim of this thesis is to apply the relationship between the self and social practice to an explanation of moral practice, it perhaps makes more sense to begin with an explanation of social

practice. In light of this second aim, the balance of the thesis overall is shifted slightly towards using the socially emergent self to explain social and moral practice, rather than the other way around. Although both are of the utmost significance in explaining the other, this thesis is ultimately attempting to explain the relevance of the socially emergent self for a rigorous explanation of social practice, so it is with social practice that we shall begin.

Modes of consciousness and Modes of Action

This thesis is primarily concerned with the social emergence of the self and its relationship with individual engagement with social practice. However, before we can begin to conceptualise either, we need to give at least rudimentary consideration to conceptualising basic modes of human consciousness. It will be argued that some degree of consciousness is foundational to the social emergence of the self and to human action. What is more, the broad modes of consciousness which will be designated presently are discernible in human action, and thus will be used to designate distinctive (yet intertwined) modes of action on the part of the individual. That is, how individuals act in the world can be designated according to the mode of consciousness through which a particular action or series of action occurred. What will be considered here specifically are the 'intentional' modes of consciousness that correspond to two main discernible modes through which human agents act in the world. This will come to be significant to the overall arguments, both of how the self emerges through social relations with others, and how this emergence of the self moulds the social action of the individual.

The basis for these arguments is that most human beings are naturally capable of consciousness. That is, it can generally be assumed that a fully awake adult is conscious of the world around her and that she is conscious of herself within that world (Schutz, 1970). It can generally be assumed that the human individual has this basic level of subjective awareness in which they experience the world and reflect upon this experience as a self-conscious being (Schutz, 1970).

Following Schutz (1970) and Giddens (1991), it seems that there are two discernible (yet not separate) modes of consciousness through which the individual engages

with action. Firstly, there is what Giddens (1991) calls practical consciousness. Secondly, there is reflective consciousness (or 'discursive consciousness' in Giddens [1984] terms). Each of these modes of consciousness can be said to be 'intentional' in the sense that they involve the individual being conscious of something (Schutz, 1970). As will be argued in greater depth later on, both modes are not entirely distinct in the sense that the individual often shifts seamlessly between these modes of consciousness in order to cope with the world around her (Schutz, 1970). Both modes shape how the self emerges while also being shaped by the emergence of the self, meaning that our consciousness is essential to how the self develops socially, and how the self develops socially is an essential foundation to individual social action through these modes of consciousness.

For the most part, we experience the world through a 'stream of consciousness' (Schutz, 1970: 57). We experience various objects as they enter into our perception. What we perceive waxes, wanes, and changes as the direction of our perception shifts. Many of the objects of our perception are experienced without being reflectively acknowledged. Being reflectively engaged means that the individual is reflecting upon an object in relation to herself, and for the most part, individuals do not perceive the world in such a way. As I walk down a street, there is a multitude of things entering into my perception, which I do not really take on board – the traffic becomes a collaborative hum, most of the faces I pass go unnoticed. I only really notice the hardness of the pavement when something changes, perhaps I unintentionally walk on to the grass, at which point I become aware of the change in surface. While most of what we perceive goes unregistered, our perception is generally directed towards something, and it shifts as our experiences shift. To continue with the example, my perception will probably be directed towards potential obstacles in my path or my train of thought. As I move forward, I become conscious of new obstacles and thoughts.

This is practical consciousness at its most basic level. We are conscious of the world around us and we act in relation to it *pre-reflectively* – i.e. without the necessity of reflective engagement with ourselves. It will be maintained here that individuals are acting in terms of practical consciousness whenever they are acting in the world without being reflectively engaged. It is here that modes of consciousness are relevant to modes of action. Being pre-reflectively conscious is one of the modes

through which the individual is aware of her world; but it is also a mode of acting in the world (Giddens, 1991). As we have seen from the example of walking down the street, the individual is not just aware of the street; she is acting pre-reflectively in that particular region of time and space. She is engaged with her social and physical surroundings without the necessity of reflection to guide her action (Sie, 2015).

However, for Mead (1967/1934) and Giddens (1984), human agents continually monitor their own activity, the actions of others, and changes in their immediate social and physical circumstances. This reflexive monitoring occurs predominantly in terms of practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984). Indeed, this is an important sticking point for understanding reflexivity; human agents are generally able to monitor their own conduct and the world around them without having to engage in a full reflective, discursive internal conversation (Schutz, 1970). As Goffman's (1959) analysis has shown, the individual actor invests a fair amount of significance in correctly setting her body language according to the situation that she finds herself in. While the appropriateness of such expressions are surely learnt, and while the agent can surely rehearse her facial expressions if she knows that she is entering into a delicate social situation, we can imagine (for the most part) that individuals are able to respond with an appropriate expression without prior rehearsal or discursive reflection on how one's face should be set. Giddens (1984) argues that most of the time the lay individual would be unable to discursively explain why her body language was set in a certain fashion in a certain situation, despite the fact that she has been able to respond appropriately. The point is that the individual agent is continually monitoring herself, even if she is not always fully *reflectively* aware of this in the sense of discursively engaging in an internal conversation (as Archer (2003) puts it) with herself about how to respond in a situation. The individual can be seen to be capable of reflexive engagement even when acting purely in practical consciousness terms.

As has been noted by many (for example Heidegger [1962], Gadamer [1977], Schutz [1970], Giddens [1991], Bourdieu [1977], King [2004], Burkitt [2015], to name but a few), pre-reflective action extends far beyond our basic engagement with our external world. Indeed, most of our daily social interaction with other people is undertaken without the individual firstly having to decide on the appropriate course of action. We are simply able to act, for the most part, in a manner generally held to be

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appropriate within our social context, even if the situation is fairly novel (Bourdieu, 1977). In the same way as a skilled sports player simply responds to the situation in front of her without having to actively decide the appropriate course of action by thinking through her basic coaching or the rules of the game, individuals in the social world generally do not need to be reflectively engaged in order to know how to act in a particular situation. As Giddens (1991: 35) puts it, in this sense much of our action is 'non-conscious' (which is not to say "unconscious").

Action that occurs in terms of practical consciousness is non-conscious or pre-reflective, in the sense that it is not necessary to reflectively engage with one's own thoughts in order to successfully engage in routine social activities. It will be argued further on that individuals are able to largely act in terms of practical consciousness because of the socially emergent process of the self. It will be maintained that, because the self emerges socially, the individual is inherently embedded in the social relations that constitute her social context, which shape how her self emerges. Being able to engage in the social world pre-reflectively means that the individual must have a deep and skilled understanding of how her social world is. It will be argued that it is from the socially emergent self that this implicit understanding is acquired. As will be shown, this means that the emergence of the self is integral to explaining routine social action because action undertaken in terms of practical consciousness is shaped by the social relations that have shaped the individual self.

Acting in terms of practical consciousness means not having to think about and question every action we take. As Giddens highlights:

> To answer even the simplest everyday query, or to respond to the most cursory remark, demands the bracketing of a potentially almost infinite range of possibilities open to the individual... What makes a response 'appropriate' or 'acceptable' necessitates a shared – but unproven and unprovable – framework of reality. (1991: 36)

This is important because the discursive questioning of all our actions and practices would not only be hugely impractical in the sense that it would inhibit our ability to act proficiently in a particular situation, but it would also be deeply disconcerting. This is because a lot of the time, we cannot give strong discursive reasons for why we undertook a certain action or indeed why certain practices are engaged with at all

(Sie, 2015). What is needed from social theory is an explanation of how individuals are able to act pre-reflectively in a social world in which the appropriate social practice is not discursively recast by each individual, but in which the contours of social practice are taken on and intuitively applied in an individualised manner in social interaction.

However, individuals also regularly engage with themselves reflectively to various depths, and an adequate social theory needs to be able to account for the role of this reflective consciousness in action as well. An individual can be said to be 'reflectively conscious' when she reflects upon her action and upon herself as a person. As Giddens (1979) and Schutz (1970) both point out, individuals are generally able to account for their action if asked. They are able to describe what they have just done and why they have done it even when the action has been undertaken pre-reflectively. This form of reflective engagement is always a retrospective assessment of past action. When our routine practical action is disturbed, we are jolted into consideration of our action. For example, when we suddenly realise that our car keys are not where we expected them to be, we have to reflect on our previous action in order to go about our day.

But individuals can also be reflectively engaged with action that has not yet occurred. For example, an individual may plan out what they want to say in an important conversation, or consider how to increase the chances of getting a promotion (Archer, 2003). Of particular importance is reflective engagement with one's self-narrative. Individuals can both reflect upon their own past action, and consider future action, in terms of who they see themselves as being, or how they would like to be seen. As shall be argued later on, the capacity to reflect on one's action and project one's self-view forward into future action are integral to the emergence of one's self-identity, and should not be discounted from an explanation of individual action. In simple terms, we can reflect upon our action, consider how it fits with who we want to be, and then perhaps strive to act differently in the future if our action was not becoming of our view of ourselves, even if we often fail on this front. It will subsequently be maintained that this reflective engagement with one's self-identity is significant to individual action.

We now briefly turn our attention to the question of the 'unconscious'. The kind of things that we refer to through the term 'unconscious', by their definition, resist being brought into consciousness (Giddens, 1991). But, as Searle (1991) argues, much of what is referred to by the term 'unconscious' can be brought into the mind and thought about; that is, we can become conscious of such things. Even issues that we cannot be made conscious of due to deep psychological repression are still the kind of thing that we *could* be conscious of – which is, of course, the point of psychoanalysis (Searle, 1991). Yet, both Searle (1991) and Chalmers (2010) highlight how we have significant urges, drives, and tendencies which, while they could be made conscious, affect our action prior to our potential conscious engagement with them. Taking their impetus from Freud, the rudimentary point of psychological theories of the unconscious is that individuals have base desires, urges, drives, and so forth, which are the result of an interminably complex interaction of biological functioning, emotional contact, and life history (Merleau-Ponty, 1969). These unconscious desires and drives are often impulsive and are centred in aggression, sexuality, and the achievement of satisfaction. In this sense, they frequently stand against the socially appropriated means of expressing and fulfilling these impulses (Chancer, 2013).[1] As a result of this conflict between the impulsive unconscious motivation and the socialised self, many of these desires and drives come to be repressed, or go unacknowledged in one's consciousness. Yet, the drives and desires persist 'beneath the surface' of our consciousness. They continue to mould our motivations, our feelings, and our responses to certain situations, while not being intentionally present in our consciousness (Chancer, 2013).

From studies into how underlying sexual desires affect automatic bodily responses (Katz, 2001) to implicit bias studies that demonstrate our susceptibility to acknowledge and recall faces of our own ethic grouping more decisively than faces from another ethnic group (Gendler, 2011), there are countless psychological studies that empirically demonstrate the undeniable significance of the unconscious to human action. It would surely be near impossible to stand against such evidence and deny that human action is affected by a multitude of emotional, physiological, and

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[1] As we shall see further on in the analysis of the socially emergent self, Mead facilitated this divide between the impulsive 'I' and the 'me'.

sexual impulses and mental states that are not made conscious, or indeed resist being made so (Chalmers, 2010). It would seem hard to deny that much of what is of significance to who we are and how we act is the result of the effect that our engagement with the world has had on our unconscious.

Indeed, Chancer (2013) argues that much of social theory has relied on some sort of notion of the unconscious – Weber's analysis of the 'Protestant ethic' rested upon his diagnosis of the individual and social anxiousness that Protestantism had produced in its followers, which affected their approach to life (Chancer, 2013). As the Frankfurt school point out, Marx's reliance on the distinction between false consciousness and actual interest requires some sort of engagement with psychological conceptualisation of the unconscious to fully function (Chancer, 2013). Giddens (1991) himself goes as far as to argue that our basic trust in the world in which we find ourselves, our 'ontological security', is founded in early childhood emotional experiences that are largely unconscious.

Nonetheless, this particular study aims to investigate the emergence of the self through social relations and the influence this emergence has upon individual action in sociological terms. While it is not felt that a hard distinction should be made between the sociological and the psychological when investigating the self, it is beyond the remit of this thesis to provide a detailed psychological account of the role played by the unconscious in the emergence of the self and in social action. Thus, the basis of the investigation into the self given here is the notion that human beings are generally conscious, or capable of being conscious, of the world around them. As we shall see, this is the foundation on which the self is formed. Through the continued emergence of the self, humans come to act in terms of practical consciousness, but they are also capable of reflecting upon and planning their action; that is, they are also capable of reflective consciousness. It is thus through these two forms of consciousness that the social action of the individual shall be considered.

Action, Social Action and Social Practice

As will be argued throughout this thesis, understanding how social action and social practice are entwined with these modes of consciousness is of the utmost importance to the question of how social theory should proceed when it seeks to investigate the relationship between the individual, her social action, and her social context. However, before we can get to that, we need to briefly outline what is meant by the terms 'social action' and 'social practice'.

Let us begin by conceptualising social action in line with no lesser source than Max Weber (1978/1922). Weber insisted that the discipline of sociology should be concerned '...with the interpretive understanding of social action' (Weber, 1978/1922: 4). He continues that '...action is 'social' insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course' (Weber, 1978/1922: 4). Of course, many actions that the individual undertakes are not socially oriented. Blinking may often be an example of this, as would be pouring oneself a glass of water in one's own home when nobody else is present. There are perhaps times when either of these actions may be socially oriented, such as fluttering one's eyes at another, or pouring oneself a glass of water in order to casually offer someone else a drink, both of which may be undertaken in order to appear endearing. It should nonetheless be clear that some of our actions that may at one time *not* be socially oriented may well be socially oriented at another. The point is that not all of our actions are necessarily socially oriented, and Weber's definition took account of this fact.

With this in mind, we can ask what exactly Weber (1978/1922: 4) was referring to when he argued that action is social when '...its subjective meaning takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course'. It should be noted that this definition does not mean that an action is social when it is directed towards others, although this may often be the case. Weber famously illustrated this point with an example of the use of money. The subjective meaning of any use of money takes account of the behaviour of others, even if it is just the private hoarding of money in a personal safe. The use of money does not need to be *directed towards* the behaviour of others for it to *take account* of the behaviour of others. The action of using money is socially oriented by the behaviour of others influencing the subjective

meaning of the action (Weber, 2006/1922). So while the decision to invest money, rather than to leave it in a savings account because interest rates are low, may seem like a deeply private action, its subjective meaning is oriented by the behaviour of others, and is thus a social action. The same could be said of hoarding money in a personal safe because the individual distrusts banks.

The 'others' whose behaviour can orient the meaning of our action can be known personally, or they can be a collective of unknown others. They can be immediately present, or they can be located in the past or future. For example, we may shake someone's hand when it is offered to us, we may wear a poppy to signify remembrance of those who gave their lives in war, or we may act in a certain way in the hope of presenting ourselves as a certain type of person to future interlocutors. These others can also be somewhere in a faceless distance - for example, giving money to a charity may be an action oriented to helping an unspecified recipient. Or, as Weber points out, using money involves engaging with an unspecified number of unknown individuals on whom we, to a greater or lesser extent, depend. Although there is often no definite other by which or towards which an action is oriented, for Weber, an action is social in so far as its subjective meaning takes account of this orientation from and towards others (Weber, 2006/1922).

In this thesis, as with much other writing in the social sciences, the term 'social practice' is often used to denote more or less the same thing as 'social action'. The two will often be used almost interchangeably, but there is a mild distinction to be made. Social action will be taken to refer to the action of the individual, whereas social practice will refer to her engagement in practices that transcend her particular action. An individual's social action can thus be an engagement with a social practice, in the same way that my individual action at a funeral involves engagement with the general social practice of the funeral (i.e. the actual ritual practice associated with death, burial, cremation, etc.) and the various practices that are commonly upheld at a funeral, such as solemnity, appropriate dress, and so forth. In the case of the funeral, the social action of the individual attending the funeral is oriented by the behaviour of others in the sense that funerals tend to have some sort of intersubjective (although not definite) meaning as a social practice. We recognise a social practice as a social practice by the fact that it has a certain commonality within a particular social context that is not restricted to the action of an individual. A

social practice cannot be entirely idiosyncratic, although a social practice can be engaged with in an idiosyncratic way through an individual's social action. In what follows, I will be referring to social action in Weber's sense that it is individual action oriented by and towards others. 'Social practice' will be used to denote individual social action that is not restricted to the particular social action of an individual, but instead is widely engaged within a social context.

Explaining Social Practice

From our brief interrogation of the modes of consciousness and action that will be considered here, we began to get a view of how human engagement in social practice should be considered. It has been argued that human beings, for the most part, do not go about their day reflectively engaged with everything that confronts them. Most of the time, we are simply in the flow of the world, dealing with what is in front of us with a pre-reflective skilful precision (Dreyfus, 2014; Schutz, 1970). We tend to know how to act in certain situations without having to plan or reflect upon our actions. For many of the hugely influential 'practice theories', such as the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1992), Anthony Giddens (1978; 1979; 1984), and much of social relations theory (Dépelteau, 2008; King, 2004), a social theory can only be considered adequate when it accurately accounts for this pre-reflective capacity to engage in social action and practice. This is because pre-reflective engagement with the social world is both the most significant and the most fundamental mode through which agents engage in social action.

However, as we shall come to see, accounting for individual engagement in social practice in terms of practical consciousness has proved to be deeply problematic even for social theories that strive to centre on practical action. Perhaps the most notable example of this theoretical impasse comes from the theory of structuration. We will now turn our attention to an exposition and a critique of structuration theory, before adding Bourdieu's (1977) general critique of most of social theories' approach to social practice, in order to demonstrate the problems associated with accounting for individual engagement in social practice through reference to social rules and theoretical modelling. As will be argued further on, Bourdieu's critique firstly tells us a lot about how we should understand individual social practice that occurs in terms of

practical consciousness; and secondly it tells us a lot about how social theory should proceed to account for social practice in this way.

Structuration and Rule-based Social Practice

For Giddens (1979), social theory had made itself vulnerable to accusation of determinism or voluntarism because it had lost sight of the significance of social practice. The acting subject (that is, the individual acting within her social context) had been overlooked in attempts to explain how the individual was either constituted by society or how society was constituted by the individual. The concept of practical consciousness, for Giddens, is key to resolving this problem (1979). He argued that understanding the individual's capacity to act routinely and pre-reflexively allows us to see the individual as reproducing structure through her practical action. This is because, in her practical action, the individual is engaging in shared social practices drawn from her social system. In turn, this practical action reproduces the social structures of that social system. This is based on Giddens' claim that human agency involves the capacity to act and the ability to have acted otherwise - although he maintains that the actions available to the agent are the product of historical circumstances that both constrain and enable the possibilities of action (Dessler, 1989). Consequently, social action can only be understood when structure and agency are considered to be mutually constitutive of one another. This is referred to as the duality of structure and action (Giddens, 1976).

According to Giddens (1979: 64-65), social structures only exist as 'rules' and 'resources' that are the 'structural properties' of a 'social system'. A social system refers to recurrent social practices organised across time and space. Social practices are recurrent in a social system because such practices are governed by rules and resources (structural properties). We could conceive of a school as a social system, in which rules and resources are drawn upon in the social practices of both teachers and students, which leads to the reproduction of these structures, and thus the social system as a whole. For Giddens, rules are applied when an agent 'knows how to go on' in terms of social practice (Giddens, 1977: 131). Rules do not usually have to be discursively understood by the agent in the sense that agent needs to be able to formulate or explain a rule in order to be able to act in relation to it. Rather, an agent

knows and applies a rule when she is able to engage in social practices according to that rule (but of course, rules do not exist in isolation; they can only function in relation to other rules) (Giddens, 1977). Language is a good example of this. In the creation of a sentence, various syntactic rules are applied. These rules structure how the social practice of using language can proceed. The correct application of these rules leads to the structural features of a particular language being reproduced (Giddens, 1979). This process occurs even if the agent is unable to explain the rules of language she is applying. The same is true of the application of rules in social practices more generally.

However, while rules allow for meaningful social practices to occur, the outcome of these practices are not determined by rules. Indeed, outcomes of social practices depend on how rules are applied and the resources drawn on by those party to the interaction. Resources are the 'vehicles of power' that agents draw upon in social interaction (Giddens, 1979: 69). Agents apply resources, which make up structures of dominance, through social interaction that then reproduces these resources (Giddens, 1979). For example, in social practices that entail the employer-employee relationship, both parties generally apply the rules of what it means to be an employer or employee respectively. Related to these rules are resources, such as the ability/susceptibility to fire or be fired, and the ability to press charges of unfair dismissal. However, resources need not be as overtly tied to domination as this example.

Individuals draw upon rules and resources in their action. In this sense, what actions are possible is both enabled and constrained by these structural properties. These structural properties simultaneously allow us to act, while restricting how we act. But through our action, these structural properties, and the social practices of the social system, are reproduced. Thus, the basic notion of structuration theory is that social action is possible because of social structures, and these social structures are produced and reproduced through action. Social practices are reproduced through the process of structuration and it is the task of the social sciences to analyse these social practices (Giddens, 1984). This allows Giddens to claim to have formulated a theoretical framework that accounts for social action without giving precedence to either structure or agency.

Yet, while structuration theory came to dominate much of social theory in the latter part of the twentieth century (Dessler, 1989), it has faced staunch criticisms, some fair, some less so. These criticisms have come from two fronts. Firstly, overcoming the dualism has required the construction of an extensive theoretical framework for explaining precisely how social phenomena emerge from the interaction of agency and structure. This has led to criticisms that focus on specific flaws in the vast theoretical model, which allows structuration to be accused of failing to overcome the dualism of structure and agency in the way that it claims. The second line of criticism follows a more general critique of rules-based theories of social practice. This line of criticism is much more decisive for the course of this thesis, because this thesis is attempting to explain individual engagement in social practice, rather than simply critiquing the specifics of one social theory. I will briefly give examples of the first line of critique before focusing more heavily on the second, as the second provides us with a much clearer explanation of why much of social theory has been unable to deal with the problem of individual social practice within a shared social context.

The Problems with Structuration Theory

Because structuration theory has explicitly claimed to overcome the kind of dualistic thinking that has inhibited so much previous social theory, the theoretical framework has been strongly adopted and applied in much of contemporary social scientific research. In many ways, structuration theory has become almost paradigmatic insofar as it provides a reasonably sound basis for social scientific research that will not easily succumb to run-of-the-mill criticisms of either giving precedence to structure or to agency (Dessler, 1989). However, structuration theory has been subjected to heavy criticism for failing to fully overcome the dualistic thinking that it set itself against.

There have been some fairly routine criticisms levelled against structuration theory on the first line of critique. For example, it has frequently been pointed out that structuration theory is not well equipped to explain how and why social change occurs (Rose, 1998) This is because Giddens argues that individuals most often act through practical consciousness in order to maintain their sense of 'ontological security', which comes from being able to engage in the social world in routine ways

without having to discursively question the stocks of knowledge that allow them to understand their place within the world (Giddens, 1984). Although I do not entirely disagree with this notion, it is clear that seeing individuals as largely acting in ways that uphold their sense of ontological security is an inherently conservative phenomenon. Giddens surely would not disagree with this, as he accurately points out that most of daily social life is made up of routinised practice. However, it is fair to say that his theory is difficult to reconcile with an explanation of social transformation; it will be argued later on that such a reconciliation requires a theory of individuation. Other critics, such as Archer (1995) and Bertilsson (1984), have argued that Giddens' theory simply conflates the notions of structure, agency and practice, in such a way that the concepts themselves lose their place in distinguishing the things that they supposedly refer to. If we reduce structure to the action of agents, then surely the use of such terms becomes redundant and may as well be dispensed with.

These are just a few examples of the critiques levelled at certain facets of structuration theory. But there is also a line of critique that begins to feed into a more general critique of social theory, by criticising the application of rules of social practice. This critique can be started as a specific critique of structuration theory before being extended into a more general critique of the notion of rules-based models of social practice. A fair amount of attention has been given to how the emphasis Giddens puts on rules leads him back into dualistic theorising (King, 2004). For King, there are two ways in which rules can function. Either rules are followed in day-to-day social interaction in the sense that individual action is produced by rules, without any sort of discursive engagement with the rules on the part of the individual; or individuals are consciously aware of the rules that they actively follow in social interaction. King labels the former 'rule-determinism' and the latter as 'rule-following' (King, 2004: 50-51). His dissatisfaction with both possibilities arises largely out of a critique of structuration theory, in which examples of rule-determinism and rule-following can be found.

In terms of rule-determinism, King maintains that structuration theory often slips into the notion that individuals tacitly act in ways that fully accord with the structures of their social system. While Giddens (1984) insists that individuals have the capability to 'act otherwise', for the most part they do not discursively engage with rules of

social interaction, but rather follow them tacitly as they act in routinised ways. Barnes (2000) points out that, by Giddens' own theory, individuals do not discursively engage with rules and choose how to follow them, because if they did, their 'ontological security' (which Giddens' maintains is essential to an individual being able to participate in social life) would be compromised. As Giddens himself highlights, tacitly following rules of routine social action in line with our sense of ontological security saves us from having to question the necessity of most of our social practices – many of which would appear ridiculous if fully examined (1991).

If rule-determinism can be detected in structuration theory, then Giddens' conceptualisation of agency (the capacity to have acted differently to how one did), is brought into question. Giddens (1979) insists that such a conceptualisation of agency is necessary to a sound account of social interaction. But if individuals tacitly act according to the rules that comprise a social structure, then the notion that they could have acted otherwise to how they did is largely redundant. In this way, it seems that Giddens' notion of agency is curtailed in favour of individual action being the product of the rules of the social structures in which they exist. Here human actors are seen as acting in socially-determined ways, rather than as the kind of agents Giddens depicts.

Yet, while structuration theory can be read to be rule-deterministic, this certainly was not Giddens' intention. He claims elsewhere that agents apply rules in social interaction, via their capacity as knowledgeable agents who can direct their own action (at least to some extent) (Giddens, 1979). However, as King points out against this, it makes no more sense to claim that agents actively follow rules than it does to claim that they are passively determined by them (2004). This is because there is always the possibility of a rule being interpreted differently by different people. Logically, at least, there is always the possibility of acting contrary to a social rule – such as either ignoring an offer of a handshake or failing to understand the concept of shaking hands altogether.

Of course, most of the time people do respond appropriately to a handshake, and most people in our society would understand the practice as a greeting. Yet we can imagine examples in which someone either deliberately or accidently ignores an extended hand, or perhaps goes to hug the other person instead. Or we can even

imagine someone of another culture being utterly confused by the gesture. The point is that it is not adequate to say that people actively follow rules, because individuals may know, interpret, and follow rules differently, which undermines the point of the concept of a rule. This being the case, the kind of social reproduction that Giddens claims occurs as a result of rule-following may not happen as he describes. This is because agents would be seen as actively interpreting rules of interaction, meaning that routine practice may not be followed in a routine way in a social system (King, 2004). The trouble is, Giddens either has to rely on rule-determinism, which leads him into the denial of genuine agency in day-to-day practice, or he has to rely on rule-following, which would lead to the kind of abundance of agency that cannot adequately account for the reproduction of social practices.

This line of criticism offered by King is fair enough, although it could perhaps be accused of deliberately misreading structuration theory in order to make a point – even though the points are surely valid. As will become clearer throughout this chapter, my problem with structuration theory is its continual reliance on rules to explain social practice. In terms of the use of rules in structuration theory, Giddens claims to 'regard the rules of social life... as techniques or generalisable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social practices' (1984: 21). With such a conceptualisation of how rules are applied, combined with Giddens' concept of agency, it quickly becomes necessary to question the extent of the role played by agents in the application of rules. Yet, Giddens adds the important caveat that rules of social life are simply 'aspects of *praxis*', which are largely followed tacitly, and are hugely contestable (1984: 21). But, as will be asked in the next section, if it is the case that human actors are generally able to act in most situations without reflective engagement, despite the fact that the boundaries of appropriate action are often fuzzy and contestable, rather than firmly codified, why rely on a conception of rules for social practice in the first place? The following section will highlight how relying on notions of rules makes it very difficult to accurately account for practical social action. This argument will be made predominantly in relation to the work of Bourdieu (1977; 1998), before extending these arguments into social relations theory.

Bourdieu's Critique of Rules-Based Practice

A social theory can be said to be adequate when it accurately accounts for engagement in social practice. If a social theory does not accurately account for engagement in social practice, then it cannot be said to function. This was the essence of the critique of social theory offered by Bourdieu (1977) in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. He argued that the social sciences have often failed on precisely this point because they attempt to model social practices in a way that actually blinds them to the logic of those practices themselves. This is because social theorists regularly construct theoretical models of practice, which are based on the kind of coherence that can be reduced to explanatory rules of practice.

Indeed, in *The Logic of Practice* (1992), Bourdieu recounts how he himself spent countless hours attempting to construct a coherent agrarian calendar from his anthropological research into the Kabyle people. The more that he attempted to impose an explanatory model to the agrarian practices, the less accurately the practices were depicted; the practices were shoe-horned into the theoretical model because the model could not maintain its coherence when the practices were accounted for in their entirety. Because trying to squeeze the entirety of social practice into a theoretical model only ever dilapidated the coherence of that model, Bourdieu (1992) notes how he found himself attempting to mould the practices to the model. This, he suggests, has been the common approach to accounting for social practices and action in the social sciences. As a result, social theories often had the social theory and its model as their end, rather than an accurate analysis and description of social practice. Or, as Bourdieu put it, such an approach to social theory leads to a confusion of 'the model of reality for the reality of the model' (Bourdieu, 1977: 39).

For Bourdieu (1992), the reason that this has been the case for the social sciences is that social scientists have too often attempted to construct theoretical models that coherently depict and formalise social practice as a whole. But these models can, at best, only present a snapshot picture of *some* social practices at a particular point in time, in a handful of specific situations. As such, any rules formalised from this model cannot capture social practice itself. Bourdieu is arguing that this approach to social theory is backwards, as generative rules and principles can only be applied to

practice through retrospective imposition from outside of the practice itself (and even then they can only be applied inadequately). Practice itself has a logic which precedes such formulation. No such model can capture the entirety of social practice because

> ...if practices had as their principle the generative principle which has to be constructed in order to account for them, that is, as a set of coherent axioms, then the practices produced according to perfectly conscious generative rules would be stripped of everything that defines them distinctively as practices, that is, the uncertainty and 'fuzziness' resulting from the fact that they have as their principle not a set of conscious, constant rules, but practical schemes, opaque to their possessors, varying according to the logic of the situation, the almost invariably partial viewpoint which it imposes, etc. Thus the procedures of practical logic are rarely entirely coherent and rarely incoherent.

> (Bourdieu, 1992: 12)

Bourdieu continues that this backwards mode of understanding social practices as governed by generative rules and principles has subsequently led to social scientists claiming that social practices are engaged with when the individual has some sort of understanding of these rules and principles. But if we understand social practice in the way just described, and if we consequently acknowledge that social practice has a logic that precedes formulation, then it becomes clear that individuals do not engage with rules, but with practices themselves, in all of their murkiness. The social practitioners themselves need no such rules in order to engage with social practice. This is because they are individuals who emerge from a social context as a 'native' of social practices, the coherence of which the individual may well be unable to discursively account for, even if the coherence of the practices is perfectly clear and accepted in practice.

In *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), Bourdieu highlighted how, particularly in anthropological research into indigenous human cultures, the social scientist has typically watched such cultures and attempted to outline how individuals within these cultures act and interact in certain situations. The researcher then formulates supposed rules of social interaction. But these rules are inherently afflicted by the researcher's own subjectivities. As Bourdieu points out, the reason that researchers

have to rely on formulating such rules is precisely because they are not natively embedded within the culture that they are investigating (1977). Unlike the researcher, the natives do not need to intellectualise their social interactions into formulated rules, because they already know the practices of their culture without having to refer to guiding, cast-iron principles of how to act. Bourdieu refers to natives as 'virtuosos' (1977: 79), in the sense that they do not act in relation to rules, nor do they need such rules in order to act. By virtue of being a native of their culture, they understand how to act in their culture better than any system of rules could ever denote. Natives of a culture need not refer to rules of interaction before every act any more than those who are skilled at football need to constantly refer back to specifics formulations of when to pass and when to shoot before they act; they are able to act and improvise 'off the cuff' in relation to the situation they find themselves in.

This argument is very much tied to a point made earlier on about how we generally go about life in the social world. It has been argued that human beings, for the most part, do not go about their day reflexively engaged with everything that confronts them. Most of the time, we are simply in the flow of the world, dealing with what is in front of us with a pre-reflective skilful precision (Dreyfus, 2014; Schutz, 1970). We tend to know how to act in the situations that arises without having to plan or reflect upon our actions. For Dreyfus, the capacity to go about our day without having to question and assess every action and situation is '...simultaneously the highest and most basic form of engagement with the world' (2014: 4). As both Dreyfus (2014) and Bourdieu (1977) emphasise so thoroughly, it is the basic capacity to act without reflection in most situations that allows us to 'skilfully cope' or become 'virtuosos' within our own social context.

It should be noted that this, in many ways, was Giddens' starting point for structuration theory: social theory must be able to explain how we generally function through the mode of 'practical consciousness' (indeed, this concept is borrowed and applied throughout this thesis). However, while Giddens is right to take this to be the point of departure for his theory, he gets into difficulty when his conceptualisations of practical consciousness and agency are expounded through a rules-based explanation. As we have seen, this leaves Giddens' theory open to the criticism that it relies either on rule-following to provide for agency, or rule-determinism in order to

explain the reproduction of social practices through practical consciousness as a mode of being.

As Pleasants (1999) highlights, the difficulty of explaining exactly how agents follow rules is based on Giddens' misreading of Wittgenstein's arguments about rules in general. Wittgenstein makes a clear distinction between actions that involve a rule being followed as part of the constitution of that action, and actions that can be said to be in accordance with a rule. In the former, the rule is generative of the action, such as following the rules of chess to put an opponent into checkmate. The latter, however, are actions that may accord with a rule that is outlined by the observer (or social theorist) (Pleasants, 1999). For Wittgenstein, most of social practice does not involve the agent tacitly or explicitly following a rule, but instead simply occurs as it does as the individual acts. The observer can then (loosely) claim that the actions are in accordance with a rule, but cannot claim that the actor is following a rule.

As Pleasants puts it, the aim of Wittgenstein's later philosophy was to '...*investigate*, rather than presuppose, the applicability of the idea that in doing what they do in personal and social life, individuals *must* be following rules' (1999: 64). Wittgenstein doubted the notion that most of social practice is based on rule following, as well as suggesting that attempting to explain social practice in this way often involves an attempt to make reality add up with theoretical models, rather than simply adequately describing social practices. This is the case for Giddens structuration theory, in which rule-following (whether explicit or tacit) is taken to be a necessary means of explaining how social structures are reproduced through the actions of agents (which are themselves constituted by these social structures) (Pleasants, 1999).

It thus must be asked if recourse to rules is at all necessary when describing general social practice. In response to similar arguments made by Giddens, Dreyfus (2014: 199) notes that, '...if one has to stop the regress of rules for applying rules by, at some point, simply knowing how to apply a principle, why not just admit that skilled people [virtuosos] know how to act justly in specific situations and drop the appeal to rules...' Indeed, as Bourdeiu points out, this is how humour and wit works (1977). We often surprise ourselves with our witticism precisely because (as with Mead's notion of the 'I' and the 'me' which will be explored further on), when we reflect upon such remarks, we cannot claim to have actively considered rules about what is funny.

Humour often arises in novel situations, in which such rules would not be clear. The point is that people do not need to consult rules in order to make a joke: they are so embedded in their culture that they are able to take a novel situation in relation to a shared understanding of the novelty of the situation.

The major problem for Bourdieu is that the direction and the appropriateness of certain social practices cannot really be reduced to a descriptive rule or to a predictive structure. What social action an individual can take, how this action should be taken, or indeed what action the individual does actually take, is not circumscribed as a clearly delimited boundary or formulatable rule (Bourdieu, 1977; King, 2000). Bourdieu (1992) highlights this in an illuminating passage that brings to the fore the kind of instantaneous intuitive complexity of virtuoso practice that social theory often cannot account for:

> [A keen observer of] the seemingly mechanical and ritualized exchanges, such as polite conversation... would have discovered the unceasing vigilance that is needed to manage this interlocking of prepared gestures and words; the attention to every sign that is indispensable, in the use of the most ritual pleasantries, in order to be carried along by the game without getting carried away by the game beyond the game, as happens when simulated combat gets the better of the combatants; the art of playing on the equivocations, innuendos and unspoken implications of gestural or verbal symbolism that is required, whenever the right objective distance is in question, in order to produce ambiguous conduct that can be disowned at the slightest sign of withdrawal or refusal, and to maintain uncertainty about intentions that always hesitate between recklessness and distance, eagerness and indifference.

> (Bourdieu, 1992: 80-81)

Bourdieu's argument is that virtually all of us can engage in producing the kind of ambiguous conduct that we can make appear more eager or more indifferent according to the specifics of the interaction and the responses of our interlocutor. I'm sure that many of us have found ourselves in the kind of interaction Bourdieu describes so expertly. What is remarkable for Bourdieu is our capacity to engage in such practices, with all of their intricacy, largely instantaneously and pre-reflectively. Being able to engage in social practice in this fashion is what it means to be a

'virtuoso' of one's social context in Bourdieu's terms. How it is possible for an individual to be able to navigate her way through even the routine interaction given by Bourdieu - with an intuitive understanding of timing, of the appropriateness of the situation and location, of the symbolism of gesture, of words, of tempo and accent of speech, and likewise of the potentially affirmative or dismissive responses of the other, and the ability to adjust one's conduct accordingly, and so forth – with the pre-reflective immediacy that makes the interaction what it is requires explanation. It is my contention, which will be detailed further on, that the intuitive complexity of pre-reflective, virtuoso action necessitates an explanation via the socially emergent self.

Indeed, while Bourdieu's analysis of social practice is remarkable, he stops short at precisely this point. Giddens was right to centre social practice as the locus of sociological explanation, and Bourdieu was right to critique the use of rules in an explanation of practice. But his explanation of how individuals are able to become virtuosos of social practice is found wanting. We shall see in the next chapter that Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (1979) was applied to fill this gap. Yet, even if this concept were correct (and it will be argued that they are not), it still seems unlikely that virtuoso practice can be explained without an explanation of the socially emergent self. However, this argument requires the theoretical framework of the socially emergent self to be set in place, which I do in chapter three, so a full explanation of why this is the case will have to be deferred.

Reflectively-led Engagement in Social Practice

However, before we get to that it needs to be acknowledged that not all engagement in social practice is pre-reflective. As highlighted above, while most of our engagement in social practice does occur in this pre-reflective fashion, we as individuals do frequently engage with ourselves to assess our previous, current, and future action. Such reflective deliberation may be relatively minor and insignificant to ourselves, for example we may need to remind ourselves to deliver a birthday card. Yet, our reflective deliberation may have important consequences for how we engage both with our action and our own understanding of our selves. For example, an individual may choose to walk away from an argument in order to maintain their view of themselves as someone who would rather take the moral high ground than

argue incessantly. Or an individual may take up learning an instrument in order to present a different side of themselves to a person they care about. On a darker note, we can also imagine an individual reacting badly to a testing situation, and coming to recognise herself in a more negative light than she previously had, as regret impacts upon her view of who she is and her subsequent practice. Indeed, as we shall see further on, Milgram (1992) found that many of the subjects of his infamous social experiments reacted in such ways.

None of these circumstances are hard to imagine – I would guess that most of us can identify with each of these examples at least to some extent. With this in mind, it would seem thoroughly detrimental to our understanding of human engagement in social practice if we were to underplay this facet of human agency. It is important to reiterate that this thesis does not want to imply that reflective engagement is the dominant mode of consciousness. Indeed, it has been stressed that, for the most part, individuals engage in the social world without reflective or discursive recourse. Yet, Archer (2003) was surely correct to argue that social theory has, on occasion, underplayed the (albeit minor) role reflective deliberation plays in social practice. It is maintained here that individuals do, some of the time at least, engage with themselves via internal conversation and shape their action in light of this reflective engagement (Archer, 2003).

Indeed, this is one of the major point of Goffman's (1959; 1963) work on the presentation of the self in day-to-day life. While it has been argued that Goffman is wrong to suggest that the self does not have any real unitary consistency, his theories demonstrate the sheer volume of work that individuals do to present themselves to others and to themselves. That the individual is able to present herself in certain ways in certain situations suggests that they are able to reflectively engage with themselves in relation to certain situations and adjust their action accordingly. Of course, Goffman (1963) argued that much of this work happened in pre-reflective terms, such as when we adjust our facial expression in response to our interlocutor's expression. However, Goffman does not doubt that people are able to engage in social practices, such as carefully choosing items of clothing or particular responses to others, in order to present themselves in a certain way. It is argued here that if we can assume that Goffman's point is accurate, then it is also accurate to suggest that individuals can reflect on who they understand themselves as being and mould their

practice (to a certain extent) accordingly. If evidence of this was needed, Doster (2013) highlights the vast quantity of work that people put into constructing and tweaking a social media profile in order to present themselves in a certain light.

