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This substitution is depicted in figure 19.6 where (Y) hovers about (X).

Have I introduced Perner's complicated representational machinery in through the back door? When the substitution of Y for X is unpacked, does it not imply that the four-year-old grasps how the mental representation of (Y) is regarded by the other as a representation of the real situation, whereas in fact it misrepresents that real situation which consists in (X)? I do not think so. All the child needs to understand is that anyone who accepts (Y) for (X) would adopt the same stance toward (Y) as they themselves adopt to (X). The situation Y would be accepted as a quite specific part of reality (the part corresponding to X). Nothing more is needed. In much the same way, we might notice that a slot machine will treat a coin that is no longer valid currency as if it were still valid; we can make that assertion – and it will help us to anticipate what the machine will do – without implying that machines have anything like a *representational* device that gives rise to false beliefs (Dretske, 1988). If my analysis is correct, it shows that the claim that children of approximately four years of age grasp the concept of mental representation (Astington and Gopnik, chapter 3; Flavell, 1988; Ferguson and Gopnik, 1988; Perner, 1988a; Wellman, forthcoming) is highly questionable.

5 Winner and Hardt (1989) and Astington and Gopnik (chapter 3) have suggested that three-year-olds' difficulties in reconstructing their own past false beliefs refute the Cartesian notion that mental states of the self are transparent, and show instead that mental states of the self have to be identified by means of a theory of representation. However, the refutation only follows if it is held (quite implausibly) that all mental states of the self – past and present – are equally transparent. A much more defensible position is that *current* mental states of the self are transparent and reported earlier than those of other people (cf. Harris, 1989a, pp. 56–7). This position is quite compatible with the existence of difficulties in reconstructing *prior* beliefs.

6 Hadwin and Perner (forthcoming) have replicated these results with one important qualification. Some children could accurately diagnose the duped animal's false belief, but still proceeded to misdiagnose the animal's emotion. This lag warrants further research.

7 Wellman (forthcoming) argues that even when children lack crucial first-hand experience, they nevertheless arrive at accurate theoretically based insights into another's experience. For example, Kelli, a blind, pre-school child, realized that her mother could see an object at a distance, provided there were no obstacles between her and the target (Landau and Gleitman, 1985). This argument is flawed, however. Kelli was not completely blind. She could distinguish light from darkness with one eye, and could therefore have learnt first-hand that light can be seen at a distance, provided there is no obstacle.

## 20

### *Narrativity: Mindreading and Making Societies*

MICHAEL CARRITHERS

In *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* Jerome Bruner sets out a contrast between what he calls the paradigmatic mode of thought and the narrative mode. The paradigmatic mode is that of mathematics, logic and computing, whereas the narrative mode concerns the human condition. He remarks that the narrative mode is little understood and speculates as follows:

Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that story must construct two landscapes simultaneously. One is the landscape of action, where the constituents are the arguments of action: agent, intention or goal, situation, instrument, something corresponding to a 'story grammar'. The other landscape is the landscape of consciousness: what those involved in the action know, think, or feel, or do not know, think, or feel. The two landscapes are essential and distinct: it is the difference between Oedipus sharing Jocasta's bed before and after he learns from the messenger that she is his mother. (1986, p. 14)

The notions of a narrative mode, and of a dual landscape, are I think potentially very fruitful. They go to the heart of the human capacity to imagine, to construe and misconstrue, others' mental states. I want to use these ideas to explore an anthropologist's perspective on mindreading.

In *Actual Minds* Bruner was concerned chiefly with the landscape of consciousness and with the narrative mode as exercised by adult competence, especially in literature. Janet Astington has taken the ideas in another direction, towards 'Narrative and the Child's Theory of Mind' (Astington, forthcoming b). She confirms that a crucial change occurs between three and five years of age, when children begin to understand the difference between the two landscapes, the difference between what is true and what someone thinks is true, between 'the weaver knows that the loom is empty' and 'the Emperor thinks that the loom might have cloth on it'. These issues she approaches from a theory of mind viewpoint, but she hints at something

more as well. She notes, for example, that the setting of experimental questions in a story facilitates children's understanding, quite apart from any additional information conveyed. This implies, I think, that the narrative mode might amount to more than the individual theories or competences into which it might be analysed.

