



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Developmental Review

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/dr



Layers of awareness in development

Philippe Rochat *

Emory University, USA



ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 26 July 2015

Available online 13 August 2015

Keywords:

Development

Awareness

Subjectivity

Intersubjectivity

ABSTRACT

Distinct layers of awareness about objects, people, and the self grow from an implicit biologically given core at birth. Each added layer of subjective experience would correspond to major qualitative shifts: the emergence of a contemplative stance by 2 months, self-consciousness from around 21 months and the manifestation of an ethical stance by 3–5 years. This new “onion” way of looking at psychological experience is meant to capture the fact that a new emerging layer of awareness does not block, re-construct, or fundamentally re-structure “à la Piaget” the expression of those ontogenetically anterior via bounding up equilibration and other reflective abstraction “bootstrapping” mechanisms. In contrast to Piaget’s overall representational re-organization, what is proposed here with the onion metaphor model is a multilayer view on consciousness in development, each layer offering a particular zone of awareness through which we constantly navigate depending on the mind state of our being in the world: dozing and dreaming, implicitly or explicitly aware, co-aware, conscious, or co-conscious. The model is illustrated using facts on the early development of pictorial understanding, mirror self-experience, self-consciousness, interpersonal awareness, and sharing awareness in development. The main purpose of the theory is to show that what develop in children between birth and 5 years are ultimately additional ranges of subjective experience, new possibilities of being aware in the world.

© 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

This work was prepared while the author was supported by a 2014–2015 resident fellowship at the Institute of Advanced Studies (I.E.A) of Paris, France.

* Emory University, Department of Psychology, 36 Eagle Row, Atlanta, GA 30322, USA. Fax: (404) 727 2979.

E-mail address: psypr@emory.edu.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2015.07.009>

0273-2297/© 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Introduction

The rebirth of nativist and evolutionary views on development was an important part of the burst of infancy research that followed the cognitive revolution of the 1960s. The mainstream theoretical intuitions regarding development followed the footsteps of Chomsky in the realm of linguistics, progress in evolutionary psychology and the modular views of emerging cognitive neuroscience research of the 1980s. Despite strong antagonist views like the ecological approach to perceptual learning, information processing based learning or the dynamic systems approach to development, neo-nativist and innate modular views that are grounded in phylogeny have prevailed. This is evident when looking at today's developmental research literature, infused with new facts presumed to be innate and long thought to be products of learning and active construction in development. These facts pertain to innate physical reasoning, innate concept formation, precocious pro-social inclinations and naïve sociology, pre-verbal theories of mind, and also presumably an innate moral sense. This new wave of infancy research continues to debunk many long held assumptions regarding the origins and putative mechanisms underlying the emergence of human consciousness, namely the ability to speak, transmit knowledge, the capacity for recursive thinking, implicit and explicit metacognition, notwithstanding the capacity to be self-conscious and having an objectified sense of self. However, renewed nativist and evolutionary looks at the origins of human consciousness tend to elude what might be major first person experiential changes occurring in early development. The model proposed here is intended to do so, combining recent infancy research discoveries with rapid changes in young children experience of the world as well as their own embodied self.

The article is organized as follows. After presenting the intuition behind the proposed model and in order to substantiate the general idea of developing layers of awareness emerging between birth and 5 years, the example of pictorial understanding is first used as a general empirical illustration, primarily because it is the context in which the intuition for the model first came to the mind of the author. Next, various general mind states that would correspond to layers of possible awareness emerging chronologically in early development. The intent here is to propose a general blueprint of awareness in development that we assume would be domain general. For the rest of the article I present more detailed empirically based observations to illustrate further multi-layer awareness in development, using my own research on the development of self and others' awareness, in particular (1) mirror self-experience; (2) self-consciousness; (3) interpersonal (inter-subjective) experience with others, and (4) the development of sharing awareness. We conclude with a recap of the main points behind the proposed multi-layer awareness model based on the conceptual and empirical illustrations that form the core of this article.

Intuition behind the model

In nature, most things grow by layers, typically piling on top of each other like geological strata, molecular structures that progressively coalesce to form organs like our brain in the course of embryogenesis. This highly, genetically pre-programmed growth process swiftly adds cell layers over cell layers. Because it is so pervasive in nature, "layer building" is an apt metaphor to capture the development of our awareness of the world, including ourselves. This analogy is obviously oversimplifying but helpful in trying to capture an aspect of consciousness in development that is arguably not sufficiently considered, despite the fact that it is an essential feature of human conscious life. As captured by William James and much earlier by Heraclitus, with their notion of consciousness as being primarily a dynamic stream, the mind works by constantly fluctuating from implicit to explicit functioning; highly emotional and irrational decision making, to highly rational and cold minded strategic reasoning; from highly moral and ethical conducts, to automatic gut instincts often contradicting explicitly defended moral norms.

The model proposes that in development, layers of awareness are added in a cumulative fashion. This accumulation increases the experiential range of the child, constantly navigating through these layers while awake and conscious. In other words, the model proposes that in development, layers of distinct experiential awareness build up in successive layers, each corresponding to a new variety of possible mind state. However, contrary to the constructionist, stage-like view à la Piaget, a new added

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/353445>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/353445>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)