More will be made of how reflective engagement with one's view of oneself can affect social practice throughout this thesis. Before we get to that it is necessary to consider our more rudimentary reflectively-led engagement in social practice. It was commented above that we are often jolted into the reflective mode of consciousness when something disrupts our practical, pre-reflective engagement with the world (Sie, 2015; Schutz, 1970). Maybe we notice a charity representative in the street and we need to think of an excuse not to stop, or perhaps we realise that we should have stopped to hold the door for an elderly person. When such circumstances present themselves, the individual is able to reflectively consider what her next action should, or what her previous action should have been, and she is able to give reasons for her past, present and future action. As Giddens (1991) puts it, even when an individual has been acting via practical consciousness, they are still able to give a strong discursive account of why and how they acted as they did. Yet, while it seems to be true that people can account for, justify, and make sense of their actions discursively, it seems to also be true that any such account will be largely reconstructive (Sie, 2014). While our account may well be sincere, because much of our action occurs through practical consciousness, we would not have been discursively aware of our intentions or our reasoning at the time the action took place (Sie, 2014).

However, this does not mean that reflectively-led practice should be discounted altogether. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, there are occasions when we are reflectively engaged with our actions, when we have to deliberate carefully in order to navigate our way through a challenging situation. A job interview may provide a useful example of this. Going into an interview, we may have already planned much of what we are going to say and considered how we are going to act. We may well continue to remind ourselves to appear enthusiastic and sincere throughout the process. In such circumstances, we are reflectively engaged with our reasons at the time of action. So in such cases, our engagement in social practice is reflective-led (Sie, 2014).

Secondly, even when our account of our reasons for action is reconstructive of the kind of practical action that we were not reflectively engaged with at the time, how we account for our action can influence our present and future action. To suggest the opposite of this would be to suggest that people do not, every so often, realise that they have acted in a way that they regret and attempt to make amends for their failure. It would even be to suggest that an individual cannot consider how she could have acted differently to achieve a certain end. We as academics are well aware that a student who has not achieved the grade that she wanted on an essay may seek out additional feedback and advice on how to improve for her next assessment. In this case, the student's reasoning as to why she did not get the grade she desired is likely to be reconstructed, but it has informed her present and future action nonetheless.

In his fascinating essay 'Passing and the Managed Achievement of Sex Status in an Intersexed Person' Garfinkel (1967) explores both these reasons as to why reflectively-led practice can be significant to engagement in social practice, as well as demonstrating a place for the reflective engagement with practice in order to engage with practice more effectively – that is, in order to become a proficient social practitioner of one's social context. The essay is based on the case of Agnes, who came to Garfinkel's attention through psychiatric help she received in the late 1950s. Despite being born with male anatomy, she developed certain feminine features during adolescence. Agnes was always convinced that she was a girl born into the wrong body (Garfinkel, 1967). The essay is based on a number of discussions and interviews with Agnes. In his conversations with Agnes, Garfinkel (1967) finds that she has an unshakable view of what it means to be a woman – a view that was akin to the general attitudes towards what it meant to be a woman in mid-twentieth century America. She insisted that gender was a binary opposite; a person could either be a man or a woman. A person could not be both, more one than the other, or in a phase of transition. These generalised attitudes of male and female divides were absorbed by Agnes and provided her with a clear image of what it was to be one or the other.

According to her reflective self-engagement, Agnes was born a woman who had the misfortune of also being born with a penis. As such, the shared understandings of

what it means to be either male or female in the 1950s caused her great strife, both before and after surgery to replace her penis with a vagina. More than most, she had to become acutely aware of generalised attitudes of gender and the practices that came with these attitudes, and acted accordingly in order to present herself as a woman, in opposition to the identity that had largely been imposed upon her as a male child. This often involved going to great lengths to avoid revealing her secret – such as, refusing to go swimming and getting a roommate to provide a urine sample (Garfinkel, 1967).

While a lot of toil was involved in the maintenance of her identity as a woman, Agnes also felt a great sense of affirmation when she was accepted as a woman. Garfinkel comments how happy she was when men held doors open for her, or held her arm while crossing the street (as was more customary in the 1950s). On such occasions, she felt a certain degree of social validation, as the person she presented herself as being accorded with the generalised attitudes of gender. This means that she had successfully absorbed these shared attitudes and the social practices that come with them, reflectively engaged with her self-identity and applied these practices in relation to who she saw herself as being (a young woman); and this had been validated by the actions of others, allowing her to reflectively engage with herself positively.

When certain social situations caused difficulty for the maintenance of her feminine identity, such as when asked to give a urine sample in the doctor's office, she became aware that her particular biology would not allow her to act in a way that conforms to generalised attitudes of what it is to be a woman. Thus, she had to take evasive action in order to maintain her identity without question. However, the process did not stop at evasive action in particular situations. She would reflectively engage with how a situation played out. If the situation went well, she would reflect with affirmation, and attempt to reproduce such occurrences. If it went badly, she would reflect with a shame and self-reproach, and use any snags as a source for future improvement to her practice (Garfinkel, 1967). This is precisely what social verification theories of identity tell us: when our self-view has been validated in social interaction, we feel comfortable. When the self-view is questioned, we commonly act

in the future to ensure that our self-view is not brought into question again (Pinel and Swann Jr., 2000).

It cannot be doubted that the specifics of certain interactions lead the individual to reflectively engage with how they should act to maintain a certain self-identity in that specific situation, as Agnes surely did in the doctor's office. Equally, the direct interactional responses others take towards us have an important role to play in our reflective engagement with social practice, because their responses towards us inform our subsequent reflective engagement, which in turn shapes our future action. The fact that Agnes was able to take on generalised attitudes of what it means to be a woman, engage with her self-understanding of being a women, utilise certain practices to present herself as such, and then engage with the responses others take towards this reflectively-led action surely indicates the significant role of reflective engagement to participation in social practice.

Importantly for this thesis, Agnes's case demonstrates why the practices drawn upon to present one's self in a certain fashion are inherently social. Agnes had to work harder than most to interact with and interpret what it meant to be of a certain gender in the United States in the 1950s. Various sources of femininity, such as how to walk, allowing a man to open the car door for her, and so on, were included in the vital social practices of being a woman, which held such significance for her self-narrative. Such practices allowed her to engage with herself as a woman, and to present her self-narrative as a woman to others.

Here we see the significance of practices being *social.* Agnes worked hard to mould herself through various practices that affirmed her womanhood. These practices, such as allowing her arm to be held as she crossed the road, were drawn from generalised attitudes of what it means to be a woman in her particular social context. She was able to adopt these attitudes, reflectively engage with them as essential to who she was, and reproduce them through her practice. But she was also acutely aware that, in her society, being a woman meant being born with a vagina. Thus, her anatomy, even when surgically changed, provided a distinctly limiting factor both on how she could reflectively engage with herself and how she could engage with social practice. Indeed, the fact that she (once) had a penis carried with it its own generalised attitudes, meaning that she was often forced to adapt her behaviour to

maintain her identity as a woman. Thus, while Agnes was able to mould her practice to accord with her understanding of being a woman, she could not choose the circumstances that had made this such a complex task (i.e. being born with male anatomy). Nor could she escape the generalised attitudes of others that had shaped her view of 'genuine' womanhood, even though her reflectively-led action had resulted in her usually being a perfectly passable woman.

What I want to draw from this complex example is the significance of reflective engagement with social practice. We reflectively engage with our social practice when we use particular practices to present ourselves in a certain light, but these practices carry with them a generally held social understanding that limits their application. Agnes was keenly aware of the particular practices necessary for her to utilise to present herself as a woman. She was able to identify certain practices as significant to presenting herself as a woman, because they were constituted by generalised attitudes of femininity in 1950s America. As Garfinkel demonstrated with his case study of Agnes, certain social practices were deemed to be either becoming or unbecoming of a woman in 1950s America. Agnes had to learn many of these practices and then apply them correctly. Indeed, on occasion, her boyfriend overtly lambasted her for offering opinions in a way that was seen as too assertive for a woman in her time: that is, too assertive in the view of the generalised attitudes towards a woman's place in her social context (Garfinkel, 1967). Garfinkel's essay highlights how reflectively-led engagement in social practice should not be discounted, because individuals often reflectively engage with their previous action, which informs their present and future action.

Summary

What we get from Bourdieu is the remarkable insight that, generally, being a proficient member of a shared social context means being able to skilfully steer oneself through the sheer complexity of social practice in a virtuoso fashion. It is precisely both the complexity of practice and its pre-reflective engagement on the part of the individual that has been the stumbling block of so much of social theory. This is because the individual's engagement with the complexity of social practice resists the imposition of formulation. For Bourdieu (1992), as for Wittgenstein (1972),

the bedrock of social practice is practice itself. The application of logic or rules of action to account for the complexity of practice will not only present an inherently reductionary model of what a social practice is and how it is applied, but will also obscure as much as it reveals in the sense that it will apply 'non-native' conceptualisations to a mode of practice which needs no such conceptualisations to function. Indeed, such theories tend to misconstrue practice as a result of this false view.

Bourdieu's critique of the social sciences on this front is emphatic, as is his insistence upon the necessity of considering much of practical action in terms of the 'social virtuoso'. However, unlike Bourdieu, I believe that it is not possible to account for the kind of virtuoso practical consciousness action that he describes without reference to the emergence of the self, and to the role played by social relations in this emergent process. I believe that if we are to account for social practice, in all its complexity and 'fuzziness', we firstly need to understand how such practices are taken on from our relations with others. This is the task of the next chapter.

Chapter 2 - Social Relations and Social Practice

The question for this chapter is how we account for social practice in all its uncertainty and murkiness, and more specifically, for the individual capacity to engage in social practice pre-reflectively, as virtuoso social actors. Furthermore, we must be able to account for reflectively-led action as well, because this mode of consciousness also plays a significant role in individual engagement with the social world. It is contended here that it is through social relations, the relations that exist between actors, that the individual's capacity to engage in social practice in these ways emerges. In line with Bourdieu's critique of the social sciences given in the last chapter, it will be maintained that social theory has often mistakenly attempted to establish unnecessary theoretical models to account for the work done by social relations in the enactment of individual participation in social practice. However, as we shall see shortly, Bourdieu's conceptual framework built around the concept of *habitus* also has a similar flaw. Many social relations theorists argue that this trend has blinded social theory to the point that we do not need to look beyond social relations to explain social practice.

This chapter begins with a critique of Bourdieu's conceptual framework of habitus, field, and capital, as this critique leads to an explanation of why the kind of relational sociology offered here is preferred to that offered by Bourdieu himself. Following on from this, the fundamentals of the relational sociology are discussed and the theoretical language of this aspect of the thesis is introduced. The advantages of relational sociology for explaining individual engagement in social practice are then brought out through an application of relational sociology to questions of structure and agency. It should be remembered that the kind of relational sociology used here has been utilised for the end of explaining how individual (virtuoso) *engagement* in social practice is possible. It is not the aim of this thesis to attempt to explain how social practice unfolds in social situations.

Habitus and Practice

The last chapter explained the virtue of Bourdieu's critique of the social sciences in relation to his view of the sheer complexity and uncertainty of social practice. There

is no doubt that Bourdieu's critique is exemplary. However, Bourdieu's attempt at providing a positive explanation of how individuals are able to skilfully participate in the murky world of social practice falters on many of the same points that it seeks to overcome. For relational sociologists such as King (2000) and Dépelteau (2008), Bourdieu's reliance on the concepts of 'habitus' and 'field' is telling for how social theory has tended to account for social practice with theoretical mediators that go beyond the explanatory power of social relations alone. While Bourdieu came to identify himself as a relational sociologist in latter stages of his life (Dépelteau, 2015), the conceptualisations that he relied upon imply that there is something beyond relations which can be theoretically designated as *objectively* shaping the form of the relations within a field. For similar reasons as Bourdieu's argument that modelling social practice undermines the logic of practice itself, any attempt to designate how relations are objectively shaped within fields of structured positions undermines the reliance on social relations at all (Dépelteau, 2015). In turn, it becomes arguable that this costs Bourdieu the capacity to explain social practice in the terms he set out in his critique of social theory.

In the early passages of *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), Bourdieu highlights the inadequacies of not just how social scientists approach anthropological research, but also the limitations of describing societies as functioning in terms of static and continuous social structures (King, 2000). If we attempt to see individual interactions as governed by prescriptive rules drawn from social structures, then we lose sight of how individual engagement in social practice cannot be rigidly prescribed. At best, we can argue that individuals *tend* to engage in social practices in a certain way, in line with certain norms. In these early sections, Bourdieu's 'practical theory' implies that individuals are engaged in complex negotiations within the social relations in which they find themselves. Individuals are not passively determined by the structures of their social world, nor are they continually consulting formulations of rules of how to interact. They are simply interacting in relation to others in a continual process of negotiation and exchange of what is appropriate behaviour within a shared understanding of norms.

So far, so good. Bourdieu's theory of practice agrees with his critique of the approach social scientists have often taken toward social practice. However, in explaining why individual participation in social practice tends in a certain direction,

Bourdieu (1977) constructs a complex model around the concept of habitus, which is defined as follows:

> The structures constitutive of a particular environment... produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions,* structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and regular without in any way being the product of obedience to rules,... collectively orchestrated without being the orchestrating of any conductor.
>
> (Bourdieu, 1977: 72)

The latter part of this definition, the bit which claims to negate obedience to rules and deterministic orchestration of action by external structures that precede the individual, allows Bourdieu to claim that habitus overcomes the problems with social theory which he himself highlighted. Habitus provides 'objectively organized' strategies for action, but the strategy chosen for a particular interaction is one amongst many possible strategies (Bourdieu, 1977:73). This is because the various strategies available to an individual are given by habitus. Yet the particular strategy which is employed is not determined by habitus, but instead coincides with the relations of the particular field in which the individual acts (Thorpe, 2013).

For Bourdieu (1992), 'fields' refer to the multiple and tessellating social spaces, defined by the structured relations in and through which individuals act and interact. The notable fields that Bourdieu highlights are the social, the political, the cultural, and the economic – although there is plenty of room left for other specific fields both beyond and within these. The fields themselves are founded on unequally distributed capitals, such as property ownership in the economic field, or the ability to influence local policy decisions in the political field. The relations between actors within a field are structured by this unequal distribution of capital (Crossley, 2013). This is because the relational position that individual actors have within a field is structured by the type (economic, social, political, cultural) and the amount of capital they can utilise (Dépelteau, 2015). This is what Bourdieu meant when he referred to his work as 'relational' – individuals and practices within a field are juxtaposed to one another according to their relative position within that field, which is moulded by the capital

and social position of the participants in social practice. For Bourdieu (1984), it is these relational and objective positions in social space that engender the actual interactional ties that individuals have with one another. As such, Bourdieu maintains that the relations he refers to are prior to the actual interactional ties that individuals engage with on a daily basis (Crossley, 2013).

Bourdieu (1992) resisted the notion that individual actors within a field are *determined* by the relations that comprise that field. Instead, he argued that individual actions are oriented by their position within this field, in which various strategies are adopted by individuals in order to make what they can of their position in relation to other actors within that field, but also in relation to the *dispositions* produced by the habitus. Bourdieu continues that habitus functions as it does because it produces 'dispositions' within the individual, which allow for certain strategies to be available to that individual within a field without determining which strategy should be followed.

For Bourdieu (1977), the term 'dispositions' is significant because it connotes the product of organised practice, while also signifying a habitual way of being that emerges in terms of tendency and propensity to act in certain ways. Indeed, the amount and type of capital that an individual possesses within a particular field is instrumental to the dispositions that come to characterise the individual's practical consciousness (Crossley, 2013). Habitus emerges in relation to one's structured position within a field, experienced by those in similar positions in a similar (but minutely different) ways. It should be noted that Bourdieu's theory is fierce in its attempt to provide for the dynamism and complexity of human life on this point. He arguably goes further than any other social theorist in explicating how the unconscious, minute interactions and seemingly insignificant differences in experience all affect the disposition towards certain actions and strategies over others (Chancer, 2013). It is this that leads to variation in choice of strategy, and explains why we can only say that practice *tends* to be conducted in a certain way.

Nonetheless, the habitus likewise affects how these minute difference are experienced, and because members of a group or class share similar experiences and their dispositions are shaped in similar ways, practices tend to be routinised and thus intelligible to others within the group. In turn, as with structuration theory,

Bourdieu claims that habitus explains the reproduction of normalised practices, without seeing these practices as purely the product of objective structure or purely subjective intention. With this in mind, Bourdieu argues that his theory surpasses those that see human action as mechanically determined by social structures, as well as those theories that prioritise subjectivity.

Yet, for Dépelteau, (2015) and King (2000), Bourdieu's reliance on the concepts of habitus and fields leaves him open to a similar line of critique as he himself offered against structure and rule based theories of practice. Although Bourdieu goes to great lengths to ensure that the concepts of habitus and field are sufficiently dynamic to avoid reliance on rules or formulatable prescriptions of practice, the implementation of the concepts themselves not only seems unnecessary to explaining social practice, but also obscures the relational approach Bourdieu claims to advocate (King, 2000).

In much the same way as the theories that Bourdieu criticised describe practice in accordance with rules, his theory ends up describing social practice as generated by the habitus, which is produced by, and enacted within, fields which are defined by objectively structured positions (King, 2000). It is Bourdieu's argument that the unequal and objective distribution of capital shapes the habitus, which in turn shapes dispositions towards tastes, behaviours, interests, and so on (Dépelteau, 2015). This creates a distinct problem, as Bourdieu's critique of social theory was based on his attack on the use of theoretical models that seek to contain the logic of practice itself. It seems hard to deny that, despite his endeavour to uphold the dynamism of social life, Bourdieu's concepts essentially rely on some sort of model that designates the structural determinants of social practice.

There is an important point to be made here for what follows. It is not argued that there are no social determinants of action. Indeed, it is not even really claimed that many of the social phenomena that shape individual action cannot be heuristically designated as structures. Rather, the argument that will be made in line with relational sociology is that we do not need to look beyond the relational ties between actors themselves as being what shapes engagement in practice. The point of the critique of Bourdieu's theory is that although it claims to be relational, it places the relational ties between individual actors as secondary to the relational positions that

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they hold in social space according to their access to capital. Bourdieu has produced a rich line of research for relational sociology into the effects of capital on practice. However, the line of relational sociology followed here maintains that it is our actual interactional relational ties with other actors that mould our engagement in social practice (Crossley, 2013).

For Bourdieu's 'relational' approach, how we engage in social practice is tied to our objective position in social fields. However, relational sociologists since Bourdieu have pointed out that how we engage with capital, our positions in social fields, and social practices themselves are the outcome of interactional engagement with our relational ties to other actors (Crossley, 2013). Social practice should not be seen as moulded by our engagement with capital and social positioning, but rather our engagement with capital and social positioning should be seen as being moulded by relational ties. As we shall see further on in this thesis, one of the major reasons for combining relational sociology with theories of the self is that it is through the social emergence of the self that the individual takes on her capacity for pre-reflective engagement in social practice. This is a process that requires direct engagement in social relations, as it is our interactional relations with others through which our self emerges.

Bourdieu, however, adds the kind of theoretical mediators that turn our attention away from what is necessary for an explanation of engagement in practice; that is, relations with other actors. It is only by attending to relations (and this concept will be expounded in detail in the next section) that we can form an explanation of engagement in practice that does not reduce practice. This was, of course, Bourdieu's stated aim, and much of relational sociology took his critique as the point of departure for the rising trend of focusing on relations. But Bourdieu stumbled on the cusp of this point by upholding the concepts of field and habitus to do the work actually done by relations alone (King, 2000).

The inclusivity and dynamism that Bourdieu affords to his concept of habitus is largely correct for what we need to explain social practice, but the conceptual model itself is not necessary if we simply acknowledge the role of social relations. For Bourdieu's early theory, social relations alone do not provide a sufficient explanation of social practice. As King (2000) points out, his early work gets caught in the trap of

assuming that some formulatable concept is necessary to ensure that the routine nature of social practice can be discerned. For relational sociologists, adding concepts such as structuration or habitus as mediators to explain social practice in relation to the individual's social context only detracts from what a social context is actually comprised of: social relations between individuals (King, 2004; Dépelteau, 2008).

The essential starting point for relational sociology is to outline how the social world is constituted not by timeless structures that precede the individual, but rather social relations (of which the individual is part), which are all that are necessary to the routineness of everyday practices (Dépelteau, 2008). It is this routineness that has led to so many social theorists relying on various complex conceptualisations of structures to explain social practice. In what follows, the alternative offered by social relations theory will be outlined.

The Claims of Relational Sociology

In recent years relational sociology has taken strides towards centring the relations that exist between individuals as the locus of explanation of how norms of social practice can become shared across time and space. The task of relational sociology has not been to dispense with notions of social structure altogether, but rather to argue that if we talk of social structures, then they simply refer to the effects of social relations (Dépelteau, 2008). As will be argued in the next section, this is a virtuous task for a number of reasons. Primarily, it allows for a less rigidly set account of individual social practice than theories based on definite social structure can provide. This is significant because, as we have seen in the last chapter, social practice cannot be rigidly delimited. While certain norms may be generally adhered to in a particular social context, we cannot say any more than that individual social action *tends* towards such norms (King, 2000).

We may say that in the United States there is a social norm of leaving a tip for good restaurant service, or that there is a social norm that stealing is generally wrong. We could equally say that slavery was taken to be an acceptable social practice in Ancient Greece. But of course a person may not leave a tip regardless of how good

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their service was; some people steal; and there were voices of dissent against the institution of slavery in Ancient Greece (Moody-Adams, 1994). Accounting for such variations in practice becomes difficult as soon as we add reified concepts of social structure. By reverting only as far as social relations for an explanation of social practice, rather than to social structure *per se*, relational sociologists have been able to offer a more accurate account of social practice, insofar as such practice is seen as the product of dynamic and emergent relations which means that engagement in social practice will always be considered with a degree of indeterminacy.

However, while this point holds for relational sociologists generally, they do not all agree on what 'relations' refer to. Powell (2013) and Crossley (2013) argue that relational sociologists have tended towards one of two strands of thought when describing relations. On the one hand, 'relations' simply refers to the actual relational ties between actors (Crossley, 2013). On the other, 'relations' are considered in the more abstract terms favoured by Bourdieu (1992), in which relations refer to juxtaposed relative positions in a social field (Crossley, 2013).

For the present thesis, the former strand of relational sociology is preferred. Indeed, it was commented in the critique of Bourdieu's work that his theory makes an error in ordering. This is because he argues that the juxtaposed relations engendered by differing access to capital influence the habitus, which in turn moulds engagement in social practices, tastes, interests and so forth. However, it should be asked how this kind of influence would be possible without some sort of concrete ties between actors. It is the argument of this thesis that concrete ties with other actors should be the starting point for explaining individual engagement in social practice. This is not to deny that individual actors have relations with abstract phenomena such as capital, nor indeed that abstract phenomena (such as capital) shape the relations between people. Rather, the argument is that these abstract phenomena must, at some point or other, be brought into the experience of the individual via concrete relations with others. This is the point of combining relational theory with theories of the socially emergent self in order to explain engagement in social practice.

That being said, it also seems clear that the phenomena of relations cannot be reduced to concrete interactional relations alone. Part of the beauty of relational sociology is that it allows us to consider how the relations that mould our social

practice extend far beyond the actors with which we directly engage (Dépelteau, 2015). The actions of a low-level employee of a large corporation are, of course, only partly constituted by those she works with directly. Various targets for profit and company policy are likely to mould her action, even though she has no direct contact with those who decide such targets and policies. Likewise, the targets and policies are likely to be shaped by various movements in the political-economy, which are even further removed from the direct experience of the individual worker (Powell, 2013).

When 'relations' are considered in this way as both direct and indirect, we become able to see how individual engagement in social practice should be seen as being constituted both through concrete relational ties, and the more abstract relations that mould how these concrete ties emerge (Powell, 2013). However, doing this requires introducing a few concepts from the relational sociology literature. The starting point for the relational sociology to be expounded here is that individual engagement in social practice should be seen as *interdependent transactions* occurring within and across various *social fields*. It is necessary to begin by outlining the terms that are applied in order to understand how social relations impact upon individual engagement in practice. This section will set out some of the basic claims of relational sociology, before the rest of the chapter considers some of the specific claims and their implications in more depth.

However, before that, it should be reiterated that social relations will be understood here as existing between actors. Relational sociology has strong links with actor-network theories, and so considers both human and non-human relations to be significant (Dépelteau and Powell, 2013). However, this thesis will be strongly focused on human relations. This is not to doubt the agentive role played by non-human actors, which has been highlighted forcefully in actor-network theory (Latour, 2000). Yet, this thesis aims to explain the relationship between engagement with social practice and the social emergence of the self. It is maintained here that a self, as can be commonly recognised in contemporary Western society, could not emerge without inter-human relations being primary to this process – although it won't be denied that non-human actors can be seen as relevant intermediaries. Why this is the case will be argued in the following chapter.

Social Fields

The term 'social relations' simply refers to the relations which exist between actors, both human and non-human (Dépelteau, 2015). Within relational sociology, 'social relations' provides a shorthand means of expressing that who we are as individuals and how we act is shaped through our relations with other actors. Indeed, the claim of relational sociology runs deeper than this by arguing that social practice occurs as it does as a result of the dynamic social relations that define the particular 'fields' or 'social contexts' in which social practice occurs. For relational sociology, because social practice is moulded by social relations, it is social relations and their effects that should be at the heart of sociology (King, 2004).

It is necessary to ask how and why relational sociology has arrived at this conclusion. Like many 'turns' in social theory, the starting point for the 'relational turn' has been to offer an alternative to the established centres of social thought. As with many other social theories of the latter half of the twentieth century, relational sociology sets itself against the traditional dualisms between individual and society, structure and agency, objectivism and subjectivism (Emirbayer, 1997). However, it also claims that many of the other theoretical stances taken against these dualisms have been insufficient because they rely on reified theoretical models based on terms that are not sufficiently dynamic to account for the indefiniteness and indeterminacy of individual social practice in a shared social context (Dépelteau, 2008). This has been the essence of the critiques offered against Giddens' structuration theory and its reliance on rules, and (to a lesser extent) against the habitus-field theory of Bourdieu.

It should be noted that this line of critique from relational sociology is almost identical in kind to Bourdieu's critique of theoretical models used to describe social practice. Just as Bourdieu's critique of why the models of social science failed to account for the complexity of social practice, relational sociology argues that social theory models have struggled to account for the diversity of what actually comprises the social spaces in which people interact. By relying on reified notions of structure and society, rather than seeing individuals as interacting in diverse emergent social fields, social theory has consequently often struggled to account for the fuzziness of social practice. Social practice, for relational sociology, is the outcome of the

multifarious interdependent relations that emerge across the various fields in which people interact. Because these fields are dynamic, and the relations that define these fields are continually emerging, the indeterminacy of practice is inherent (Dépelteau, 2015). Thus, relational sociologists acknowledge that if we talk of 'society' at all, we are referring to the relations between people that manifest in transactions in a diversity of social fields.

What is needed, according to relational sociology, is a rethinking of the social space in which human action occurs which is sufficiently dynamic to account for the murky yet interdependent world of social practice. This is done through the argument that there is no overarching 'society' or 'structure'. Rather, human action occurs across many differentiated and tessellating 'social fields' that are defined according to the particular relations between the actors involved in the particular field at a particular time. It should be noted that the concept of social fields is, as we shall see, somewhat different to Bourdieu's conceptualisation of 'field' in which the structural position of each individual is determined according to the type and amount of capital they can utilise. Still, it should be remembered that much of relational sociology takes Bourdieu's concept as a point of departure; indeed, much of relational sociology has involved building on Bourdieu's insights in order to take it a step further (Dépelteau and Powell, 2013).

Within relational sociology, the social spaces in which people interact through relations are variously described as 'fields', 'fields of transaction', 'figurations', 'networks', 'social context' and 'social worlds' (Dépelteau and Powell, 2013). While the terms may be different, they are used in relational sociology to describe the various contexts in which we interact without referring to an encompassing notion of society. While we may say that we are part of an overall society, an important contribution of relational sociology is to recognise that the actions and experiences of individuals occur across a wide variety of contexts of all shapes and sizes: the family, the games we play with other children, the restaurant in which we have dinner with a loved one, the bar we drink in, the sports team we play for, the shop we work in, the meetings we go to, courts we may find ourselves in, the nation in which we live, the global economy of which we are part, and so forth (Dépelteau, 2015).

Individual engagement in social practice is not determined by our participation in an overarching social system, or as the result of a particular structure. Rather, individual social practice unfolds across a wide variety of various fields in which the individual is involved to a lesser or greater extent. All of these fields are social processes in the sense that the terms of their engagement and outcomes for practice emerge from the relations involved (Dépelteau, 2015). Some of these fields may encompass only momentary interactions and have little impact on the future practice of the individual, such as buying an item in a shop. Other fields may have a considerable endurance and significance not just for the social practice of one individual, but for vast numbers of individuals. The capitalist economy, for example, has a greater degree of durability and affects individual action more profoundly than an exchange in a shop with a cashier.

Yet we cannot say that individual social practice is defined entirely by an encompassing structure because social practice varies across the social fields in which the individual engages. A basic point of social theory, affirmed most strongly by the likes of Goffman (1963), Milgram (1992) and Garfinkel (1967), is that individual social practice varies according to the situation in which it takes place. Often people may prefer to drink wine rather than beer depending on who they are with (Goffman, 1963). People may even affirm the common agreement of the group of which they are part about a fact that they know to be wrong, or they may follow the kind of instructions of an authority figure which they would otherwise know to be wrong (Milgram, 1992). Relational sociology reaffirms that the individual engages with the social world in multiple (often interconnected) social fields, rather than as occurring in an encompassing society *per se.* The individual's social practice cannot be seen as just the outcome of an overarching social structure, because social practice varies across fields and the relations which define these particular fields.

While each of these fields may be more or less diffuse and more or less enduring, all social fields are essentially social processes that are defined relationally. That is, regardless of whether it is an interaction in a shop or participation in the global capitalist economy, each social field is made up of the relations that exist between the actors within them. Even the more enduring fields only continue to exist as they do for as long as actors continue to act in reasonably similar ways within them (King, 2006). Yet, because relational sociology sees such fields as simply being comprised

of relations, such fields can be understood as continually unfolding processes, rather than as static structures (Elias, 1991). As we shall see in the following sections, even the routine interactions within a seemingly stable structure such as capitalism are not static: they continue to emerge in time and alter marginally as participation continues, even if a basic similarity and routineness can be discerned. Relational sociology urges us to consider both the diffuse and the minute social fields as belonging to essentially the same order – the relational order (Dépelteau, 2015). While their differences cannot be denied, they are similar insofar as they are defined relationally: they are what they are because of the various interdependencies that exist between the actors involved.

A note of caution should be given when considering social contexts in terms of fields. Saying that social life involves engaging with many dynamic fields that are entered into and defined relationally is not to say that the field and the form of the relations are defined and recast by the individual every time she participates in it. Methodological individualism is certainly not the presupposition of relational theory (Burkitt, 2008). Indeed, while the boundaries of social practice may not be as precise as social theory has often claimed, there is no doubt that there are norms of interaction that transcend the specifics of particular interaction between particular people. Again, as Goffman (1963) highlights, there are routine ways of interacting with the person serving us in a shop, or with talking to a potential employer in an interview (or indeed of answering an email to someone who is not known personally to us, to add a contemporary example). While there is no guarantee that such norms will be followed, trends can be noted. The beauty of relational sociology is that it considers such trends to be the product of relations that are simultaneously immediate to a situation, but that also transcend it both personal and social historicity. Relational sociology is able to make this argument because it considers individuals interdependent 'transactors'.

Interdependence and Transactions

This brings us to the question of how relational sociology considers the constitution of individuals' social practice within various aspects of their social context. Relational sociology considers the individual as existing within a web of interconnected

individuals (Elias, 1991). Our action, as individuals, is always in someway interdependent. Rarely is our action *entirely* dependent on the actions of others, but neither could our actions be seen as the implementation of an entirely independent individual will. Individual action is interdependent in the sense that how the individual's action emerges is moulded by social relations.

Certain parallels can be drawn between Weber's notion of social action (2006/1922), and social relations in the sense that an individual can be considered to be in a social relation when their action is shaped by and oriented towards other actors – that is, when the behaviour of other actors is either implicitly or explicitly taken into account in the action. Without trying to distinguish too sharply between the two opposites, it could be argued that these relations between people can be both personal and impersonal, and that these social relations shape the individual both in terms of immediate action, and in terms of social embeddedness.

As was highlighted above, the 'others' towards whom one's action may be oriented can refer to both immediate interlocutors, who may or may not be known personally, and to unknown others who may be well outside the immediacy of a particular interaction, whether they be a faceless part of an institution, a past influence, or an unspecified number of unspecified individuals a huge distance away towards whom one's action is directed (Weber, 2006/1922). What is true for Weber's interpretation of the orienting of social action is also true for the social relations that exist between people. Our practice can be affected by social relations in a very immediate sense, by the presence of certain others, who we may or may not know. A simple example of this is the variation in how we act in certain situations, such as addressing our friends differently to how we would address our boss. Equally, in particular situations, social relations from the past and future can affect present action, perhaps through our memory of a past failure or our desire to uphold a sound reputation.

However, our social action can also clearly be affected by social relations that extend through long, impersonal chains of interaction – Weber's example of using money surely also applies here. This is the point that Elias (1994) was making when he argued that our capacity to act in the ways demanded of us by contemporary modern society requires long chains of interdependencies that extend through various divisions of labour. For example, the routine task of getting paid for our work now

often requires us to have a functioning bank account for payment of our wages to be processed electronically. This simple task requires us to engage with vast networks of impersonal social relations before we can make use of our wages. As will be argued further on, it is in this way that individual agency is afforded to us through our social relations.

Through these long and diffuse chains of interconnected interaction we can see the impersonal social relations with which individuals engage in their social world. But it seems accurate to say that individuals also engage with much more personal social relations; indeed, the personal and the impersonal surely cross over frequently. It is uncontroversial to say that the vast majority of people, from the earliest possible age, are embedded into certain personal social relations with caregivers, siblings, teachers, friends, and so on. As will be argued more fully in the next two chapters, it is clear that it is through our more interpersonal direct relations that our self emerges (Elias, 1991).

More will be made of this last point shortly. However, if it is taken to be true that individuals are immersed within both personal and impersonal social relations that shape their action, then we must ask how these social relations are manifest. That is, we must ask how it is that these social relations are brought into the experience and action of the individual. Following the work of Dépelteau (2008), it is argued here that both personal and impersonal social relations manifest themselves and are engaged with, as 'transactions'. While the term 'transactions' may sound more instrumental than the term 'interactions', Dépelteau (2008) prefers the former, because 'interaction' is often taken to refer to an isolated exchange between two or more people in a particular situation, the meaning and intentions of which are specific to that situation.

The trouble with this is that the effective capacity of social relations to shape action does not necessarily arise from specific interactions in specific instrumental and circumstantial situations (Donati, 2006). It should be noted that social relations do emerge and impact upon action through social interaction, but these interactions have a historicity that shapes how the social relations associated with an interaction influences social action. Indeed, one of the major failings of Blumer's symbolic interactionism was his inability to explain how meanings could both emerge from

interactions and precede specific interactions (1969). When we get a new boss, we are likely to treat them according to quite standardised notions of deference that are commonly expected of the employer-employee relationship in our society. While there is likely to be circumstantial variations in this relationship depending on the nature of the job and the individuals involved, much of the shared understanding of the roles precedes the particular interactions between the employee and her new boss. Of course, through further transactions, the dynamic of this relationship may change, but this only adds an interpersonal extension of the historicity and shared dependency of the relationship.

Equally, it seems plain that, in contemporary Western society, we can find more or less normalised and shared understandings of the wrongness of murder or racism, for example. These understandings are shared precisely because they transcend specific individuals and interactions. It is surely the case that, except in extreme or abnormal cases, even those who do not believe that murder or racism are wrong would recognise that their attitude runs contrary to the norm. The point is that it is through our social relations with others, and through the transactions that manifest these social relations, that we take on shared understandings that transcend specific interactions. The understanding of social practice that we take on from the attitudes of others usually has a historicity that precedes the individual, which are then taken on by the individual through her transactions with others, and thus shape her further transaction. The precise process of how this happens in relation to the self will be given shortly.

Social Relations and Hermeneutics

The last section introduced the concept of transactions that have a degree of historicity. It now needs to be asked why historicity is so significant to social relations. It would be incorrect to suggest that individuals exist in a manner that is detached from one another and from their social context more generally. Each of us is born and raised within a particular set of circumstances which unfold from a history which long precedes our individual existence. As Elias highlights, in contemporary Western society, a homeless man cannot suddenly choose to become a CEO of a major corporation and expect it to simply happen, anymore than anyone else in his

society can expect to become a genuine knight, as existed in Medieval times (Elias, 1991). While many of us today have more lifestyle choices available than were available in previous eras (Giddens, 1991), we are ultimately born into social relations that exist at a particular time and space, which more or less delimits what is possible for us.

Even for those of us lucky enough to be born into a relatively affluent segment of contemporary Western society in the late twentieth century, the available possibilities of our existence are still limited. I cannot become a native German; I cannot change my mother tongue; I cannot choose the economic structure of my society; and I cannot choose to have been socialised into Eastern Taoist traditions rather than into traditions of Western of thought. Of course, to some extent, I can choose what to do further on in my life, but I cannot change the traditions that I was brought up with. Any new ways of viewing the world will be set either against or in addition to those into which I was socialised; they do not entirely displace the traditions that I was originally socialised into (Linge, 1977). More specifically, I generally cannot choose the wealth my parents had while growing up, the opportunities afforded to me or (for the most part), the schooling that I had received, the strength of the job market when I finish education, or the fact that murder is near universally seen as wrong in our society (Elias, 1991).

With this argument, Elias is very much building upon the notion of a 'hermeneutical situation', as expounded by Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975). To give a very brief rendition of Gadamer's arguments, every individual goes through life with the past founding the possibilities of their present. That is, both the particular situation that a person finds herself in, and how she interprets that situation, is inescapably the product of the prejudices that the individual receives from the past. It should be noted that, in Gadamer's work, the term 'prejudices' does not have the same negative connotations as is usually attributed to it, as with 'racial prejudices', for example. Rather, the term is used to refer to the basic presuppositions that we carry through life, which make it possible for us to interpret routine situations in our society (Linge, 1977). These can be very elementary, such as rudimentary notions of gravity allowing me to know why I walk on the ground rather than float away. Or they can be more socially variable; for example, many children in Britain take it for granted that children go to a school that is easily accessible and that they do not have to directly

pay for. These understandings are not arrived at via critical investigation by a continually questioning subject. Instead, they tend to be absorbed uncritically from the traditions of the society in which one is brought up.

Gadamer (1977) considers these understandings as forming the 'horizons' that allow the individual to participate in day-to-day life in his society. Such horizons should not be seen as objects of understanding *per se*, but rather as the conditions that allow understanding to occur (Linge, 1977). It would be impossible to go through life without any such horizons. I could not write this essay if I had to question every basic facet of my existence and the world around me at every turn. In writing this essay, I am assuming many usually unquestioned things: I have electric power in my house that is harnessed in ways I don't fully understand; I have access to the internet; I am doing a PhD that entails writing on social theory; the words I am writing are intelligible (hopefully); the list is endless. The point is that we tacitly take on the traditions and understandings of our society in such a way that they generally do not need to be questioned, as they allow us to function routinely in everyday practice. Every one of us, therefore, finds ourselves in a particular hermeneutical situation, in which various unquestioned understandings set the horizons of how we go about being in the world (Gadamer, 1977).

This does not mean that we are necessarily determined by our past or that our horizons are unchallengeable. Firstly, many of our horizons can become fused with those of other cultures, which lead us reflectively to question aspects of our basic means of being. This can lead to new understandings being taken on in relation to our own understandings. It is important to note that when this happens, the old understandings do not become absolutely dispensed with. Rather, new understandings build upon previous understandings (Linge, 1977).

We can refer back to the example of British children taking free and accessible education to be the norm. This norm may be challenged by charity drives showing children in other nations who perhaps cannot afford to go to a school that would require hours of walking to get to even if they could afford it. This challenge to one's horizon would not displace the notion that, in British society, children generally have free and accessible schooling, but it will likely extend one's horizon to include an

awareness that many children in the world go without education, which can then be extended into questions of what one considers to be fair and just.

Furthermore, the fact that we all bring the past into the present does not strictly limit us because the past provides a wealth of possibility, rather than a cast iron structure. Because we carry our individual prejudices into our interpretations of the past, how we bring the past into the present varies considerably. For example, Heidegger's particular hermeneutical situation shaped his reading of Greek philosophy, which provided new possibilities for understanding the past, which in turn altered the horizons of many after him (Linge, 1977). As Mead (1925) points out, humans are made up of a near-infinite number of differences in what we find pleasurable, desirable, fair, and so on, that emerge through the formation of our self in relation to others. Thus, individuals approach the past with varied prejudices, that allow for alternative interpretations of our inherited past. We can think of the early slavery abolitionists who negated the history of subjugating black people as approaching a shared past with different prejudices, which led to alterations in their own horizons and those horizons of future generations.

