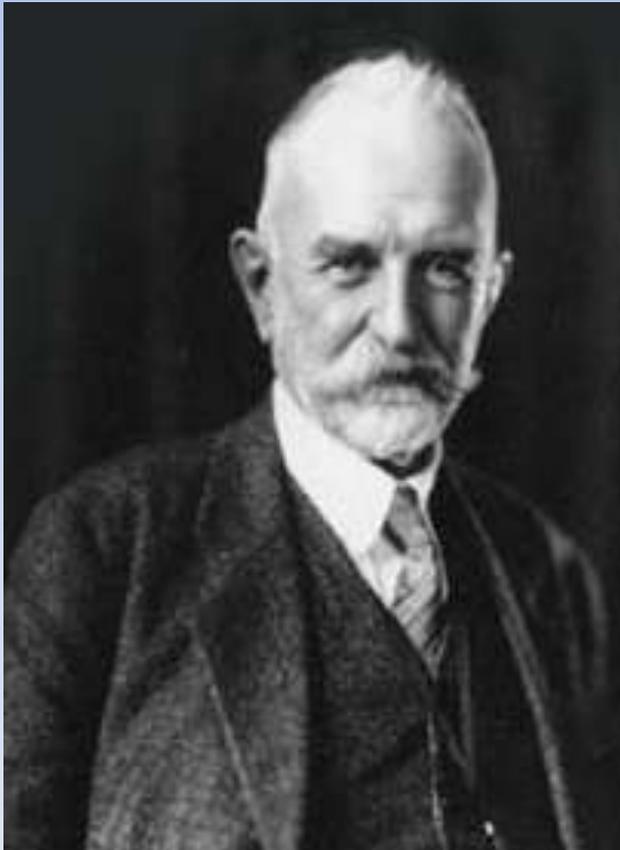




G.H. Mead's Theory of Self

George Herbert Mead: An Introduction



George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) was an American philosopher, sociologist and psychologist, primarily affiliated with the University of Chicago, where he was one of several distinguished pragmatists. He is regarded as one of the founders of social psychology and the American sociological tradition in general.

His major contributions are Pragmatism and Symbolic Interaction, Social Philosophy (Behaviorism), Philosophy of Science, Play and Game and the Generalized Others. In this presentation we shall focus on his theory of self.

The “Theory of Self”: A Glimpse

- 1. Mead is best known for his theory of Self. According to Mead, the self represents the sum total of people’s conscious perception of their identity as distinct from others.**
- 2. His theory of Self was shaped by his overall view of socialization as a life long process.**
- 3. For him self is the social product rising from relations with other people. At first, as babies, we are unable to interpret the meaning of people’s behaviour. When children, learn to attach meanings to their behaviour , they step out of themselves. Finally, when they can think about themselves , the same way they might think about someone else, they begin to gain a sense of self.**

Three stages of Development of Self

The process of forming the self, according to Mead occurs in three distinct stages:

- 1. Imitation:** In this stage, children copy behaviour of adults without understanding it. A little boy might 'help' his parents vacuum clean the floor by pushing a toy vacuum cleaner or even a stick around the room.
- 2. Play stage:** A child plays, sometimes at being a mother or a teacher, at times a Post man, a police man etc. In this stage, responses are not organised. A child thus internalizes the attitudes of others who are significant to him through enacting the roles of others.
- 3. Game Stage:** As a child matures, he also learns to respond to 'Generalised Others'. The individual just does not identify the roles of his significant others (family) but also determines other. He gains a Social Identity.

Two Facets of Self

Mead made significant contribution to the development of the concept of social self in differentiating that the portion of the self that develops through the internalization of the attitudes of others from that portion which never becomes completely predictable.



'Me' and 'I'

'Me'



- 1. Me is the part of the Self that is an organisation of the internalized attitude of others.**
- 2. Me represents the conventional part of self.**
- 3. Its an Objective part of self.**

'I'

- 1. I is the acting part of Self.**
- 2. I represents the self insofar as it is free, has initiative, novelty and uniqueness .**
- 3. I is the Subjective part of self.**



Interaction Between Two Facets of Self

1. Mead says that two parts of the self are in constant interaction. The 'I' holds attitudes about "me". and the me reflects the judgments of others towards "I".
2. This dialogue is the basic part of the conscious and unconscious mental life of every individual.
3. The self has characteristics that it can be the object and subject to itself.
4. Self is introspective.
5. Self is reflective.
6. The self arises in the process internal conversation between I and Me

Conclusion

Thus the approach focuses on the peculiar individuality every self. Each person participates in the social process and develops a self by taking others into account. The ultimate product each individual experience is the Unique Human being



THANK YOU ...

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