In fact in this paper I will propose that we might usefully think of a distinct capacity, *narrativity*, a property of the human species which differentiates it from other species. Mindreading or higher-order intentionality, I argue, is a necessary foundation for narrativity. But that is not the end of the matter, for narrativity provides a yet more powerful form of mindreading. It is narrativity which allows humans to grasp a longer past and a more intricately conceived future, as well as a more variegated social environment. In other words, narrativity supports the more elaborate and mutable sociality which differentiates humans from their cousins, the other social primates. In this perspective the link between the landscape of consciousness and the landscape of action cannot so easily be disjointed for purposes of exposition, as Bruner and Astington did. For in our evolutionary past, as in our later history, the landscapes of action and of consciousness have been part of one real and determining flow of deeds and moral consequences.

My arguments therefore are phylogenetic and sociological rather than ontogenetic and psychological. If they are acceptable, however, they should be able to be translated into a developmental perspective. For example, I think it no accident that the children depicted by Astington above and Astington, Harris, Wellman, and others in this volume – children gradually attaining new and more powerful attributions – can also be depicted in a very different way:

In every culture, the period of three to five years is one in which children begin to discover wider opportunities for co-operation as well as the harsher aspects of human conflict and aggression. They begin by initiating and comparing, and then gain imagination for real co-operation in a narrative drama where pretended roles complement each other. Emotions of liking and disliking are strongly expressed in play. When play breaks down, fights can become mean and bitter. Friendships and antipathies last, but are open to negotiation and change. Confident and joyful sharing of experiences, and of the motives that give them significance, depends on acceptance of rules and the exercise of communicative skills that facilitate agreement. (Trevarthen and Logotheti, 1989)

This child's world as described by Trevarthen and Logotheti is an altogether more intricate, risky and engaging place. It is in fact more like human social life, and certainly more like the threshold to an adult social life that

adult competence must match. To think of people as holding a theory concerning others' ideas and beliefs is perhaps a reasonable first step in trying to understand how we master social complexities. But in order to enter into play, pretend roles, or negotiations over friendship and antipathy, the child – and *a fortiori* the adult – must build a more sophisticated understanding of a social setting than mindreading in a narrow sense can provide.

#### Research Programmes

I want to begin by stressing that my reasons for thinking so arise from the character of human experience as envisaged by anthropology and not from psychological evidence. I conceive that anthropology has a research programme, as developmental psychology and behavioural biology have theirs, and that these programmes arise in genuine *conundrums* set by experience. For sociocultural anthropology the *conundrum* appears in two phenomena, the sheer complexity of human sociality and the wide variation in schemes of sociality.

In box 20.1 I have tried to convey the anthropological programme by contrasting it with others represented in this volume. I envy the elegance of experiment and the rigour of thought demonstrated by many of the papers here, and my attempt to characterize the different paradigms implies no value judgement. Psychologists and behavioural biologists are building a view of humans from the simple to the complex, whereas anthropologists work from the complex to the simple.

I have surely oversimplified, but this series will help me to make three important points.

The first concerns the difference of temporal perspective between the top of the table and the bottom. Humphrey, for example, writes that social primates inhabit a world 'where the evidence on which their calculations are based is ephemeral, ambiguous and liable to change, not least as a consequence of their own actions' (1976: p. 309). The key word is 'ephemeral'. This is not, as I first thought, a world without time, but one whose temporal horizons are very close and which does not, at least so far as the social primates are concerned, suffer the burden of a laboriously planned future or a long remembered past. Similarly the experiments reported in this volume by Leckam, Wellman and Astington and Copnik are ones which presuppose only a very brief sequence of actions. But in contrast the settings studied under the rubric of (4) in box 20.1, and even more so those under (5) and (6), are ones with broader views on time, bringing into consideration