Gadamer's hermeneutics is significant here because it emphasises that each of us necessarily exists within certain horizons for understanding our social context. Far from being entirely limiting, these horizons are foundational for our individual engagement with the social context in which we find ourselves. It is precisely the historicity of our hermeneutic situation that allows our subjective understanding of the world to emerge and flourish. It is maintained here that it is from our social relations that this historicity is brought into the experience of the individual through extended chains of interaction and dependency. The terms 'transaction' is thus used to connote the extended chain of dependency and historicity that allows the individual to engage in social practice (Dépelteau, 2008).

It is argued by relational sociologists that it is through these transactions, with their long chains of dependency and historicity, that shared understandings of social practice are brought into the experience of the individual. Through such transactions, individuals come to understand not just the shared meaning of particular social actions, but also the likely responses of others towards certain actions. As we saw with the example of how an individual may interact with their boss, this allows social

practice to be understood as being both immediate to a situation, and historically contextual to a particular social field. When an individual interacts with her boss, she is of course engaging with a particular – perhaps even a novel – situation with particular direct relations. Yet, how she engages with this situation is moulded by a much wider set of social relations that have shaped her understanding of social practice. It can thus be argued that social relations shape the practice of the individual by shaping her understanding of appropriate social practice, which are then brought into direct interactions with others (King, 2004). This allows relational sociologists to bypass the necessity of explaining routine (yet diversified) social practice with anything other than the relations that exist between people.

Because relational sociology understands the relations between actors –(rather than social structures) as mediating social practice, there is room to accommodate the fuzziness of the boundaries of social practice that social theory has frequently ignored. If we consider individuals to be simply acting in relation to one another (including absent others), even though these relations carry a certain historicity, the individual can still act in ways appropriate to her virtuoso understanding of her social world as specific situations present themselves. In this way, social relations theory is much better equipped to describe a social practice such as telling a joke in a sombre situation to lighten the mood. There are no rules to dictate what the content of such a joke should be, when it should be told, or who should tell it. An individual has simply acted in relation to others from her shared yet individualised understanding of social practice. Of course, this could go disastrously wrong, but this is part of the beauty of social relations theory: it acknowledges the murkiness of social practice.

When social theory is directed in this manner we are able to see that social relations theories do not underplay the significance that social context plays in the lives of individuals, nor do they lend support to the notion that society is simply made up of free-floating individuals who exert no influence upon each other, quite the contrary (Burkitt, 2008). Rather, people are socialised as they are and their social action occurs as it does because of the relations they have with other actors within their social context. Indeed, the argument made here suggests that the historical nature of our social relations, which the individual self is socialised into and emerges from, is what allows the hermeneutical horizons (our basic understanding of how the world is) to be brought into the present in the experience of the individual.

The point is that explaining the influence of social context through social relations does not mean that individuals are brought up within detached sets of social relations which are specific to each individual *per se*. Of course, each individual does find herself born into and socialised within particular circumstances that result in her experiencing her social relations in a differentiated fashion, but as Elias (1994) teaches us, all social relations are historically situated. How we experience common relations, such as parenthood, childhood, and education, is an unfolding product of the historic transactions between people. This is to say that we are brought up in a world which has widely shared norms, social rituals, roles, and expectations, that are based upon a shared understanding of practice (King, 2004). For relational sociologists, affirming this point does not necessitate resorting to conceptualisations of social structure *per se*. Indeed, it is common among relational sociologists to dispense with notions of structure altogether (Donati, 2006; Emirbayer, 1997; Dépelteau, 2008); however, this is not the approach taken here, as will be explained further on.

The trouble with theoretical notions of social structure is that they simply act as a heuristic filler for the fact that particular sustained and wide-spread social phenomena exist as they do because individuals continue to act in certain ways in relation to other actors. Using 'social structure' as shorthand for this fact is not necessarily a bad thing. However, problems arise when social structure comes to be reified in social theory as something that exists independently of the relationally-oriented individual (King, 2004). Of course, through social interaction, individuals are able to achieve things that would be impossible on their own. One needs only to think of the massive institutions that impinge heavily on day-to-day life in modern society. However, this need not be taken as an indication of why a theory of structure is necessary to an explanation of society. King (2004) points out that even the most pervasive institutions in our society are formed only of expansive webs of humans interacting with other humans in light of particular interpretations of the relationship between them.

We can take the example of a capitalist economy. While it may seem to be an institution that precedes individual involvement, it continues to function as it does because it is comprised of a vast number of other smaller (although often still large) institutions. Governments, for example, set interest rates in relation to various

statistics produced by various groups, and banks adjust their lending policies accordingly. Each of these aspects of a functioning capitalist economy are made up of ever smaller groupings of individuals, who are acting in relation to the expectations and actions of others (King, 2006). As Weber put it, an institution, such as a state government, "...ceases to exist in a sociologically relevant sense whenever there is no longer a probability that certain kinds of meaningfully oriented social action will take place" (Weber, 2006/1922: 7). To extend Weber's point into the language of this thesis, institutions exist as long as the relations between people continue to carry the expectation of certain kinds of practice. It is a primary task of relational sociology to demonstrate that the individual should not be considered separate from society. A key aspect of this is the recognition that, if we do talk of structures, it is to refer to the persistent mode of individuals acting in relation to other actors. Social context and individuals are not separate – individuals act in relation to one another in such a way that a particular social context continues to be how it is at a given time (Dépelteau and Powell, 2013).

The point of social relations theory is to argue that the individual is shaped by her social context through her social relations. This of course takes heed of how the relations between people shape the actions of others in specific situations. However, for this thesis, it is far from sufficient to say that our social relations are necessary to our interpretation of the place of the individual within her social context simply because the individual's action is shaped in relation to the action of other individuals. What is much more significant is the question of how the individual becomes capable of acting in relation to others in the first place. This is a question of how the individual becomes embedded within her social context to the extent that she has an implicit understanding of herself and her practice within that context in relation to others. Thus, if we are to understand how the individual is shaped by her social context, we must be able to explain how the individual arrives at a basic understanding of how her social context *is.* As will be argued more fully in what follows, it is the process of the self emerging through social relations that allows the individual to become so embedded within her social context that she takes on the kind of basic and practical understanding of practice which is necessary for her to go through life effectively within the various fields she encounters. To stress the point, it is simply our relations

with other actors that shape our very understanding of the social world around us and allow us to emerge as a self.

Social Relations and Virtuoso Practice

However, none of what has been said means that individuals simply act as they please. Nor does it mean that individual engagement in social practice is not largely routinised. In the Western world, at least, it would be fair to say that adults are generally expected to wear clothes in public. Equally, the individual surely tends to have some idea of when (and with whom) it is appropriate to be naked, even if these boundaries of appropriateness are subject to a degree of individual variability. Our social practice is, of course, regularly constrained by the judgement of others. But this is not a sufficient explanation of why individuals don't simply engage in social practice however they please. To be part of a social context is to be embedded within social relations from which we arrive at a virtuoso understanding of social practice that not only affords us an understanding of negative judgement, but that also affords us the possible directionality of our practice (Bourdieu, 1992).

The notion of a 'shared (or 'native') understanding' of social practice is essential to Bourdieu's practical theory (King, 2000). For him, it is by an implicit understanding of practice, learnt from living among others in our social context, that we act and reflect on our practice. Whether or not an action is appropriate is not decided via consideration of a rule, but rather through an implicit understanding of appropriate practice in that particular situation in relation to our peers. It is through a pre-reflective understanding of how our actions can be (and how they are likely to be) interpreted by others within our social context that a practice comes to be engaged with in a virtuoso fashion.

It could be contested that the fact that an individual acts within shared understandings of what is considered appropriate by one's peers is simply another way of saying that we follow rules. But by arguing that proper practice is ultimately taken on from our relations with other actors takes us beyond questions of whether a rule was accurately followed. The role played by our native understanding of the potential social judgement of others is less rigidly set than the notion of following a

rule correctly. By acting as virtuosos of our social context, we are acting in relation to other actors, from whom we have taken our understanding of practice. But the relations from which we take our cue for practice are emergent from the social fields with which we engage presently. To be a social virtuoso, in Bourdieu's (1977) terms, means to be able to take a pre-reflective understanding of social practice into the social situations in which we engage, and the relational transactions that emerge from them. We can say with Giddens (1984) that actors are largely knowledgeable of how to act (how they are expected to act) in certain situations, and that they understand the likely manner of social judgement if they act inappropriately. This knowledgeability is taken on from our social relations through the social emergence of the self, and is applied across diverse social fields. However, the dynamism of social life means that virtuoso engagement in social practice is more a case of skilfully riding the waves or rolling with the punches, than following a script. This is true of our pre-reflexive action, because we have a practical virtuoso understanding of our social context, which is taken on through the emergence of the self (more on this shortly). Yet this is also true of actions which we have planned and reflect upon in consideration of the responses of others. If we consider the individual as acting in relation to other actors through a native understanding of appropriate action in relation to other actors, then a certain degree of justificatory freedom can be afforded in a way that cannot be accounted for in rule following behaviour.

We can bring out this point by borrowing Kant's (1996/1797) famous example of lying being wrong. This is generally deemed to be the appropriate position to take in contemporary Western society, and we could argue that this is a rule that individuals apply in their action, both reflexively and pre-reflexively. This is surely often the case. However, it is easy to think of occasions when lying *is* the appropriate thing to do, even in circumstances when it is not of absolute moral necessity to do so (such as lying to a crazed murderer about where his potential victim may be). If, for example, we have received a hideous sweater as a present from our grandma, it is perhaps appropriate to pretend that we liked the gift. What is more, if we upset our grandma by telling her how hideous we thought the sweater was, we would surely be judged by our peers to have acted inappropriately in the given circumstance. As social virtuosos, many of us are surely already aware of the appropriate course of action, and would skilfully follow this course without reflective consideration of how we

should act. Furthermore, if we consulted 'the rules' of action, then the scope of action may well be limited to the rule that we should not lie. However, as Bourdieu (1977) highlights, the boundaries of appropriate practice in a society are inherently fuzzy and, at least to some extent, variable. The appropriate course of action is inherently tied to the context of the situation in which we are acting. The fuzziness of the boundaries of appropriateness affords individuals a certain capacity to act as they see fit in particular (and often novel) situations in light of their virtuoso understanding of their social context, and social relations theory provides for this.

We are embedded in our relations with others to the extent that we tend to implicitly act within a shared understanding of practice (King, 2004). Acting as virtuosos in our social context means that our practice is tied to our implicit understanding of how to act that we gain from existing within a particular society (as we shall see shortly, this is due to how we emerge as selves). Practice that runs contrary to what is considered appropriate can obviously become subject to negative responses – as we would no doubt face from our parents if we upset our grandma through our ingratitude - in which case we can reflect upon our action and act differently in the future. More than this, for the most part we are already knowledgeable of appropriate practice without the necessity of reflexive engagement with ourselves. We act in relation to the judgement of others because we are deeply socially embedded within the social relations that constitute our society.

What is more, these social relations provide the boundaries of our possible practice, even when we attempt to work against such boundaries. Even if we try to formulate a new moral position for ourselves (for example, refusing to buy anything from supermarkets) this moral position is formed within, as well as against, the general position that buying from supermarkets is an acceptable practice. The point is that these boundaries are fuzzy, and because individuals are not acting through set rules of action, they are able to act as they see appropriate – with the caveat that their understanding of practice has emerged through their social relations.

This leads us to another important point that is not well covered by rule-based theories. Because individuals do not have to continually rely on rules in order to act, but rather their implicit understanding of how to act in a given situation, the boundaries of practice are not static. Rather, they are continually emerging in a

process of negotiation and exchange between actors (Bourdieu, 1998). Indeed, Giddens (1984) reminds us that society would be completely different if we all simply acted differently. While this is true, if we were to follow a rule-based theory, then changes in boundaries of appropriateness would be tied to changes in the content of rules. What the approach given here argues is that virtuosos are able to act according to their native (yet differentiated) understandings of practice in relation to others within already fuzzy boundaries. This allows for the kind of variation in action that leads to understandings of practice to shift. We can again think of examples such as telling a risqué joke at a formal occasion that then shifts the tone of the occasion, or going against common notions of appropriate practice in order to act in a way that the individual feels is morally correct. Such examples should not be seen as a result of a shift in the application and interpretation of rules, but rather as the kind of indeterminate practice afforded to individuals from our social relations (more on this shortly) which allows the boundaries of appropriateness to be pushed to a certain degree.

Social Relations and Agency

A social theory of practice, as in theories of all social phenomena, is inherently embroiled in questions of structure and agency. Such questions arise from two apparently clear truths about the social world: on the one hand we have reflexive human individuals who can be seen as the source of their action and the cause of effects in the social world. On the other hand, we have the institutions, historical circumstances, and immediate social influences that shape the possibility of the individual's action (Dessler, 1989). Although this thesis does not have much interest in the ongoing debate about the value of the structure and agency problem to social theory, the social relations theory offered here does tell us a lot about how structure and agency should be conceptualised. It is argued that these conceptualisations are of great importance to understanding how individuals engage in social practice.

The next two sections attempt to show how social relations theory offers an alternative view of structure and agency that prevents the two binaries from being entirely polarised when considering practice. Beginning with an interrogation of common theoretical frameworks for understanding human agency, it is argued that it

is a mistake to view individual action as detached from the individual's social relations. It will be argued that, rather than being the product of the individual's will within the constraints of a social structure, the individual's action is afforded to her by her social relations. This will lead on to an outline of the alternative approach to structure and agency offered by relational sociology.

To briefly reiterate something that was noted earlier, this section will be dealing primarily with human agency and the relations between people. This is not to disparage posthumanist lines of thought, which have illuminated the role that non-human actors play in shaping human action and interaction (Pickering, 2008; Latour, 2000). Indeed, I am in no doubt that non-human actors have a tremendous role to play in the emergence of the self and the shape of social practice. However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into this in more depth. With this in mind, this thesis will be restricted to analysing the role of interdependent human agency in the emergence of the self through social relations.

Throughout social theory, it has commonly been uncontentious to highlight how the individual has the capacity to act, to make decisions, to reflect upon her actions and decisions, to consider alternative courses of action, and to generally be able to intercede in the happenings of her social context (Barnes, 2000). It seems perfectly accurate to say, for example, that individuals have the capacity (in the right circumstances) to take considered decisions on which flowers to plant in their garden, which charities to support, and who to vote for. Indeed, this last point is the bedrock of our current era of human rights in contemporary Western society, in which the individual right to some sort of definite political autonomy is enshrined as a basic freedom (even if it is not always realised) (Badiou, 2002).

What is more, the individual's capacity to act extends beyond the capacity to act in a certain way: we, as individuals, have the capacity to have acted otherwise to how we did. We could have voted otherwise, we could have not broken the speed-limit; we could have worked harder at school, and so on. For Giddens (1979), it is this capacity to have acted differently that defines human agency. When this capacity to have acted differently is compromised, the individual becomes considered to be acting under circumstances so unusual that she should be afforded special status that differentiates her from 'normal' individual responsibility. The legal defences of

duress and diminished responsibility exemplify this (Barnes, 2000), as does Foucault's remarkable exposition of how the insane are treated in modern society (Foucault, 1971).

All of these points about the individual's capacity for agency seem to ring true, and it is not denied here that such conceptions largely cover the individual's capacity to act in the world. What is questioned, however, is the detached view of individual agency that accompanies such conceptualisations (the intellectual history of this notion is discussed in greater detail at the end of Chapter 3). It is arguable that social theory has taken the term 'agency' to refer to the action of reflectively engaged individuals who would have the freedom to act as they choose if they were not inhibited by social structure (Burkitt, 2015). The strength of the view that we are individuals with freedom of action, autonomy of thought, and choice in decisions, has detracted from something that should also be quite clear: agency simply refers to our capacity to act in the world, and this capacity is not detached from our social context, but instead is *afforded* to us from our social relations (Burkitt, 2015). That is, it is not the case that the individual would be able to act entirely as she chooses if she were not inhibited by structure; rather, the very capacity of the individual to act in the world (her agency) is afforded to her by the social relations that comprise her society (Burkitt, 2015).

Of course, this point should bring us back to what is essential to social theory: that is, attempting to understand how one's social context impacts upon practice (King, 2004). Indeed, it is surely quite clear that the actions of individuals are inherently shaped by their social relations with others. As Elias (1991) has argued, the particular form that our individual action takes requires interdependence between individuals. This is increasingly the case in modern Western society, in which vast chains of differentiated and interconnected actions are required for the individual to fulfil many of the most basic tasks required in everyday life.

We can take the example of answering our email. This requires that we have internet access, which requires people installing and maintaining our internet connection. This action also requires that we have been given a valid email address by the person that we wish to communicate with. If we require a response in order to complete our task, then we need the other person to respond in a timely manner. Or

we can take the example of a simple purchase in a shop. This requires that we have the correct form of currency, whether it be cash or card. If we pay by debit card, we must have money in our bank account, which may mean that we have to assume that we have been paid by our employer on the correct date, and that the payment has been processed by the bank, and that the card machine in the shop is working, and so on. All this requires a huge network of interdependencies of actions between individuals.

However, these interdependent relations have a historicity that has made them what they are. The various actions required for a debit card purchase exist as they do because of a contingent history of the use of money (and all the history of capitalist economics, monetary policy, and technological advances) that make these various actions necessary and possible. This brings us back to a point made earlier: the individual finds herself within a particular place in history in which the horizons for possible and intelligible action are largely already circumscribed (Schutz, 1970). As we saw earlier with the argument made for the term 'transactions' over 'interactions', the routine facets of social life are shaped by a contingent history that affords the individual the ability to act in her social context in an intelligible, routine fashion. Within this history, various interdependencies that allow an individual's action to occur are formed (Elias, 1991; 1994).

Thus, the capacity for the individual to act in the world is not the product of choices made by individuals that are essentially separate from and independent of their social relations, but instead is the result of the relations of a long chain of interdependent individuals within a particular social context. Yet individual action is also non-independent in another sense – individuals are susceptible to the influence of others within a given situation (Barnes, 2000). This has been made startlingly obvious in many social psychology studies, most notably those carried out by Stanley Milgram (1992). Milgram famously had his subjects (who were designated as 'teachers') administer electric shocks to a 'learner' at the instruction of a scientific researcher investigating the effects of electric shocks on learning. Of course, the 'learner' and the researcher were actors, and no real shock was administered. However, the subject of Milgram's experiment was able to clearly hear what they thought was the agony of the learner as the shocks were administered. The "shocks" had to be administered at increasingly severe levels in equal intervals in response to

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a mistake on the part of the learner. Remarkably, out of the forty subjects, only fourteen disobeyed the researcher by refusing to administer the shocks all the way up to the highest voltage (these tests were repeated on one thousand subjects in all, with a number of variables that supported the initial conclusions). Even those who did refuse had got a fair way into the process of shocking the learner (Milgram, 1992).

The results of this study came as a surprise even to Milgram himself, who had expected most of the subjects to refuse to go all the way through to the end of the study. Milgram (1992) then conducted a follow-up study in which the conditions were exactly the same as the previous study, except that two other 'teachers' were added. These additional teachers were actors, and they were instructed to refuse to continue the experiment at various intervals against the request of the scientific researcher. This led to thirty-six out of the forty subjects subsequently disobeying the orders of the researcher.

What these studies demonstrated was the susceptibility of the individual to the influence of others. Indeed, when properly considered, it is quite clear that the course of individual action is susceptible to the influence of others and of our environment. Many social niceties, such as queuing in an orderly manner in a certain direction, provide a good example of this. What we can learn from such behaviour is that how individuals act in the world is frequently the result of how others act in the world, rather than being the product of reflexive consideration of the best approach to achieve one's ends (Barnes, 2000).

However, for Barnes (2000), the two rudimentary points just highlighted (that individual action often requires the action of others and that individual are often susceptible to the influence of others) have been overlooked because social theory has tended to over-emphasise individualism. While it would surely be pretty obvious that individual action cannot be seen in entirely independent terms, it has been commonplace to see agency in terms of the functioning of entirely independent individuals, set against those things which they have no choice over (structure). As Barnes (2000) highlights, this is a presumption so deeply embedded within modes of contemporary Western thought that the evidence provided by Milgram, and the evidence offered by other similar social psychological experiments, has been largely

disregarded in favour of continuing to see individuals as freely choosing, independent agents. Barnes (2000) strengthens his argument by pointing out that, if people did act as entirely independent agents, collective protests would not happen. If people did not act in relation to each other, and only acted in order to achieve their own ends, nobody would engage in collective political action, because the rational thing to do would be to let others act and subsequently reap the rewards.

This is not to say that individuals do not think, act, take decisions, and reflect upon those decisions; rather it is that when individuals act, think, decide, and reflect, they do so interdependently within the social relations that comprise their social context (Powell, 2013). As highlighted earlier, this point does not refer just to the immediate presences of others affecting how we act in a particular situation; it also (more importantly) refers to the emergent form that the relations between people have taken at the particular moment in history that the individual happens to be acting within. It is this historically emergent form of the relations between people that affords the individual her capacity to engage in the social practices required by participation in a particular social field. It may be true that being able to speak English affords me the capacity to engage with a wide number of social fields, and as such affords me a huge amount of opportunities that native speakers of another language may not have. But this is not *necessarily* true. Rather, this is the case in contemporary Western society as a result of the historical form that relations between actors have produced through a complex and contingent series of dense transactions.

Indeed, understanding agency as being afforded to us from our social relations allows us to understand how different individuals can have different degrees of capability to affect their social context. It is clear that some people have more choice in how to act in certain circumstances than others (Fuchs, 2001); it is uncontentious to say that a CEO has more freedom to choose the path of their business than one of her employees, but this freedom is still interdependent. It is still a freedom afforded to the CEO from people acting in relation to each other in certain ways, such as through board decisions and union meetings. Indeed, the status that comes with being a CEO is to some extent dependent upon her employees continuing to acknowledge her as CEO and treat her with deference and respect (Powell, 2013).

What this social relations approach to agency is offering is an understanding of agency that does not require us to see the individual as detached from her social context in order for her to be considered to be an agent who acts in the social world. It should also be noted, in line with the rest of this thesis, that this view of agency does not prioritise intentionality and reflectivity. Individuals are agents when they are acting in the world, and much of this action occurs pre-reflectively. The routine activities that define our existence in contemporary Western society - going to school throughout our childhood, driving a car, crossing the road, answering our email, buying groceries and so on – do not occur because an isolated individual *ex nihilo* wills them to happen. These actions can only happen because we are embedded within a social context with a particular historicity and because others are acting in certain ways, which in turn allows us to act in certain ways (Burkitt, 2015).

Sie (2014) adds the analogy of human agency being akin to road traffic. She argues that, as with traffic, people interact in various ways, with varying levels of reflective awareness, and with various intentions and objectives. It is largely through participation in social 'traffic' that we come to learn how to be proficient within it. The argument given throughout this thesis is that this occurs as we take on generalised understandings of practice through our social relations as our self emerges. But for now it will suffice to say that just as proficient drivers engage with traffic without much deliberation, people can generally engage in social life without needing to consider the aims, intentions, and motivations of every act they perform; indeed, importantly, many of our motivations would not be entirely clear even if we did reflectively consider them. We may not understand why we made a social faux pas any more than we understand why we made a bad decision while driving. Of course, when something goes wrong, as with an accident or a near-miss in a car, we are forced to consider our current position, our previous intentions, and our future action.

This, I think, is a useful analogy for how human agency is most of the time. What is more, it is arguable that understanding agency as being afforded by social relations provides a good means of explaining how this general mode of agency is possible. When we understand agency as the capacity to act in the world (more often than not in terms of practical consciousness) we can understand that the capacity to act practically is afforded to us from our social relations. We can revert back to the example of making a purchase in a shop. This generally involves a series of serial

interactions with the social world which require little deliberative engagement. As agents, we have come to be proficient at this process through our continued participation in this necessary facet of daily life, meaning that we can skilfully navigate our way through various and even novel aspects of the task at hand.

However, we are only able to do this because our social relations afford us the capacity to do so. As we have seen, this is true both in terms of historicity and immediate practicality. The historicity of our social relations has meant that the particular task of making a purchase in a shop is both a necessary facet of daily life, and that the intricacies of the task are as we commonly know them to be. It is not necessarily the case that we buy food from large stores for subsistence. Neither is it is necessarily the case that shopping is often taken as a social event in contemporary Western society, nor that we tend to expect many mainstream stores to have their shelves stocked (within reason) and that we expect them be capable of facilitating credit and debit card transactions. These things are only the case because the social relations in which we are engaged have a certain historicity that has unfolded through generations of transactions between people. In turn, this allows our practical capacity to act in the world to be a certain way; the transactional nature of social relations means that we can undertake routine tasks in a manner that shapes our ends, and allows us to achieve them without much deliberation. More directly, this historicity allows us to navigate engagement with more immediate interlocutors in an appropriate manner – we tend to know already how an interaction with the store clerk is likely to unfold, and we can even *ad lib* in the situation at hand without reflective recourse (Sie, 2014). We are only able to do this because our practical agency has been afforded to us by our social relations. As we shall see further on, this has a huge amount to do with how the self emerges from these social relations.

How the individual is able to act is shaped by the particular time and space in which they exist. We cannot untangle ourselves from the social relations that afford to us our particular courses of action. This is lost in dualistic ways of thinking about agency, in which the individual is all too often seen as an independent actor, who is able to act as an individual, detached from other individuals, within the confines of her social structure. This view of agency cannot accurately account for social practice because the individual's engagement in social practice is dependent upon,

though not determined by, her relations with others within her social context. It is simply through our social relations that our social context is brought into the action of interdependent individuals.

Social Relations, Theory, and Structure

Building on the last section, relational sociology argues that, if we continue to talk of social structure, then it should be used to refer to the relations between people from which individual action is afforded (Dépelteau, 2008). This is not necessarily an easy point to grasp within the traditions of the social sciences. In *The Civilising Process* Elias emphasises how it is difficult for us to understand that how we act is simply shaped by other actors, rather than by some mediating totality that supposedly exists between individuals (1994). Indeed, this is how social structure has often come to be seen in the social sciences: because individuals are perceived in independent terms, some sort of totality must exist which results in individuals acting in the discernible and routine ways we readily observe. After all, it is the fact that people act in certain, often predictable ways, that makes a particular social context what it is.

What is more, much of what we might refer to as 'society' is made up of definite institutions, historical circumstances, and routinised social practices, which are clearly not the product of independent individual actions. A few obvious examples spring to mind: in the contemporary Western social world, individuals tend to come under the remit of a particular nation-state, with a particular form of government and economic system. While a few significant actors could be named, it would be largely incorrect to say that the continuation of these institutions is the product of the actions of particular individuals, and it would certainly be wrong to say that an individual would stop feeling the influence of these institutions if she simply declared that she no longer wanted to fall under their remit.

An individual could perhaps avoid participation in democratic voting, or even perhaps find a way to manage without using money. But these institutions would continue to go on around her, and they would continue to impinge upon her action – it would, of course, be very difficult to manage without using money precisely because it is such a pervasive facet of contemporary existence. Managing without money and

government officialdom would likely involve acting so radically differently from the norm that it would surely often force the deviator into illegal (or at least deeply impractical) action, meaning that the individual would be on the verges of being a social pariah.

It thus seems undeniable that much of what makes a particular social context what it is directs and constrains the actions of individuals in distinct ways. Furthermore, many of these institutionalised facets of social life will precede the existence of the individual and will continue to shape the action of other individuals in similar ways long after the life of a particular individual has ended (Elias, 1991). This is, of course, perfectly in line with traditional sociological theory. But if these routinised, institutionalised facets of social life cannot be denied, where does social relations theory differ from traditional sociological accounts of social structure?

Relational sociology perhaps does not differ hugely on its interpretation of the effects of 'social structure' on individual action; whether they are referred to as structures or the effects of relations, various supra-individual institutions mould individual practice in notable and often routine ways, for example by ensuring that only a particular currency can be used for transactions in a particular jurisdiction. The point of departure of relational sociology is found in its emphasis on what constitutes that which may be referred to as social structure. For relational sociology, social structures are understood as being nothing more than relatively enduring and consistent effects of interactions between interdependent individuals (Dépelteau, 2008). Yet this is not to say that social structures are constituted entirely through a specific transaction. Both the content of the transactions that sustain a social structure, and the social structure itself, must be located within time. As we have seen, the way that individuals interact is shaped by the relations that exist between actors. These relations must be historically situated.

Buying a house provides a good example. In contemporary Britain, it is generally not possible to take a huge bag of cash to someone selling a house and expect to complete the purchase. There is a process of transaction involving estate agents, solicitors, surveyors, and so on, which must be gone through before the social practice of buying a house is acceptably completed. The content of this process has a long history of legal, economic, and social influence, which has shaped the

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direction of the necessary interactions. There is a historicity to the relations that afford the directionality of the practice of buying a house and relational sociologists would argue that the form that the institutionalised practice of buying a house takes is shaped by nothing more than the relations that exist between people and the effects that these relations have on action.

That is, the process of buying a house is what it is because people simply act in certain ways in relation to others within a historical framework of relations (manifest as transactions), and this historic framework is made up of nothing more than further transactional relations between people. These relations have maintained a certain degree of continuity that has allowed them to endure across time and space, but because such institutionalised practices are nothing more than social relations, they are never static. There has, for example, been a recent growth in websites that allow houses to be bought and sold without using estate agents (*The Telegraph*, 2012). Equally, while a capitalist economy has endured in the contemporary Western social world, the form of the economy is different from fifty years ago, and it continues to evolve as practices are reshaped and the relations between individuals change - the growth of zero-hours contacts in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis is testament to this.

This point highlights one of the major problems raised by the critique offered by relational sociology. Relational sociology would not necessarily question that something that can be considered a 'social structure' has certain consistent effects on individual action. However, because social theory has frequently fallen into the trap of conceptualising social structures as separate from individuals acting through their social relations, social structures have often been implicitly conceptualised as reified entities in themselves (Emirbayer, 1997; King, 2004). This makes explaining social change (large and small) challenging. As outlined above, even the most pervasive of 'structures', such as the free-market economy, only function as they do because vast networks of interdependent individuals are acting in relation to each other in certain ways. Individuals continue to use banks and money, various government offices collect figures to inform decisions about interest rates, people subsequently act in relation to changes in interests rates, and so on. The trouble comes when it is overlooked or forgotten that such structures are simply comprised of relationally acting individuals. When social structures come to be seen as

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separate from the social relations that comprise them, they quickly become seen as reified entities. As such, it becomes hard for social theory to explain how structures change.

We can take the example of recent changes in race, gender, and sexuality relations. While it would be inaccurate to say that we now live in an age where discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation does not occur, it is fair to say that the past century has seen perhaps the most radical change in these relations ever experienced in the Western world (Buchanan and Powell, 2015). It is certainly arguable that discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, and sexuality is 'structural' in the sense that it has been an enduring facet of everyday life that transcends specific individuals. However, if it is forgotten that these structures are simply comprised of interdependent individuals acting in terms of their social relations, then explaining recent advancements towards improved equality cannot easily be accounted for.

This difficulty can be seen in long-running debates about why institutionalised slavery, which had existed for thousands of years in Western history, came to such a relatively rapid end in the modern era. Throughout this debate, it has been pointed out that it is wrong to claim that individuals suddenly became 'more moral' than their predecessors (Davis, 1987). But, as Haskell (1985) points out, it is also incorrect to suggest that the decline of slavery occurred purely due to structural economic reasons stimulated by the rise of capitalism. Such an instrumental explanation could not explain why slavery has come to be seen as genuinely morally repugnant in the eyes of most people.

What Haskell argues is that the changes in the social and economic form of the social context that occurred from the mid-eighteenth century led to genuine changes in people's moral sensibilities, which led to a growing trend of abolitionist feelings that spread rapidly. Although Haskell himself does not make this argument explicit, it seems clear that his point is in line with the notion that social and moral change occurs as the relations between people shift. It is very difficult to explain how such radical change occurred if structures are seen as detached from the relations that exist between people. If this is the case, the changes in normalised action can only be explained as being determined by a structural overhaul, and this itself can only be explained by the relations between people shifting.

If this point is remembered, the argument can be made that widespread advances in equality have come about as the relations between people have shifted due to increasing social differentiation between people (Durkheim, 1973/1898) (more will be made of this point in chapter 3). Because social structures are comprised of relationally acting individuals, structures shift as the relations between people shift; perhaps due to economic changes, pervasive arguments of influential people, wars, communication advances, and so on. Indeed, this was very much the overall point of Elias's *Civilising Process* (1994). As the rise of the modern nation-state and the increasing division of labour in the capitalist economy altered the relations between people, the necessities and expectations of social life changed.

With this in mind, it would be to our detriment to not continually remind ourselves that if we talk of social structures, we are talking about 'more or less stable effects of trans-actions between interdependent actors' (Dépelteau, 2008). Failing to follow this line would not only inhibit our ability to analyse social change, but would also continue to drive the old divide between structure and agency, the individual and her social context. It is sometimes argued in relational sociology that any notions of social structure should be done away with entirely (Dépelteau, 2008). I am not sure that this is necessary so long as notions of structure are used heuristically: clearly there are supra-individual forces within a social context that direct and constrain individual action, and the term 'structure' is often a convenient means of denoting this. Taken in this light, relational sociology allows us to recognise what social structures actually are, and, in this way, they allow us to both describe social change and recognise that structures are not static, reified entities, but rather are continually emerging through the unfolding interactions of relational, interdependent individuals.

More importantly for this thesis, this relational mode of thought also allows us to challenge other modes of social theorising that insist that there simply must be some discernible mediator beyond social relations that results in patterns of social practice. It is surely often recognised in even the most 'structure-led' social theory that structures are held together by interdependent, acting individuals. However, unlike relational sociology, much of social theory has continued to insist that there is something beyond these social relations. For them, there simply must be something that makes these relations what they are, or which causes people to act in light of them in certain ways. Indeed, this is precisely King's (2000) criticism of Bourdieu's

early work. Bourdieu's early practical theory came so close to the realisation that people *tend* to act as they do because of their social relations, only to then add the concept of habitus as the objective 'structuring structures' that dispose people to act through their social relations in certain ways (Bourdieu, 1977:72). Relational sociology sees any such addition as superfluous: individuals tend to act as they do because of the social relations that comprise the various fields in which practice occurs. This is sufficient to explain individual practice within a social context.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to set one pillar of the theoretical framework necessary to explain the role of the socially emergent self in individual engagement in social practice. In line with this aim, this chapter has attempted to overcome the problem of accounting for social practice in a way that does not reduce 'the logic of practice' itself, as Bourdieu would put it. It has been argued that social theories that rely on concepts of rules or reified structure can neither illuminate the murkiness of social practice nor the dynamism of the social fields in which practice occurs. This becomes problematic when we attempt to explain why people only *tend* to act in certain ways, and when it is necessary to explain changes in widespread social practices.

The major claim levelled in this chapter is that relational sociology provides the theoretical framework to facilitate the fuzzy boundaries of social practice. Relational sociology allows us to recognise that individual engagement in social practice is not directed by structure; neither is it the product of an independent will. Rather, engagement in social practice involves interdependent transactions within the particular relations that constitute a particular social field. As individuals, our action is interdependently tied to the actions of others, both directly and indirectly. In the direct sense, our action is often the result of the actions of another, or relies on another's action to occur. Indirectly, our understanding of how to engage with social practice is the outcome of various historical transactions that have shaped a particular field of social practice in a particular way. As we have seen, the practices of buying a house or interacting with our boss are not entirely emergent of the particular situation. In such situations, how our practice occurs is mediated both by the transactional

relations that have constituted that particular field across time, and by our implicit understanding of how to engage with the practice itself. This chapter has heavily focused on bringing out the complex historicity of transactional relations and how they affect present engagement in social practice. Later on, chapter four will tie this together with the socially emergent self in order to explain how the individual's capacity for a virtuoso understanding of social practice is possible. But before that argument is possible, it is necessary to conceptualise what is meant by the socially emergent self.

<u>Chapter 3 - The Socially Emergent Self</u>

The meaning of the term 'self' is not easily established. The term is both routinely applied in everyday language and minutely discussed in multidisciplinary academic literature. Perhaps this is a source of the trickiness of the term. It seems that what the self refers to is often applied on the assumption that it is, or should be, tacitly understood. A prime example of this can be found in Bernard Williams' *The Problems with the Self* (1973) which, while being insightful, presumes that what is meant by the 'the self' is already clear. As will be discussed in this section, this is far from the case. Many of the varied interpretations of what the self refers to will be discussed in this section in an attempt to form a clear conceptualisation of the self as the basis of this thesis.

It will also be highlighted that how a theorist conceptualises the self has implications for how that theorist is able to interpret engagement in social practice. Take the example of Erving Goffman (1959). Because he conceives of the self episodically, he is unable to give a robust explanation of why and how the kind of social practices that he sees as so significant to the presentation of the self in everyday life are internalised *by* the emerging self and pervasively utilised in routine action. As Alfred Schutz (1970) points out, it may be accurate to say that the self is only really present in discrete interactions, but this does not mean that the individual does not form a unified view of herself. With this in mind, it is apparent that if it is to be argued that the social emergence of the self is significant to engagement in social practice, then what the term 'self' refers to, and the process through which it emerges, must be clearly set out. Indeed, as we shall see, how the self emerges is integral to explaining such practice.

I will maintain that understanding the *process* through which the self emerges is essential both to understanding what 'the self' refers to and its place in explaining engagement in social practice, so it is here that this chapter begins. This chapter aims to outline why and how the self should be understood to be socially emergent. This will largely be based on the framework provided by George Herbert Mead (1967/1934). Further on, part of Mead's theory will be brought into question, as will a number of other theories of the self, in order to arrive at a theory of the self that can be used to account for engagement in social practice. It should also be noted at this

point that while I do not attempt to make an overt distinction between psychological, sociological and philosophical theories of the self, the sociological nature of this thesis inevitably leads to an emphasis of perspectives from this field. However, relevant philosophical and psychological theories are utilised.

Mead's Socially Emergent Self

We take our point of departure from George Herbert Mead, who is often considered to offer the most influential account of the social emergence of the self (Habermas, 1995). The self, for Mead, (1967/1934), is the object of reflective engagement with oneself. The individual becomes conscious of a self that becomes an object for herself as it develops via social interaction. How does Mead explain this? His starting point is the premise that the self is the product of social context. For Mead, arguing that the self is socially emergent means that the self, while undoubtedly underpinned by cognitive mechanisms, is not present at birth. As we shall continue to see in this chapter, the capacity to emerge as a self requires that the individual is reflexively capable. That is, she must be able to engage with her own consciousness and with the world as an object of her consciousness. When considering the self, we are considering human beings who are capable of this basic reflective awareness of themselves (Mead, 1967/1934). It is this capacity for reflexive awareness of oneself that provides the starting point for the self to begin to become self-conscious, which in turn provides the foundation for the self to emerge (Mead, 1967/1934). However, the process of development of self-consciousness and the continued emergence of the self require social interaction. So while the self is underpinned by the basic human capacity of reflexivity, the self cannot be reduced to cognitive-physiology as such, but instead develops through the individual's relationships with the social world.

This is because, in Mead's theory, the individual emerges as a self as she comes to recognise herself as both an object and a subject for herself (Mead, 1967/1934). A person can emerge as a self insofar as she can be the subject who is reflexively engaged with herself, and the object of this reflexive engagement. She comes to understand herself as being an object in the sense that others take an attitude towards her, and in the sense that she can take an attitude towards herself. The

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process of emerging as a self begins with the recognition that she can be an object for the attitudes of others and for herself. She comes to understand herself as a subject, in the sense that she comes to recognise her capacity to act in the world, and in the sense that she is able to take a standpoint upon this world, which she recognises as belonging to herself (Mead, 1967/1934). It should be noted that Mead's framework only uses the subject-object dualism as theoretical bracketing. As we shall see shortly, the developed self is comprised of both the 'I' (the acting subject) and the 'me' (the object of reflection). Both are mutually constitutive in the development of the other and arise conterminously in the social process of emerging as a self (Habermas, 1995).

In Mead's terms, we can only become a self through social interaction because, in order to become an object for oneself, an individual must engage with the attitudes of others. Specifically, the individual must take on the attitudes that others hold towards her before she can reflect on herself as an object. This is not to say that an infant does not have some sort of reflective capacity. Indeed, this capacity is the basis of the formation of the self. Rather, it is to say that the 'me' – the object of reflective engagement – can only emerge via social interaction. This is because it is in this process that the individual is able to arrive at some sort of understanding of the actions and attitudes of others, which she is able to turn towards herself through reflective engagement. These attitudes come to comprise the shape of the 'me'. In this sense, the self that the individual is addressing and responding to 'belongs in a certain sense to another' (Mead, 1967/1934: 366). This is the first of two stages that Mead highlights in the full development of the self. Importantly for Mead, this process must occur through the 'verbal gesture', because we can only reflect on the attitudes of others towards ourselves through the mechanism of language (more on this shortly) (Mead, 1967/1934:39).

