

Pages 289-310 (George Herbert Mead)

Introduction

- Through language, an individual is able to see themselves as an object.
 - o Ex: picking out clothes for a date
 - o Thus experiencing "self" socially - controls conduct
- Mead laid the foundation for *Symbolic Interactionism*
 - o Defined society as "generalized social attitudes" that continually emerge through coordinated interaction between individuals and groups.
 - Rather than defining society as a system of interrelated parts that promote consensus/stability or conflict/domination.

Biographical Sketch

- Born in 1863 in South Hadley, Massachusetts; moved to Ohio at age 7
 - o Graduated from Oberlin College in 1883
 - o Worked in northwest as railroad surveyor/tutor
- Graduate studies in philosophy & psychology at Harvard.
 - o Met William James (American pragmatist) and Wilhelm Wundt (German philosopher).
 - o Then hired as philosophy instructor at University of Michigan (2 years)
- Went to University of Chicago until he died in 1931
 - o Met John Dewey (head of philosophy department) and Charles Horton Cooley.
- Transcriptions of Mead's lectures were edited and published in *Mind, Self, and Society*.
 - o Influence from social psychology course.
- Envisioned a social utopia
 - o Reform rather than revolution
 - o Wanted society that expanded universal rights that helped individuals pursue their own interests, but also a unified order.
- Active in the reform movement in the early 20th century
 - o Faith in science and reason to create a participatory democracy.

Intellectual Influences + Core Ideas

- Pragmatism
 - o Developed through Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey.
 - o Used as a method/instrument for studying the meaning of behavior.

- The meaning of objects/actions lie in their practical aspects (how individuals adapt and solve problems they confront).
 - “The point is that the meaning of objects or social interaction is rooted in action, in everyday practical conduct, that is, the uses that are made of them as individuals go about the business of constructing their behavior” (291).
 - Based on German idealism and philosophy of Kant and Hegel.
 - Existence of “two-fold self” - “I as subject” and “I as object”
 - No reality separable from perceiving subject.
 - The world is a task to be accomplished.
 - Consciousness itself cannot be said to exist unless there is something there is some object in the external world that one notes or becomes aware of.
- **Behaviorism**
 - “Social Behaviorism” derived from the behaviorist branch of psychology
 - Focuses on observable actions - thus mind, feelings, desires, and thinking cannot be observed nor studied scientifically
 - Therefore behaviorism can only study *overt behaviors* of links between visible stimuli and the learned responses that are associated with them.
 - **John B. Watson** - behaviorism in psychology
 - Human behavior differed little from animal behavior; explained/predicted on laws that are associated with behavioral responses to external stimuli (learned response).
 - Mead saw mind as “a behavioral process” that entails a conversation of significant gestures.
 - Internal conversation - individual takes on attitude of the other
 - Individuals shape their actions on the basis of imagined responses they attribute to others.
 - Self-control = from of social control
 - Emphasized that “the individual and the society to which she belongs are mutually dependent; each requires the other for its progressive evolution.
 - Ex: Internal conversations before asking someone on a date, going on a job interview, deciding whether to ask a question in class, etc.
 - **Take on the attitude of the other**, viewing yourself as an object as other individuals do during interaction.
- **Evolutionism**
 - Two evolutionary themes:
 - Saw humans as most advanced species
 - Humankind's superiority lies in it's capacity to communicate through symbols.

- Language allows us to see selves as an object.
- Ability to interact symbolically with others, ourselves, and the environment.
- Social progress (practical vs. utopian)
 - Practical - role of science as an instrument for addressing problems we see in natural and social environments.
 - Science allows for orderly adaptation to and increasing advantage over our environment and increase advantage over our environment.
 - Utopian - emphasis on language, eventual creation
- *Social control depends on getting what is needed for both social control and individual creativity
- This process can also occur on an individual level within societies on a collective level once they become interdependent on each other.
 - The League of Nations - community recognizes other community in universal democracy.

Theoretical Orientation

- Individualistic

- Social order is continually emerging through ongoing activities of individuals.
 - society as product of coordinated activities by individuals who take the attitude of others with him they are interacting with.
 - Society is NOT an overarching system of pre-existing structures.
- Society = shared attitudes that consciously shape individuals' behaviors.
 - Institutions emerge as patterns of action that are reenacted by participants.

- Non-rationalist

- These individuals are attempting to navigate or make sense of the situations in which they find themselves.
 - Actions are guided by an attempt to solve problems.
 - Also mentions suppressing some actions that could elicit disapproval from others.

Introduction to "Mind"

- "Mind" = a process/behavior that allows for the conscious control of one's actions.
 - Mind involves an internal conversation of gestures.
 - Controlling one's present action with reference to ideas about possible future consequences (non-rationalist).