## Box 20.1 Primal Scenes

- 1 A generic individual (with theories or mind modules) confronts the environment.
- 2 Generic individuals confront each other and environment in a shifting social setting with a narrow temporal horizon. (Humphrey's (1976) setting, theory of mind experiments.)
- 3 Individuals typed by age, sex and rank confront each other and environment in a face-to-face community over a (relatively short) time period. (Achieved or projected longitudinal studies of primate groups — Strum, 1968.)
- 4 Role types, based on named individuals but distinguished by achieved and/or marked social statuses, relate to each other and environment in a face-to-face community with a weighty cultural tradition and complex social organization. (Community Studies in ethnography.)
- 5 Named individuals with shifting role types relate to each other and environment in a face-to-face community with complex social organization, a long past, an uncertain future, and a rolling cultural heritage. (Historically oriented ethnography)
- 6 Those of five join with others, and against others, in interest groups, ethnic groups, and classes to remake their heritage (of role types and groups) in the face of shifting global social and social environmental forces. (An ideal social anthropology or social history)

This box gives a simplified comparison of different viewpoints in research on human sociality.

the lifetime of individuals and the longer continuity – or discontinuity – over generations or centuries of families and other institutions.

Secondly, the perspectives at the top of the list are socially simple. The experimental settings reported in this volume have at most three roles: experimenter, subject and perhaps one other. Even the experimental stories have only two or three characters. On the other hand humans considered by anthropologists are socially variegated on many dimensions. Within a family or small community different kin relations distinguish one person from another: mothers, mother's brothers, grandparents and great-grandparents, daughters, cross and parallel cousins. Beside these relations, and often involving the same people, other social, political or economic distinctions might be made: woman and (uninitiated) girl, healer and patient, judge and plaintiff, headman and villager, queen and subject, host and guest, customer and trader, master and slave.

Finally, the temporal and the social perspectives are intimately involved with each other. For in human societies regarded as such the types or characters are frequently ones arrived at over a large part of a life-cycle: a doctor or healer trains for years, a woman becomes a wife after being initiated and achieving her society's version of the age of reason, a peasant son succeeds to his patrimony as head of household only with age and his father's retirement or death. Moreover, these gradually attained characteristics of persons occur in a mutually construed flow of events extending beyond any one person's life-cycle into the past and the future. The arrival in his hands of his patrimony by the peasant son, for example, is intelligible because of, indeed is constituted by, the previous inheritance by his father and his father's father, and so forth.

Such a flow of events includes performative acts – the vows of marriage, initiation into manhood, conferral of a degree, coronation as a king – the natures of which are constituted by, and are only conceivable within, a wider social and temporal setting: a church, a community, a university. In the larger evolutionary perspective the peculiarity of this human trait is highlighted if we ask how such roles differ from those we might attribute to a social primate of another species. How, for example, might the role 'newly immigrant adult male', a role strongly differentiated in other primate societies, appear among ourselves? And the answer is: in many ways. A new commander is appointed to your unit. A new apprentice joins your company. A lawyer comes to town and hangs out his sign. Such characteristically human movements are only intelligible in the light of, indeed are constituted by, a much larger and more complex social background than those found among our primate cousins.

And finally there are other and larger events which may not be performative alone, but which all the same create a new and long-lasting state of affairs and set of characters. A murder takes place, a feud begins, and new identities with new relations of enmity spring into being. Famine strikes and whole regions are rendered refugees and dependents. A colonial power arrives and society is transformed from top to bottom.

Anthropologists, sociologists and social historians have one way of conceiving such events and arrangements, the people involved have another. Different participants have different understandings of the action. But what I think ineluctably true is that human beings have an effective capacity which enables them to create, to understand and to act within these ramifying complexities, complexities extended through social rather than physical space and unfolding in an event-filled rather than abstract time.