The second stage involves the individual engaging with generalised attitudes towards issues relevant to her social group. This stage is important because a fully developed reflective self must exist in relation to others with in her society. As Mead states:

> The individual possesses a self only in relation to the selves of other members of his social group; and the structures of the self expresses or reflects the

generalised behaviour pattern of this social group to which he belongs, just as does the structure of the self of every other individual belonging to this social group.

<div align="right">(Mead, 1967/1934: 164)</div>

Mead clearly doubted that a self could be considered fully developed until it is immersed within the general attitudes of the society of which it is part. Or, put differently, the self is inherently a product of social relations. Mead offers the example of property ownership to illustrate his point. It is taken to be an implicit facet of social intercourse in Western society today that we can have ownership over property. What is more, this property can be stolen. Related to this, it is generally accepted that stealing is wrong. As a developed self, the individual is able to engage with such generalised social attitudes in relation to their own conduct (Mead, 1967/1934). For Mead (and for this thesis) the significance of taking on generalised attitudes towards one's social context cannot be stressed enough. Because the self emerges socially, by taking on the attitudes of others through social interaction, the individual self cannot but be formed in relation to generalised attitudes taken towards the shared social context in which it emerges.

To elucidate this point further, Mead introduces the concepts of the 'I' and the 'me'. Mead considers the social emergence of the self to occur through a triadic relationship between the 'I', the 'me' and the generalised attitudes of others. The 'I' refers to the initiating aspect of the human being, which is pre-reflective in the sense that it acts in immediate response to others and the world around it. The 'me', on the other hand, is made up of the collected attitudes of others that have been absorbed in the development of the self (Mead, 1967/1934; Mead, 1925; Gould, 2009; Hjorkoer and Willert, 2013). It is through the 'me' that an individual can reflect on the acting 'I' in relations to the absorbed attitudes of others.

The 'I' is the response to the 'me' in the sense that the individual is responding to the attitudes of others. However, as Mead puts it 'what the response will be he does not know and nobody else knows' (Mead, 1967/1934: 175). This is because the action of the 'I' 'gets into his experience only after he has carried out the act' (Mead, 1967/1934: 175). This means that the response of the 'I' can run contrary to how we would like to act in relation to who we see ourselves as being (Willert and Hjorkoer,

2013). This is what Mead refers to as the elusive nature of the 'I'. As it is the 'me' that reflects upon the 'I in relation to the attitudes of others, we can only reflect on such actions retrospectively, by which point they have become part of the socially-engaged reflective interpretation of ourselves that makes up the 'me'. In short, the 'I' acts in response to others, and the 'me' reflects upon these actions in relation to the perceived generalised attitudes of others.

It could be argued that Mead's 'I' and 'me' can be used to depict the practical and reflective modes of intentional consciousness described above. The 'I' is essentially the individual acting in terms of practical consciousness, whereas the 'me' is engaged with on the occasions when the individual pauses and reflects in terms of reflective consciousness. For the most part, individuals can be seen to be acting via the 'I', and only really engaging as a 'me' when routine is broken. To some extent, this is accurate. However, as we shall continue to see throughout, Mead's theory allows for pre-reflective action to be moulded through the emergence of the self. That is, the actions of the 'I' come to be shaped by the emergence of the 'me'.

However, when conceptualising the 'I' and the 'me', Mead's writing often depicts the 'I' and the 'me' as distinct and even set against each other, which was not his intention (Morris, 1967). For example, Mead states that: 'The 'I' reacts to the self which arises through the taking of the attitudes of others. Through taking those attitudes, we have introduced the 'me' and we react to it as an 'I'' (Mead, 1967/1934: 175). This could be read as indicating that when Mead talks of the self, only the 'me' is considered to be significant. But he explicitly argues that acting through the 'I' is an indispensible part of the process of the self. We act as an 'I' that has been shaped through the social emergence of the self, and then we reflect upon that action through the 'me'. It is the 'me' that is reflected upon as the self, but the 'me' emerges as it does through the actions of the 'I', and the 'I' is shaped by the emergence of the 'me'. The way that this capacity to be both the subject and the object for oneself emerges means that the actions of the individual, even when acting through practical consciousness via the 'I', are moulded by the social emergence of the self. This is because this process involves taking on the generalised attitudes of others towards one's shared social context.

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Mead developed the notion of the 'generalised other' to indicate how the attitudes of others are brought into our individual experience. The generalised other represents the general normative standards and expectations of behaviour that are taken on by the individual in the emergence of their self (Burkitt, 2008; Habermas, 1995). This process begins early on in the formation of the self, as the individual takes on the attitudes of her primary caregivers through their judgement of her behaviour (Burkitt, 2008). The attitudes that are taken on by the individual become more generalised as their sphere of interaction increases. As the individual takes on more attitudes towards herself from a diverse range of perspectives, the individual comes to develop an increasingly generalised understanding of appropriate conduct (Burkitt, 2008).

The pervasiveness of the generalised other should not be underestimated in the formation of individual behaviour. It is through the generalised other that the individual reflects upon her own action. Further, the attitudes of the generalised other are internalised by the individual to the extent that they become implicit in the individual's practical action (Habermas, 1995). Because the individual develops a self by taking on the attitudes of others towards herself, the behavioural expectations of her social context become internalised by the individual, meaning that she is able to act in response to the other without having to reflectively consider what appropriate action in a particular situation entails. Indeed, by 'internalised', it is meant that the generalised views of others are taken on by the individual to the extent that they are absorbed into their mode of practical action. It is not just reflective conduct that is shaped by the emergence of the self; how the individual experiences the world is significantly shaped by the shared understandings of her social context that have been taken on through their socially emergent self.

Because the generalised attitudes of others, which are taken on socially, are integral to the emergence of the self, it is through this triadic relationship of the 'I', the 'me' and the generalised other

> ...that the whole social process is thus brought back into the experience of the individuals involved in it; it is by such means, which enable the individual to take the attitude of the other towards himself, that the individual is able

consciously to adjust himself to that process, and to modify the resultant of that process in any given social act in terms of his adjustment to it.

(Mead, 1967/1934: 134)

It should be understood that the 'I' and the 'me' are very much two sides of the same coin in terms of understanding the processes of the self. It is through the action of the 'I' that the individual is firstly able to take on generalised attitudes of others and then reflect upon herself through the 'me'. Moreover, it is through taking on these generalised attitudes that the actions of the 'I' are shaped, which in turn affects how these actions are reflected on in terms of the 'me'. As we shall see later on, this point is of huge significance to explaining the role of the self both in individual social practice and, consequently, in the reproduction of the social relations that comprise one's shared social context.

The Vocal Gesture and the Emergence of the Self

From Mead's theory, we can begin to see how the self inherently emerges socially. But to understand the process of social emergence, it is necessary to consider the significance of the gesture, and the vocal gesture in particular. Mead labelled himself a behaviourist, in the sense that social interaction originates in our basic stimulus-response behaviour. As such, he subsequently attempted to explain social interaction (which yields the emergence of the self) as occurring through an exchange of gestures in which meaning arises. Mead used the broad term 'gestures' because we take on the attitudes of others not just from verbal language, but also from body language, silence and various other actions. He argued that if we are to understand how we become a self by taking on the attitudes of others, we need to understand how such attitudes are absorbed by the individual.

Mead emphasised the role played by gestures and meanings in this process. Taking on the attitudes of others requires the individual to understand the meaning that the other's gestures carry (Mead, 1967/1934). This process begins in childhood. Our particular behaviours elicit certain responses from others, which allow these gestures to be recognised as carrying a certain meaning between individuals (Burkitt, 2008).

So for Mead, meaning emerges in the threefold relationship of the gesture to another, the other's response to that gesture, and the subsequent social act (Gould, 2009).

> Meaning arises and lies within the field of the relation between the gesture of a given human organism and the subsequent behaviour of this organism as indicated to another human organism by that gesture.
>
> (Mead, 1967/1934:75-76).

Thus, taking on the attitude of the other, which is necessary to the individual becoming an object for herself, requires that we engage with the other in a conversation of gestures, through which an understanding of the other's attitude arises. However, Mead argued that the emergence of the self requires more than simply becoming aware of the meaning of gestures in a purely behavioural sense. He maintained that the vocal gesture is particularly significant as it allows us to become self-conscious, which is essential to the development of the self. The vocal gesture is so significant, according to Mead, because in early life, the child becomes capable of recognising her early attempts at vocalisations as being the result of her own behaviour. Through the reflexive capacity that Mead sees as the basic foundation of the self, the child is able to realise that it is her that makes a particular noise. The child is subsequently able to recognise herself as the originator of an action that elicits general responses from another (Burkitt, 2008).

As these noises develop into language, the individual becomes able to engage with the complex array of shared meanings that comprise human language (Habermas, 1995). It is from this shared understanding of meaning, which has arisen through an exchange of gestures, that the individual is able to become an object for herself in relation to the attitudes of others. Understanding the attitudes of others first arises from the individual child acting and then recognising the response to that action from the other. It is from these responses that the meaning of the interaction arises for the individual, who is then able to interpret these meanings in terms of an attitude taken towards herself (Mead, 1967/1934).

The complexity of language allows complex meanings to be both shared and interpreted between individuals (Blumer, 1969). Through language, complex

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attitudes can both be expressed and interpreted by the individual in relation to herself. The individual expression and interpretation of meaning is shaped by the particular emergence of the self through social interaction. As the individual emerges as a self from a particular point in her social context – that is, as the social interactions that shape an individual's self vary considerably between individuals – how the individual interprets the meanings of others' gestures (and thus attitudes towards oneself) also varies considerably (Mead, 1967/1934). This can lead to both very broad and very individualised variations in interpretations of meaning. For example, using the name 'Jesus' in a joking manner could be interpreted very differently by deeply Catholic social contexts and social contexts that have no Christian history. Equally, the interpretation of this vocal gesture may be interpreted differently between individuals in the same social context. A religious person may interpret it as taking their Lord's name in vain, whereas a non-religious person may find it a humorous means of satire. As we shall see, this variation in the interpretation of meaning plays a significant role in the individualisation of selves.

Nonetheless, the overall point to be taken from this section is that Mead saw the exchange of gestures – particularly vocal gestures – as integral to the individual being able to emerge as a self. What we find in Mead is a sound conceptual framework for explaining how the self emerges socially. As we will see further on, understanding the self as an essentially social phenomenon will be the first step on the path to understanding how social contexts affects individual action.

Is the Self the Individual in Mead?

As has been described, for Mead the self is the collection of attitudes that the individual takes on from others, through a continual process of exchange between the 'I', the 'me' and the generalised other. She relates to herself through the attitudes of others. The self, as it emerges from the attitudes of others, is an object for the individual in the sense that it is what the individual relates to about herself. Does this mean that the individual and the self can be seen separate, to some extent at least, in Mead's theory? In his outline of how the self begins to emerge during childhood, it certainly seems so. As Mead put it,

It is necessary to emphasise the wide stretch between the direct immediate life of the child and this self growing in his conduct. The latter is almost imposed from without. He may passively accept the individual that the group about him assign to him as himself. This is very different from the passionate assertive biological individual, that loves and hates and embraces and strikes. *He* is never an object; *his* is a life of direct suffering and action.

(1967/1934: 369)

What Mead is highlighting in this passage is the difference between the 'biologic individual' and the self in the early stages of childhood. The biologic individual refers to the developing human organism, with its basic behavioural responses to hunger, the actions of others, and so forth. This biologic individual has not developed a self as of yet, because the child has not developed the 'me' that will be the object for her reflective engagement. The self that begins to emerge in relation to the attitudes taken toward her and her actions as a biologic individual, however, is becoming the object towards which the child addresses herself – often against the biologic individual. In the early stages of the emergence of the self, Mead presents an image of the individual as a kind of dualism between the 'I' and the 'me'.

Yet, as the child continues to take on the attitudes of others and starts to understand the nuanced complexity of such attitudes, she no longer reacts purely to the social and physical situation in which she finds herself. She comes to respond also to the self which has become an object of increasing significance to her engagement with the world. She comes to understand, for example, that if she wants to play with others, then she may have to share her toys or understand what it is like for a toy to be taken away from her, if she is going to continue to play with those others (Mead, 1967/1934).

The self comes to be of increasing significance as an object for the individual as the child's engagement in the social world comes to increasingly depend on taking on and applying the attitudes of others in her conduct. This results in the self becoming integrated with the biologic individual. By this stage, it is no longer just immediate attractions and impulses that guide the child's behaviour (Mead, 1967/1934). As the individual child's responses come to be integrated with the attitudes of others, the response she gives is not simply behavioural and impulsive, but is composite with

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the attitudes of others. As the individual develops as a self, she ceases to be a purely biologic individual *and* a self. The two become integrated to the extent that the body and the self are who and what she is (Mead, 1967/1934).

The biologic individual is, of course, not really something that can be fully controlled. We continue to have biological functions and urges, but our engagement with these functions and urges comes to be integrated with the attitudes of others that we take on as emergent selves. Indeed, this is the process described so expertly in the work of Goffman (1959; 1963) in his astute notation of how individuals manage their expressions and bodily functions in relation to the situation in which they find themselves.

In short, for Mead the individual does *have* a self in the sense that the self emerges from, and comes to be identified with, the biologic individual. However, the emergence of the self means that the attitudes of others that allow her to be an object for herself come to be integrated with the biologic individual in terms of who that individual is. The individual *is* a self that is integrated with the body (Mead, 1967/1934). As we shall see, this has important consequences for how we understand the individual's engagement in social practice, as her engagement in social practice is in many ways initiated and guided by her emergence as a self.

The Process of Individuation

At this stage, Mead's theory of the self facilitates an explanation of how social norms are internalised by the individual through the emergence of their self. Mead's addition of social psychology based on cognitivism provides social theory with a clear descriptive framework of how the individual internalises social norms and expectations to the extent that they not only guide her practice, but also provide the foundations for this practice. Mead should be seen as providing an indispensable resource for any theory that attempts to explain how and why individuals engage in relatively routinised social practices that transverse a particular social context (Habermas, 1995). But the real value of Mead's theory lies in its ability to explain the drastic variations that exist between individuals who emerge as selves from a shared social context. Most importantly for this thesis, Mead's theory of 'individuation' allows

us to understand how the individual can engage in shared social practices in individualised ways.

This process of individuation occurs for two connected reasons. The more obvious of the two is that individuals emerge as selves from differing positions within a social context. As Mead (1925) points out, the kind of variables that make a difference to the emergence of the self that exist between one person and another within a particular social context are vast in number, even if these people lived in very similar circumstances; identical twins would be an example of this. Some of these differential variables are will be drastic, others seemingly insignificant. We can surely understand that factors such as whether one is the older or younger sibling makes some sort of difference to how the individual internalises the attitudes of others. As does where one went to school, the relationship between one's parents as one is growing up, whether one was brought up bilingually, one's relative wealth or poverty, one's health, and the locality in which one lives, to name but a few differentiating factors. Mead's (1925) work expertly highlights how the magnitude of factors that differentiate one person's experience of their social world from another's, even if these factors are relatively minor, affects both the kind of attitudes that the individual faces, and how she internalises these attitudes. The result of this is that the individual self emerges in a way that is inherently different from others.

So far, this is quite obvious. The real purchase of Mead's theory lies in how he connects this rudimentary social psychological point with his explanation of the second cause of individuation. Mead (1925; 1967/1934) contends that as the individual encounters a diversity of attitudes as she emerges as a self, she necessarily arrives at her own subjective standpoint on shared objects of social concern. Because the individual encounters the variable (although not necessarily distinct attitudes) of others as she goes through social life, she must reconcile these attitudes into her own understanding of her social world.

The origins of this process lie in the early stages of the emergence of the self, as the individual comes to recognise herself as a subject. As has been said, this process begins as the child comes to recognise herself as the generating cause of certain noises and actions that she identifies as *her* vocalisations and actions. Mead's behaviourism allows him to conceive of humans as having this basic reflexive

capacity that precedes full subjective self-consciousness (Habermas, 1995). As she develops, the child comes to understand certain actions as eliciting certain responses from others. She begins to internalise the meanings that certain noises and actions carry in relation to the responses of others. It is this basic process that allows the individual to recognise herself as an acting subject who is able to elicit and interpret the responses of others in relation to herself (Mead, 1967/1934; Habermas, 1995). As this process continues, the individual becomes able to internalise the more complex attitudes taken towards her by others in relation to her emerging self-consciousness.

She is *taking on* these attitudes in the sense that she becomes increasingly aware of her own subjective role in her engagement with these attitudes, and their subsequent internalisation in relation to herself (Mead, 1967/1934). The internalisation of these attitudes comes to shape her understanding of herself as a subject. The attitudes that she continues to take on, in their diversity and their contradiction, are now taken on in relation to her developing understanding of herself as a subject who is increasingly aware of herself as having her own understanding of such attitudes. The diversity of attitudes that the individual faces means that she must reconcile these attitudes with her own generalised understanding of what they mean and why they are significant. She consequently arrives at her own subjective understanding of the social world in which she is engaged. She arrives at an understanding of herself as having her own perspective which she recognises as being her own, as belonging to herself and to her life history (Habermas, 1995).

As an integral part of the emergence of the self, the individual becomes aware of herself as being able to take her own standpoint upon intersubjective perspectives of social life, and upon objects of general social concern (Mead, 1967/1934). An obvious example of this arises in the form of participation in democracy. Although it may be argued that it would be largely inaccurate to say that individualised perspectives on one's political system are entirely possible, it surely cannot be denied that individuals are aware of any political views that they have as being their own. This does not mean that they are unique or revolutionary; rather, it means that the individual is able to take a position on what she thinks about the political sphere in which she finds herself, and potentially to vote according to this perspective. The

individual does not just mechanically adopt a political view, but rather endorses it and identifies it as being her own.

Mead's explanation of individuation can thus be seen as a result of both societal differentiation and individual interpretation, both of which are connected. The individual arrives at her understanding of herself, and subsequently arrives at her own perspective on the social world, from her particular differentiated position within her social context. The attitudes she faces and how she internalises them are tied to the various differentiating factors that comprise her experience of the world, and it is this that intimately moulds the standpoint on her social context that she understands to be her own. The perspectives that the individual takes toward the social world are shaped by her interpretation of the attitudes which she encounters, and the way that she faces them is the result of her differentiated position within that social context.

It will be argued further on that this aspect of Mead's theory needs to be amalgamated with social relations theory in order to provide a more intricate and historically situated explanation of how the emergence of the self occurs via transactions. However, I maintain that Mead's description of how the individual arrives at her own perspectives on a shared social context as part of her emergence as a self from that social context is of the upmost theoretical importance to explaining individualised engagement in social practice. Before that, some of the criticisms of Mead's theory need to be resolved if it is to be used as a foundation for explaining engagement in social practice.

Some Criticisms of Mead

The overall framework for the self that Mead puts in place has some limitations. Firstly, as Merleau-Ponty (1981) has intricately demonstrated, it is not accurate for Mead to give such pride of place to the vocal gesture in the process of becoming self-conscious. Merleau-Ponty points out that the body as a whole is involved in becoming self-conscious. We are able to experience our body as our own by touching our own hands together, experiencing hunger or pain, and so on. Merleau-Ponty thus indicates that awareness of our body as our own is integral to the emergence and persistence of the self. Building upon this, Margaret Archer (2003)

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argues that practice should be given primacy when considering how the individual comes to be aware of her self. That is, it is through our engagement with the world via our various actions that we come to recognise ourselves as selves, who are capable of eliciting certain effects and responses from both others and ourselves. We come to establish what we are and are not capable of, and how certain actions make us feel. In turn, this allows the individual to experience herself as a self.

While I take these points to be extremely relevant to the emergence of the self, I do not think that they overthrow Mead's points about the vocal gesture; rather, they build upon the basic argument Mead makes about how we come to reflexively engage with ourselves as objects. I maintain that the vocal gesture, our bodily experience and the experience of our own action are of vital importance to how we become capable of reflective self-engagement. There can surely be little doubt that the recognition of her own vocal gesture, the recognition of the effects of her action, and the recognising her own body are all integral to the child coming to recognising herself as an acting self. With this in mind, this line of criticism will be set aside as we turn to other critiques of Mead's work.

It has been argued by a number of authors (Gould, 2009; Daanen and Sammut, 2012) that Mead's emphasis on behaviourism leads to his work being read as though he thought that meaning *only* arises through an exchange of gestures and does not precede this exchange. Such commentators argue that Mead's focus on the exchange of gestures resulted in him failing to give a clear account of how shared meanings exist between individuals in a society before a particular interaction. In my view, it is an overstatement to suggest that Mead thought that meaning arose entirely through the exchange of gestures, without any sort of meaning preceding the particular situation. Indeed, it would be very hard for Mead to complete his aim of explaining the part (the individual) in terms of the whole (society) if he claimed this to be the case. However, his lack of a conceptualisation of intersubjective meanings and understandings that precedes interaction can lead to his work being read as claiming that meaning only arises through specific interaction.

To understand meaning in this sense would surely be a mistake. It seems much more likely that, as fully developed adults, we learn the significance of a hand shake, for example, and carry knowledge of such meaningful actions into similar situations

in the future. The social interaction with another then allows us to reflectively engage with these meanings in relation to our self. To give a more complex example, we can imagine a young individual who is sympathetic to left-wing causes, although she is yet to actively participate in political action. She enters into a conversation with a new acquaintance, who bemoans and vilifies those on the left who do not actively participate in political rallies or engage with more radical politics. These were general comments, which were not aimed directly at our first individual, and the second knew nothing of the first's lack of participation. Nonetheless, the first individual takes on the attitudes of the other and reflectively engages with her self and her position in left wing politics. Mead's theory could be read as though this occurs through an exchange of gestures, in which the meaning of the second's attitudes arose. Yet, it would not be possible for the reflective engagement of the first to occur as it did unless she had some prior conception of left-right politics, activism, and radicalism. The meanings of such things could not have emerged entirely from a series of throw-away comments made by a newly acquainted other. Because Mead's work lacks a theory of how meanings can precede situations, Sammut and Daanen (2012) argue that it lacks a coherent account of how meanings can exist between people without an exchange of gestures in every situation.

Indeed, many authors, for example Berger and Luckman (1966), Gadamer (1975), Giddens (1979) and Searle (1996), have all highlighted how some background intersubjective understanding of the world is necessary for coherent social interaction. Without these underpinnings, we would be completely unintelligible to ourselves and to others. We can only take on the attitudes of others in the process of becoming a self insofar as these attitudes are generally intelligible to us. And for these attitudes to be intelligible to us as individuals, they must carry some sort of meaning generally held within our social context (Berger and Luckman, 1966). Mead makes this point himself when he argues that we take on generalised notions of right and wrong from our society (Mead, 1925). If this is the case, then we have to assume that such attitudes have a meaning that is carried into the specific exchange of gestures, rather than the meaning emerging entirely from this exchange. The overall point is this: if individuals did not carry a certain degree of understanding of how to proceed in specific interactions, we would not be able to interpret the attitude of the other that Mead claims is so integral to the development of the self.

In my view, it seems likely that Mead was aware of this. Indeed, a careful reading of Mead's account of the exchange of gestures (outlined in the last section) shows clearly that through the exchange of gestures the individual is engaging with shared and generalised understandings in their social context, rather than simply taking on the attitude of another person afresh in each situation. If someone lashed out at us for bumping into them on a train, then that specific gesture would yield not just the meaning that they were angry, but also that they had massively overreacted. We would be able to understand that person as overreacting because we have emerged as a self through a multitude of interactions that give us a *generalised* understanding of what is appropriate, which is carried into the individual's experience of the world. For Mead, the exchange of gestures does not mean that we only come to understand what is appropriate for a single interaction; rather we come to a generalised understanding that allows us to act in an intersubjective social world. This will prove to be very important to explaining 'virtuoso' engagement in social practice.

Against the Situational Self

However, it is fair to say that Mead's emphasis on behaviourism could lead to his work being read as claiming that meaning only emerged in particular interactions. This is not helped by his conceptualisation of the acting 'I' as preceding reflective engagement. Notably, (perhaps unintentionally) it sets the theoretical foundations for the notion that the self emerges in a particular way in specific situations. This is very different from merely stating that the self is socially emergent. Saying that the self is socially emergent does not preclude the notion that the self can be based upon, and experienced through, some sort of extended coherence and reflectivity; it simply indicates that the reflectivity and coherence of the self arises socially. Arguing that the self arises in specific situations, however, implies that the self is defined according to a particular interaction in a particular time and space. As has already been indicated, this is far from Mead's intention. Mead clearly thought that the individual internalised the attitudes of others through the social emergence of the self to the extent that they become implicit in the actions of the 'I' (Habermas, 1995). However, Mead also highlighted the spontaneous nature of the 'I', which responds to

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the particular situation it finds itself in. Only afterwards do these actions get reflected upon through the 'me'. It is arguable that this framework set by Mead is short-sighted in itself, and is extended in the works of Goffman (1959), Sartre (1969), Doris (1998), and others.

The work of Goffman (1959) has provided fertile ground for sociological investigations into how we interact socially and how we present our self in day-to-day life. Indeed, many authors have commentated that his work has endured so successfully because it strikes such a chord with our actual experience of how we go about acting in the social world (Raffel, 2013). His observations are so enlightening to read precisely because he describes the kind of nuances of interaction that we are all familiar with (despite the fact that they go largely unnoticed) in our interactions with others (Giddens, 1979). This being the case, it would be hard to ignore Goffman's theories when conceptualising the self. However, his work is not without its critics, many of which cast Goffman's work into a more dubious light when his conceptualisations of the self and his implicit claims of generalisability are questioned.

Let's begin with a short outline of what Goffman's work has to offer by focusing on two of Goffman's texts that have particular relevance to the self: *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1959) and *Behaviour in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organisation of Gatherings* (1963). Very briefly, Goffman gives an intricate account of how individuals attempt to manage impressions of how they are perceived in the social world in relation to rules of social interaction (Goffman, 1963). He highlights how we attempt to gain information about specific interactions by gleaning clues both from the setting of the interaction and the behaviour of others from the expressions that the others "give" and "give off" (Goffman, 1963). The signs we *give* are intentional symbols of communication of our self in that situation, e.g., I can nurse a copy of some significant book if I wanted to present myself as a young academic. The signs we *give off* are symptomatic and unintentional, such as a slight twitch of annoyance at a passing comment from my interlocutor. Goffman insists that we are generally aware that the other is attempting to draw information from us in the interaction, and he highlights how we frequently attempt, as much as possible, to manage the impressions that the other receives from us. This is done with a view to

presenting ourselves in a particular light *vis-a-vis* what we intend to achieve from the interaction and the various social rules that govern how we should act in a particular situation.

It is from his use of pertinent examples of how this process manifests itself in a variety of particular social interactions that Goffman draws his conception of what the self is in Anglo-American society. To quote him at length:

> [the] self does not derive from its possessor, but from the whole scene of his action, being generated by that attribute of local events which renders them interpretable by witnesses. A correctly staged and performed scene leads the audience to impute a self to a performed character, but this imputation – this self – is a *product* of a scene that comes off, and is not the *cause* of it. The self, then, as a performed character, is not an organic thing that has a specific location, whose functional fate is to be born, to mature, and to die; it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented, and the characteristic issue, the crucial concern, is whether it will be credited or discredited.

> (Goffman, 1959: 222-223)

This is a remarkable claim about what the self is, and it provides the point of departure for the critique of Goffman offered here. To be sure, a number of theorists have noted that Goffman's conceptualisation fails to get to grips with the complexity of the self (MacIntyre, 1985; Giddens, 1991). For what Goffman is arguing is that the self is a momentary thing that simply emerges from any particular interaction, and all that the individual is concerned with is managing the impressions that they give in order to ensure that the self that they desire the other to receive in that particular situation is obtainable to the other, and that their behaviour is consistent with a socially accepted image of a certain type of self. What this leaves us with is a notion of the self that is purely episodic, with no real continuity between social interactions.

For Garfinkel (1976) and Raffel (2013), this is not good enough. As Garfinkel (1976) points out, how we act in a specific situation informs, and even haunts, how we act subsequently. He highlights how if we use an excuse once to avoid revealing a secret, then we will carry that excuse into similar interactions that require us to take

alternative action, in the sense that we may use a different excuse next time to avoid suspicion. I would take this further: if an individual acted in a way which she felt was unbecoming of who she sees herself as being then it is likely that she would reflect upon herself with reproach. She may even go out of her way to rectify the image of herself, not just to the others who witnessed her fall, but also to herself. Such action is taken with a view to ensuring some sort of alignment between her view of herself, and the presentation of herself to others (Pinel and Swann Jr., 2000).

This scenario highlights the importance of understanding the self as functioning in relation towards itself, that is, as reflective. It is the lack of consideration of one's relationship toward oneself that leads Goffman's theory of the self to come across as so divorced from our everyday experience of ourselves. Because Goffman did not consider this relationship as relevant to the self, his work dispenses with the notion that the self is experienced by the individual with any sort of coherence and consistency (MacIntyre, 1985). To him, we are simply who we present ourselves as being at a given time.

Of course, to some extent we do present ourselves as Goffman described. Undoubtedly, Goffman's work is so striking to read because of its uncanny diagnosis of how we often act in social situations and it does so in such a way that the majority of us can relate to these accounts even if they had previously gone unnoticed. There is little doubt that most of us can think of occasions when we have simply attempted to manage our impressions in a particular social situation, perhaps with a view to avoiding conflict, or in order to fulfil our role. In Goffman's theories, this is precisely how the self is: we manage the impressions we give and the self is whatever emerges in this process.

However, Raffel (2013) maintains that a major shortcoming of Goffman's account is that he presents individuals as *only ever* managing impressions. This leads his argument to read as though we cannot act in a way that reflects our view of ourselves in any situation. But Raffel (2013) highlights that we are more likely to reveal a moral stance on an issue that genuinely reflects our moral views to a close friend than we are to somebody more distant. For example, we may joke about doing something that upset someone else as part of 'changing room banter' with our sports team, but may then admit feelings of regret to a close friend. These feelings of regret

will have emerged through one's reflective view of their self as a moral person, and there is a chance that such feelings will impact upon future action. Here, then, is an example of how Goffman's dismissal of the reflective relationship as fundamental to the self also leads him to ignore the kind of consistency of the self that the individual often maintains through time and space, even if she is not always acting consistently with who she sees herself as being.

It is fairly clear to see how Goffman's work, in many ways, has similarities to a basic notion of Mead's concept of the 'I'. Both argue that we act in relation to normalised attitudes of others, while also acting in ways that can catch ourselves off guard: note that Goffman's notion of 'given off' signs that we do not intend to let slip is akin to Mead's argument that acting through the 'I' means that we can often '...surprise ourselves by our own action' (Mead, 1967/1934: 174). Furthermore, both highlight the significance of the particular situation for yielding the meaning that the interaction entails. However, Goffman takes this much further than Mead, by arguing that the self entirely emerges within such situations. While Mead's theories of meaning have their flaws, his conceptual framework leaves room for the notion that the self is able to maintain coherence over time. This is because Mead built his theory around the notion that the self involves reflectivity. Goffman's disposal of this base claim leads him to present a theory of the self that overlooks how an individual is able to engage with herself and make decisions on who they want to be accordingly.

Similar conclusions to those of Goffman are found in Sartre (1969) and also in much of the situational social psychology literature (see for example, Doris and Stitch, 2008; Doris, 1998; Harman, 1999). In these cases, situational psychological experiments have been used as evidence for the claim that our action is shaped according to the specific situation that we find ourselves in, rather than by robust character traits. This is an interesting position, and the weight of the empirical evidence that these claims employ make it hard to deny their significance. However, I do not think it is necessary to deny the significance of their claims to uphold the argument that the self is characterised by a reflective relationship towards oneself. Indeed, we do often act in ways that do not affirm who we see ourselves as being in many situations. There can be no doubt that the structure of certain social settings plays a large role in yielding certain behaviours. However, it is not correct to discount the reflective nature of the self on these grounds. There is no reason to suggest that

we do not reflect upon how we acted previously in particular situations and (perhaps only occasionally) strive to act differently in the future. What we can glean from our failures to act in particular ways provides information to apply to our own self-understanding, a point which is well made by Mead.

The major problem with theories that explain the self as episodic is not necessarily that they offer an inaccurate account of how humans interact. Rather, they provide a very accurate account of human interaction, instead of providing a theory of the self as such. Said theories do accurately detail how we go about our day-to-day lives, and how situations impact upon our action, but this is not a theory of the self as it is understood here. In relation to the theory offered here, those other theories could perhaps hold to illustrate particular manifestations of the self; however, they do not get to grips with the phenomena of the self in its entirety.

I think this point can be supported as follows. Even if we consider the self to be the product of particular individual interactions that emerge in a specific situation, it would be hard to imagine this occurring without some more robust notion of who one considers oneself to in terms of one's own self-narrative and life history. For example, as a person who understands himself as an aspiring PhD student, it is perfectly acceptable in my own self-view, and in the view of others, for me to sit in a cafe taking notes on philosophy books. But it would not be acceptable in terms of my own self-view, as a non-religious person, to stand on the street telling people about the word of God, even if the situation pushed me in this direction.

What we see here is that while we may act in certain ways in relation to the specifics of the social situation, one's reflective engagement with one's self must, in many respects, limit what can be considered to be appropriate action. I should reiterate that I am not completely discarding the situational psychology evidence that suggests that we often act in ways that we would not generally feel to reflect who we want to be. I am simply arguing that it would be naive to suggest that we can never act in relation to our understanding of ourselves, particularly when it is quite clear that it would make little sense to claim otherwise. The person and the action that emerge in a particular time and place are not simply the product of the situation, but also the product, at least to some extent, of how one understands their own self in relation to how this self has emerged socially.

<u>The Self and the Internal Conversation</u>

It has already been highlighted that Mead's theory of the self can be read as though it advocates that an individual can only ever reflectively engage with her self retrospectively. That is, Mead indicated that individuals reflect upon themselves through the 'me' once the 'I' has acted. A number of authors have outlined this inadequacy in Mead's theory, for example Gould (2009) and Archer (2003). It has also been highlighted in the last section that much of this criticism is overstated. However, there is certainly something to be said for the claim that Mead was not clear on how the individual's reflective engagement with her self can affect her engagement in practice. It is argued here that understanding the human individual as having the capacity to engage with their understanding of their self, and to reflectively engage with their past, present, and future action in relation to this self-understanding, is an integral facet of explaining engagement in social practice. While it is accepted that most of individual action is conducted without prior discursive reflection, this does not mean that individuals do not adapt their action in relation to their self-view every so often. Nor does it mean that actions cannot be planned (at least partly on some occasions), nor that previous self-reflection cannot impinge upon future action.

It thus needs to be asked how it is possible to extend Mead's theory into the kind of genuine individual self-engagement that directly impacts upon action. Mead's (1925) theory surely lends itself to such an extension, because his theory of individuation explains how individuals are able to arrive at an understanding of themselves as having views on social issues that they can recognise as their own. Once this process has occurred, it is only a small step to understanding individuals as being capable of reflectively-led action. To extend Mead's argument in this way, it is necessary to borrow Archer's concept of 'internal conversation'. Archer (2003: 16) argues that internal conversations need to be understood as being '...(a) genuinely interior, (b) ontologically subjective, (c) causally efficacious'. Archer is arguing that the human individual has the capacity to reflectively engage with her self in a dialogue that is entirely the possession of that individual. As we shall see shortly, it is argued here that one is in conversation with one's self.

Mead's theory of individuation is instructive here insofar as it offers an insight into how individuals arrive at this capacity for subjective, internal dialogue. Recall that Mead (1967/1934) argued that the individual self emerges as it takes on the attitudes of others both towards herself and towards objects of shared social concern. These attitudes become generalised as the individual encounters an increasing diversity of attitudes. In the process of reconciling this diversity of attitude, the individual necessarily arrives at her own standpoint. That is, she begins to take her own view of herself and the social world. Because these views have arisen through the emergence of the self, the individual recognises these views as her own (Habermas, 1995).

This is a very important insight. However, in line with the rest of Mead's theoretical framework, this does not entirely explain how reflective engagement becomes significant to social practice. It does, however, show us how Archer's (2003) genuinely internal and ontologically subjective conversations arise. Through the process of individuation, the individual arrives at her own subjective position on herself and the social world, which she can recognise as being entirely her own. The reflexivity of the self means that the individual can engage with her own subjective position. Archer's theory allows us to move beyond this point in order to see how the individual can shape her engagement in social practice (at least to some extent) through this subjective capacity for self-understanding, whereas Mead's theory can be read as though reflective engagement is only retrospective.

Archer (2003) argues that much of social theory has dramatically underplayed the integral role that reflectivity has in affecting social action. For Archer, it is perfectly clear that individuals can engage with their beliefs on issues such as marriage, attitudes towards money, feelings towards other people and so on. She does not doubt that beliefs, attitudes, and feelings can be externally influenced, and thus the fact that one holds certain beliefs is not evidence of the role of interiority. However, we can assume that people are able to (and often do) engage with, and even adapt and change, their own beliefs. If this were not the case, then academic discourse would surely be redundant. Equally, we can assume that people can and do act on their beliefs, attitudes, and feelings. This, of course, is not to say that people always act 'rationally' as a result of reflective engagement. But it surely cannot be doubted that people can reflectively deliberate, have these views challenged, and then act as

they see fit. Surely at least some people go through this process when voting, or when considering the course of action to take when an interpersonal relationship becomes problematic.

While accepting Archer's premise that internal conversations can affect action, this thesis does differ from hers in terms of order. For Archer, the individual becomes able to be influenced by her social context *once* she has arrived at the capacity for internal conversation. Here it is argued that the opposite is true. Following Mead's framework, it is argued that the self begins to emerge from the influence of her social relations, which then leads to the individual's capacity for individuation, and subsequently, 'causally efficacious' internal conversation. I argue that the internal conversation occurs in light of the individual becoming an object for herself through her absorption of generalised attitudes, not before.

This ordering is preferred to Archer's because Archer's account underplays the social basis of the self. Indeed, she argues that Mead's account of the emergence of the self is over-socialised, in the sense that the self can only emerge from social relations. According to Archer, this means that the role of the internally-deliberating agent in her own action is overlooked (Archer, 2003). For Archer, it is through the internal conversation that '...agents respond to social forms' (Archer, 2003: 16). Here, Archer is de-emphasising the social basis of the self as the means through which individual action is shaped by social relations, in favour of reflective deliberation fulfilling this role. As a result, Archer goes too far in her critique: she comes to suggest that individuals are reflectively engaged in their practice much more than they really are. It is my argument that, for the most part, human individuals engages with practice through practical consciousness – that is, they largely act without reflective deliberation. Individuals are able to act in this way because their self has emerged socially, and this moulds their mode of practical action in such a way that discursive recourse is unnecessary to engagement in social practice.

Archer is right to suggest that the role of reflectivity has been understated in much of social theory. The trouble is, she attempts to rectify this by overstating the role that internal conversations play in bringing social structure into action. What can be taken from Archer is the notion that individuals are able to engage with their selves

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discursively in such a way that their engagement in practice is affected. In this sense, the concept of internal conversations provides a necessary extension to Mead's framework of the self.

A Critique of Mead through Taylor: The Self and Hermeneutics

The problem with Mead seems to be that his analysis of reflective engagement does not run deep enough. As Archer's critique shows, the cognitivist side of Mead can benefit from a more direct analysis of internal conversation (as has been noted, Mead did leave room for such a mechanism, but was not explicit enough on this point). However, there is another reason why Mead's theory struggles to achieve the necessary depth to fully account for the reflective self. His theory does not provide sufficient analysis of the frameworks through which how we understand ourselves as a person emerges. I argue in this section that we cannot sufficiently account for how the self emerges, and specifically how the individual is able to engage with their self, without understanding how the socio-historic circumstances in which the individual finds herself provide the horizons for their emergence and engagement.

This brings us into the realm of Charles Taylor's (1989; 1995) interpretation of the self as being necessarily tied to the kind of hermeneutical frameworks outlined in the previous chapter. Taylor arrives at this argument by raising the question of personhood. What does it mean to have personhood, and how should we understand the self from this point? Following Heidegger's (1962) notion that the human being (Dasein) is the entity for which being (indeed, its own being) is of concern, Taylor (2005) argues that the person should be seen as 'self-interpreting'. The human being attempts to make sense of the world, to make the world intelligible. We attempt to make sense of the world we are in, and the lives that we lead within it. In this sense, we are the beings that attempt to make sense of our own being (Withy, 2011).

Taking this as his point of departure, Charles Taylor (1989) asks how it is possible for us to make the intersubjective world intelligible, and to understand ourselves and our place within it. For Taylor, we must understand the individual as necessarily being an interpretive agent who is practically engaged in an intersubjective world that

has already been largely circumscribed before their existence within it. Again drawing heavily on Heidegger (1962) (particularly through Dreyfus's expositions of 'thrownness' and 'being-in-the-world') Taylor (2005) argues that this task of self-interpretation is first and foremost grounded in our practical coping with the world, which is our basic state of being-in-the-world (i.e. practical consciousness). It is from the basic necessity of being able to cope with the world in which we find ourselves that our interpretation of this world takes its impetus. The possibility of being able to interpret oneself and one's world differently from previous conceptions is the outcome of firstly being able to deal with the world around us as it is presented to us.

What is right and wrong, good and bad, respectable and deplorable, what it means to be kind, what it means to be a parent or a guardian, all of this is largely already established prior to our entry into our social context. Of course, the individual has room to manoeuvre on all of these basic horizons for understandings of the world, whether it be taking a different approach to parenting to that of her own parents, or revolutionising our understanding of physics as Einstein did. But we nonetheless firstly find ourselves within a particular 'hermeneutic situation' that allows our world to be intelligible to us as practically engaged interpreting subjects (Taylor, 1989).

It is from this point that Taylor begins to set out his opposition to Mead. Taylor (2005) criticises how Mead's emphasis on behaviourism leads his theory to ignore how emerging as a self involves the individual making sense of the world in which she is necessarily engaged from the intersubjective, pre-circumscribed frameworks which set the horizons for this process. This places the individual in an intimate engagement with the intersubjective historicity of the particular circumstances of her life in a way that delimits how she can understand her self; what is of significance to who she is, to how she understands her self and her world, are drawn from the hermeneutic frameworks with which she engages as she engages with her social world as an interpreting subject (Moran, 2009).

Taylor (1989) argues that hermeneutical frameworks are drawn upon by interpreting subjects from their engagement with the world as enmeshed participants in 'webs of interlocution'. Our basic practical engagement with the world situates us among others, from whom we take our means of interpreting the world and ourselves. Emotions such as shame at certain actions, or pride in the actions of others, only

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make sense as a phenomenon among other people who shape our facility to interpret and respond to the world around us.

But as interpreting subjects, we are not simply reflecting the world we find ourselves in, we are also *construing* it (Moran, 2009). Our life histories, which become increasingly deep and complex as we become increasingly skilful at coping with the world (Dreyfus, 2014), are moulded in relation to the others that surround us in the formation of our life-narrative, and it is from these interlocutors that the frameworks that set the horizons for our interpretation of the world are drawn. Yet, as interpreting subjects, we come to arrive at our own position on the world which we have construed in relation to the others who have shaped our lives.

For Taylor (1989), we are selves when we can take ownership over our life to the extent that we are able to take valued positions on our own lives and the world around us. Interpreting one's place in an intersubjective world necessitates an evaluative judgement of social life, of what is of worth, what is the best course of action. Such evaluations and the terms we apply are drawn from the frameworks for interpreting the world which we take from our engagement with others (Taylor, 1989). These evaluative stances are taken by the individual throughout her engagement with the social world in relation to her own position within it, and in relation to her own unfolding life-history that she understands in narrative terms. That is, the evaluative judgements that one makes are taken as an interpreting subject who is aware of her life history (Taylor, 1989).

We are selves insofar as situations and issues are meaningful to us (Moran, 2009). And they become meaningful to us as we are able to take an evaluative stance towards them, to recognise what is of significance to us as a self. What can be of significance to who we are is inextricably tied to the frameworks that shape how our lives can be interpreted. However, how we interpret precisely what is of significance to who we are is every bit the outcome of our interpretation within these frameworks, which has emerged in relation to an unfolding life history moulded through our web of interlocution (Taylor, 1989).

For Mead, we take on the attitudes of others, but his theory does not adequately account for why the attitudes that we take on have any sort of prior significance. To be a self in modern society, for Taylor (1989), requires that we are able to locate

ourselves within intersubjective frameworks that have a definite significance for who we are and how we understand ourselves. Emerging as a self is not simply a case of unreflectively taking on the attitudes of those around us. Rather it is a case of coming to recognise the import that certain attitudes have within our social context. It is only through our recognition of the significance of intersubjective understandings that we become able to identify our place within the world into which we are thrown. And our understanding of intersubjective importance comes from our (firstly practical) involvement in this world (Taylor, 2005).

As interpreting subjects, we do not simply accept any attitude we encounter. What has significance for who we are has the significance it does precisely because it transcends the particular interactions in which we are involved, and the particular attitudes that we take on from those attitudes. We cannot say that we understand ourselves and our place in the world simply from the behavioural taking on of generalised attitudes of others. This seems like a fair criticism. Yet, I advocate an exchange between Mead and Taylor's theories. I see no reason why it cannot be the case that individuals are practically involved in a world of hermeneutic frameworks, and that they take on the attitudes of others, and in this process they arrive at an understanding of what is of intersubjective significance for understanding themselves within a particular social context, in a way that transcends the particularities of specific interactions. It seems arguable that it is through the Meadian model we arrive at the kind of understanding of significance advocated by Taylor; that is, certain strongly qualified understandings that come to be recognised as being of particular significance to who we are within our socio-historical circumstance.

Perhaps something that Mead was not clear on is that we do not emerge as selves from attitudes that are entirely emergent from the particular interactions in which we find ourselves. The attitudes that are taken on have an intersubjective history themselves that precedes the specific interaction. Of course, we may display an attitude of annoyance to another in response to an action as a result of some unacknowledged unconscious disposition. But many of the attitudes which we take on through social practice – indeed, many of the attitudes which carry the utmost significance for how we understand ourselves with our social context – should be recognised as the product of an intersubjective historicity which defines a particular hermeneutic situation.

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The earlier example of Agnes given by Garfinkel (1967) demonstrates this point. Agnes did not construct her view of what it meant to be a woman in 1950s America independently. Rather, through her engagement with her world and the social practices within it, she arrived at an understanding of what womanhood is (or was) in her social context. We could say that she took on the attitudes of others, which she was able to generalise through diverse interaction (as Mead would argue), and from here she arrived at her own subjective perspective on an issue of intersubjective historical significance, which provided part of the hermeneutical frameworks for how she could understand her self and her place within her social context (with Taylor).

What we get from Mead is an explanation of the process of the cognitive basis of how the self emerges through social interaction; and what we get from Taylor's neo-hermeneutics is an explanation of how the emergence of the self cannot be detached from the intersubjective historical frameworks that set the horizons for interpretation of oneself within a particular social context. We can consider how these two approaches can be synthesised through some contemporary examples. A good example is offered by Irvine, who considers 'adolescent sexuality as an historical process mediated by a myriad of social and political influences' (1994:3). She maintains that the nature of sexual identities shifted in twentieth-century Western society away from emphasising reproduction, towards emphasising pleasure, romance, experimentation, and risk. This coincided with adolescence coming to be seen as a distinct stage of life between childhood and adulthood. The factors that have pushed these changes are multifaceted: the rise of feminism, new modes of communication, rising prosperity, the absence of war, and so on.

Each of these factors is the result of various contingent happenings throughout history, which have shaped the particular frameworks for understanding oneself within contemporary Western society. The hermeneutic frameworks for making sense of teenage sexuality have been gradually recast, which are both the cause of, and the product of, a shift in attitudes commonly held towards teenage sexuality. This subsequently affects how young people emerge as selves and specifically how they are able to reflectively engage with their sexuality as part of their interpretive understanding of themselves within their social context. This facet of the socially emergent self cannot be detached from the cognitive process of taking on such

attitudes from others, but neither can this process be detached from the shifting hermeneutic frameworks that provide the attitudes which are taken on with any sort of significance for one's task of making sense of one's life.

For Mead (1967/1934), the self emerges in relation to others, who allow us to reflect upon ourselves as objects as we take their attitudes towards ourselves. This is the basic process of how the self emerges. However, the attitudes that we take on cannot be detached from the hermeneutic frameworks that provide certain attitudes with the significance that they come to have for our interpretation of our social world and our place within it. Through his neo-hermeneutic approach Taylor (1989) is able to demonstrate clearly why and how our means of making sense of the world and current moral issues in the present are inherently drawn from historical intersubjective frameworks. Indeed, Taylor's work brilliantly takes this point a step further by outlining that how the self emerges must be located within these historical intersubjective frameworks that form the horizons of how the individual is able to make sense of the world around her. The comparison between Taylor and Mead will be returned to in chapter 5, in relation to moral practice.

The Modern Self

This brings us to a point which Taylor (1991) recognises as a consequence of his theory – how we understand the self both in daily life and in intellectual fields is tied to hermeneutic horizons. This is an important point for situating the applicability of this thesis. It is necessary to stress that the notion of the self referred to in this thesis should not be taken as universally applicable across all times and cultures. Indeed, the concern for this thesis is what Taylor (1989/1991) refers to as the 'modern self'; that is, we are referring to the self that emerges in the contemporary Western social world as a historically situated product of the hermeneutical frameworks of Western thought (Taylor, 1989).

It has been noted by many authors (Foucault, 1998; Burkitt, 2008; MacIntyre, 1985; Taylor, 1989; Elias, 1994) that the self can be understood and conceptualised as the capacity of the human individual to reflect upon herself as a differentiated individual because the frameworks of Western thought have allowed the self to emerge as

such. These authors point out that what we recognise as the 'self' today has not always existed in the way that it does now. Our understandings of the self both in philosophical thought and in our day-to-day experiences of the self are the product of a contingent hermeneutic history that has moulded how the self can be understood. It is the task of this section to very briefly outline why the self should be understood as being historically situated within the hermeneutic frameworks for Western thought.

Taylor's (1989) neo-hermeneutic argument ties the self to the historical frameworks which provide the horizons for how we can interpret our social world. How the self can emerge in the contemporary Western world is tied to our frameworks for understanding what the self is, and our frameworks for understanding what the self is are a product of a contingent social and intellectual history. This leads Taylor (1991) to argue that social history, abstract theorising and day-to-day life intersect in the emergence of the self. This is particularly significant to modern understandings of the self because the self is both theorised about and experienced in daily life. As has been stressed throughout this thesis, becoming a reflexive, self-realising individual self within contemporary Western society is a process of personal emergence. However, this process is not *only* personal: it is also historical in the sense that the notion of selfhood experienced today is the result of historical transformations that continue to emerge (Elias, 1994).

Most significantly for our current theoretical understandings of selfhood is the rise of individualisation throughout the modern era. That each person can experience herself as a self-actualising individual, who is to some extent distinct from her society and from others, is integral to how the self is understood in contemporary Western society (Taylor, 1991). Again, this is not to say that such conceptualisations of the self are wrong. Instead, the argument being made is that we experience and conceptualise the self in this way as the result of the particular history of contemporary Western social relations. This will be demonstrated more fully shortly, but to start with it is necessary to outline the process of the progressive division between the individual and society that has shaped our conception of the self today.

It is argued throughout this thesis that a Mead-based framework largely accurately accounts for the self in contemporary Western society. This framework revolves around the individual's capability for reflective engagement with herself that emerges

from her continued social interaction with others. This process allows the individual to take on the generalised attitudes of others, which both implicitly moulds her pre-reflective behaviour and her capacity for reflective engagement. However, Mead himself recognised that the process only occurs as it does in Western society because of the increasing individualisation of society that has occurred throughout the modern era (Mead, 1925). As many others have highlighted (Foucault, 1998; MacIntyre, 1985; Taylor, 1989; Durkheim 1985/1893; Weber, 1978/1922; Habermas, 1992; Elias, 1994), Western society has undergone a process of individualisation in both the intellectual and social spheres (indeed, the two are undoubtedly linked) (Habermas, 1992).

On the intellectual side, considering the individual as distinct from the world around her has provided a foundation for thought in the modern era since Descartes (Pickering, 2008; Burkitt, 2008; Elias, 1991). It has become commonplace to argue that Descartes' meditations first articulated the notion that the human capacity for rational thought means that human beings should be considered separate from the world around them (Taylor, 1991; Pickering, 2008; Burkitt, 2008; Rae, 2014). By articulating a growing trend in the thought of the modernising world, the binary distinction which has come to define our understanding of the world in the modern era was set in motion. This binary is the distinction between the individual and the world around her (Haraway, 1988; Rae, 2014). According to this distinction, unlike other animals, the human individual thinks, experiences the world abstractly, and has language and reflective consciousness. The human individual has thus largely been considered to have a privileged place over and against the world around her. This has been a key foundation of Western thought which has shaped how we philosophise about (and experience) the world around us.

Of course, many of the most significant philosophers of the twentieth century, in particular Heidegger (1962), Derrida (2001), and Haraway (1988), have attempted to throw out this philosophical tradition of human separateness and specialness as erroneous. But this notion of separateness has also defined the social sphere of modern society in a way that far surpasses ivy tower intellectualism. As Foucault argued so brilliantly, how the human individual is today, as a reflective, self-controlling subject, is defined by relations of power, which manifest themselves most strongly through institutionally defined facets of life such as health, punishment,

sexuality, and education. These power relations have shaped the human individual so deeply because the individual is seen to be distinct from the world outside herself, meaning that she can be made to engage with herself as a responsible, self-monitoring individual (Foucault, 1998; Simons, 1994).

However, as Taylor (1991) has highlighted, it is insufficient to attribute the kind of inward self-control and the related centring of self-identity (which are so central to our modern conceptions of the self) purely to our Cartesian intellectual inheritance. The significance of self-understanding, being true to who one sees oneself as being, cannot be entirely described as a product of detached, rational individualism. While the inherent individuality of the modern self can be seen to be tied to Cartesian modes of understanding the world, the kind of individuality that comprises the modern self, with its emphasis on understanding oneself, has its roots in the romantic tradition articulated most fervently by Jean Jacque Rousseau (Taylor, 1991; Burkitt, 2008). It was Rousseau who first articulated a growing ideal of self-reflection as the means of self-determination, emphasising a culture in which understanding oneself and being true to this self-understanding provides the highest standard of freedom (Taylor, 1991).

It is the amalgamation and extension of these two traditions (Descartes on the one hand, romanticism on the other) that affords the intellectual basis for our current horizons of understanding the self. Yet, theoretical understandings of the self in contemporary Western society cannot be seen as purely shaped by intellectual inheritance. Of equal significance is the manifestation of these traditions in the social processes that have defined modernity. Indeed, these processes are surely indistinguishable: the intellectual traditions have shaped social changes, and the social changes have embodied, reinforced, and extended the intellectual traditions in such a way that they have exchanged between philosophical theorising into our basic understandings of the world.

It almost goes without saying that, since Descartes and Rousseau, Western society has undergone a tremendous degree of social change, much of which has facilitated the process of individualisation. From the seventeenth century, factors such as industrialisation, political revolution, the rise of the nation-state and democratisation, scientific and educational advancement, and rapid technological progress

(particularly in terms of communication) have all conjoined to create a contemporary Western world that is almost unrecognisable from its past (Habermas, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Castells, 1997; Elias, 1994). Each of these factors has advanced the process of individualisation.

Durkheim (1972/1898) and Marx (2013/1867) famously commented on the significance of the division of labour and urbanisation for separating people from their labour and from generations of common social norms. Weber (1992/1905) highlighted the disenchanting effects of the rationalisation of society. Elias demonstrated how the rise of the nation-state recast social relations towards the necessity of self-control. Giddens (1991) outlines how, in more recent history, processes of globalisation (notably new communication technologies) have ensured that contemporary Western society is defined by reflexivity, both on an individual and a social scale. What each of these authors, and many more, are arguing is that the various factors that have been integral to the current framework of Western society have played a decisive role in separating the individual from the social whole, not just in intellectual terms, but also in terms of day-to-day routines and functions. In turn, this feeds back into the intellectual horizons for understanding personhood in contemporary Western society.

Our understanding of the self today is not simply the product of detached intellectual conceptualisations. Rather, the intellectual conceptualisations are as they are because the self has become individualised due to the particular form of the social relations from which it emerges, which allows it to be conceptualised in social theory as it has been here. Perhaps the best demonstration of this is to be found in Elias's classic work *The Civilising Process* (1994). Elias's argument is that the various intellectual and social changes that occurred throughout the modern era reshaped the relations between people, which necessitated the continued intensification of self-control until it became the norm into which we are socialised. For Elias, the transformations that defined the rise of modernity, particularly the rise of the nation-state and the industrial revolution, produced a society of immense complexity, with ever-longer chains of mutual dependencies between increasingly diversified people. Being able to function in such a society requires a much larger degree of self-control than was necessary in traditional rural society. With the nation-state now holding a monopoly on the use of violence and the rule of law, the individual's ability to act in

the correct manner in certain situation becomes much more significant to achieving her ends than her ability to protect herself or extend her dominion (Elias, 1994).

It is as a result of the changes of the modern era that the individual has become responsiblised for her own action (Elias, 1991). But it would be wrong to claim that this change was planned and put into place over the centuries, or even that it is imposed upon individuals from the 'outside'. What brought about these changes in the individual was a shift in the relations between people, which has gradually changed our means of interaction (Elias, 1994). It is from here that the self can come to be understood as regarding itself as an individualised object in light of the multitude of social interactions that mould its everyday actions.

The reshaping of the social relations that comprise modern Western society engendered individuation on a scale unprecedented in previous societies. As such, the modern self has come to be characterised by its individuality (Taylor, 1989). Indeed, Mead's conceptualisation of the self holds such prominence precisely because it is able to describe the emergence of the self within a differentiated, individualised society so accurately (Habermas, 1995). Describing the individual in modern society provided a continual obstacle within the frameworks of traditional sociological understanding. As Habermas (1995) points out, Durkheim and Parsons could only describe the modern individual (which supposedly provided the centring point for modern society) as an institutional product. Durkheim claimed that the individual person should be considered an 'autonomous source of action' (1985/1893: 15). But this autonomous action could only be understood as being the outcome of the institutions that defined modern society and the individuals within it (Habermas, 1995). Mead, however, provides a conceptual framework that allows us to understand individuation as being realised by the individual herself as she is socialised within increasingly differentiated sources.

The point is that the shift in the social relations that has characterised the rise of modernity has shaped the horizon for how the self is understood both on a personal and an intellectual level. The social changes that have brought about modernity have been largely individualising, and this contingent history has placed each person into a hermeneutical situation that requires that person to understand their self as an individual in the process of further extending their individuality (Taylor, 1991). That

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each person is an individual who is able to attempt to direct their life within the circumstances in which they find themselves has become perhaps the most encompassing horizon for understanding oneself in contemporary Western society. As such, this horizon also encircles abstract theorising of the self. The argument being offered here is that our understanding of the self is shaped by the intellectual and social changes that have reshaped the relations between people and their horizons for understanding the world around them. The reason this argument is necessary to this thesis is that the conceptualisation of the self given here should be seen not as universally applicable, but rather as historically situated.

Summary

The major aim of this chapter has been to put the final pillar of the theoretical framework of the thesis into place before moving on to the more substantial argument of how a combination of relational sociology and the socially emergent self is beneficial to explaining individual engagement in social practice. If it is to be argued that the social emergence of the self plays an integral role in individual engagement in social practice, then a sound theoretical conception of the self is necessary. This has been given by taking Mead's theory of the self as providing a sturdy foundation. Mead's theoretical framework allows us to understand the self as cognitively based, yet socially emergent. The individual self emerges as she becomes capable of becoming both an object and a subject for herself. This occurs as she takes on the attitudes that others take towards her, and towards objects of social concern. The self emerges by taking on such attitudes to the extent that they come to mould both her practical and reflective consciousness. Yet, this is not an entirely deterministic process. Mead's theory of individuation allows us to recognise that emerging as a self in this way results in the individual arriving at her own subjective standpoint on objects of shared social concern. As she integrates increasingly diversified perspectives into her own understanding of the social world, she arrives at a perspective that she can recognise as belonging to herself.

While I take Mead's framework to be generally sound, the above exposition of his theory has highlighted a number of shortcomings. These particularly relate to Mead's underplaying of the reflective relationship with oneself and to his inadequate

explanation of how meanings and understandings can precede interaction and transcend time and space. The first of these shortcomings is easily rectified: while Mead may have underplayed the role of reflective engagement with oneself, his theory certainly leaves room for its implementation. This can be done by simply acknowledging the role of the internal conversation. The second shortcoming requires a bit more redress. It has been maintained that Taylor's neo-hermeneutic approach to the self overcomes what Mead did not. This is because it situates the emergence of the self within the hermeneutical frameworks of significance which are inherently historical. However, it has also been argued that Mead gives a more robust explanation of the cognitive basis of the self, and of the direct process through which the self emerges. Consequently, both approaches can fruitfully be combined.

Indeed, this point pre-empts the next chapter, which will attempt to combine the Meadian framework for the self with relational social theories. As will be argued, this synthesis will be important to explaining the role of the socially emergent self to engagement in social practice. From what has been said about the self already, we can begin to see the how the self has relevance to engagement in social practice. However, it will be argued subsequently that the combination of relational sociology with the idea of the socially emergent self allows us to understand how the individual can engage with shared social practices, which are historically situated, in an individualised manner across diverse social fields.

Chapter 4 - Social Relations, the Self, and Social Practice

In the preceding three chapters, the theoretical groundwork has been set in place for understanding the self, social practice and social relations. The primary task of this chapter is to begin to tie the three together. To do this, it needs to be outlined why the process of the emergence of the self cannot be detached from social relations. It is maintained that the individual's capacity to act proficiently within her social context is a result of the emergent process of the self, which necessarily occurs through our relations with others. In brief, this occurs as the individual continually takes on the attitudes of others towards herself. Insofar as the individual grows up socially, within a social context, these generalised attitudes become foundational to how the individual acts within her social context. However, as has been highlighted above in the critique of Mead, his approach does not leave much room for people to act against the generalised attitudes that they have taken on, nor does it account for individuals acting reflectively in relation to their self. I will argue that this mode of individual action cannot be overlooked when attempting to explain individual action as a whole. But, as will be argued, such reflectively-led action can be explained as an extension of the Meadian framework of the emergence of the self from social relations.

Before this problem can be expounded, it is necessary to further discuss the individualisation of the self in contemporary Western society. This is something Mead himself very much provided for by arguing that the differentiation between people in contemporary Western society results in individuals emerging as selves from differentiated standpoints in a social context. However, in order to make this argument effectively today it must be contextualised in modern life, in which differentiation has intensified, and then extended into social relations theory. This will involve consideration of some of the main extensions of Durkheim's theory of individualisation.

I begin by providing a detailed explanation of why social relations are necessary to the emergence of the self. As argued above (and will be argued in more detail below) a key point of evidence for seeing the self as emerging from social relations is the effect that the emergence of the self within a social context has upon the practice of the individual that occurs through their practical consciousness. I argue that

understanding this routine, practical action is central to understanding the relationship between social context and individual engagement in social practice. It is this capacity to act as a 'virtuoso' that allows the individual to cope effectively with routine social life. With this in mind, this chapter begins its investigation into the relationship between the self and social relations by outlining in greater detail what it means to be a virtuoso in many aspects of social life, as well as giving examples of how this process works. This will provide a starting point for explaining the emergence of the self in terms of social relations.

Virtuoso Practice and the Emergence of the Self

Much has been made already of the point that Dreyfus (2014), Bourdieu (1977), Schutz (1970) and many others have highlighted: for the most part, we experience the world through practical consciousness. As fully-awake human adults, we are able to go through much of day-to-day life without much reflective engagement (Schutz, 1970), as virtuosos (Bourdieu, 1977), skilfully navigating our way through the world and the interactions we face (Dreyfus, 2014). However, as Dreyfus argues, we are not born with this capacity. We have to learn to be skilful practitioners of daily life, and this process of learning is not really very different to how we learn other more specific skills. He uses the example of learning to drive. We begin as novices, who need to be taught the rules of the road, when to change gear, when to check the mirrors, and so forth. As our learning progresses, we gradually become more capable of driving without having to refer back to the instructions we have initially received. However, when faced with a novel situation, such as the first time we have to start on a hill, overtake a cyclist, or deal with an unclear set of road markings, we may require instruction. By the time we have been driving for some time and can be declared to be competent, we are able to drive almost automatically, without really being actively consciously engaged with what we are doing, and we can also respond effectively to novel situations in a decisive manner (for the most part).

Another example of this would be the use of language. In the Western world, for the most part, we become competent in the use of our native language as we use it. We are taught and corrected as children, and we may learn about various rules of sentence structure throughout education. Largely, however, the use of language is

absorbed from social interaction and by the time that we are adults we can use our native language pre-reflectively; indeed, it is arguable that this would be the case even if we had absolutely no knowledge of the rules of language whatsoever. However, this is not the case with a foreign language. A native English speaker may be able to say a few phrases in French, for example, but for a novice, this would be merely repeating what they have heard or read in the hope that they may be understood, rather than expertly using the language for their own ends. If, for example, our novice French speaker had learnt how to order a glass of wine at a French bar, only for the bar keeper to respond with a series of follow-up questions in French, the novice is likely to be stumped, maybe only being able to respond with another recently-learnt phrase, '*je ne comprends pas*'. The novice has little or no understanding of the practical workings of the foreign language.

If, however, our English speaker begins to learn French in a bit more depth, they may find themselves able to converse fairly well in French, and they may come to know some of the more intimate rules of the French language. Yet, she may also find herself unstuck if confronted with a regional dialect. In this case, she is likely to find herself grappling with the rules and vocabulary that she has learnt, in an attempt to make her interlocutor's utterance coherent to herself. This is unlikely to be necessary for an expert in French, who would surely be able to make immediate sense of the utterance without reverting to her understanding of the rules of language. Equally, the novice or the intermediate French speaker would surely struggle to either understand or make a joke based on play on the French language: for the intermediate speaker, such a joke might be interpreted as a mistake. The expert speaker is able to skilfully engage with the language entirely through practical consciousness. She has a mastery over the language that allows her to play with it and understand it contextually.

For Dreyfus (2014), we go through exactly the same process when becoming able to skilfully cope with our social world pre-reflectively. As children, we need instruction on basic tasks, such as crossing the road or using a knife and fork. But they come to be so routinised that we are able to execute such tasks pre-reflectively and effortlessly. Plus, we are usually able to cope with a novel variation on the norm; such as not crossing the road at a designated crossing if we notice that a driver coming towards us is not paying attention to the crossing.

The starting point for the process of becoming a pre-reflective virtuoso of social practice is the recognition of oneself as an object. It should be recalled that this is Mead's starting point for the emergence of the self. It was highlighted early on that Mead gave particular precedence to the vocal gesture in allowing the child to recognise her self as an acting being that can be reflected upon. It was added that our bodily experiences and the experiences of the consequences of our action are also relevant to this process. It is from this initial recognition of oneself as an object of one's own contemplation that the path to skilful coping begins. This is because the individual must be able to recognise herself as a source of action that elicits responses from the world and from others before the individual can begin to take on the attitudes of others towards themselves and shape their action accordingly (Mead, 1967/1934).

This is not a simple task. Emerging as a virtuoso of the social world takes a long time: Durkheim (1973/1989) would argue that it takes longer as societies become more complex. It means not only being able to complete basic tasks to survive physically, such as crossing the road, cooking food, and so on, but also becoming capable of surviving socially. In complex societies, being able to pre-reflectively cope with the diversity of social situations that we face in a manner commonly taken to be appropriate is no mean feat. It requires a continual process of learning from the responses of others, from our own emotional response, and from reflecting upon ourselves as objects within a shared framework of understanding. The point is that being able to deal with the world pre-reflectively requires that we have the capacity for reflection. We must be able to engage with ourselves as objects in relation to the attitudes of others before we can skilfully cope with the world around us through social practice and improvise within it. This is the foundation of Mead's theory of the emergence of the self.

The Emergence of the Self from Social Relations

Without much significant adjustment, Mead's (1967/1934) theory can allow us to recognise the self as being the product of social relations. As the child comes to recognise her own gestures as eliciting certain responses from other relational actors, the child comes to recognise herself as a source of action, and she comes to

understand the meaning that her actions hold for those she is in relation with. As she comes to recognise herself as an object for herself, she gradually comes to understand the meaning that certain actions and objects have, how others respond to these actions and objects when she applies them or when others apply them, how they make her feel, and how they affect her life and the lives of others (Mead, 1967/1934). The individual thus comes to perceive herself as a social object in terms of the generalised view of others. She becomes able to reflect upon herself in terms of these generalised attitudes, which she takes on via transactional engagement with social relations. Most significantly, it is through this process that the generalised attitudes of others become internalised by the individual (Habermas, 1995). Of course, the individual can act contrary to general social expectation. This is (in part) what Mead referred to as the elusive, spontaneous nature of the 'I' (Mead, 1967/1934). However, through the social emergence of the self, the generalised attitudes of others are so thoroughly taken on by the individual that when she does act contrary to social expectation, she is generally aware that she has done so (Habermas, 1995). Because the self emerges socially in this way, the generalised attitudes of others are embedded into the individual self, and the individual self is embedded within her social context.

What Social Relations can Add to Mead

It should be quite clear how this Meadian notion of the emergence of the self lends itself to the concepts extended by relational sociology in chapter 2. As Mead himself continually reminds us, it is through social interaction that the self emerges, as it is through social interaction that we take on the attitudes of others towards our self. In this sense, the self emerges through social relations in a very direct sense, as it is in relation to other people that generalised attitudes are taken on. Of notable importance in the process are the relations with the people that bring us up and educate us. But, as was stressed when expounding social relations theory above, the social relations in which we are embedded have a historicity that extends beyond the particular relation between a father and his child, or a teacher and a pupil, for example. These relations have certain norms, expectations, and limitations (some social and moral, some legal), which transverse a particular social context. In

educational terms, a defining feature of the relationship between pupil and teacher in Britain is that it is compulsory for the pupil to be in education until age eighteen. It is also expected that certain lessons will be taught, and that the teacher is generally (to some considerable extent at least) responsible for the child's learning, and not the other way around.

Yet, as has been noted in the preceding chapter, Mead's conceptualisations perhaps inhibit the intentions of his theory. His lack of a conceptualisation of intersubjective understanding that precedes interaction can lead to his work being read as an argument that meaning only arises through specific interactions. Against this interpretation, I have argued that a careful reading of Mead's account of the exchange of gestures shows clearly that through this means the individual engages with shared and generalised understandings in their social context, rather than simply taking on the attitude of another person in each situation (Habermas, 1995). Nonetheless, it seems that Mead's framework would be less susceptible to misreading if he did not rely so heavily on the term 'interaction'.

For Mead it is of course through interactions with others that the self emerges, but the self does not emerge from particular interactions *per se*. The self emerges as the individual becomes able to generalise the attitudes of others. The individual is only able to do this by engaging in a diversity of interactions, that allow her to form a generalised understanding of social attitudes (Mead, 1967/1934). It is from the fact that attitudes become generalised as the individual takes them on that she becomes able to engage with shared social understandings and social norms that transcend her particular interactions, and can thus be applied more generally in social interaction. While this was Mead's intention, it is arguable that his terminology did not facilitate this conception.

It is clear that the shared understandings of the expectations of such interactions, which are integral to the emergence of the self, extend far beyond specific interactions within specific relations. This is why it has been argued that it is more appropriate to use the term 'transactions' over 'interactions' when discussing social relations. Mead was not especially clear on this point, but if his theory is combined with relational sociology then his overall point becomes more exact. This is particularly relevant to the earlier discussion of favouring of the term 'transactions'

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over 'interactions'. If 'transaction', as it is used by relational sociology, is preferred over the term 'interactions' then Mead's theory can be seen in a light that would bring out his intentions more clearly.

This point about transactions has further significance because it allows us to understand more generally that it is through social relations that the self emerges. The social relations that shape the individual self so decisively have a historicity that is not reducible to their episodic interactions. Indeed, the social emergence of the self plays an essential role in the maintenance of the historicity of certain relations and the shared meaning that these relations often carry. The shared understanding of a parent-child relationship (both in general terms and in terms of the dynamics of a specific parent-child relationship) for example, is surely taken on socially through the continued emergence of the self. Through transactions, the child takes on certain understandings of what the parent-child relationship means. The attitudes that the parent is imparting to their child have, at least in part, been internalised through the parent's own experiences in the social world. That is, much of what constitute the attitudes that the parent takes is not emergent from the immediate situation. Rather, certain understandings in the parent-child relationship carry a certain degree of generalisability within their social context: for example, it is commonly expected that the parent should be responsible for the discipline of the child, and for correcting particular behaviours.

This is what is meant when it is said that the self emerges through transactions with a certain historicity. Because the self emerges by taking on generalised attitudes (in this case, generalised attitudes towards the parent-child relationships), there must be certain shared understandings towards certain objects of social concern. Yet, this is not to say that every parent-child relationship is the same in every social context or across all social fields. The nature of these shared understandings of course varies greatly according to the particular social context. One of the key points of Elias's *The Civilising Process* (1994) is that the expectations of what children should learn in the family home (such as table manners and customs) has changed greatly over time.

There is, of course, also huge variation between different families, but this is also explained by the social emergence of the self. Because the self emerges from a diversity of social relations, variation between individuals occurs according to the

diversity of generalised attitudes that the individual takes on (Habermas, 1995). The significance of this process of individualisation for explaining engagement in social practice will be discussed in more detail in the next section. For now, it should also be remembered that this process is not static. While one's attitudes towards parenting are likely to be heavily influenced by the parent's own childhood experiences, the parent's attitudes towards parenting may differ considerably from those of her own parents. This was surely evident in the post-war generation in the mid-twentieth century, in which tremendous social change put a notable divide between generational attitudes (Broad, 2006).

Nonetheless, because it is in the process of the emergence of the self that generalised attitudes (in this case generalised attitudes towards the parent-child relationship) are internalised, individual engagement in social practice is affected by the transactional nature of objects of general social concern. It is through the continued emergence of the self that generalised attitudes, with their transactional historicity, are brought into the experience of the individual and her subsequent engagement in practice. It was highlighted previously that our action is susceptible to the influence of others directly involved in a situation. But what is more significant is how our social relations shape our practice in more general terms: this process is tied to social emergence of the self. This process is demonstrated in the parent-child relationship example. Such a relationship has a shared meaning within a social context that transcends the specific interactions of the particular relationship, which are then brought into the individual's experience via the emergence of their self. By itself, Mead's theory is not able to fully account for the transactional historicity of the intersubjective understandings from which the self emerges. But with the addition of relational sociology terminology, we are able to see how the self emerges through the internalisation of attitudes that extend far beyond the immediate social interaction; the course of the social interactions from which the self takes on generalised attitudes is oriented by the historicity of social relations.

What Mead Adds to Relational Sociology

While the points made in the last section are surely of theoretical significance, of more importance is what Mead's theory adds to relational sociology. This is because

his theory more or less already describes how the social world influences the practice of the individual, while making allowances for variation in individual practice. In this way, with a few minor additions from relational sociology, Mead's theory provides a sound basis for accounting for the social ontology of individual engagement in social practice. If we take Mead's theory as offering such a basis, then we begin to see that it fills many of the gaps currently left in relational sociology for understanding social practice. It is the task of this section to demonstrate how Mead's theory helps to elucidate many of the points made by relational sociology for understanding social action.

It is maintained by relational sociology that every individual is embedded in particular social relations from birth, through which she comes to a shared understanding of social practice without having to rely on following rules or on reflective recourse generally (King, 2006). Relational sociologists argue that individuals are able to act in this way as a result of their experience of social relations. By being brought up within certain social relations, the individual has been embedded within certain shared understandings of how to act, to the extent that the individual can act in an appropriate fashion (even in novel situations) without reflective recourse (King, 2004).

A good example of this is the control individuals largely exert on various bodily functions while in public, as outlined by both Goffman (1959) and Elias (1994). As both go to some length to explain, while this involves a process of reflexive monitoring, the individual need not detach herself from her social engagement and reflect upon her course of action before deciding not to burp in the face of someone she hardly knows. Through her emergence from social relations, shared understandings that this is rarely appropriate action have been internalised within her understanding of the social world to the extent that her practical consciousness has been shaped.

However, while largely accurate, this relational sociology explanation is not yet sufficient as it fails to explain how our social relations are able to affect the action of the individual so pervasively that she does not need to actively think about what appropriate practice in certain situations would entail. It is far from sufficient to claim that an individual is so embedded in her social relations that these relations shape

her practical, pre-reflective action without explaining how and why it is that an individual comes to be so embedded within these relations. If, on the other hand, we add Mead's concept of the socially emergent self to this argument, we end up with not just a clear outline of the process through which shared understandings are taken on through social relations, but also an indication of why social relations play such a pervasive role in moulding individual engagement in social pratice.

Mead's theory demonstrates how intersubjective understandings that comprise our hermeneutic situation are taken on by the individual from childhood through an exchange of gestures that allows the individual to arrive at an understanding of what certain (particularly vocal) gestures mean, and what responses are appropriate (Mead, 1967/1934; Habermas, 1995). From here, as the individual encounters a diversity of others through social interaction, she becomes able to take the attitudes of others towards herself (thus allowing her to emerge as a reflective self), and then generalise these attitudes, and consequently arrive at a general, shared understanding of certain actions and social objects.

This understanding becomes integral to the individual's pre-reflective action – before we can nod our head as a means of assent without any real reflective engagement, we must come to understand the meaning of the action. This learning occurs through social interaction. And this process can be applied to more complex social actions, such as knowing when to make light of a difficult situation. Also, the individual is able to reflectively engage with herself through the 'me'. Because an individual has emerged as a self by taking on the attitudes of others towards herself, she cannot reflectively engage with herself in a way that is not the product of social relations. The individual experiences herself as an individual through the attitudes of others she encounters through social interaction. Even in our most private moments of self-reflection and contemplation, we are drawing upon the social relations that have shaped our view of ourselves (Elias, 1991).

This means that, according to Mead's framework for the emergence of the self, both our practical action and our reflections upon ourselves and upon our action are moulded by our social relations with others in our social context. To follow Mead's theory of the self is to argue that who we are and who we continue to become as individual selves, our engagement in routine practice, how we relate to ourselves,

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are social products that have emerged from our relations with other actors. Of course, the 'I' still adds a degree of spontaneity. But as a developed self, the impulsive 'I' is inhibited, and the individual is largely able to respond to the 'I' in relation to her self and her understanding of practice, which has emerged socially (Habermas, 1995). The process of the social emergence of the self from social relations explains why individuals in a social context are so deeply embedded in social relations. As argued previously, this is what allows social interactions to function as transactions through intersubjective understandings that transverse social context.

More than this, because we take on the attitudes of others towards ourselves through social interaction, the emergence of the self also means internalising generalised attitudes towards social practice. It has already been noted that the process of taking on the attitudes of others through transactions involves taking on shared meanings and understandings. The process of internalising attitudes consists in coming to understand the meaning which certain gestures and actions carry, and the general responses which they elicit. Thus, as we take on the view of the 'generalised other' through our transactions, our attitudes towards what is considered right and normal in our society are shaped (Mead, 1925). Because the individual emerges as a self in these social terms, the taking on of shared understanding of social practice emerges as an inherent part of the emergence of the self.

This is the major point of this section: by linking relational sociology with Meadian theory, we are able to describe how the individual's capacity to engage in social practice emerges as the self emerges from social relations. This allows us to explain why people tend to act in normalised ways, and why patterns and tendencies of practice can often be discerned. Because this socially emergent process results in the individual being embedded in the social relations that shape her understanding of her world, these shared understandings of social practice ensure that the individual can rarely simply act entirely as she pleases. Indeed, as her engagement in practice is constituted through social relations and the attitudes she takes from them, we cannot see individual engagement in social practice as being purely the implementation of independent will. We have seen how the self emerges as generalised attitudes come to form the 'me'. The individual then comes to consider

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and reflect upon the action of their 'I'. It is through this continually emergent process that shared attitudes towards social practice are taken on by the individual, allowing both her reflective and pre-reflective engagement in practice to be moulded in light of such attitudes (Habermas, 1995).

Even if the individual were to act against generalised attitudes towards stealing, for example, this is still an act in relation to the generalised attitudes that have emerged through transactional engagement with social relations. As long as the culprit is aware that stealing is generally considered to be wrong, it can be assumed that she has nonetheless absorbed generalised attitudes toward stealing, even if she has acted contrary to these attitudes. The point of applying the Meadian theory of the emergence of the self to individual action is to highlight that, as we are embedded in social relations through the emergence of the self, the learnt attitudes of others carry a certain pervasiveness, which generally results in social action that varies only by degree in relation to these generalised attitudes, rather than being a complete revolutionary break from social norms (Mead, 1925).

When the Meadian processes of the self are combined with social relations concepts, we are able to expand on existing conceptualisations of routine, practical action, which usually fits within social norms of practice. As we saw above, Dreyfus (2014) argued that the individual becomes capable of 'skilful coping': she is able to cope with the social world around her, largely pre-reflectively. What is missing from this argument is an explanation of how the individual arrives at this capacity to skilfully cope. The framework offered here allows us to see that we arrive at this capacity through the emergence of the self, because of how the individual self has emerged through the internalisation of the attitudes of others, which have moulded the individual's capacity to engage in practice pre-reflectively. This process allows her to not only arrive at a shared understanding of social practice, but also for this shared understanding to be an implicit part of her mode of routine action which she does not need to reflectively engage with before she acts.