## Narrativity

It is this capacity which I want to designate as narrativity, a capacity to cognize not merely immediate relations between oneself and another, but many-sided human interactions carried out over a considerable period. We might say: humans understand *characters*, which embody the understanding of rights, obligations, expectations, propensities and intentions in oneself and many different others; and *plots*, which show the consequences and evaluations of a multifarious flow of actions. Narrativity, that is, consists not merely in telling stories, but of understanding complex nets of deeds and attitudes. Another way to put this would be to say that human beings perceive any current action within a large temporal envelope, and within that envelope they perceive any given action, not as a response to the immediate circumstances, or current mental state of an interlocutor or of oneself, but as part of an unfolding story. (I owe this latter formulation to Paul Harris, personal communication.)

I think it essential that character in narrativity be conceived very broadly, since it must comprehend both individuals as having statuses and roles – that is, as standing in relation to one another – and individuals as having idiosyncratic histories and propensities. On the one hand there must be some room for abstraction, so that people can be understood as acting generally, on a first approximation, with a specific set of obligations and rights: as, for example, a lawyer, or a king, or a mother acts with obligations and rights toward clients, subjects, or sons and daughters. But on the other hand the particularity of one person rather than another, of Hannah rather than Amy, must also be grasped. We must understand not just the type of the grandfather, for example, but also his individual propensities: mellowness or irascibility, friendliness or aloofness, and so forth. Whether or not the Western notion of an individuated personality really grew out of a much earlier sense of people as *personae* or types as Mauss suggested (see Carrithers, Collins and Lukes 1985), narrativity must comprehend both of those possibilities and many others as well.

But characters with their relationships are also set in a flow of events, a plot, with its sense of plans, situations, acts and outcomes. Plots embody what a character or characters did to, or about, or with some other character or characters, for what reasons, and what followed on from that. To comprehend a plot is therefore to have some notion of the temporal dimension of social complexity. This complexity arises from a distinctly human form of causality in which people do things because of what others think and because of how others' places thereby change with respect to their own. By means

of stories humans cognize not just thoughts and not just situations, but the metamorphosis of thoughts and situations in a flow of action.

Clearly a very great deal must be involved in the capacity to understand interlinked events in this way. For example, a good deal of the causality woven into a plot consists in characters acting upon their evaluation of others' acts in the light of some standard: I may act, that is, just because I find your action kind or evil, appropriate or silly, and so forth. People also rely upon a folk psychology, some more elaborate and cultivated set of attributions which supplement the basic theories of which Wellman, for example, writes in this volume. But what I want to stress for present purposes is only this: though we can, for purposes of analysis, separate out character and plot, and morality and folk psychology as well, in the flow of action these constituents are all inextricably mingled in a larger and comprehensive understanding of pattern in events. The landscape of consciousness would not be intelligible, would not even exist, were it not meshed with the landscape of action.

Let me use Bruner's example, *Oedipus the King*, to illustrate what I mean. On one hand, Sophocles' play could be no better example of the power and intricacy of immediate and temporally simple human mindreading capacities. From the beginning the drama plays on the difference between the audience's received knowledge of Oedipus' actual condition of incest and parricide and the false state of mind of Oedipus on the stage. To cast the situation in a form which emphasizes the layers of representation and metarepresentation involved we could write:

We know that Oedipus believes [falsely] that he is innocent, not the cause of the city's pollution.

And even during the early scene with Teiresias, whose prophetic knowledge of the real state of affairs is not accepted by Oedipus, this configuration is wound more tightly until:

We know that Oedipus believes [falsely] that Teiresias seeks to deceive Oedipus and the citizens; but we also know that Teiresias knows that in fact Oedipus deceives himself.

Sophocles drives this interplay of ignorance and knowledge further and further until just before the revelation, when Jocasta implores Oedipus not to pursue his enquiry into his origins: 'I beg you – do not hurt this out – I beg you, / If you have any care for your own life / What I am suffering is enough' (Latimore and Grenc, 1954: line 1060).