Further still, precisely because the individual self is (to a large extent) a product of generalised attitudes towards social practice, the individual becomes capable of acting in appropriate ways in novel circumstances. This is Bourdieu's notion of virtuosity in social practice (1977). Not only does the emergence of the self afford her

the capacity to engage with widely-held social customs, she can also act with variability and sensitivity according to circumstance. We can revert back to the classic sociological example of the use of money. By living in a social context in which money is a necessity, a child is able to pick up the significance of money as a means of exchange from her social relations. Gradually, this understanding can become more nuanced. The individual child can begin to take a personalised attitude towards money: perhaps she feels she needs more of it, perhaps she comes to recognise herself as relatively impoverished, or she may feel that the love of money is the root of all evil. Equally, she is likely to attain a nuanced understanding toward the practical use of money. She may come (as an adult) to understand situations where it is perhaps not appropriate to charge for a service, such as when a decorator does not charge a family member for painting their house; or she may pick up other such nuances, for example letting a taxi driver keep the change from a note. This variation will be investigated in more detail in the next section, which discusses individuation and the self.

Something should be reiterated here which has been noted throughout. The practices just described are perfectly common within Western society today, but it would be a mistake to think that they are reducible to rules. It doesn't take much imagination to envisage a difference of opinion between two people as to whether it is worth tipping a taxi driver in this fashion. Equally, we can envisage a decorator who starts to get irked by all of her extended family thinking that she is always willing to give up her time for free. The point is, as we emerge as selves in relation to others we are not learning rules per se, but rather we are engaging with generalised attitudes from differentiated standpoints which we apply across a diversity of social fields. We skilfully cope in the social world through an implicit understanding of social practice that has been shaped by our social relations with others. It is through this process that we come to understand the significance of the emergence of the self to day-to-day social practice within a social context.

King (2000) argues that individual action occurs as a result of the individual's (often assumed) judgement of what appropriate action is according to the social relations in which she is embedded. This does not require constant reference back to standardised rules. This, I think, is accurate. But it is not a sufficient explanation without the Meadian framework of how the individual becomes so deeply embedded

in the social relations as a result of the social emergence of their self. When the Meadian framework is added, we have a stronger argument. Because the individual is so deeply part of a shared social context, what is taken as appropriate is 'natively' understood as part of who she is as a self. Reflective engagement is rarely required, even when the boundaries of appropriate action are not clearly drawn across all circumstances. In this virtuoso fashion, an individual is able to deal with the world around her not as a product of objective structures or prescriptive rule-following, but simply because she exists within shared relations that define how she can approach the world.

When we come to understand the vital role that the social emergence of the self plays in the relationship between individual action and social context, we are also able to deal with questions regarding the reproduction of practice. How social norms and practices are reproduced through individual action has been of central concern to much of contemporary social theory. The trouble is, as soon as social reproduction is seen as occurring as a result of rules of social interaction (as in structuration theory), the 'fuzzy' nature of how social norms are applied is lost. But, when we understand that individuals are acting as a result of shared understanding of social practice due to the social emergence of their self, the notions of rules or objectively shaped dispositions become unnecessary. The individual acts in relation to shared understandings because her self has emerged from these shared understandings. Not only does this allow for individuals to act in fuzzy virtuoso ways; it also allows us to understand that social norms continue to be reproduced as a result of the social relations that are formative of the selves of the members of a particular social context.

Social Relations, Individualisation, and the Self

There is, of course, an inherent difficulty in describing the individual self as being emergent from the generalised attitudes that are internalised through social relations with others in their social context: if the individual self arises in this fashion, and if this process is as significant to the individual's routine practice as has been indicated throughout this thesis, how is it possible to account for the hugely significant differences that exist between individuals within a shared social context?

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It is not controversial to argue that individuals act somewhat differently from one another, even when presented with the same circumstances. An interesting point that can be drawn from Milgram's (1992) studies of obedience (discussed above) is that while most of the subjects did follow the instructions given to them to the highest degree, a notable portion of the subjects refused to fully obey the instructions. Even this rudimentary methodological affirmation that people act differently from one another is surely overkill. It is clear to see that variation exists not just in action, but also in taste and what is found to be enjoyable, the extent to which work should be privileged over enjoyment, the degree to which laws and social norms should be conformed to, what is of social importance, what it means to be a good person, what a good life might entail, and so on. Indeed, the wealth of various differences that make people into individuals is beyond being listed.

What is more, individuals surely frequently experience themselves as uniquely different from others. This is not only to say that an integral facet of self-experience is the experiencing of oneself as a unique individual separate from others (Archer, 2003), but it is also to say that on a more basic level, the individual can recognise herself as having different intentions, preferences, habits, beliefs, modes of action, etc, from others around her. We can come to recognise such a difference even from those that have been most influential in our upbringing. It has already been noted how an individual may take different attitudes towards parenting than those of her parents during her own upbringing. To claim anything other than that individuals vary considerably in their action, their views of themselves and of the social world, would be ludicrous.

But, if this is true (and it surely is), how can it also be true that the individual self is an emergent product of her social relations? Equally, how is it that individuals can emerge as individuals (that is, as individuals who are in some way different from other individuals) from their social relations, and yet still act in the kind of routine ways that make a social context what it is? These are the problems associated with explaining individual engagement in social practice within a shared social context. There is no doubt that these problems are incredibly sticky; such questions have provided the impetus for much of the most significant social theory we have inherited. It is precisely these problems this thesis aims to account for. It is maintained here that the application of the Meadian framework of the emergence of

the self, combined with social relations theory, offers a sound way of dealing with these problems.

One of Mead's major starting points is that we as individual selves experience the world in terms of difference. Being an individual entails both being a self that is separate and different from everyone else, while also being *aware* of this difference (1925). Difference enters into the individual's experience of the world because, while much of social experience is shared, each individual experiences the world (at least slightly) differently. Each individual enters into and experiences social life from a different standpoint, meaning that she experiences the social relations that shape her self in a stratified fashion.

Some of these stratifications are relatively minor. For example two similarly aged brothers within a stable family are likely to experience many of their social relations in a similar fashion, although they are not likely to have exactly the same experiences. Neither are they likely to cognise similar experiences in exactly the same way (Mead, 1925). Some stratifications are much more significant: for example, an individual who grows up in a wealthy family is likely to experience the world very differently from someone born into poverty, while perhaps experiencing the world in a similar fashion to other rich individuals. This is part of Bourdieu's (1984) argument that differences in capital across fields engender differences in habitus.

Mead's argument is that, in the process of emerging as a self, the individual experiences the world in terms of a near-infinite number of minute differences from others' experience, which not only shapes the individual's views on what is pleasurable, desirable, permissible, etc, but that also have an implicit role to play in how we emerge as a self. Individual experience is vast, and much of this experience is common to many of the individuals within a particular social context. But there are a multitude of factors that affect how the individual experiences this common context. From differences in wealth, locality, and education, to particular prejudices parents implicitly impart to their children, particular significant interactions with others, and even chance events (for example, witnessing a horrific accident), the individual's experience of a shared social context is at least going to be marginally different from others similarly positioned in that context (Mead, 1925). Because the individual

engages with a shared social world in minutely different ways, how the individual experiences the social relations that mould the emergence of her self vary considerably. In turn, this leads to differentiation in individual selves that emerge from a social context (Mead, 1925).

As we shall see shortly, this means that the degree of individuation (the variability between individuals within a social context) increases as greater differentiating circumstances exist between individuals within a society (Habermas, 1995). We have seen above how the process of individuation is integral for Mead's understanding of the self. In the process of taking on the generalised yet diverse attitudes of others, the individual arrives at an understanding of herself, which comes to form a personal life-history that the individual is conscious of and capable of shaping (Habermas, 1995). Faced with a diversity of attitudes, the individual necessarily comes to her own individualised standpoint on objects of social concern into which the generalised attitudes of others are integrated (Mead, 1967/1934).

This is the beauty of Mead's theory of the self: individuation is neither conceived of as being entirely an institutional product, over which the individual herself has no conscious or active involvement; nor is it conceptualised as an isolated individual asserting her autonomous will against her social context. Rather, Mead's theory allows us to see how the individual becomes an individual in the process of taking on generalised attitudes from her social context, which necessitates her coming to her own subjective standpoint *in relation* to these attitudes (Habermas, 1995). In this sense, individuation is an inherent and integral part of the process of emerging as a self in relation to others. This is because it is in the process of absorbing generalised attitudes the individual not only becomes self-conscious, but also self-constituting.

As the individual begins to adopt a distinct standpoint towards the generalised attitudes that she has internalised, her self-consciousness (which begins in behaviourist terms as recognition of her facility to act and elicit action in the world) becomes a self-consciousness with an understanding of herself, of her distinct views upon objects of social concern (Mead, 1967/1934). Of course, the distinctness of one's views upon many things is likely to be limited – most people in contemporary Western society would, for example, be annoyed if somebody stole their stuff. This is

because our standpoints, while being our own, are internalised from the social relations which comprise our social context (more on this shortly).

However, the individual is able to recognise her standpoint as her own, as belonging to herself, precisely because the process of internalising the attitudes of others has necessitated her taking her own subjective position on them. It is from this recognition of her own standpoint that the individual achieves the kind of self-understanding that allows her to recognise herself as having a distinct life-history in which she is intimately involved (Habermas, 1995). The individual consequently becomes individualised in the sense that she has a subjective understanding of herself, of who she is, of having her own views and ends, as being in charge of her own action (even if this is not entirely the case), and as having a past that belongs to her and shapes who she is.

For now, what needs to be understood is that the emergence of the self in terms of the internalisation of generalised attitudes through our social relations results in the individual arriving at a subjective self-understanding that is simultaneously experienced by the individual as being their own, while being inextricably the product of the social relations from which this self-understanding emerges. This means that, importantly, the individual does not emerge as 'unique' *per se.* Rather, the process of individuation allows the individual to recognise her views, her actions, and her self as her own. It would be inaccurate to say that the process of individuation means that all individuals become capable of taking unique standpoints on social issues, or come to form an entirely distinct or revolutionary identity. The point of this entire thesis is to argue that the self that emerges, the individual's engagement with this self, and the individual's engagement in social practice, are inextricably tethered to the social relations from which she has emerged.

Once it is understood that individuation arises from the individual coming to her own standpoint on absorbed generalised attitudes, the relevance of differentiated engagement with social relations to individualised social practice can be brought out. It has already been highlighted that it is the various differences and stratifications within a social context that allow for individuals to emerge in a differentiated manner. As Mead argues (Mead, 1967/1934), this means that the greater the diversity in generalised attitudes that the individual faces, the higher the potential for

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individuation. The diversity of generalised attitudes that the individual experiences is tied directly to the complexity of the social context from which she emerges as a self. The more complex the social context, the greater the diversity of generalised attitudes the individual is faced with; and the greater the diversity of generalised attitudes, the greater the degree of individuation that follows from individuals emerging as selves. But what exactly is meant when a social context is referred to as complex? According to Durkheim's celebrated account (1973/1895), the complexity of a society results from

> the number of individuals in relation and their material and moral proximity, that is to say, the volume and density of society. The more numerous they are, and the more they act upon one another, the more they react with force and rapidity; consequently, the more intense social life becomes.
>
> (Durkheim, 1973/1895: 123)

Durkheim's argument is that the complexity of a society is tied to the complexity of relations between people. A society is more complex when the roles of people are differentiated, while also being mutually dependent. In contemporary Western society, there are many examples of this. Going to the shop involves lots of differentiated roles being fulfilled in order for the action of other individuals to occur – someone has to have stocked the shelves, a shopkeeper has to be available to serve customers, the computer systems have to be working to facilitate card payment, perhaps even the petrol pumps have to be filled so that the car can be fuelled, and this in turn relies upon various political-economic factors that affect oil production, and so forth.

This is what it means for a society to be complex in Durkheim's terms. It is not difficult to extend Durkheim's basic argument into the kind of social relations theory offered here. A social relations perspective would affirmatively argue that a social context is more complex when the relations between people are intricately dense and complex, and when individuals are mutually dependent on the fulfilment of certain relations in order to act effectively. For Durkheim (1973/1895), the process that led to this growth in the nature and diversity of our social relations was the increasing division of labour that occurred in developing countries through industrialisation. This process resulted in the action of the individual being ever more

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reliant upon others fulfilling their own roles. As such, developed societies came to be made up of increasingly long and complex chains of mutual dependency in which the diversity of social roles far surpasses those of traditional societies (Elias, 1994). As labour has become more complexly divided, individuals simultaneously become further differentiated, while also becoming more dependent on those whom they are differentiated from.

Individualisation becomes more significant as the number of relations that shape the individual's action increases. The more relations people engage with in order to function within a society, the more they become differentiated from others within their society. This means that, in modern societies, individuals must interact with vast swathes of differentiated people in the course of daily life (Durkheim, 1973/1898). Modern societies are composed of vast densities of social relations existing between differentiated individuals, which allows individual action to occur as it does. It is in this process that individuation occurs, and this individuation intensifies with the degree of differentiation between people.

This argument offered by Durkheim is surely accurate, and it is easily extended both into theories of interaction in today's globalised world, and into the social relations theory offered here. After all, it is Durkheim's position that individuation occurs as the social relations between individuals become more complex. However, Durkheim's position is limited by the absence of a theory of the self. This means that, from Durkheim's perspective, individuation occurs predominantly through differentiation of social function, rather than from differentiation of social attitudes. Of course, the two are intimately entwined and it is surely the case that Durkheim saw the differentiation of role as leading to differentiation of attitudes and perspectives, which then further extends differentiation. But this is hard to reconcile without explicit reference to how individuals emerge as selves. This is precisely the benefit of Mead's theory: because it centres on the absorption of the attitudes of others as an essential feature of the emergence of the individual self, he is able to explain that individuation increases as the diversity of perspectives faced by the individual increases. This argument is then extended into the very process of the individual becoming a self that is able to recognise herself as having a life-history distinct from others (Habermas, 1995).

Most importantly, this point allows Mead to explain individuation not just as an institutional product, but also as something that necessitates the individual's continued involvement in her own social existence as an individual. Indeed, as Habermas (1995) points out, without an integrated theory of the self, Durkheim's theory of individuation is unable to fully define the role that the individual herself plays in the individuation process. In Durkheim's terms, the differentiated individual is the outcome of the process of labour becoming increasingly divided in modern society. This alone cannot explain how the individual becomes able to recognise herself as an individual with distinct views and perspectives, and how these are applied in the courses of action she follows. Mead's theory allows us to argue that the emergence of the individual is entirely dependent upon social relations, yet the individual herself is intimately involved in this process of becoming an individual.

Mead (1967/1934), of course, agreed with Durkheim that the changes undergone by society in the process of industrialisation (particularly the division of labour) were integral to individuation. However, Mead is more able than Durkheim to offer an explanation of precisely how living in a social context with increasingly complex and diversified social relation inherently results in individuation. As the social relations from which we emerge as selves become increasingly complex, the individual is likely to encounter a multitude of often contradictory attitudes to take towards herself and, subsequently, towards the social world. As such, as she emerges as a self, the individual necessarily begins to take an attitude towards the social world that is a product of the social relations in which she has engaged, but also recognisable to her as her own perspective that has the potential to inform her engagement in social practice.

The example given above about the parent-child relationship can be further extended to elucidate this last point. It was commented above that a child is likely to take on much of what she understands of the parent-child relationship from her relationship with her parent figures. Yet, it was also noted that many people approach parenting differently from how their own parents did. The explanation for this lies at least in part in the fact that, in contemporary Western society, individuals are confronted with a wide range of attitudes that can be taken towards the parent-child relationship. Of course, within the same social context there are likely to be shared understandings of the parent-child relationship that transcend generations.

For example, few parents from recent generations would think that it is acceptable to make their child work down a mine from the age of ten. This is the transactional nature of the social relations that shape shared understandings of social practice.

However, there may be many issues on parenting that are up for debate. For example, the acceptability of the parent's right to hit children as a form of punishment is an issue that has undergone recent generational shifts. While it would surely be agreed across many generations that the parent is generally responsible for instilling discipline in the child, the question of acceptable methods for doing so can vary greatly. What is more, we would expect an individual to be able to take a position on what she herself believes is an appropriate means of punishment, which she can recognise and endorse as her own position. Again, it should be emphasised that this is not to say that the parent takes a unique position on the various practices associated with parenting. Rather, the individual parent is able to arrive at a view on parenting that she recognises as her own, which is likely to inform her practice. She is able to do so because she has encountered various generalised attitudes on parenting through her social relations. Some of these are experienced directly, such as through the attitudes of friends and family; others indirectly, such as from books, films, and other media. As the individual encounters more and more attitudes from a differentiated social context she can arrive at a distinct position on how she herself understands the parent-child relationship, and on how to engage with practices relevant to this understanding.

Mead's theory indicates not just why individuation occurs despite individuals arising from a shared social context, but also why this process intensifies as societies becomes more complex. Combining Mead's theory of individuation with social relations theory allows us to see that social transformation throughout the history of Western society has resulted in increased individuation. This is because many of the shifts in social relations between people that demarcate historical transformations of Western society have led to an increase in volume and density of the social relations in which people must engage with in daily life. In turn, this results in people often having to reconcile an increasingly large number of generalised attitudes into their own standpoint. Mead's theory of individuation is significant because it allows us to explain variation in engagement with social practice between individuals via the complex relational nature of social context, while acknowledging the actuating role of

the individual in her engagement with practice (Habermas, 1995). The significance of this point will be exemplified in the next chapter in relation to moral practice.

Individuation, Social Relations, and Social Practice

So far, this chapter has set out what the combination of relational sociology and Mead's theories of the self and individuation can add to an explanation of individual engagement in social practice. However, it is now time to ask why this synthesis works better than other explanations of this phenomenon. In his critique of theories of practice, Bourdieu threw down the gauntlet for a theory to be established that can explain social practice as fundamentally shared and routine, while also acknowledging that engagement in such practice will often be individualised and the outcomes of practice will be indefinite. It is precisely the uncertainty and the individuality of engagement in social practice that has been so difficult for social theory models to deal with, particularly when they rely on concepts of structure. Even in theories which attempt to present structures as dynamically engaged with by the individual, such as structuration theory, social practices are construed as being engaged with in terms of rules, which adds an unjustified degree of definiteness and certainty to how practices will be engaged with.

Chapter two argued that the approach of relational sociology facilitates an alternative perspective, as it only goes as far as utilising social relations to explain engagement in social practice. Relational sociology provides a fantastic resource for explaining how individual engagement in social practice is the outcome of both direct and indirect social relations that are historically situated. Yet, it has been argued that without the addition of Mead's framework for the socially emergent self, relational sociology cannot account for how social relations are brought into the experience of the individual to the extent that they mould her engagement in social practice.

The addition of Mead's framework allows us to explain the process through which this occurs. It is through social relations that historically situated and shared attitudes towards practice are brought into the experience of the individual as the self emerges through transactions with others. By combining Mead's theory of the socially emergent self with relational sociology, we can recognise that the

emergence of the self moulds engagement in social practice because it is in this process that shared social attitudes towards social practice are internalised.

What the synthesis of Mead's theory of the socially emergent self and relational sociology allows us to explain is that the practical and reflective consciousness of the individual is moulded by the attitudes of others, which comes to affect their engagement in practice. As Dreyfus (2014) argues, our understanding of practice is rarely formed through theoretical interrogation, but rather through a gradual practical understanding of how practice is conducted in our particular field. Mead's theory of the socially emergent self allows us to explain how this process occurs through the internalisation of attitudes of others, to the extent that such attitudes sculpt our pre-reflective engagement in routine practice.

However, this does not determine how practice will be engaged with. This is firstly because the process of individuation ensures that the individual is, to some extent, able to approach social practice from her own standpoint, from her own understanding of her life history, her views on social issues, and her reflective engagement with herself. Indeed, as we have seen, Mead's framework leaves room for the role of reflective engagement with oneself as an individualised social agent who is able to consider her own action in relation to views that she understands as being her own. When we reflect, we reflect upon the 'me' that is formed of the collective attitudes of others. This reflection upon the 'me' from our individualised standpoint allows us to engage with our previous action, and even to mitigate and direct our future action. This means that, by applying and extending Mead's framework, we are able to understand the individual as playing an actuating role in their engagement in practice from an individualised standpoint. Admittedly, the theory outlined here means that social relations are to some degree constitutive of individual engagement in practice. Yet Mead's theory allows us to understand that individual's will always engage with relations from differentiated standpoints, which means there will be variation both in the relations that the individual encounters, and in how the individual internalises the attitudes that these relations impose. The individuated self is able to engage with social practice (to some extent, at least) from her own perspective on such practice; for example, by not eating meat if she views this as being morally wrong.

What is more, because the explanation of the emergence of the self and engagement in social practice is not taken beyond social relations, we can acknowledge that while the individual's capacity to engage in social practice may be tied to the emergence of their self, the actual outcome of practice itself may not be. As has just been argued, the experiments of social psychologists, such as Milgram (1992), highlight the role of social influence upon practice. The beauty of the synthesis between Mead and relational sociology is that it does not rigidly structure which practices will be produced in a particular social situation. Mead (1967/1934) makes this point himself when he argues that the 'I', the 'me' and 'the other' are all relevant to social action. The immediate relations present in a situation may yield a response from the 'I', which may be unexpected to the individual herself, but that may then be reflected upon through the 'me' to produce a certain response. While the responses of the 'I' may be shaped by the 'me', it cannot be forgotten that the individual may react to a social situation in an unexpected way, perhaps because of an unconscious response, or even because of a simple misreading of the situation. In this way, the indefiniteness of individual engagement in social practice is facilitated by the theory offered here.

When Mead's theory is combined with relational sociology, we are left with a theory that is sufficiently robust to explain how shared understandings of practice are brought into the experience of the individual to the extent that she is able to engage in social practice as a social virtuoso from an individualised standpoint. The individual capacity to engage in routine social practice in an individualised manner, and the capacity to reflectively engage with practice, are all covered by this synthesis. Further, this theory is also sufficiently dynamic to realise that the outcome of practice cannot be predicted by how the self has emerged. As such, this theory takes us beyond rules and structure-based explanations of social practice, as it does not underplay the unpredictable dynamism of social life, yet it is also able to explain how routine engagement in widely intelligible social practice is possible from an individualised perspective of personhood.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to demonstrate why adding social relations theory to Mead's framework for the emergence of the self allows us to clearly conceive of how the self is an emergent product of social relations. In turn, this allows us to understand how individual capacity for engagement in social practice should be seen as tied to the emergence of the self from social relations. Social relations theory lends itself nicely to Mead's framework, as Mead argues that the self emerges as the individual takes on the generalised attitudes of others. However, the relational approach also allows Mead's theory to be taken further because it facilitates the transactional nature through which social relations are engaged with. This then allows us to understand how shared understandings of social objects and social practice are brought into the experience of the individual to the extent that they become foundational to her routine action.

Yet, if this theory stopped at the point of explaining the self as emerging from social relations, then it would be not be able to explain how it is possible for engagement in social practice to be individualised within a shared social context. It has thus been argued in the second half of this chapter that it is through our social relations that individuation occurs. This is because, according to Mead's theory of the self, in the process of taking on generalised attitudes of others through social relations, the individual necessarily arrives at her own position on general social issues, and becomes aware of her attitude as being her own. Building on Durkheim, Mead argued that the more complex a society, the more intense the process of individuation becomes, as the individual has to reconcile increasingly more generalised attitudes with her own view.

Adding to this argument, it has been maintained that a social context can be seen as 'complex' when social relations that comprise that society increase in volume and density. That is, the more relations people necessarily engage with in everyday life, and the more dependent individuals are upon long chains of mutual dependency, the more complex a social context becomes. In a social context with a high degree of complexity, individual engagement with such a multitude of social relations greatly increases the propensity for individuation. It is Mead's theory of individuation that gives his theory of the self such explanatory power. This is because it allows us to

simultaneously understand how it is that the self emerges from a shared social context in such a way that the individual is able to act in a routine manner within the shared understandings of social practice within that social context, while also allowing us to understand how the process of the emergence of the self also necessitates a degree a differentiation and individualisation. This means that we can understand individual engagement in social practice as being emergent of the social relations in which we are engaged, while also being individualised.

Chapter 5 - Moral Practice, Moral Agency, and the Self

It is perhaps easy to recognise that the theories of the self and social relations discussed throughout this thesis have a certain application to moral practice. Indeed, many of the examples used to elucidate the concepts applied here have clear moral content: issues such as stealing, property, the use of money, and parenting have been invoked, all of which have degrees of moral significance. The primary task of this chapter is to apply the theoretical stances that this thesis takes to the sphere of moral agency and practice.

Why focus on moral agency and practice in particular? On the practical side, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to give a comprehensive evaluation of conceptualisation about what morality actually is. Rather than offering a philosophical perspective on 'morality' as such, this thesis will provide a sociological approach to explaining moral agency, and how it manifests itself as moral practice. This chapter has no interest in the metaethical question of what morality is *per se*, but instead asks how the individual's capacity to engage in moral practices is constituted through the self that emerges from social relations.

On the theoretical side, combining a Meadian framework for the socially emergent self with social relations theory lends itself to a theory of how moral agency emerges and manifests itself in practice. This has already been hinted at in the above discussion of what this combination of theoretical frameworks means for understanding human agency. It was noted then that agency, before anything else, involves the capacity to act in the world. It was argued that this capacity to act in the world has been afforded to us from our social relations, both directly and indirectly. This means individual agency cannot be detached either from social context or from the immediate practicality of everyday situations. It will be maintained that this is also true when considering moral practice. However, the principle virtue of this synthesised theory is that both the Meadian side and the social relations side allow for an explanation of how practice can be individualised. The theory offered here provides for an interpretation of moral agency that allows us to understand how variation in moral practice can exist in accordance with individual subjectivity within a shared social context. As will be argued below, this is necessary for a realistic and inclusive conception of moral agency and practice.

Importantly, the Meadian basis of this thesis allows me to argue that moral agency and practice are, in many ways, not dissimilar from other social practice more generally, both in terms of how they emerge and how they are enacted. Indeed, the undercurrent that pervades the Meadian framework is that objects of social concern emerge through the taking on of social meaning and values from social context. This is of course true for objects of moral concern. The Meadian model thus has no place for the idea of pre-social moral value: what is of moral concern to the individual is inherently taken on from social context (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). As will be discussed below, this is not to say that moral values cannot extend beyond a particular social context, or that there is not a cognitive basis to moral value, or that moral values are entirely relative to particular social contexts. The historicity of social relations allows us to understand how our capacity to engage in the moral world requires us to engage with broad frameworks of moral understanding that have an extensive history and a diverse applicability (Taylor, 1989).

In line with this, the Meadian picture is one of the individual being thoroughly immersed in the moral world, because much of her emergence as a self has moral content, as in the above example of parenting. This Meadian model is further extended by social relations theory, because relational theory facilitates recognition of the inherent 'fuzziness' of moral practice. The theory offered above does not provide a theoretical exposition of what the boundaries of moral practice should be. What it does provide is a theoretical exposition of how shared social practices with a certain 'moral' content are brought into the individual's action and experience of her social context, and how their agency is affected as a result.

It will consequently be maintained in this chapter that, due to people internalising attitudes towards moral practices and expectations in the same way that attitudes towards all other social practices and expectations are internalised, individuals are often able to engage with moral practices just as they engage with other social practices: that is, pre-reflectively through practical consciousness. This may seem quite alien to what is often thought to be the domain of moral philosophy. Yet it will be argued below that there is no reason to believe that the moral sphere should be seen as detached from more general emergences and enactments of agency and practice (Sie, 2014). It will be argued that, in the contemporary Western social world at least, the individual is commonly immersed within moral practices that play a vital

role in her emergence as a self, and her continued participation in social life. Indeed, part of being a skilful virtuoso of social life surely involves being able to engage with practices that can be said to have moral content. This is not to say that social practices as a whole have moral content. Rather, it is to say that many of the social practices we engage with daily can be seen to have a certain content generally recognised as being of shared moral concern.

Making this argument will, of course, require justifying the claim that individuals can be seen as being generally immersed in broad moral practices as they go through daily life. This will be achieved by applying the Meadian and relational theories outlined above to questions of how individuals take on shared moral understandings, and how these are enacted through their moral agency. This will allow for the argument that individuals are able to engage in moral practices in routine activity via their practical consciousness.

However, it would be wrong to say that individuals do not reflectively engage with themselves and their view of themselves as moral beings, before and after taking certain moral actions. This reflective capacity, while perhaps often overstated, is an essential facet of human agency and it plays a vital role in moral practice. It will be argued further that this reflective capacity is essential to moral individuation. We have seen how Mead ingeniously extended his theory of the self to include individuation as a necessary outcome of social life in a complex society. It will be maintained that individuation in the moral sphere also fits this model, as can be demonstrated by the variation in moral practices and beliefs that we see routinely in contemporary Western society. Views on vegetarianism and abortion illustrate that it would be incorrect to say that individuals simply absorb and reproduce the moral norms of their society. As moral theorists, we must facilitate the notion that individuals are able to genuinely consider their position on a moral issue and arrive at a conclusion that they understand to be their own view. This chapter will maintain that the role of reflective engagement is a significant part of this process. How the individual self emerges, and how the individual comes to understand her self, surely has a decisive impact on how she approaches the moral issues she encounters in her social context.

<u>The Self without Moral Content</u>

Following a line taken by Charles Taylor (1989), this first section will form the basis of the argument about why the self should be seen as being absorbed within moral notions, and will also outline why the self should be seen as *necessarily* immersed in the moral sphere.

To demonstrate this, we begin from a question posed by Bernard Williams (1993). How would a person have to be and how would they have to live, if they were to be completely amoral? Such a person would have to refrain from doing anything for, and empathising with, anyone else. They would only ever act out of self-interest; they would not be concerned with honesty, fairness, care, or kindness. The amoral person certainly would not be concerned with treating others in the same way as she would hope to be treated. The amoral person may argue that morality is simply arbitrary social convention, conditioning and influence, but then again, so is everything else (language, taste, mode of behaviour and interaction, and so forth) that makes daily life possible. Of course, Williams does not intend to equate morality with mere taste or preference for certain behaviours. We distinguish between morality and mere taste or preference in mundane matters precisely because 'we take seriously the idea of a man's being wrong in his moral views' (Williams, 1993: 17). This is precisely because, if morality involves anything at all, it involves at least a concern for others. Within this it is recognised that how we treat others is of some sort of tangible importance. If it can be said that an individual has at least has some concern for others, then that person fits into a world of recognisable morality (Williams, 1993).

However, the amoral person might argue that people only act this way because of authority or fear of sanction. But Williams points out that people frequently follow moral precepts regardless of the law or the presence of authority: 'the more basic moral rules and conceptions are strongly internalized in upbringing, at a level from which they do not merely evaporate with the departure of policeman or censorious neighbours' (Williams, 1993: 7). The question to be asked now is why this is the case.

In his startlingly insightful work *Sources of the Self*, Taylor (1989: 3) sets out to argue that 'Selfhood and the good, or in another way, selfhood and morality, turn out to be

inextricably intertwined themes'. This is because, for Taylor, individuals emerge as selves from, and form their identity within, strongly qualified 'frameworks of the good', which pervade their social world. The notion of the significance of 'frameworks' (also referred to as horizons earlier) to the emergence of the self has been outlined in previous chapters. It has been argued that the frameworks for understanding ourselves within our social context carry a certain historicity that is brought into the experience of the individual through her social relations.

Taylor's argument becomes particularly relevant to this chapter because of the emphasis he places upon the notions of good and morality in the constitutive role played by these frameworks in the emergence of the self. His argument is as follows. To become and to be a self in a society means to live within shared frameworks for understanding the social world. Through common language, we come to understand shared social objects and meanings. An integral part of being able to participate in social life as a result of this emergence is the necessity of evaluation, judgement, and deliberation. As individuals, the necessities of social life ensure that we must be able to judge social situations, evaluate worthwhile purposes, and deliberate about best courses of action with other interested individuals, all of which occurs in relation to one's self. The value terms that we draw upon to make these distinctions are drawn from the frameworks in which we exist. For Taylor,

> You cannot help having recourse to [certain value terms] for the purposes of life. The 'cannot help' here is not like the inability to stop blinking when someone waves a fist in your face... It means rather that you need these terms to make the best sense of what you are doing.   (1989: 59)

'Making best sense of what you are doing' is of the utmost significance for Taylor, as socially immersed individuals necessarily need to be able to make sense of their lives and the lives of others in order to participate in the social world in which they exist. Taylor maintains that the terms of judgement and evaluation that we draw upon to make sense of our lives are, by their nature, intrinsically tied to notions of what is good. Passing judgement on social situations or evaluating the worth of certain ends necessarily requires some sort of overarching framework of what is good and what is of worth, which are taken on via our social engagement within

these frameworks. These are what Taylor refers to as 'hypergoods' (Taylor, 1989: 63).

Hypergoods provide indispensable facets of our current understanding of the human world in such a way that they guide and orient all other moral precepts and conceptions of the good that we may or may not take to be significant to our lives. In contemporary Western society, a certain concern and consideration for the wellbeing of other people pervades all of what we take to be of moral concern. This can be extended into what Taylor (1989) believes has become a hypergood in this particular time and space: the notion of justice that does not discriminate between race, gender, sexuality, or ability. While these hypergoods are, by definition, widely accepted and enduring, they should not be seen as static or universally accepted. It has, of course, not always been the case that a non-discriminatory view of justice should be seen as an ideal norm, and there are still many who either explicitly or implicitly reject the value of this ideal; indeed there is still progress to be made precisely on this front. Yet, there is now widespread acceptance of this idea which, in many ways, undermines previous hypergoods such as the traditional nuclear family.

This ideal of universalistic justice is a hypergood because, for many people, this notion is encompassed in all other facets of what they take to be morally good. When this notion is accepted whole-heartedly by an individual, all other moral goods are secondary to it, both in terms of hierarchy of importance and in terms of its role in engendering and orienting subsequent moral precepts. The individual who accepts this hypergood may, for example, come to campaign for public buildings to become more user-friendly for disabled people, or they may sign a petition demanding fairer treatment of black people in the criminal justice system. Such actions may come to be definitive of her self-understanding (more on this shortly). Yet, they are oriented by the overarching good of universal notions of justice.

From these hypergoods, all other terms of moral self-understanding take their impetus. The individual can take on the means of understanding the world and herself within terms that are oriented by such hypergoods, meaning that her self and her means of self-understanding can be made intelligible to her and to others, while also making others intelligible to her. Of course, there is no reason why people could not manage without a particular hypergood, or without certain secondary moral terms

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that allow their world to be evaluated: social life would continue without terms such as 'holocaust', 'genocide', 'racism', and 'dignity'. But these terms, once learnt, become indispensible to how we can understand the world and ourselves (Taylor, 1989). It is this possibility of understanding the world within the horizons in which we live that is of importance to Taylor.

Because these frameworks for the good are so much tied to how we understand the social world, they come to define how we can understand ourselves and our place within the world in relation to others. Further, because these aspects of the good are so integral to our self, the self be integrated towards these frameworks to the extent that to not live up to them can become disastrous to our self-view (Taylor, 1989). By Taylor's argument, because the individual's subjectivity emerges in relation to these frameworks of the good, the individual becomes aware of herself through their articulation of these goods in relation to their own life (Calhoun, 1991).

The fundamental role played by the good in the emergence of the individual's subjectivity means that the articulation of frameworks of the good becomes fundamental to how the individual understands herself, and who she understands herself as being. In Taylor's (1989) view, the individual does not passively absorb and apply frameworks for the good. She engages with them and arrives at her own position upon them. She *articulates* her understanding of the good in relation to her understanding of herself and her social world. As with Gadamer's (1977) concept of horizons, frameworks for the good are not static but rather continue to emerge as individuals re-interpret them in order to make sense of their lives.

The role of the subject emerging in relation to her articulation of these frameworks is significant for Taylor, because it means that the individual's moral subjectivity is constituted by her particular experience of these frameworks, which vary according to time, place, and context (upbringing being of particular importance) (Taylor, 1989). As such, how the individual is constituted in relations to these shared frameworks within a variable context affects her articulation of them in relation to herself and to others. This means that individual positions on the good are genuinely subjective within a shared framework, which consequently allows for variability in moral articulations between individuals. This results in the individual's subjectivity being constituted essentially in relation to shared frameworks of the good in a way that

becomes integral to her self-understanding, which is experienced as being her very own moral position (Calhoun, 1991).

It is thus Taylor's argument that the individual, as an individual who is immersed in social life, necessarily draws upon frameworks of what is good when she attempts to make sense of herself and others, because the means through which she is able to do so cannot be formulated outside the overarching and historical frameworks that constitute the social world of which she is part. As such, the individual is constituted as a self by the frameworks of the good, which she cannot escape for making sense of her self and the social world. She is necessarily oriented towards the good by virtue of being a self within her social context.

Taylor's works asks us whether we can really conceive of personhood in modern society without considering it to be intertwined with moral subjectivity. Would we be able to accurately account for selfhood in the way that we do today without considering moral subjectivity as integral to this selfhood, or without understanding individuals as consequently valuing their way of life and their conceptions of the good? And why would we not conceive of shared moral frameworks (which clearly pervade the social world) as integral to the individual's understanding of herself, to the extent that they provide substance to her self-identity, and to the extent that she takes seriously her own moral lapses? (Calhoun, 1991). Taylor's insight makes us realise that any moral theory that overlooks or works against any of these questions would be deeply impoverished. I take this to be entirely correct. However, while this argument is sound, I believe that more needs to be added in terms of explanation.

It has been argued above that a Meadian account of social emergence greatly benefits from a conceptualisation of 'frameworks' or 'horizons'. Indeed, it has been highlighted how some such conceptualisation is a necessary extension to theory. But it is equally true that relying on horizons or frameworks for an explanation of immersed social practice is flawed without a more robust conceptualisation of the process of the social emergence of the self than Taylor offers. If we are to answer the questions that Taylor poses, and if we are to explain why and how the self is necessarily immersed in the moral sphere, we need to do so with reference to the process through which the individual emerges as a self and the subsequent process of individuation. It should also be added that Taylor's frameworks for the good should

be seen as enjoining the experience of the individual via social relations. These arguments will be made in the next section.

<u>Moral Practice and the Socially Emergent Self</u>

It is not necessary to reiterate the Meadian framework in too much depth to make the argument that it is primarily through the emergence of the self (which emerges through social relations) that objects of moral concern are brought into the experience of the individual. However, a little reiteration will help to make the argument clear.

Mead himself made a few attempts at applying his theory of the self to ethics (for examples, see Mead, 1908; and Mead, 1925) but these attempts were perhaps not substantial enough to be deemed an extensive contribution to ethical and moral theory. Nonetheless, Mead's theory certainly seems to lend itself to an application to ethical theory. Indeed, Mead's concept of the 'me' has often been interpreted as almost essentially based on the internalisation of the normative expectations of the 'generalised other' (Habermas, 1995; Hjortkoer and Willert, 2013). That is, the 'me' is formed as general behavioural expectations of one's social context are brought into the experience of the individual in such a way that it limits the impulsiveness of the 'I' from the perspective of others (Habermas, 1995). This means that the starting point for an application of Mead's theory to moral practice would be to say that the individual internalises objects of moral concern in exactly the same way as she takes on objects of general social concern. That is, the individual takes on objects of moral concern through the triadic relationship between the 'I', the 'me' and the 'generalised other' (Hjortkoer and Willert, 2013).

As we have seen, from an early age, the individual comes to recognise how her actions (actions initiated by the 'I') come to elicit certain responses from others that allow her to recognise herself as both an acting subject and as an object for others and for herself. She begins to take on the attitudes that others take towards her, and thereby begins to take on more generalised attitudes towards objects of social concern. We can condense an example of a child learning about property and ownership to illustrate this point. A toddler may absent-mindedly pick something up,

and be told that she should not play with that item by a parent figure. She is likely to be aware (and becomes increasingly aware) of herself as eliciting this response through her action, particularly when a similar response is elicited for similar acts. As she develops, she may be told that she cannot play with an item because it does not belong to her, or because another person may be upset if it gets lost or broken. The toddler is thus being integrated into generalised notions that not all items are at her disposal to play with, that certain items belong to other people, that some items have a certain value to other people, that other people may be upset if these get damaged, and that she may face retribution if these norms are transgressed.