*We grasp that Jocasta fears that she might know what Oedipus hopes; fears the herdsmen might know about Oedipus' birth.*

Looked at in this way, the play is constituted through its use and manipulation of humans' abilities to construe and to track complex states of mind in oneself and others. The drama is literally made of mindreading. Moreover, action is set out as taking place in a very narrow time-span, a few hours perhaps, and only with few characters, so that the dramatic action is a good deal closer to the experimentalist's chronological and social simplicity than to the anthropologist's complexity.

But it is misleading to think that the story of Oedipus is circumscribed by mindreading alone. Narrativity is no less an ingredient of *Oedipus the King*, and indeed the wider envelope within which the action takes place covers most of an ordinary human life. It includes the union of Laius, Oedipus' father, with Jocasta his mother, Oedipus' own birth, his exposure on the hillside and rescue, Oedipus' murder of Laius, his accession to the throne and marriage to Jocasta, and the begetting of his children. Without this framework the short-term play of mindreading would be senseless. And indeed, since the story of Oedipus looks forward as well to his death and apotheosis at Colonus and to the fate of Thebes in later episodes, for a Greek audience the temporal envelope extended into the future as well.

So if *Oedipus the King* is unintelligible without mindreading, it is equally so without the notions of what a king and a queen are, a husband and wife, a mother and a son, without the conception of a human life-span and its proper stations, and without the notion of what constraints and possibilities govern long-lasting relationships. It would also be unintelligible without some notion of Oedipus' idiosyncratic character, including the intelligence and heroism which allowed him to confront the Sphinx and solve its riddle. Nor could we grasp the action without being able to conceive a change in such statuses, such as Oedipus' taking of marriage vows or being crowned king, or Jocasta's giving birth to legitimate children. And finally, I suggest, it would be incomprehensible were not statuses, changes in status, and the transformation of relationships, attitudes and beliefs knitted together into a larger, developing, narrative whole. The fate of Oedipus, to blind himself, and of Jocasta, to hang herself, would seem poorly motivated had not the tempo and relation of events, both on stage and in the larger context, led inexorably to that outcome. It is for this reason that the separation of a landscape of consciousness from a landscape of action is finally unviable: for the tale is made indissolubly of Oedipus' relations to others, of the characters' beliefs, feelings, and intentions in regard to each other, of public events, and of their unfolding together in a compelling sequence.

### Making Society

My proposal is that narrativity, Bruner's narrative mode, constitutes a level of cognitive integration matched to the level of social and interactive integration achieved in human social life. I have elsewhere (1989) suggested that just that capacity for a larger social integration, our distinctly human form of sociality, has been selected for in the process of human evolution. The argument is an elaboration from Humphrey (1976) and Byrne and Whiten (1988b): an increasing capacity to live in groups, to vary the organization of those groups, and to create ever-more complex forms of cooperation within them would, for many reasons, have been to the advantage of members of our species. When Trevarthen and Logotheti wrote of children developing an 'imagination for real cooperation in a narrative drama where pretended roles complement each other', their words had an evolutionary as well as a developmental significance. It is the development and elaboration of cooperation which marks us as a species, and our children begin to be equipped – this is Trevarthen and Logotheti's larger point in their article – to enter into co-operation from the beginning. Moreover I have suggested that we need not conceive the narrativity that was part of that evolution to be a strictly or narrowly linguistic skill, though it is certainly intertwined with linguistic skills in adult humans at present.

It is however misleading to conceive narrativity only after the pattern of an audience understanding *Oedipus*. For that example sets narrativity in a passive mould, as a capacity which enables humans to comprehend successfully a social world already formed, already given and immutable. For purposes of research into mindreading or narrativity it may be easier to take this view, since to consider the social environment as shifting introduces complexities that are very difficult to reckon. But in an evolutionary perspective narrativity must have been important as an active competence as well, one which enabled humans to shape events, and indeed society, through plans or projects. I suggest, in fact, that the human capacity for planning and for having long-term projects is at base no different from narrativity.

As Schmidt and Marsella point out (in chapter 8) a plan may be conceived on a short or a long scale. A plan on a very short scale, such as those envisaged by Humphrey or in some of the experiments reported here, may perhaps be directly grasped as an immediate intention, belief or attitude through mindreading in a narrow sense. Fred's intention as he busies himself with his kettle to offer a cup of tea to his colleague Nigel might be read by a Nigel equipped with higher-order intentionality. But a long-term plan, such as Fred's design to woo Nigel and get him to help Fred displace Angela

as head of department, appears only through a grasp of Fred's character and through a casting of events in a long enough perspective. Only then might Fred be understood as a schemer and Fred's actions be revealed as a campaign, not a random series of interactions. More important, Fred could only be a schemer if he could project the unfolding of his scheme over a considerable period of time and in the face of shifting vicissitudes. This dimension of human life would appear more clearly if we read *Macbeth* or *Othello* rather than *Oedipus*.

Let me look at the example of Fred more closely. On the one hand there are the larger narrative assumptions which are part of Nigel and Fred's setting, assumptions analogous to those which enable an audience to understand *Oedipus*. Fred and Nigel understand what a chairperson is, what it means for a university to have a relatively democratic structure, and therefore how a chairperson might be chosen or elected. More to the point, they connect these larger assumptions with an actual history, the development of chairpersons' power in their university and Angela's appointment as chair several years ago.

Moreover for Fred there is a yet larger history as well, one which he tells both himself and others. Angela epitomizes an unfortunate and backward influence in (shall we say) the discipline of anthropology. She is steering the department towards biological and evolutionary interests. Fred, as the faithful student of the celebrated Professor Zehetgrueber, represents a more enlightened concern with cultural symbols. This is indeed the department Zehetgrueber founded, the one which should carry forward his project of symbolic anthropology. So apart from personal ambition there is, for Fred at least, a much longer term story, one which transcends his own lifetime and involves in one way or another many others in his discipline.

And there is a finer-grained story too, one which concerns the patterning of events on a day-by-day, even hour-by-hour scale, and the forming of action on that scale. The meeting at which arrangements for electing or re-electing the chairperson is next month. Fred's close friend and ally, Lotte, has agreed with Fred that things have gone too far and that they need to change the direction of the department. They must go to work quickly. They cannot count on everyone agreeing, but there are some who might come around, among them Nigel. Fred agrees to approach Nigel while Lotte approaches others. Indeed – and now we are back with Fred about to offer Nigel a cup of tea – Fred will not mention his conversations with Lotte, for Nigel does not wholly approve of Lotte. Fred will rather address Nigel directly and appeal to his shared concern with symbolic anthropology. And as Fred now hands Nigel that cup of tea, he looks very closely to see Nigel's reaction as the topic of the chair is raised. Fred will be able to narrate to Lotte the course and timing of his conversation with Nigel. From that they

will measure Nigel's inclinations and decide how next to move.

The entanglements of this hypothetical sketch are not in their nature, I believe, very different from those of many families or corporations or villages or churches or other social settings. On one hand, Fred could not understand what was going on, let alone act, if he could not put characters together with plots: he could not understand himself as the student of Professor Zehetgrueber, Angela as an abidingly deleterious influence, or Lotte as his ally. On the other hand, the forging and recounting of stories enables him to act. On the larger scale it is the casting of Angela as a villain in the developing story of Zehetgrueber and his apostles that furnishes him with orientation and direction. Fred can understand himself, indeed present himself, as acting for the longer term, not just for whimsy or temporary advantage. And as action develops and circumstances change, he will be able to orient himself according to that narrative . . . or according to some new and further narrative which develops out of it. Fred is not without invention, and he can spin a new tale to match new circumstances.

On a smaller scale Fred's ability to recount Nigel's reactions will form the basis of further policy to be pursued by himself and Lotte. They will understand Nigel partly through the development of his conversation with Fred, and they will remind each other of things that Nigel said or did on other occasions. They will work Nigel into their account of the developing action. And in fact Nigel would be literally incomprehensible to anyone, completely unaccountable, were it not possible for Fred and Lotte so to set him in a narrative frame.