As such, it is likely that these attitudes will be taken on by the child to the extent that they limit her action. This is the formation of the 'me' through the 'other', which comes to inhibit the action of the 'I'. As she comes into contact with an increasing diversity of attitudes, she arrives at a generalised perspective of shared social attitudes that inform her future action. Further, the diversity of attitudes means that she also comes to understand herself as a genuine subject with her own views on the generalised attitudes that she reconciles for herself in relation to herself and others. This is, of course, an incredibly condensed picture of how a child may take on generalised attitudes towards the shared social object of property ownership. But it serves to demonstrate how the child firstly begins to recognise herself as a subject and an object for herself, and how she comes to take on the attitudes of others towards herself and her actions, and towards objects of general social concern.

However, this example also demonstrates how many of our objects of general social concern not only include moral content, but also that objects of moral concern are taken on in exactly the same way as more general objects of social concern. In the example given, it would almost certainly be wrong to say that a child would be told not to play with a particular item in order to induct that child into a sound understanding of the conventions of property and ownership. Of course, we could often say that the parent figure recognises that the child should be taught that she cannot play with anything she pleases, and that the child should be taught to recognise that certain things belong to others, that they have value to others, and that they may be upset if these things were lost or damaged. But it would be less accurate to say, for the most part, that the parent figure has reprimanded the child purely to uphold a clear understanding of the function of property in the moral sphere

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of the contemporary Western social world. Firstly, it seems unlikely that we could expect every person to give a rigorous exposition of what property is and why/how it can or should be owned. Secondly, there are also likely to be other reasons for not letting a child play with something, many of which may be practical rather than explicitly moral (Sie, 2015). The item in question may be in some way dangerous, expensive to replace, or easily lost: it is possible to envisage that a parent wouldn't mind their child playing with her brother's football, whereas the parent may be concern if the child instead chose to play with her brother's chess pieces. In other words, learning and teaching moral practice is a *practical*, more than it is a *theoretical*, exercise.

The practicalities of the situation notwithstanding, it would still be hard to deny that explaining to a child that she cannot play with a certain item because it belongs to another who may miss it if it is lost or damaged entails some sort of moral content. That is, coming to understand that we cannot simply use other people's stuff and disregard the value that the other attaches to it is surely an integral facet of the moral conventions of the contemporary Western social world. Rather than being particularly philosophically special, we can thus come to see how objects of moral concern are taken on in the same way that other objects of social concern are taken on. They are not transmitted or explained via their normative integrity or their moral purity. For the most part, objects of moral concern are taken on in relation to a variety of social and practical circumstances by the individual as she experiences the world as an acting subject, in which she is also an object for others. Indeed, the 'me' is commonly defined by the taking on of the normative expectations of others. The 'me' is largely defined by objects of shared moral concern that affect the action of the 'I'. As Habermas (1995: 182) puts it, 'The 'me' is the bearer of a moral consciousness that adheres to the conventions and practices of a specific group'.

As objects of moral concern are so definitive of what the 'me' is, we can see that the objects of moral concern are of the utmost importance to the emergence of the self. As the 'me' of the self is constituted by the generalised attitudes of others, Mead's theory is able to give a much more decisive answer to why transgressing our own moral expectation can lead to shame and regret on the part of the individual than Taylor's (1989) argument can. Of course, Taylor is right to say that to transgress our moral expectations of ourselves is to transgress the moral frameworks on which our

self is partly formed, but applying Mead's theory allows us to explain *how* these frameworks for the good become integrated into the individual self which is the foundational basis of her social action and self-understanding. This takes us one step beyond Taylor's argument.

Mead's theory has the additional advantage of being able to accurately account for individuation within the process of taking on normative expectations. Both Mead (1925) and Taylor (1989) acknowledge that individuals necessarily emerge as selves from differing points in a shared social context. Parental values (which are, of course, a product of individuation itself), income, ethnicity, gender, education, troublesome childhood experiences, and generational differences provide just a few notable examples of how individuals may come to face a shared social context from variable standpoints. For Taylor, the variable standpoints from which individuals face a shared context lead to variations in how individuals articulate their understanding of the social world. This means that the individual's subjectivity is constituted by their articulation of shared frameworks from the individual's variable position within that framework. In moral terms, this means that the individual's subjectivity is constituted by their variable articulation of frameworks of the good (Taylor, 1989).

Mead's theory accepts this point, but it also takes it further than Taylor (1989). It was outlined above how, in Mead's theory, individuation occurs as an inherent part of the process of the self emerging by taking on the attitudes of others. As part of emerging as a self, the individual necessarily takes on the attitudes of others and integrates them into their own subjective understanding of the social world in which they find themselves. This process occurs as the individual faces an increasing diversity of attitudes taken towards her self and towards objects of social concern by others. It is only from this emergent recognition of their own subjectivity that the individual becomes able to generalise and integrate the diversity of perspectives that they face in an abstract manner. This consequently results in a genuinely subjective self that is able to recognise their own attitudes as their own, and their actions as being something for which she is accountable (Habermas, 1995). The amalgamation of the multitude of variables that differentiate individuals from one another results in variations in the individual's subjective standpoint on the diversity of attitudes she encounters.

If we take it to be the case that objects of moral concern are taken on in much the same way as objects of general social concern, then it seems that there is no reason this process of individuation would not apply to objects of moral concern also. One of the major aims of this thesis has been to combine the Meadian framework for conceptualising the socially emergent self with relational sociology in order to establish a sound theoretical means to account for individual engagement in moral practice within a shared social context. Mead's theory of individuation means that the framework offered here is able to account for how individual moral agency is necessarily afforded to the individual from her social context, while allowing for individualised variation upon shared moral practices.

Mead's theory allows us to see that accounting for individualised engagement in shared moral practice is not dissimilar from providing an account of individualised engagement in social practice generally. Explaining individual moral views and actions cannot be detached from social context, but nor can it be seen as being rigidly determined by that context. If this was the case then moral dissent and moral change would not occur. Any one of countless examples could be used to make this point, but we shall stick to the most basic of all moral premises in contemporary Western society: killing another person is generally taken to be entirely wrong except in specific exempting circumstances, such as legitimate combat. However, we are increasingly facing questions of active euthanasia. It should be acknowledged that passive euthanasia (letting someone die with their permission, as in cases of 'do not resuscitate') is permitted in the UK, but actively administering a lethal drug to a terminally ill person upon their request in order for them to die in relative comfort, for example, still counts as murder (McLachlan, 2008). It is an understatement to say that a diversity of views exist on the question of whether euthanasia can be morally justified despite its current illegality. Even without reverting to religious notions of the sanctity of life, a person can hold the view that euthanasia is an unjustifiable act. Others may believe that whilst euthanasia can be morally justified in itself, sanctioning the act legally may be potentially unsafe. On the other hand, there are those who actively campaign for the right of the terminally ill to have the right to request that their life be ended by a medical professional, who would then not face prosecution under such circumstance (Singer, 1993).

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It would be hard to say that any of these views are morally illegitimate, as each is drawn from shared moral frameworks regarding the right to life, the right to dignity, and the right to avoid suffering. It is not for this thesis to say which of these views is right. What I want to do instead is to offer a means for accounting for this diversity of perspective within a shared social context with notable moral horizons. It should not be doubted that those who hold particular views on euthanasia recognise these views as their own, and as integral to their moral subjectivity. Mead's theory allows us to both recognise this point, and to recognise that these moral views (and any subsequent engagement in moral practice) are the outcome of the taking on of generalised attitudes within a social context in the emergent process of the self, which enables the individual to arrive at her own standpoint on objects of shared moral concern.

Applying Mead's theory in moral terms thus has two notable advantages. Firstly, it allows us to understand how objects of moral concern are taken on in the same fashion as objects of general social concern. This allows us to account for how recognisable moral content necessarily migrates into the individual's self and her experience of the social world. Secondly, Mead's framework allows us to understand how the individual can emerge as a self from shared moral horizons, and yet be able to take her own subjective position on objects of moral concern, as a result of the process of individuation.

But, as argued above, Mead's theory is in need of extension if its explanatory potential is to be fully realised. It is necessary to remind ourselves why social relations are significant to the explanatory power of this process on two fronts. Firstly, understanding the role that social relations play in the emergence of the self allows us to see how the self can emerge from a transactional process that is not limited to the immediacy of social interaction. How this is possible was not made sufficiently clear by Mead. Secondly, relational sociology facilitates, perhaps better than any other social theory, the enactment of individualised engagement in social practice. This is because it understands boundaries of appropriate practice to be inherently murky.

Social relations theory can be brought into the theoretical framework offered here in order to account for how moral practices transverse social context, while also making

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affordances for variability in individual engagement in social practice. As Taylor (1989) points out, many of the most basic moral frameworks that allow the individual to articulate their understanding of the social world have an extensive historicity. The 'Golden Rule', for example, is still regularly articulated in contemporary society, even if its Biblical or Kantian sources are neither known nor acknowledged within this articulation. In more recent times, the evolutionary (or quasi-evolutionary) idea has resulted in articulations of the human world as ultimately self-interested entering the moral and political lexicon – in recent terms, notably via the work of Richard Dawkins (1999) (Taylor, 2005).

How the historicity of shared frameworks affords the individual her capacity to engage in moral practice is something that Mead's theory alone does not adequately grasp. But, conversely, Taylor's theory does not adequately explain how moral frameworks are brought into the experience of the individual. It has thus been explained that understandings of social and moral practice are brought into the experience of the individual via their social relations (through transactions). Relational sociology allows us to recognise certain practices as having some sort of intersubjective moral content that precede the specific interactions of individuals. It offers us the conceptual tools for considering how our transactional engagement with social relations allows the historicity of these shared intersubjective understandings of moral practices to be acknowledged. The basis of this claim is that the individual is able to arrive at an understanding of social practice from her relations with others alone. However, as was also argued above, this can only be done when relational theory is combined with Meadian theories of the socially emergent self. When this is taken to be the case, Taylor's argument that frameworks for the good are decisive for the self and the individual's understanding of the world can be given more explanatory substance. Taylor's argument allows us to consider the significance of intersubjective, historically situated frameworks of the good. Mead's theory allows us to understand the process through which the emergence of the self is tied to social engagement. The addition of social relations theory is able to marry the two together in such a way that we can understand how frameworks for the good enter into the experience of the individual.

Mead, Social Relations, and Moral Agency

Having outlined how the synthesis of the Meadian self and social relations theory that I have developed can be applied to the internalisation of moral content, I can now set out what this means for understanding moral agency. If we take it to be the case that our selves emerge in relation to generalised attitudes towards objects of moral concern (in just the same way as we emerge as selves in relation to objects of general social concern) then we can see how, in Mead's argument, individuals should be seen as capable of moral agency through their practical consciousness. It was argued above that the theory offered here allows us to understand how individuals absorb normative expectations of social practice to the extent that they can largely act within these expectations pre-reflectively. The capacity to act in such terms, to skilfully cope with the social world pre-reflectively, as Dreyfus (2014) puts it, is the most basic and most significant element of human agency.

This practical, pre-reflective engagement with the world describes how individual agency is, for the most part at least. The individual rarely sets out her intentions and plans exactly how to enact them through social intercourse before acting in the world. As with the analogy of driving a car, we do of course have our reasons for acting, but we find ourselves interacting with the intentions of others and the rules of the road. Most of the time we are able to do this fairly effortlessly: we would hardly be considered proficient drivers if we had to actively recall what the rules of the road were before acting. Instead, we have become proficient via our participation in the activity, so much so that we are often able to adapt to others and novel circumstances in an effective manner. Of course, we often get jolted into such circumstances that our reflective deliberation is required – perhaps we realise that we should have been paying more attention, or we have to think of a new route home (Sie, 2014).

In this sense, driving is analogous to our participation in social life as an agent who has emerged as self from her social relations. Because the self has emerged from the normative expectations carried from her social relations, and thus individuals are able to enact social practices in ways that coincide with the normative expectations of others that have formed the 'me', and that inhibit the spontaneously acting 'I'. In this sense, our social relations afford us the capacity to engage with the social world in a practical manner, without the necessity of reflective recourse prior to action. And what is true of human agency generally is also true of *moral* agency (Sie, 2015). If it

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is the case that a combination of the Meadian framework of the self and social relations theory allows us to explain pre-reflective engagement in social practice, and if it is also the case that this theoretical synthesis allows us to understand how moral content is taken on by the individual in this same emergent process of self-formation, then it follows that the theory offered here allows us to explain moral agency through the concept of practical consciousness.

It has been outlined how much of what comes to be recognisable as being a moral practice is taken on from others as we emerge as selves. Earlier, this was alluded to through the example of parenting. Sie (2015) points out that in contemporary Western society it is normalised for our children to be inducted into certain moral norms and expectations that are common in their social context: respecting others, not hitting others in order to get what we want, not taking other people's possessions. From an early age we are inducted *ad hoc* into the moral frameworks of our social context through the evaluations and responses that we face from others. Our self emerges from the evaluations and responses that others take towards us. In terms of moral evaluation, we face reproach, blame, resentment, punishment, praise, gratitude, and reward, to name but a few evaluative categories from which we come to understand ourselves through the attitudes of others in relation to the moral frameworks of our social context (Sie, 2015). This induction into moral judgement is continuous throughout our lives, although, as we shall see, our responses may become increasingly individualised. Nonetheless, the point made by the application of Meadian theory to moral agency is that the individual self is necessarily immersed in objects of moral concern, and she emerges as a self in relation to the internalisation of attitudes that have some sort of moral content. The fact that this moral content is so central to how the self emerges allows us to understand the emergence of the self to be productive of a moral agency that is immersed within the normative expectations of a social context.

Because the emergence of the self is productive of our capacity to engage in social practice pre-reflectively, it can be argued that applying the Meadian framework to the sphere of moral content allows us to understand how we come to be able to function pre-reflectively in moral terms. But if this is to be accepted, it needs to be asked what it means to say that much of moral agency frequently manifests itself in pre-reflective, practical terms. To do this it is crucial to shake off the notion that genuine

moral agency necessitates the reflective and discursive engagement of the individual over her moral action (Sie, 2014). Indeed, as Williams (1985) points out, a perennial problem of moral philosophy since Kant has been the over-emphasis of the purity of intentions and deliberative motivation in the consideration of moral action. However, this theoretical debate can be put to one side in favour of considering how much of our action that could be said to have some sort of moral content does not require reflective engagement. As was highlighted earlier, the parent need not consult her personal understanding of the ethics of property ownership before telling her toddler not to play with some someone else's watch (and, as was also highlighted earlier, the parent's motivations for reprimanding the child may not be led by her desire to instil moral precepts into her child). Likewise, it is surely accurate to say that we would not need to deliberatively engage with our moral conscience before stopping a child from running into the road.

This is of course an extreme example, but it could also be said that reflective deliberation is not necessary to actions such as feeding our pet. *Not* doing this clearly has some sort of moral content, as it would surely be wrong within our moral framework. But the fact that an action has some sort of moral content does not mean that we need to undertake deliberative reasoning before undertaking it. It is likely to be simply part of the individual's routine action. The same could be said of many other facets of daily life in which our behaviour is moulded by how we have emerged as a self. For the most part, we are well aware of the fact that using violence against other people to achieve our ends is not acceptable in everyday practice. Indeed, this is so much part of most people's understanding of appropriate social practice that it would surely be hard to entertain an alternative point of view in this matter. In this sense, not using violence to achieve our ends could be seen as fitting in with what Taylor (1989) would call the 'hypergood' of basic respect for other people. The self has emerged so intimately from this generalisable attitude that most people would recognise such acts of violence as wrong even if they had not fully considered *why* it was wrong, or what specific moral wrongs it transgresses. We can understand the self as emerging so decisively from such pervasive moral frameworks that the individual need not reflectively consider her position on the use of violence in social practice. She already knows that such action would be wrong and her reflective consideration is largely unnecessary for avoiding it.

It is all well and good to say that individuals draw upon shared moral frameworks within a social context, or to say that these moral frameworks are underpinned by 'hypergoods'. But, it could be contended, where is the *justification* for the moral beliefs and shared understandings taken on from these moral frameworks? If we think long and hard about some of our most basic moral understandings, such as killing another human being or discriminating against another on the grounds of ethnicity being nearly always wrong, then we soon reach a point where we can give no further justification for its wrongness (Hermann, 2015). It may well be the case that many who hold these beliefs would struggle to give any sort of justification for them beyond the plain assertion that such acts simply are wrong. Even those trained in moral philosophy or the law will eventually reach a similar point. If we were challenged to give an explanation as to why killing is wrong, or why it is wrong to go around punching people for no reason, we may find ourselves either unable to give a satisfactory foundational reason, or going through an endless justificatory regress in an attempt to find a satisfactory foundation for our belief (Hermann, 2015).

Through an application of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, Hermann (2015) argues that this latter process is both unnecessary but also pointless. It was Wittgenstein's argument that justifying our actions and beliefs should not and cannot be seen to come to an end only once a direct foundational truth for those beliefs and actions has been reached. Such a point proves to be illusory and beyond the realm of social practice. For Wittgenstein, justification beyond how we simply act (when we are talking about deeply embedded practice) is unnecessary: 'it is *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game' (Wittgenstein, 1972: 204). Wittgenstein, of course, did not himself apply this argument to moral philosophy, but Hermann (2015) argues that moral practices and justifications, just like other practices and justifications, are grounded in action and reaction, meaning that there is no reason for us to look for foundational justifications beyond acting.

Hermann (2015) asks us to imagine an encounter with a person who genuinely thinks that a child, who is about to undergo a major surgery, should not be given anaesthetic. If we assume that there is no good reason (such as an allergy) for not giving the anaesthetic, then we arrive at the conclusion that the person is not just simply wrong, but perhaps sadistic or morally revolting. It seems likely that we would respond with anger or discomfort that takes us beyond rational debate. We do not

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need foundational justification to feel certain that the other person is completely wrong. Propositions and foundational justifications are largely irrelevant to this certainty; what is relevant is the foundation of action and reaction. Agreement over such moral certainties as giving a child anaesthetic before surgery when there is no good reason not to are founded in practice, not in principle. These certainties become manifest in the largely unquestioned approach which is taken towards the practice, and the likely revulsion we would feel if someone disregarded the necessity of avoiding the potential suffering acting otherwise would cause.

What we learn from this is that moral agency should be seen as grounded in practice, rather than in the capacity to provide foundational justification for one's beliefs. Moral agency is a question of moral competence; that is, it is a question (at its most basic level) of whether the individual is proficient within the moral practices of her social context. By the theory offered in this thesis, the reason that questions of foundational justification are not necessary to questions of agency is that individuals have emerged as selves by internalising the most basic moral practices and expectations of appropriateness from their social relations. This means that individuals are able to act as morally competent agents (without the necessity of justifying their most basic moral beliefs) as they have emerged as acting moral agents from shared moral frameworks in the process of emerging as a self within a shared social context. Or, to bring in the language of this thesis, individuals are able to engage in moral practice in a virtuoso fashion as a result of their emergence as a self via social relations. As such, the justification of moral beliefs and practices need not be extended beyond their grounding in practice, which is afforded to the individual from her engagement with the social relations that comprise her social context.

This is not to say that *no* moral beliefs can or should be justified. Rather it is to say that judicatory *foundations* are not necessary to engagement in moral practice. Neither is it argued that individual's cannot give reasons for their moral action when questioned. As Sie (2015) puts it, there are of course occasions when we find ourselves having to reflect on the best action to take in a situation that we suspect may need careful moral consideration on our part. In such cases, reasons for action can easily be given (more will be made of this point in the next section). But Sie (2015) also points out that we can give reasons for our moral actions taken pre-

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reflectively in the practical mode of consciousness. Because these reasons are not brought into consciousness before acting, any reasons given in these circumstances would be reconstructive. This does not necessarily mean that they are inaccurate. Rather it means that the individual's moral agency has emerged from shared moral understandings to the extent that she can engage with situations in her 'thoroughly moral world' (Sie, 2014) without the necessity of planning her action at every turn. This is the case for situations of moral concern as much as it is for any of realm of social practice, such as applying humour. Indeed, the theory of moral agency here relies upon engagement in moral practice being conceptualised as both emerging and being enacted in more or less the same way as all other spheres of social practice.

The theory offered in this dissertation allows us to understand how moral agency can be conceptualised as being practically engaged in the social world before it is anything else. My theory is able to argue that moral agency need not be reflectively-led; sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't. The individual's capacity for moral agency is manifested in her capacity for competent moral practice in daily life and in her capacity to recognise the significance of objects of moral concern in this practice. This precedes her capacity to justify and give reasons for her most basic moral propositions. In a way analogous to how the competent agent can largely know how to apply language correctly, and recognise when it is not applied correctly, without the necessity of being able to discursively explain the rules of language, so too the competent moral agent is able to engage with the moral practices, and recognise when they have been transgressed, pre-reflectively (Hermann, 2015). Their moral agency is demonstrated by this capacity for competent practice, as moral agency is founded upon practice, not discursive reasoning or foundational justification.

That moral agency should be understood as practical and pre-reflective before all else is, for Dreyfus (2014), simultaneously the most basic and the highest demonstration of human moral functioning. Yet, this conceptualisation of moral agency also demonstrates the necessity of the explanatory power of the socially emergent self. Moral agency emerges in the process of the socially emergent self, in which shared understandings of moral practice are brought into the experience of the individual to the extent that they mould her pre-reflective action, even if these actions have some sort of moral content. Consequently, it can be argued that the question of

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moral agency is a question of moral practice, not moral reasoning. Further, it can also be said that moral agency, as it is the product of a socially emergent self, is afforded to the individual from her social relations.

This is because the individual's capacity to act as a competent moral agent, as just described, relies on them internalising intersubjective understandings of moral practice from her engagement with the social relations that comprise their social context. It is through the individual's engagement with her social relations that she comes to be immersed in the moral frameworks that shape her emergence as a self and, consequently, her social practice as a moral agent. It is in social relations that the historicity of shared moral frameworks are contained and extended as practice. They are brought into the experience of the individual through their relational transactions with others, through which the emergence of the self occurs. Because the emergence of the self in this process is decisive for the individual's capacity to act pre-reflectively and competently, and because shared moral understandings are so integral to how the modern self emerges (Taylor, 1989), the individual's capacity for competent social practice is necessarily tied to her taking on of moral expectations from her social relations.

Practicality and Virtuoso Engagement in Moral Practice

However, as was highlighted in our earlier exposition of the relationship between the self and their social relations, it is not sufficient to say that the emergence of the self from a social context means that the individual's practice is determined by that social context. What Bourdieu (1977) teaches us is that the individual is able to become a virtuoso of a social context, in the sense that they can skilfully navigate and innovate in their social world both in relation to the traditions of that context and novel circumstances that present themselves, without recourse to reflective consideration. To be a proficient or competent moral agent is to be able to deal with various situations in this fashion; we would not say that an individual who can *only* follow moral rules to the letter would be a competent moral agent; quite the contrary, as we saw with the example of lying above. The notion that lying is commonly seen to be morally dubious would surely fit in with the frameworks for the good which Taylor (1989) discusses. But it would be incorrect to suggest that the avoidance of lying is

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accepted *carte blanche* just because it is a deeply pervasive facet of our moral framework. While many would accept that lying is normally wrong, few would say that lying is never the appropriate thing to do. Social relations theory allows us to understand that individual engagement in moral practice is not set by rigid structures, but instead is guided in accordance with an understanding of moral practice which is taken on by the individual from her social relations.

The fact that individuals are able to act in a virtuoso fashion has been explained by the emergence of the self through social relations, precisely because relational theory allows us to understand the fuzziness of boundaries of expectation that allow for individual innovation, rather than structural determination. When relational theory is added to the process of individuation, it becomes straightforward to argue that the individual is able to skilfully innovate upon the generalised understandings of engagement in moral practice she has taken on as she has emerged as a self in order to negotiate the practical circumstances in which she finds herself. Through this theory, we are able to see individuals as being capable of articulating her own position on moral frameworks, and as being able to enact this through her engagement with moral practice in relation to the practical circumstances across a diversity of emergent social fields with which she is confronted in daily life. The individual is able to engage practically with situations of moral concern precisely because understandings of moral practice have been taken on in the emergence of her self from social relations. The recognition of the capacity of individual's to engage with moral practices pre-reflectively as social virtuosos in continually emerging social fields is what the concept of social relations, rather than reified social structures, allows us to recognise.

An important contribution of relational sociology to the current argument is that it allows us to recognise that boundaries of moral practice are murky, and they are taken on and applied as such. Relational sociology recognises that all we need to acknowledge in terms of the moulding of individual engagement in moral practice is the social relations between people, rather than reified social structure. Elbowroom is thereby made for variation in the taking on of generalised attitudes of how moral practice can and should be engaged with. If, rather than relying on theoretical structures, we understand that individual engagement in moral practice as simply being shaped by the internalisation of shared understandings of practice from our

social relations (which are then applied in the practical circumstances that we face) then we need not see the direction of practice in circumstances of moral consideration as being rigidly set.

Take the example of helping an elderly person with their shopping bags. While many would see this as a morally good act, most of us would surely recognise that there are questions of appropriateness associated with when such an act should be undertaken. Would we consider a person who *always* helps an elderly person with their bags, regardless of the situation, to be competent moral agent? Almost certainly not, as they run the risk of causing offence. But we could also not really say that there is any codification of when helping an elderly person (or even simply asking the elderly person if they would like help) is the right thing to do. Social relations theory allows us to understand the murkiness of moral practice, as it enables us to see how engagement in moral practice emerges through the relational internalisation of the fuzzy boundaries of appropriateness which surround intersubjective understandings of practice. Because this relational internalisation is instrumental in the emergence of the self, the individual becomes able to deal with novel and diverse situations as a competent virtuoso moral agent, capable of pre-reflective engagement and adaption in moral practice according to the demands of the social field they find themselves in[2]. This capacity should be seen as being afforded to us from our social relations, as it is through our social relations that our pre-reflective understanding of moral practices (with all their historicity) are brought into our individual experience and applied in our daily action.

The example just given also leads us into the relevance of practical circumstances. It was argued above that social relations theory is beneficial because it allows us to recognise how engagement in social practice is tied to long chains of social relations, while also recognising that social practice itself arises in relation to the practical circumstances of the emerging social fields we engage with. The same process is true of moral agency, and can be applied to our current example. The classic 'ought implies can' principle comes in here: it would perhaps not be appropriate to help an elderly person with their shopping if we ourselves were struggling with our shopping

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[2] Of course, this is not to say that people *always* act morally when the circumstances are conjunctive to such action. It is rather to say that engagement in moral practice, if it occurs at all, occurs in relation to the practical circumstances in which the individual finds herself.

due to some injury. We may not feel it reasonable to stop and help an elderly person if we simply had our hands full, or were in a rush to get to a meeting. This may seem inadequate as an excuse, but it is maintained here that practical reasonableness is essential to understanding moral agency.

Let us apply the theory to the more complex example of the abolition of slavery to tease out the relevance of practicality and social relations on a grander scale. For the sake of brevity, much of the substance of the abolition debate amongst historians will have to be skimmed over, but it should suffice to say that slavery began to face moral criticism from around the middle of the eighteenth century. The slave trade was prohibited in Britain in 1807, with many other territories and states following suit by the middle of the nineteenth century (Cohen, 1997). For an institution which had been perennial throughout history, as slavery had been, this is a rapid decline. The example provides us with an interesting question for understanding moral agency because it can be asked firstly why slavery persisted throughout human history, and secondly why it faced moral questioning when it did. It has been argued by Moody-Adams (1994) and Guerrero (2007) that the wrongness of the acts associated with slavery was so palpable that they should have been seen by any competent moral person at any point in human history. That this wrongness was not seen is an example of what Moody-Adams claims to be culpable moral ignorance. Moody-Adams (1994) has pointed out that even in Ancient Greek society, in which slavery was institutionally normal, there were individuals who questioned the morality of slavery. We know this because Aristotle argued against those who questioned it in order to arrive at the conclusion that slavery was justified. This, she argues, implies that those who did not question slavery's morality were culpably moral ignorant.

However, for Pleasants (2010), this argument is deeply inadequate as it overlooks the significance of the changes in practical circumstance that allowed the moral agency to be enacted in a different way at the time of abolition. Most notably, the rise of the capitalist market provided a genuine functioning alternative to slave-labour in the form of wage-labour. This is of the utmost importance, because while people could have *questioned* slavery in terms of moral distaste, bringing slavery to an end would have meant bringing to an end a perfectly normalised aspect of daily life with no viable alternative to ensure the continued functionality of social practices which

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were held to be of the utmost necessity to the continuation of social life as it was known (Pleasants, 2010).

This argument may not seem particularly morally compelling, but as Pleasants points out, it is perfectly reasonable for us in contemporary Western society to recognise the ills of wage-labour, and perhaps imagine a world without it. However, if future generations brought about a world without wage-labour and looked back at us today, would it be fair for them to judge us as moral failures for not fully appreciating the evils of the institution? According to the theory given here, the answer to this is no. Today, to bring about a comparable abolition of wage-labour as was seen with the abolition of slavery would require us to tear down much of what we take to be normal in our lives. How would we manage our time, receive the services we need, facilitate the upbringing of our children, and maintain our identity, in the face of these and other assaults on our routine existence such a change would bring? We can of course imagine an alternative to wage labour, but living this out would require us to live for the foreseeable future as social pariahs, or even criminals, far beyond the social normality that has come to define our existence. In addition, it seems unlikely that any of our actions would eliminate wage labour unless a genuine widespread alternative emerged.

In normative terms, it may seem inadequate to give such precedence to practicality, but it needs to be registered that moral agency is enacted within practical circumstances, just as human agency is in general. Thus, to expect individuals to transcend and transgress practical circumstance and social expectation in the pursuit of moral purity not only represents an unreasonable expectation, but also a complete misunderstanding of how moral agency functions in practice. For the most part, it is fairly straightforward to understand that we could act differently to how we did within our social context, and even imagine normatively better ways of acting. However, the necessity of acting in a way that accords with our social world often puts demands on our practice that we cannot reasonably do without. Far from acting out of pure intentions to make the world a better place, when people act morally they are, more often than not, acting in an already circumscribed sphere of moral consideration in a way that is delimited by practical reality.

A correlation can be drawn between previous attitudes towards slavery and current attitudes towards starvation (Pleasants, 2010). It would be hard for most people in the richer parts of the world to claim that they are unaware that starvation is a prevalent moral issue that we could address, and it is straightforward to recognise that certain practices exacerbate the problem. However, in terms of practical agency, it is not easy to expect people to tear down the normalities of their daily existence in order to change things, or to recognise themselves as being morally culpable for engaging in the practices which are basic to, and taken for granted in, their routine life when most of these acts are taken to be perfectly morally acceptable by most people in their social context.

This would change, however, if we imagine a future in which a technological development has meant that those who live in a privileged part of the world can feed a starving person at the click of a button (this example is borrowed from Haskell, 1985). Let us assume that we can do this benevolent act once a day, every day. It would soon become the case that *not* doing this simple act would be deeply immoral. The point is this: there is no reason to assume that we wouldn't attempt to reduce the evil of starvation if we had a simple means of doing so. We nearly all understand starvation as bad, but few of us do much to prevent it. This would surely cease to be the case if Haskell's imagined technology became reality, because the practical circumstances of our social context will have changed. In turn, it seems likely that the normative expectations of moral practice (which we take on from our social relations) would also change. We can thus imagine that an aspect of our moral framework would be significantly adjusted by practical advancement. Pleasants (2010) argues that the same is true of slavery before the rise of capitalism. While its moral wrongness perhaps should have been palpable, the normality of it and the absence of a viable alternative made any real moral progress deeply unlikely.

In terms of the abolition of slavery, the change in the directionality of moral agency from previous eras occurred as the massive and multifarious changes that defined the rise of modernism and capitalism in Western Europe and the United States. In *Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere* (1992), Habermas brilliantly outlined the tremendous wealth of changes in social relations that brought about the social and political changes that gradually led to the rise of capitalism and the new public sphere of modernity. There is not time here to go into all these changes, but it can be

easily appreciated that a multitude of distinct and interrelated scientific and technological innovations, political upheavals, global explorations, and intellectual advances more generally, led to various adjustments in the social world which greatly shifted the relations between people. Habermas particularly notes the rise of print technology, the widespread press, and the broadened interactions and dependencies yielded by trade, as adjusting the social and political sphere. Of course, these aspects are just a few of many turning cogs that altered the social world so dramatically. Each of the multitude of social changes that occurred in the flourishing of modernity radically shifted both the social relations from which individual moral agency emerges and the practical circumstances under which this agency is enacted. As the practical circumstances shifted, the way that moral agency *could* be enacted changed. Further, because the practical circumstances changed as a result of changes in social relations, and vice versa, it came to be that the way moral agency *should* be enacted also changed in terms of the normative expectations of others. If Haskell's (1985) imaginary button became a reality, it would quickly become wrong for us not to take the trouble to feed the starving person because the practical circumstances would shift the generalised normative expectations internalised through transactional engagement with social relations. This seems to be also true of the practical circumstances that allowed slavery to change from a normalised to an abhorrent practice in a few generations.

It needs to be reiterated that this does not mean that people cannot act outside of moral norms; indeed, those who protested against slavery in Ancient Greek society are testament to this (Moody-Adams, 1994). Yet, how individual moral agency can be enacted and the directionality it can take is surely tied to the practical circumstances in which the individual finds herself. It is the practical circumstances (and the social relations which manifest themselves through these circumstances) that make the difference between a handful of people protesting against slavery, wage labour, or whatever, and sweeping widespread reforms that redefine the moral normality of a society.

Why is this so? I believe the answer to this is tethered to our explanation of how moral agency emerges and how it should be conceptualised as largely enacted through practical consciousness. It has been argued that moral agency emerges in relation to the absorption of generalised expectations of others, which allows the

individual to engage with the facets of daily life that carry some sort of moral content pre-reflectively as morally competent agents. If it is true that moral agency should be seen as largely the morally competent, pre-reflective, practical application of absorbed generalised expectation of a social context, then it must be acknowledged that our practical circumstance affords the directionality of the individual's engagement in moral practice. The emergence of the self shapes our pre-reflective capacity to act within the practical circumstances we face as individuals, and it is our pre-reflective engagement with practical circumstance that provides the contours of our moral agency.

Moral agency is not determined by practical circumstance, but rather is enacted within it, in relation to the pre-reflective capacity of the self that emerges from the generalised attitudes of others. No theory of moral agency could be considered adequate without acknowledging that practical circumstance has a role in the enactment of moral practice. When conceptualising moral agency, we are attempting to describe how moral agency *is*, not how it should be. We are discussing moral agency as the largely pre-reflective engagement in practice of the individual in a murky moral sphere that is already circumscribed, and in which practicality is often decisive in terms of the direction such practice can take.

Practices, particularly moral practices, are decidedly murky. We cannot rely upon purity of motivation, nor discount the relevance of the social influence of the immediate situation. While we can say that the individual self is deeply immersed within (and formed in the process of internalising) shared moral frameworks, this does not result in uniformity of moral practice. On the contrary, differentiation and the blurriness of moral boundaries are inherent in how this process occurs. The practicality of moral agency only adds to the murkiness of moral practice, as it ties moral practice to possibility, social context, and the particulars of the individual self, more than it ties moral practice to motivation. If anything, it is tough to be sufficiently nuanced in our description of engagement in moral practices, while still saying anything useful at all about their intersubjective basis. All we can really say with regard to moral practices is that they are enacted from a moral agency that is afforded to the individual from the social relations from which she emerges as a self, and the practical circumstances in which her action is embedded.

<u>Reflective Moral Agency</u>

While it has been highlighted that moral agency should, to a large extent, be reconceptualised in terms of the pre-reflective practical consciousness, it would be wrong to say that individuals never reflect on their moral practice, or consider how they would like to act in a moral situation before they enter into it. As expressed above, no theory that does not give sufficient space for reflectivity on the part of individual can adequately account for agency and practice. In moral terms, it would be ludicrous to say that individuals do not reflect upon their action, consider how they would like to act in a moral situation, assess how they may not have lived up to their view of themselves as moral people, and seek to adjust their future behaviour accordingly.

It consequently must be asked how reflectively-led moral agency is accounted for in the Meadian framework set forth in this thesis. The answer to this lies primarily in the overall process of the socially emergent self. However, there is an important extension of our basic reflective capacity as an agent that occurs through the process of individuation, in which the individual becomes aware of herself as having her own subjective standpoint on shared objects of social concern. As we shall see, applying the process of individuation in this way allows us to account for notable individual variation in moral agency between individuals, as well as highlighting the significance of self-reflection to how moral agency unfolds.

The basic capacity to reflect upon one's own action is the product of the socially emergent self. Insofar as the individual has emerged as a self by taking on the attitudes that others take towards her, and then direct these attitudes towards herself, the individual is capable of reflective engagement with her self. The importance of this reflective capacity to the individual's engagement in practice cannot be underestimated, as it is this reflective internalisation of attitudes that moulds the individual's social practice. As we have just seen, perspectives that have some sort of moral content play an integral role in how the individual emerges as a self. From childhood, it is generally the case that many of the attitudes that individual's absorbs are grounded in moral content in some way. The individual comes to understand that her behaviour has elicited some sort of reproach or praise on the part of the other towards herself, and so forth.

This process of internalisation affords us the capacity to engage in the moral sphere in terms of practical consciousness, which we do most of the time. Every so often, however, we are jolted into the necessity of reflection. Perhaps a drastic change in circumstance, such as the illness of a family member, leads us to reconsider our action towards that person in moral terms. Or perhaps we realise that we have inadvertently wronged another, or even that we have deliberately wronged another and have come to regret it. Perhaps a particular occurrence leads us to feel that we must take moral action, such as the news showing horrendous images of suffering, or realising that we should help a neighbour look for a child who has gone missing. Or perhaps we realise that we should have acted better in such a situation that occurred in the past.

It is reasonable to suppose that people may well reflectively engage with themselves in such circumstances, that they may consider how they should act, how they could act differently, and perhaps how they could act better in the future. It is also perfectly reasonable to assume that such reflections yield changes in future practice. Indeed, it is perfectly plausible to suspect that a previous family feud may be forgiven if the other person in that feud became terminally ill. Charity appeals surely only work at all on the basis that they may, on occasion, lead people to consider how they could and should do more to help those in need. Reflection on moral practice surely cannot be doubted, even if the necessity of reflective deliberation has often been overplayed in moral philosophy (Sie, 2014).

Yet, while deliberative reflection has been given perhaps unnecessary precedence in moral theory, it has been shown already that Mead's framework underplayed the productivity of this capacity. As argued above in line with Archer (2003), although Mead's framework does have reflectivity built into it, little consideration was given to how the individual deliberates with herself through 'internal conversation' in such a way that she can plan, assess, and direct her action in light of this reflectivity. If the points made in the last two paragraphs are sound, then we must assume that the individual is capable of reflective and subjective deliberation, which can be seen to be causally efficacious for their action. If this was not the case, then we could not really say that individuals are able to engage with their own views on marriage, recycling, fairness, and so on, and (often) act in accordance with these views, which seems ridiculous. As with explaining social practice generally, this presents a

shortcoming in terms of applying Mead's theory to moral agency, in the sense that Mead's theory does not adequately explain how the individual can deliberate with herself and her action, and mould her practice accordingly. However, this shortcoming has been overcome by extending Mead's theory into notions of self-reflection and internal conversation, something which Mead's theory does in fact lend itself to quite naturally, particularly when his theory of individuation is properly considered (Dunn, 1997).

Insofar as Mead's theory affords for the emergence of the self-reflective capacity of the individual (which can be extended into notions of internal deliberation) it becomes quite clear that ample room is left in the Meadian framework to explain how engagement in moral practice can often occur through reflective consciousness. As we have seen in our interrogation of the modes of consciousness, the individual often enters into the reflective mode when her practical routine is disturbed in a way that makes reflection necessary; in moral terms, some examples of this have just been given. We can thus see how the Meadian framework, when appropriately extended, allows us to describe moral agency in pre-reflective terms, while also acknowledging that there are occasions when engagement in moral practice is reflectively led.

Yet, in line with the expansion of Mead's theory of the self given previously, it needs to be asked what the significance of this is is to moral reflection and practice, and how this reflective capacity interacts with the individual's understanding of herself as a moral person. When we reflect on moral practice, we are reflecting on how we understand ourselves in moral terms, as moral people (Taylor, 1989). How we understand ourselves in moral terms is a product of a self that has emerged in relation to the moral terms that we have taken on from our social context. While it is largely correct to say that the individual absorbs the attitudes others take towards her, and internalises moral norms in this process, this is not entirely sufficient. What the additional process of individuation allows us to see is that the individual begins to arrive at her own subjective standpoint on moral norms and attitudes. That is, the individual comes to understand herself as having particular views on objects of moral concern that she recognises as her own standpoint. The social emergence of the self affords the individual the capacity to reflect upon her moral thoughts and actions.