### Recapitulation

Let me for the moment leave Fred and Lotte conspiring. I have proposed that narrativity consists in two inseparable traits which I have called 'character' and 'plot', traits which humans attribute to themselves and to the people and actions which surround them. People do not possess characters apart from their place in the developing action any more than plots possess a shape apart from those who participate in them. Neither plot nor character make sense without the other. This inseparability is the central reason why I would wish to see narrativity considered as unitary, rather than as the cumulative effect of separable competences or theories.

Character consists in attributions to persons in action: such attributes can be very varied, ranging from personal attitudes and propensities to the duties and obligations expected of someone acting in a well-understood social role, but in any case the attributes appear only in the course of events,

events which may span a lifetime. Plots in turn consist in series of actions and events which are linked causally through the construal of the propensities and attitudes, the beliefs and understandings, the intentions and interests of those participating in observing them. Fred and Lotte, that is, will act next on the basis of their understanding of Nigel's propensities, beliefs and desires. They will act as they do because Nigel inclines towards or thinks or wants this or that, and because Nigel's beliefs or desires bear particular consequences in the present flow of action.

If, as I suggest, narrativity is a distinct cognitive power, we need not think of it as being infallible, or as producing a canonical or impersonally correct account. Participants' understandings may be more or less public and agreed, as people agree on who is now chairperson, or they may be more private, hidden or contentious, such as who will be the next chairperson. Nigel no doubt would tell a story different from Fred's, and Angela's would differ again. What all the narrators have in common is the ability to act by virtue of construing a direction in events and a coherence in persons.

In fact there is a certain amount of recursion or embedding involved in such construals: the coherence which Nigel finds will, to the extent that it guides his action, actually render his action coherent and capable of being construed. Consequently Fred may well tell a story which involves the story Nigel tells himself. 'Lotte,' Fred might say, 'Lotte, I think Nigel always thinks of himself as a peacemaker, a true Christian, that's what he did the last time the chair was elected, so if we can go along with that then he might . . .'. The embedding which we find in higher-order intentionality ('I suspect that he *thinks* that I *believe* so and so') appears in narrativity, the only difference being that in narrativity temporal and social complexity are encompassed as well.

By connecting narrativity to action I have also tried to suggest that we regard it as more than just a mental capacity for representation. For narrativity is essentially connected to conation and emotion. Stories move us, and move us to action in a way that merely imperative injunctions cannot. It is commonplace of anthropologists that peoples everywhere look to exemplary narratives, myths or legends, for a template of action. In my own fieldwork (1983, 1988) I found that Buddhists in Sri Lanka and Jains in India did indeed often pattern their actions, and indeed whole series of actions, on some narrative precedent enshrined in their scriptures. These narratives are roughly equivalent to Fred's larger story of the heritage of Zehetgrueber and his place in it. What anthropologists find harder to capture is the way in which people – including themselves – find in everyday life the more evanescent narrative structures that allow them to act. Yet if my contention that narrativity is a fundamental and pervasive human trait is true, then it is to the fragmentary and elusive talk of everyday life – what so-and-so did

to so-and-so, and what you are going to do about it – that we should look for confirmation. We would expect to find narrative coherence – or better, coherences – even in the absence of clearly marked story-telling. And indeed some anthropologists, notably Schifffelin (1976), have begun to take this tack.

The notion of mindreading is partly an answer to the question: how can humans enter into such complex interactions with each other? What I have tried to suggest is that this question leads on to another, and that is: how can humans form enduring and changing relations with each other, such that they create the intricate and mutable societies in which they live? And I have suggested that narrativity, a capacity to comprehend both long-term experience and elaborate social arrangements, is the answer to this second question. The implications for anthropology of this answer, if it were accepted, might be that we would look less to purely abstracted symbols and the play of symbols as the atoms of human cultural arrangements, and more to plots and characters as embodying a fusion of ideas with action and actors. For my psychological colleagues it might imply that they could look to a level of integration of cognition greater than that embodied in the understanding of immediate intentions and beliefs alone.