However, the process of individuation means that she is able to utilise this reflective capacity in relation to her own understanding of herself and her own moral subjectivity. As we have seen, as the self emerges from the diversified perspectives of others, the individual necessarily arrives at her own standpoint on objects of moral concern as she reconciles these diverse perspectives into her own understanding of the social world. Above, the example of euthanasia was used to indicate how a diverse range of perspectives can be taken towards an object of general moral concern. As euthanasia is a significant issue of moral debate in contemporary Western society, there is a good chance that an individual will interact with various perspectives on the topic. If this is the case, she is likely to arrive at her own understanding of the issues surrounding euthanasia, and even perhaps arrive at a view on what she feels about whether current policy is correct. She will recognise her views as her own, but this does not mean that these views are original. On the contrary, the whole thing about the socially emergent self is that the individual engages with the attitudes from others on intersubjective matters, which then come to be reconciled into her own understanding of the social world. So although her standpoint will not be (indeed, cannot be) wholly original, the process of individuation means that she arrives at an understanding of a shared object of moral concern that has emerged from the attitudes with which she has engaged, and which she recognises as being her own view on the matter. From here, as she is also able to recognise herself as a genuine subject capable of affecting the world according to her own views, she becomes able to engage with her own perspectives on objects of moral concern, and (on occasion) mould and adjust her practice according to this moral understanding of her self.

It was argued earlier that when we reflect and internally deliberate, we are engaging with a self which has a life history that emerges from, and is constructed in relation to, our social context. I think it would be incorrect to suggest that each individual has a definite and distinct facet of their self-identity that can be referred to as being their 'moral identity'. That is, I do not see it as plausible to suggest that most individuals form and maintain a clear sense of the moral views and precepts with which they identify as a moral person. Of course, people often do build identities around moral precepts that inform their practice, as is often the case with vegetarianism, for example, and people often strive to find a way to live a morally good life. However, I

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do not think that understanding oneself in moral terms through strong moral identifications is necessary to moral practice. I find it more plausible to say, in line with MacIntyre (1985) and Taylor (1989), that the moral frameworks of one's social context are so integral to how the individual self emerges that the individual's self-identity is necessarily tied to these moral frameworks. That is, if the individual self emerges from moral frameworks, then these frameworks must come to play an integral role in how the individual comes to understand who she is and how she should act if she is to live up to her view of herself. In this sense, the moral frameworks from which the self has emerged are integrated into the individual's self-identity, and the life history with which the individual engages (Taylor, 1989), rather than being a distinct, discernible aspect of the individual's identity.

Any notions of a 'moral identity' *per se* face easy criticism from countless social-psychological experiments that show how quickly individuals' moral principles and identifications slip away as circumstances change (Doris, 2002). To give just one example, a classic experiment by Darley and Batson (cited in Doris, 2002)) found that seminary students were perfectly happy to ignore a person slumped in a doorway and clearly in distress, when they were told that they may be running late for an informal presentation. It is hard to deny that such studies provide compelling evidence to reject the notion that individuals have a discernible moral identity that defines how they go about their practice in all situations. Rather, this chapter has attempted to recognise that the individual engages with the moral sphere in practical terms, which is indeed likely to be subject to circumstantial influence. Yet room should also be left for when individuals reflect upon their previous and future moral action. If we take the experiment just given, it wouldn't be hard to imagine that the seminary students, when told of the experiment and the results, would reflect on why they acted as they did and how they should be more attentive in the future.

When the individual reflects in this way, she is engaging with her self, which has emerged from shared moral frameworks which are internalised and deliberated with through social transaction. When moral frameworks are seen as an integral part of how one emerges as a self, we can see that how the individual understand herself has some sort of implicit involvement in the moral context that has moulded who they can possibly see themselves as being. We have seen above how the individual is immersed in objects of shared moral concern from the earliest age, as they take on

attitudes of right and wrong, good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable, through their practice-led engagement with others. If it is true that this immersion of the individual into objects of moral concern is so significant that the self emerges in such a way that normative expectations are brought into the practical action of the individual, then it must also be the case that how the individual comes to understand herself and her practice upon reflection is also tied to this process.

Although he does not rely on a Meadian framework, this is why Taylor thinks that it would be deeply flawed to attempt to separate questions of identity from questions of how the individual is embedded within moral frameworks as part of living in modern society (Calhourn, 1991). Because moral frameworks are so integral to how we emerge as selves, we cannot make sense of the world or consider our own position within it, without these frameworks for the good providing a basic source for who we understand ourselves as being. This is why Taylor (1989) argues that our view of ourselves as moral beings is of such significance to who we know ourselves to be. For Taylor, how we are as moral people tends to matter deeply to the individual even if she does not always live up to her own view of herself in all circumstances. It could of course be noted that this is not true for all people. But Taylor's point is that how we emerge as selves is so thoroughly tied to moral frameworks that the individual cannot help but have her understanding of her place in the world moulded by such frameworks, even when she stands against them or fails to live up to her articulation of them.

This is why Sie (2015) argues that the kind of social psychological experiments carried out by Darley and Batson do not necessarily mean that we are moral hypocrites. While circumstance may make a difference to our practice, we continue to care about how we view ourselves morally. Indeed, Sie points out that these kind of social psychological studies that did follow up surveys with the subjects (for example, Milgram (1992)) tended to find that the subjects did reflect on what they had done or failed to do, tried to provide an explanation, and considered their moral position accordingly. All that this section seeks to argue is that people do reflect upon their moral personhood, and when they do so they are engaging with a self that is inherently formed in relation to the moral frameworks of their social context. An individual's self is formed in relation to her internalisation of attitudes taken towards

shared moral frameworks, and thus these frameworks, while subject to individualisation, become inherent in the individual's self-understanding.

As a result, understanding oneself as a moral person is tied to the moral frameworks from which one emerges, and is integral to how one continues to assess oneself. When the occasion arises for moral reflection, the individual is engaging with her basic understanding of herself within the moral frameworks of her social context (Taylor, 1989). Because it is one's self that one is reflecting upon, and because moral frameworks are so integral to our understanding of the world and of ourselves, our moral reflections have some sort of definite consequence for how we go about our lives, how we direct our engagement in moral practice, and how we reflect upon our inadequacies (Taylor, 1989).

An Exemplification of the Theory, Via Gilligan

The empirical studies of Carol Gilligan into the effects that differences in psychological development between genders produce in terms of moral judgement are remarkable. Her work, and the subsequent studies that it has engendered, provide an indispensable resource not just for understanding how gender relations can result in distinct modes of moral judgement between men and women, but also for understanding the role that social relations more generally play in the process of moral engagement with oneself and with morally challenging situations. And it is to this end that I would like to draw upon and extend her work in order to concretely exemplify the theoretical framework for explaining the role of the socially emergent self, social relations, and practicality, as set out above.

Through the interview studies documented throughout *In a Different Voice* (1982) Gilligan argues that two distinct modes of approaching moral problems can be detected. She refers to these modes as 'moral voices'. On the one hand, moral problems can be approached from a perspective oriented by justice. Moral problems, in this voice, are approached with reference to balancing, making the inequitable equitable. This tends to carry with it some sort of notion of detached reasoning, a consideration of what the just outcome should be. On the other hand, moral problems can be approached via the perspective of care. This perspective

emphasises responsiveness to the needs and the situation of the other, and the necessity for taking the initiative for the care and consideration of the other (Gilligan, 1988). These are essentially the characteristics of the two moral voices Gilligan discusses: that of justice, and that of care.

Gilligan's studies, and many subsequent ones collected in *Mapping the Moral Domain* (Gilligan, et al., 1988), indicate that, although not all women in the studies followed a perspective of care when approaching moral problems, perspectives of care tended to be taken by women. Women were considerably more likely to favour a care perspective than men. But what is more striking is that, although many women tended towards a justice perspective, virtually no men took a care perspective. This can be exemplified in one of Gilligan's studies, which she argues is consistent with the general results of other similar studies (Gilligan and Attanucci, 1988). In this study, eighty 'educationally advantages adolescents and adults' were asked semi-structured interview questions pertaining to real-life moral dilemmas and choices that they had faced (Gilligan, 1988: xviii). This was done in order to establish the voices through which the participants faced and described moral problems. It was found that, while all participants referred to both justice and care concerns in the semi-structured interviews, most tended toward an strongly emphasise one perspective over the other. This strong emphasis was deemed to have been reached when seventy-five percent of the concern raised pertained to *either* care on the one hand, or justice on the other. It was found that fifty-three out of the eighty participants (around two-thirds) tended towards a strong emphasis. The interesting point lies in the gender differences between the emphasised perspectives. Of the thirty-four women involved in the study, twelve emphasised care, twelve had an even split between the perspectives, and ten focused on justice. Of the forty-five men involved, only one focused on care, fifteen were relatively even, and thirty focused on justice (Gilligan and Attanucci, 1988: 81). Gilligan described what these results demonstrate:

> The tendency to focus was equally characteristic of both the men and the women studied… There were sex differences, however, in the direction of focus… Care focus, although not characteristic of all women, was almost exclusively a female phenomenon in three samples of educationally

advantaged North Americans. If girls and women were eliminated from their study, care focus in moral reasoning would virtually disappear.

(Gilligan, 1988: xix)

These results are indicative of the results of similar studies (Gilligan, 1988). Gilligan (1982) argues that this difference emerges because of differences in the relations that are productive of how the self emerges. Gilligan makes the relatively straightforward point that, because males and females tend to be engaged with differently according to gender in contemporary Western society, the emergence of selves varies between genders considerably. And, because male and female selves emerge very differently, gendered differences can be detected in how moral problems are approached. In what follows, I will show that this line of argument reinforces and exemplifies many of the points made throughout this thesis.

The first point that Gilligan makes so strikingly clear is social relations in an *abstract* sense inextricably mould the individual's moral perspective, but they do so via *direct* relational engagement. This precise point has been one of the major motivations for combining Mead's framework for the socially emergent self with a transactional view of relational sociology that allows for the notion of historicity. It is Gilligan's empirically-based argument that many of the higher aspects of human cognition – reflexivity, reasoning, concept formation, and so on – emerge as they do as a result of our direct engagement with others. However, these others are commonly engaged with differently according to gender. This difference in engagement occurs not as a result of biological difference, but rather as the result of socially and historically produced differences of how males and females are engaged with throughout their childhood and adolescence. Gilligan does not deny that biological differences are of significance, but argues that the basic differences in biology that are used to categorise boys and girls as such lead to differences in how they are brought up. This is reminiscent of de Beauvoir's argument that biological difference in sex becomes phenomenologically significant for the production of gender as we engage with a social world that attaches relatively distinct sets of norms and expectations to males and females. For Gilligan, abstract conceptions of what it means to be either male or female are brought to bear in how we are engaged with by others in our psychological development. To formulate this in the language of this thesis, the self

emerges as the individual engages directly with the attitudes that others take towards her, and these attitudes commonly have a general form within a social context that has a historicity which precedes the specific emergences of the self.

It is Gilligan's argument that this difference in psychological development can result in distinct differences in perspectives that shape moral judgement. This sounds rather radical, but in Gilligan's terms it is not: if our psychological development is affected by our direct engagement with others, and if these others interact with us differently in relation to our gender, then it seems logical that differences in how we view the world will be subsequently produced. If there are relatively distinctive and consistent attitudes taken towards the developmental engagement with males and females, then it seems likely that relatively distinct and consistent attitudes manifested in perspectives of moral judgement will be the consequence. Indeed, this is precisely what her studies, and many subsequent studies by others, found (Gilligan, et al., 1988).

Gilligan thus gives us an empirically-supported argument for how moral engagement is affected by the emergence of the self from the social relations in which the individual is embedded: the moral perspectives that we take/form are moulded by abstract conceptions, such as gender expectations, that are brought to bear in the development of the self. Abstract conceptions of gender and gendered expectations of behaviour affect the attitudes that are taken towards the individual during her emergence of the self. These abstract conceptions, while transmitted directly, are shaped transactionally within the hermeneutic frameworks that condition shared understandings of how the world is. In turn, this affects the standpoint from which the individual takes their moral perspective.

Above, the combination of Mead and Taylor has been used to argue that, via direct relational engagement with others, the self takes on the kind of shared understandings of normative expectations which have a historicity that extends beyond these direct interactions. This is true of gendered relations, which are not produced in specific interactions, but rather have a historicity which is *manifested* in particular interactions (hence the term transactions). It is because of this hermeneutic historicity that gendered expectations are produced in the direct relational engagements from which the self is formed, which is why (following

Gilligan (1982)) male and female selves emerge differently. And because the relations that selves emerge from are differentiated according to gender, the moral perspective that forms through this emergence is also differentiated.

This major point of my thesis can be further discussed via one of the particular studies in Gilligan's (1982) work. Gilligan moulded and tested her theory around female choices in fertility and a specific study into the decision-making process of women who had been referred to abortion and pregnancy counselling services. This involved two rounds of interviews (firstly at the time of the decision, and secondly one year later) with twenty-nine women, ranging from the ages of fifteen to thirty-three, all of whom had been referred to abortion and pregnancy counselling services. Before we come to any of the specifics of the abortion decision-making study, we can draw on a long quote from Gilligan which sets the scene for her choosing the case of abortion as a particularly useful means for illustrating her theory:

> When birth control and abortion provide women with effective means for controlling their fertility, the dilemma of choice enters a central arena of women's lives. Then the relationships that have traditionally defined women's identities and framed their moral judgements no longer flow inevitably from their reproductive capacity but become matters over which they have control… However, while society may affirm publically the woman's right to choose for herself, the exercise of such choice brings her privately into conflict with the conventions of femininity, particularly the moral equation of goodness with self-sacrifice. (Gilligan, 1982: 70)

This passage brings to the fore several points covered in my thesis. The first is that practicality frames the domain of the moral sphere. This can be both technical and social. On the technical side, if a genuinely effective and comfortable means of birth control had not been invented, then obviously it cannot be relevant to how moral decisions are made. Once such contraceptives did become available, however, as Gilligan's passage highlights so starkly, the individual's engagement in moral decisions, and how she draws upon moral frameworks, is framed in a completely new light. On the social side of practicality, in a deeply religious social context, in which abortion or the use of contraceptives may result in shunning (see for example Harris and Mills, 1985), then the practical reality of such a choice is negated. Of

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course, there is more of an option to use contraceptives than there is if they weren't invented, but we cannot discount the tremendous degree to which such a context will frame the arena of the practical moral decision. The option of alternative moral decision-making would be (and has been), for many women, closed off for all intents and purposes.

We can see from Gilligan's quote that this point is not just restricted to deeply religious social contexts. The second part of the quote is arguing that moral decisions are still subject to the relational expectations of a social context's view of womanhood. So although women may have the choice to abort or to use contraception, and although contemporary Western society tends (at least publically) to support the right for women to choose, individual women must still engage with such choices within a sphere of expectations of femininity, and judgements of behaviour that supposedly run contrary to such expectations. It is the argument of this thesis that this is the case because she has taken on such expectations as she has emerged as a self from gendered social relations, in which shared understandings and expectations of personhood – and the practices to sustain a certain type of personhood – are taken on and internalised.

The significance of this point can be discussed via a contrast with how abortion has often been discussed in contemporary moral theory. Peter Singer (1993), like many other moral theorists, has made strong arguments for the moral and justificatory rationale of abortion. The overall point Gilligan is making is that we can often detect different approaches to moral problems between males and females – the common theme being that males tend to favour justice and rationality in their explanations of choice, and women often lean towards care and responsiveness. This is a product of their emergence from different relational expectations (Gilligan, 1982). Now, if we were to ask which voice the work of Singer ordinarily talks in, it would almost definitely be that of justice, rationality, and objectivity. Indeed, part of Gilligan's point is that moral theory has often been written from this point of view, which is why the moral views and arguments of women have either been overlooked or seen as inferior (Gilligan 1988). Singer provides an intricate justificatory account of why abortion is not just permissible, but also why, regarding the moral question of abortion, '…there is a clear-cut answer and those who take a different view are

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simply mistaken' (Singer, 1993: 137). However, we can play Singer's argument off against the second part of the Gilligan quote. If Gilligan is right to suggest that an alternative moral voice also prevails, which is different (and the product of difference) rather than being wrong, then we can understand that moral decisions regarding abortion may not always be taken on the grounds of rationality and justice, but rather on the grounds of care and responsiveness, which woman are often more likely to be socialised into (Gilligan, 1988). The voice through which the decision is taken is not necessarily one of justice. What Gilligan's work does is centre the emergence of the self in explaining engagement in moral practice (which is supported by my thesis). Because the self emerges in relation to shared moral frameworks, justice and rationality may well be relevant to how the self has emerged, and how moral decisions are taken. However, because the self emerges from differential social relations, considerations of justice and rationality may not always be centred in engagement in moral practice. The upshot of this is that, when attempting to explain individual engagement in moral practice, we need to consider the significance of the emergence of the self before we consider justice or rationality.

Indeed, individuals can be fully aware of the kind of justificatory reasons of why abortion is permissible, and perhaps even the 'rationally' 'more just' decision in certain circumstance (such as those presented by Singer (1993)), but still disagree with the practice of abortion itself, or decide that abortion is not the right decision for them. It is not unreasonable to expect that both a man and a woman, who find themselves in the position of having an unexpected pregnancy, can both be aware of such arguments, but upon reflective engagement with themselves, still arrive at the conclusion not just that abortion is not the right option for them, but that abortion is itself not a practice that they can take to be morally sound. This brings us back to the moral justifications arguments made in relation to Wittgenstein by Hermann (2015). At some point, moral justification is likely to reach a point where it can go no further, and the argument becomes 'this is what I believe to be right'. It is my argument that this point is the product of how our self has emerged from our social relations, and it can have a decisive impact on our moral practice (as in the example just given).

Here we are also beginning to touch on the significance of reflective engagement with oneself. One of the interviewees in Gilligan's study describes how she initially considered continuing with her pregnancy, but then came to decide to have an

abortion because, upon reflection, she arrived at the conclusion that she was initially excited about the pregnancy because she was lonely, and that in reality, she wasn't ready for the responsibility of parenthood at the age of 17 (Gilligan, 1982). She comments on how what she wants and what is the responsible course of action were in opposition. It was upon *reflective deliberation* with herself in relation to the practicalities of her circumstances that led to the moral decision she took.

This highlights the tension which has been at the heart of this thesis. How engagement in moral practice unfolds is tied to a self, which has formed relationally, and which is then enacted in relation to the practical circumstances in which the individual finds herself. It was described previously how the capacity for reflective deliberation with oneself should not be discounted, particularly when moral decisions are concerned. Gilligan's investigation into the decisions surrounding abortion highlights this beautifully. Of course, it should go without saying that most people considering an abortion would surely deliberate on the matter. But what Gilligan shows us so clearly is that the whole decision-making process occurs in relation to a self that has emerged from particular social relations, which have directed the individual's judgement in particular ways, and which finally get engaged with as part of the self with which reflective deliberation occurs. And all of this occurs in relation to practical circumstances, which are undeniably decisive in how the engagement in moral practice unfolds.

This brings us back to the critique of Goffman that was offered in chapter 3. For Goffman, the self and any sort of associated notions of the self guiding moral judgement and practice arise purely in situational terms. The self emerges as it does in response to the social situation, and there is no consistency to the self with which we reflectively engage. It would be wrong to say that Goffman was entirely incorrect here. Indeed, I have stressed that moral practice unfolds in relation to the practicalities of the situation. To deny this would be to firstly deny a wealth of social psychological evidence, but it would also mean assuming that we do not act in relation to the moral situation which confronts us. On the former point, it cannot be denied that humans are more or less susceptible to situational influence. On the latter point, it needs to be remembered that agency, including agency directed towards engagement in moral practice, is primarily practical. And being proficient at engaging with moral practice must, to some degree at least, involve the practical

adjustment of oneself to the immediate circumstances in which moral practice occurs. However, Goffman denies the role that the formation of the self via social relations plays in how moral practice is approached. Gilligan intricately demonstrates how the particular relations that commonly differentiate how females and males emerge as selves leads to testable differences in approaches to moral problems. And, what is more, room is left in this interpretation for reflective engagement with this self when moral conundrums are afoot.

Nonetheless, how the self emerges, and how this affects the individual's engagement in moral decision-making, necessarily intersects with the practicalities of the moral decision at hand. In terms of just the practical features that went into the decision-making around abortion discussed by Gilligan, we can draw up a quick inventory of the salient points that arose in her study. I have already mentioned religiosity and the conservatism of the social context in which the decision occurs. Health advice is also going to be of huge significance, as is income and career choices, to name but a few significant influences. Of course, these practicalities in the decision-making process are, as Gilligan points out, only considered when abortion is itself a viable option. These practical decisions hinge on the overall practicality (i.e. the legality and the availability of the procedure). The availability of abortion affords new practical considerations. This overall practicality recasts what the moral decision can be, and what subsidiary practical factors (such as income) are considered to be relevant to it. It also cannot be forgotten that these practical decisions are made in relation to (and often overshadowed by) wider beliefs and values about life, as Gilligan's study shows. And, of course, these beliefs and values intersect with those of the individual's significant personal relations, and often have to be compromised on this (partly practical) front.

Indeed, in terms of practicality, there is the perceived response of significant others, such as parents. Within this, there are the particular contours of these relationships which define this perception: one of Gilligan's (1982) subjects discussed how her parents had previously made her have an abortion, which was impacting tremendously on her present decision. Other subjects talked of their parental relationship; whether they felt they would get support through the pregnancy, or be shunned by ashamed parents. There is also the nature of the relationship from which the pregnancy occurs. One of the interviewees discussed how the father of the child

actually had a wife and children, who she thought best not to embroil in this saga. The views of the partner also are inevitably of relevance to the decision. To what extent is the father of the child able to coerce the decision he wants?

Interestingly, Gilligan links this with a more traditional notion of what femininity should be: one of subservience. Even if this subservience is often less direct than in previous times, Gilligan's notion of the female voice is generally inclusive of a willingness to facilitate views which contradict the individual's own views, or a desire to be inclusive of the needs and wants of other people in a caring manner. One of Gilligan's subjects 'Cathy', sums this up when she is discussing how she thinks that having a baby would be terrible for herself, but her family and partner want her to have the baby anyway: "I think what confuses me is it is a choice of either hurting myself or hurting other people around me. What is more important?" (Gilligan, 1982: 80). This notion of care is key to what Gilligan sees as the different perspective that many women take towards moral problems. It is not necessarily a question of the rational 'right' or most just decision, or indeed of the most just or rational decision being privileged over the wants and needs of others. Rather, it is a question of concern and responsiveness towards others. And this difference in moral perspective is the product of the self that emerges from differing relations as a result of gender. It is this that resulted in differing perspectives on how to approach the issue at hand.

Differences in how the self emerges and in how subsequent moral decisions unfold are surely notable. However, even the detectably different 'moral voices' Gilligan outlines need to be located within common 'frameworks of the good', in Taylor's (1989) terms. Indeed, this can be seen in how Gilligan was able to depict two moral voices as 'Two… different ways of thinking about what constitutes a moral problem and how such problems can be solved… which draws attention to the fact that a story can be told from two different angles and situations seen in different lights' (Gilligan, 1988: xvii). Gilligan's different voices are not depicting two distinct moral frameworks, but rather are reflecting a commonly shared moral framework which is articulated differently depending on how the self emerges. This is one of the major points of my thesis: the individual emerges as a self as she engages with shared understandings of the world (many of which could be described as 'moral frameworks') via differential engagement with social relations. Although it is from

these social relations that shared understandings are taken, the differential engagement with these relations differentiates how the self emerges. In turn, this results in differentiated (and indeed individuated) articulations of the shared (moral) frameworks from which the self emerges. This point was made above via the explanation of why a Meadian understanding of individuation can extend Taylor's point about the articulation of frameworks for the good.

Indeed, Gilligan (1988) and Johnston (1988) find in their follow up studies, that both males and females have access to, and can switch between, 'justice' led responses and 'care' led responses to the same moral problem. This seems to suggest that the individuals involved in the study have a generalised and shared understanding of how moral problems can be approached. According to Gilligan (1988), the difference lies in orientation towards certain ways of thinking about moral problems. This orientation is shaped by differences in how the self emerges. We articulate shared moral frameworks in different ways as a result of the emergence of a self from differential engagement in social relations. And, to round this off with the necessity of the practicality factor, Gilligan's (1988) and Johnston's (1988) follow-up studies also showed that the approach taken (justice led or care led), while definite gender differences occurred, they could also be shaped by the particular situation and the influence of other actors – for example the researcher prompting a certain moral perspective being taken, or indeed attending a school at which justice was emphasised to the students (Johnston, 1988). So what we have with Gilligan is an exemplification of how our engagement with moral practice involves an expression of shared moral frameworks, which is shaped by how the self emerges from different social relations, but which is also tethered to the practicalities of the situation in which moral judgement occurs.

Gilligan's underlying point is this: in modern Western social contexts, males and females are likely to experience the relations from which they emerge as selves differently. This is because there are commonly different expectations and norms placed on males and females within this social context. This differentiation is sustained through various practices and interactions (or transactions, in the language of this thesis), which are transmitted socially, via social relations. Again, in the language of this thesis, this occurs through the taking on of the attitudes of others as we emerge as selves. Because the attitudes that males and females take

on are different, because they carry with them different norms and expectation (particularly in terms of practice), how the self emerges and how the self is understood by the individual, varies notably between genders. In turn, this produces variation in moral judgement.

Now, if Gilligan's argument is sound (and it certainly seems plausible in relation to the empirical evidence given in the studies conducted by her and by many others following similar themes) then it seems clear that these points made about gender would hold more generally for the emergence of the self and its outcomes for individual variation in engagement in moral practice. This is a point that I have made through the arguments of individuation. In this thesis, it has been argued that individuals inevitably arise as selves from differentiated social relations. The relations we engage with, the attitudes that are taken towards us, and how these attitudes are taken on necessarily varies according to the particular circumstances of our lives, chance happenings, and various significant and insignificant experiences. Because we emerge as selves from differential relations – and via a differential experience of these relations – we can assume that variability in moral judgement will be the outcome generally, just as it is for gendered differences in the relational emergence of the self. Again, these points about individuation are themselves supported by Gilligan's study, as she highlights how variability in social positioning and experience produce differentiated individual responses to similar circumstances. Although her theory brings out thematic similarities between her female subjects, each responded in a distinct and individualised manner not just to the interview questions, but also to the circumstance of an unwanted pregnancy. This gives the theory I have offered throughout this thesis the ability to explain individuated engagement in moral practice. Yes, we emerge as selves from relatively common social relations within a shared social context. And this of course means that the self will emerge from shared norms and expectations. But, as Habermas (1995) points out, these attitudes migrate into the individual differently via the minute differences between the relations we face, and how we face them. In turn, this is productive of our variable and individuated engagement in moral practice and judgement. Our engagement in moral practice can thus be explained, through this theory, as being the product of social relations and shared moral frameworks, while also allowing for individual variation.

Summary

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This chapter should be seen within the remit set by the secondary aim of this thesis: to explain individual engagement in moral practice. Essentially, what has been provided is a sociological perspective on moral practice, although several points have been made that are of significance to philosophical questions of how moral practice should be conceptualised. Notable examples of such points include the argument that moral practices should not be seen as being decidedly different from social practice more generally, both in terms of how they are taken on and how they are enacted. Related to this, it has been argued that engagement in practices that can be seen as to some extent 'moral' does not necessarily require a special degree of intentionality or reflective deliberation. Against these points, this chapter has argued that the individual is able to engage in moral practice largely in pre-reflective terms because her self has emerged in part in relation to pervasive moral frameworks which have significance across social contexts.

This has been done largely by applying the theory of social practice outlined above to moral practice. Mead's theory of the self allows us to understand how moral practices are taken on in the same social process as social practices generally. This allows us to argue that understandings of moral practice are taken on from the generalised other to the extent that the individual's pre-reflective engagement with practice is moulded. Combined with Mead's theory of individuation (and the extension into reflectively-led engagement in moral practice), this allows us to explain how moral practices are engaged with by individual in a largely routine manner, while acknowledging individual variation in approaches to such practice. This is significant because no theory of individual engagement in moral practice would be adequate without acknowledging the individual differences in how such practice is approached. Any theory which failed to do this would consequently fail to account for the tremendous differences that exist between people's views on, and participation in, moral practice within a shared social context. Indeed, this point was reinforced by Taylor's argument of why moral frameworks are so significant to how the self emerges.

However, bringing Mead and Taylor together into a theory of the self and engagement in moral practice required the addition of relational sociology. Firstly, relational sociology allows us to take Taylor's concept of moral frameworks and apply it to Mead's theory of the socially emergent self through the concept of

transactional engagement with social relations. Secondly, relational sociology allows us to acknowledge the uncertainty and indefiniteness of moral practice itself. Because engagement in moral practice is seen as being shaped by social relations, rather than social structures or rules, the individual's engagement can be seen as emerging through social relations without being determined by these relations. The theory offered here thus allows moral practice to be seen as engaged with by individuals whose moral agency has been moulded through their emergence as selves from social relations, while also seeing this agency as being tied to the practical realities of the emerging social contexts in which their engagement in such practice occurs.

<u>Conclusion</u>

This project began as an investigation of the relationship between moral practice and self-identity. Its initial aims were to ask how the construction of one's self-identity affects moral practice. At the heart of this was the question that I really wanted to answer: how can we account for widely shared moral practices, while acknowledging that individuals engage with such practices in an individualised manner? It seems clear that many moral norms and practices are integrated into the very fabric of a social context, in the sense that they are (perhaps uncritically) accepted and engaged with by the overwhelming majority of the individuals that comprise a particular social context. But this is not to say that variation does not exist in how norms and practices are engaged with by individuals. An example of this in the contemporary Western social world would be the general avoidance of using violence against others. With Taylor (1989), I am in no doubt that this is an integral aspect of our current 'moral framework'. Yet, it also seems clear that individual variation would exist on the application of this norm in practice. We can imagine that a cross-section of a social context would have variable views on under what (if any) circumstances this general norm may be broken. Is it alright to punch someone who punches you first? Is it permissible to use violence to defend a victim of domestic violence? On a more macro scale, is military force ever justifiable, and if so under what circumstances? If individualised perspectives exist on such problems, the question becomes how we explain individualised engagement in shared moral practice.

I still suspect that there is something to be expounded here in terms of self-identity – although I suspect the role is much more limited than I originally set out to argue. This initial aim of explaining individualised engagement in shared moral practice is still applied in the last chapter. However, the shape of the thesis has changed from this being the primary question, to it being more of an upshot from a more general explanation of individual engagement in social practice. This is because a more general explanation was found to be necessary before the more specific case of moral practice could be explained. It did not take long for me to realise that an explanation of self-identity requires an explanation of the social emergence of the self. Likewise, an explanation of moral practice requires an explanation of social

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practice more generally. It soon became clear that both of these points were sufficiently problematic to warrant whole chapters by themselves. Indeed, it soon became clear that an explanation of the role that the socially emergent self plays in individual engagement in social practice was a much more fundamental question, and much more in need of an answer.

The work of Pierre Bourdieu outlined exactly why explaining individual engagement in social practice is so problematic. In line with Bourdieu's critique of how practice has been modelled, the previous social theories upon which I had relied to explain social practice quickly became untenable. In a strange way, it was the attempt at precision that made the likes of structuration theory so imprecise in its aim of accounting for social practice. The reliance on rules and structures gave such explanations of social practice a degree of certainty that could not be justified. Hence, I came to accept many of the arguments presented by relational sociologists, with which I had become acquainted with as a result of broadening my readings around Bourdieu. Relational sociology offered a means of explaining how social practice could be shared across social contexts in a way that did not deny that practice is ultimately the indefinite product of a multitude of dynamic and emergent factors called 'social relations'.

Yet, with a few notable exceptions, relational sociology seemed to have overlooked the role played by the socially emergent self in bringing shared social practices into the experience of the individual in an individualised fashion. Bourdieu's explanation of how individuals are able to engage with the 'fuzziness' of social practice in a 'virtuoso' manner is particularly inadequate. It became apparent that the kind of framework for the socially emergent self offered by Mead was able to address this inadequacy. Indeed, it also became apparent that the explanatory power of both relational sociology and Mead's framework for the self would benefit from an amalgamation. More importantly for this thesis, this amalgamation provided the means to explain the role the socially emergent self plays in individual engagement in social practice.

So what is this role? It has been argued throughout that the emergence of the self affects individual engagement in social practice, because it is through this process that attitudes towards social practice are taken on by the individual, to the extent that

the individual's practical and reflective consciousness is emergent from these attitudes. The basis of this argument is that the self emerges as the individual internalises the attitudes of others. The individual takes on the attitudes that others take towards her and towards general objects of social concern. As she faces an increasing diversity of attitudes, these attitudes come to be generalised. These generalised attitudes are internalised as the self emerges in the sense that they come to comprise the 'me'. Comprised of the generalised attitudes of others, the 'me' comes to inhibit and shape the action of the spontaneous 'I' (Habermas, 1995). While the responses of the 'I' continue to be relevant to the responses and action of the individual, the social action of the socialised self is tied to her internalisation of the attitudes of others to the extent that reflective engagement with oneself is no longer necessary to the capacity to act in line with social expectation (Habermas, 1995).

Much of the content of the attitudes that the individual engages with have to do with engagement in social practice. Indeed, this point has been brought out most decisively in the passages about why it is largely incorrect to see moral practice as distinct from social practices more generally. When we think about much of what we take to be routine in our social lives (the notion that property can be owned and stolen, that we should often approach our boss with a degree of deference, that we should perhaps appear to be grateful even if we do not like a gift we received, that we should not lash out if someone accidently bumps into us) we should recognise that much of our understanding of how to engage in practices has been taken on by internalising the attitudes that others take towards us and towards common objects of social concern.

As Bourdieu highlights, what is of particular interest is that individuals can be seen to be engaging with such practices with a seemingly virtuoso understanding of practice itself, through which the individual is largely able to adapt to changing and novel circumstances pre-reflectively. How such an engagement in social practice is possible requires an acknowledgement of the role of the socially emergent self. This is because it is through the emergence of the self that attitudes towards social practice are internalised to the extent that they are able to mould our pre-reflective engagement with them. As we emerge as selves, our practical pre-reflective capacity

to engage in routine social practice emerges as we take on the attitudes of others within our social context. It is here that the predominance of the role of the socially emergent self in individual engagement in social practice plays out.

However, it needs to be remembered that the emergence of the self does not determine the outcome of social practice itself. Part of the reason for applying Mead's framework for the emergence of the self is that it allows for differentiation in individual practice. The individual self emerges from a multitude of diverse transactions, which are not experienced uniformly by all individuals. One of the virtues of Bourdieu's concept of habitus is that it acknowledges that individuals will have (often minutely) different engagements with other actors in a shared social context, and that even identical engagements are likely to be experienced by the individual in different ways. The point is quite basic – the complexity of social life means that there are likely to be differences between individuals in *what* they experience, and the complexity of the social organism means that there are likely to be differences in *how* they experience social life. Bourdieu left room for the unconscious in his theory of habitus to facilitate this latter point (Chancer, 2013). Indeed, he argued that while habitus may be similar for certain groups in society, it does not produce identical practice.

A number of conceptual flaws with the concept of habitus have been outlined above. But in many ways, the points just made are true of how Mead's theory of the self is applied here. Mead saw the individual self as emerging from differences, both in terms of what is experienced in social life and how social life is experienced. In a similar vein to Bourdieu, Mead argued that this produces differences in how the self emerges. The individual emerges from both socially and psychologically differentiated positions on social life, which affects how she engages with the attitudes of others. Mead's (1967/1934) concept of the 'I' upholds the role of the unconscious in the individual's cognitive experience of the world. The individuals' socially and psychologically differentiated position in the social world affects the subjective standpoint that she comes to recognise as belonging to herself. That is, differentiation results in the individuation of one's perspective on the world and on herself, which affects how she engages with practice (Habermas, 1995).

This process of individuation is significant to differentiated engagement in social practice in another sense. The self that is engaged with by the individual is comprised of the generalised attitudes of others that have been internalised from an individualised standpoint. As a result of differentiation in the emergence of the self, the individual comes to recognise herself as a subject with her own life history, and with views on the social world which she can recognise as being her own. The self that the individual reflectively engages with is thus comprised of the generalised attitudes of others upon which the individual has her own perspective. This means that, when engagement in practice is reflectively-led, it is based on engagement with a self with an individuated perspective upon practice. As such, the capacity for reflectively-led engagement in social practice (which Mead's theory can be extended to account for) means that the outcome of practice is to some extent differentiated and individualised. In the framework given here, social practice cannot be seen as an entirely determined product of social context because the individual plays a subjective and actuating role in her engagement with the social world.

What is more, it cannot be said that the emergence of the self produces certain outcomes for social practice itself because the actions that actually occur in the conducting of practice are often tied to the influence of other actors. Various social psychology experiments have been referred to that clearly demonstrate the susceptibility of individual actors to the social influence of others. Such compelling evidence cannot be denied in any coherent theory of how social practice unfolds. This is important here because it limits the explanatory power of the socially emergent self. It cannot be argued that the social emergence of the self results in certain social practices unfolding because such studies (particularly those of Milgram (1992)) illustrate how individuals may be influenced in ways that go against not just how they view themselves, but also (at least in part) how the 'me' is likely to have emerged.

This brings me to one of the major reasons for utilising relational sociology. Rather than relying on rules or structures to explain social practice, relational sociology argues that practice is constituted by unfolding relations across a diversity of social fields. When appropriately conceptualised, this allows relational sociology to argue that social practices are both historically situated and emergent from present

transactions in particular social fields. This is because relational sociology understands individuals as acting in relation to one another, while acknowledging that such action is the product of extended chains of interdependencies and historically situated transactions. How the individual acts in a present social situation is of course affected by other present actors, but our capacity to act in a certain way is also tied to the actions of individuals that extend far beyond our current circumstances. It has been argued that a basic example of this point is that buying an item from a shop relies on the actions of countless others. But on a more abstract point, how a social practice is generally taken to be is the product of historically situated transactions which transcend time and space. The fact that a handshake is taken to be a means of greeting somebody (often someone with whom we are not well acquainted) is not (usually) emergent from a particular situation, but instead is a practice that has become normalised and transformed over time (Elias, 1991).

By relying only on social relations, relational sociology is able to explain social practice in such a way that it can account for social practice as being dynamically emergent across present situations, while also accounting for how practices are shared across time and space. It has been argued that, on this front, relational sociology is able to add greatly to Mead's theory of the self. This is because Mead was not especially clear on how shared understandings of practice are able to extend beyond specific interactions. The concept of 'transactions', however, can easily be integrated into Mead's framework to remedy this oversight.

Equally, the addition of Mead's theory of the self allows us to see how social practices are brought into the experience of the individual via transactions between actors in relation to one another. Making this argument requires that we see the self as emerging from social relations. This is not a difficult addition to make to Mead's framework: it more or less requires that the conceptual language of relational sociology is brought into Mead's theory. As a result of this synthesis, this thesis is able to explain how historically situated social practices can be largely shared across a social context, and how they can be brought into the experience of the individual. What is more, Mead's framework means that we are able to explain how the individual's capacity to engage in social practice is shaped via these relational transactions, which bring attitudes towards social practice into the experience of the

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individual. But, as was stressed earlier, this does not mean that the emergence of the self from social relations *determines* the outcome of practice.

What we are left with is a theory of how the individual becomes able to engage in social practice both pre-reflectively and reflectively as a social virtuoso. But this theory is sufficiently dynamic to recognise the emergent and murky nature of practice itself. This allows the theory offered here to accord with Bourdieu's exposition of social practice, and the critique of theories of social practice offered by him and relational sociology more generally. This thesis is able to explain individualised engagement in both routine and novel social practice without relying on the limiting and rigid notions of rules and structures. Perhaps most importantly for the aim of this thesis, the role of the self in individual engagement in social practice is accounted for in a way that does not delimit the outcomes of practice itself.

From here, achieving the subsequent aim of explaining the role of the self in individual engagement in moral practices is simply a case of applying the above theory to moral practice. However, doing this also teaches us several things about moral practices themselves and about moral agency. Firstly, moral practices are largely taken on in the same way as social practices generally – that is, through the continued emergence of the self via social relations. Secondly, in light of this it has been posited that moral practices are not necessarily taught or transmitted as moral practices *per se*. Often, the moral content of certain practices arises through our general engagement with the practice and the attitudes of others. It was highlighted that there are often practical, rather than moral reasons, for a parent to take certain attitudes towards their child's action. It was argued that it is unlikely that the parent is necessarily attempting to introduce the child to the murky water of the morality of property ownership when she tells the child not to play with a delicate possession. While it may not be correct to say that our generalised understanding of moral practice arises incidentally, it is arguable that we take on our understanding of moral practice from our more general engagement with social practice and the subsequent attitudes of others.

What this gives us is a theory of individual engagement in moral practice that does not need to revert to metaphysical explanation. We can see individuals as simply engaging in moral practices in much the same way as they engage in social practice

more generally: both reflectively and pre-reflectively. As such, in line with the more general conclusions of this thesis, it can be maintained that this thesis offers an explanation of how shared moral practices are brought into the experience of the individual, while providing for individualised approaches to such practices in relation to continually emerging transactions across social fields. This theory can thus describe engagement in moral practices in terms that are dynamic, while also recognising the shared and historically situated nature of moral practices themselves.

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