

George Herbert Mead

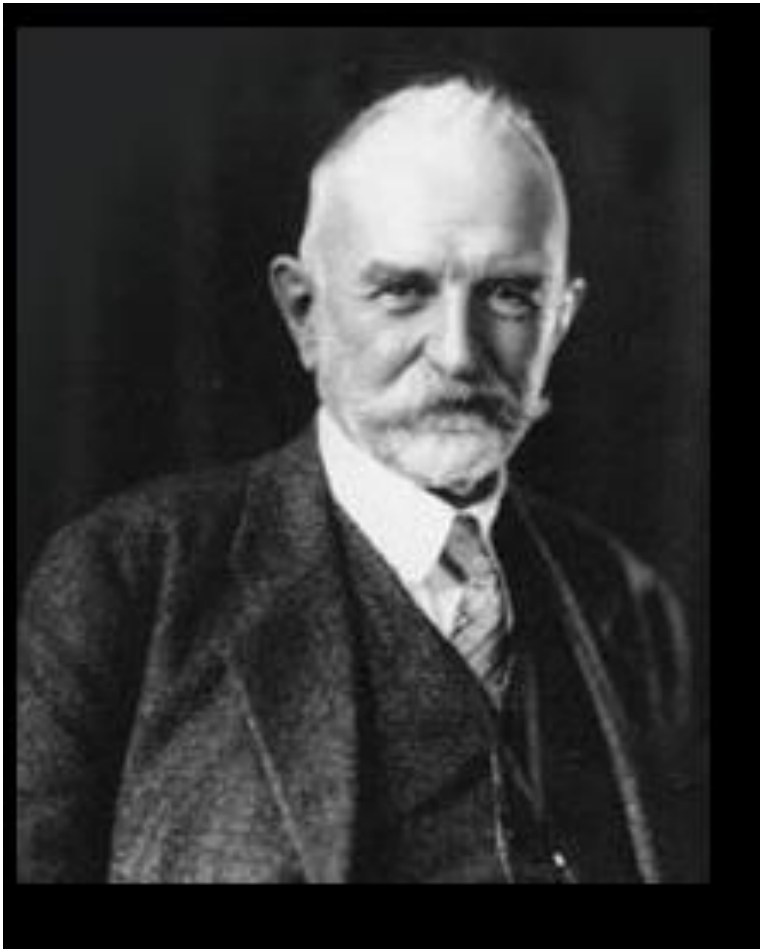
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George Herbert Mead

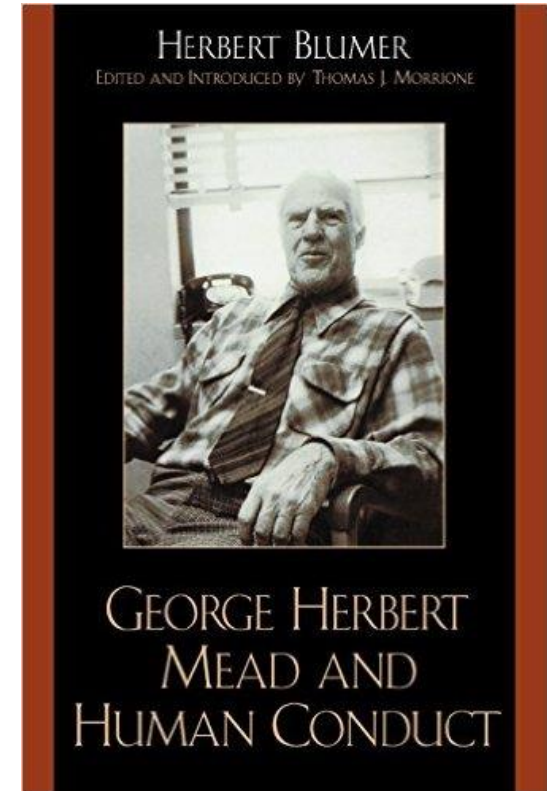
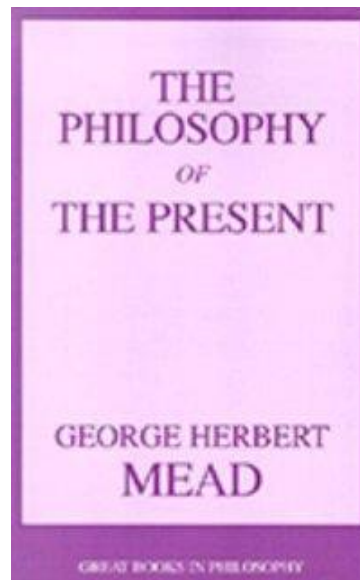
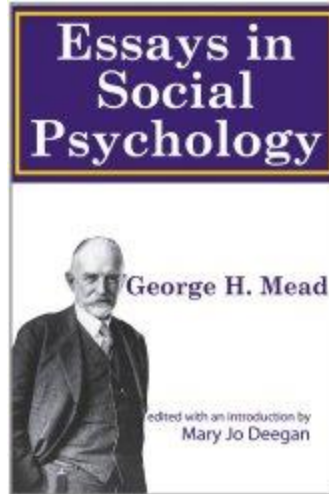
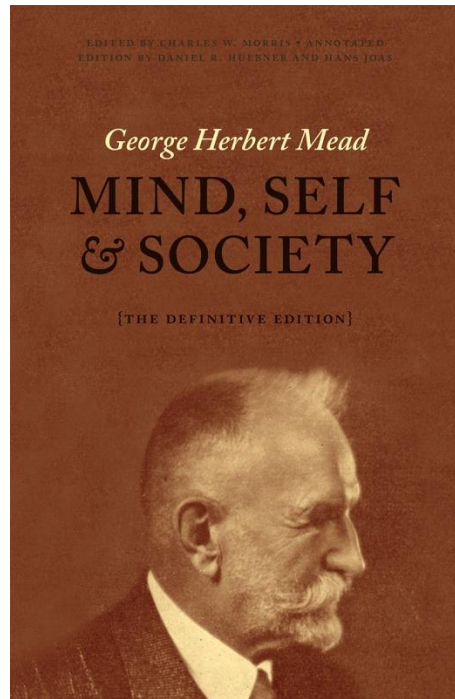
(February 27, 1863 – April 26, 1931)



✓ 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 symbolic interactionism and of what has come to be referred to as the Chicago sociological tradition.

Mead's Major Works



Mead's works were assembled posthumously

from lecture notes and unpublished papers by several of his students;
these comprise his major works:-

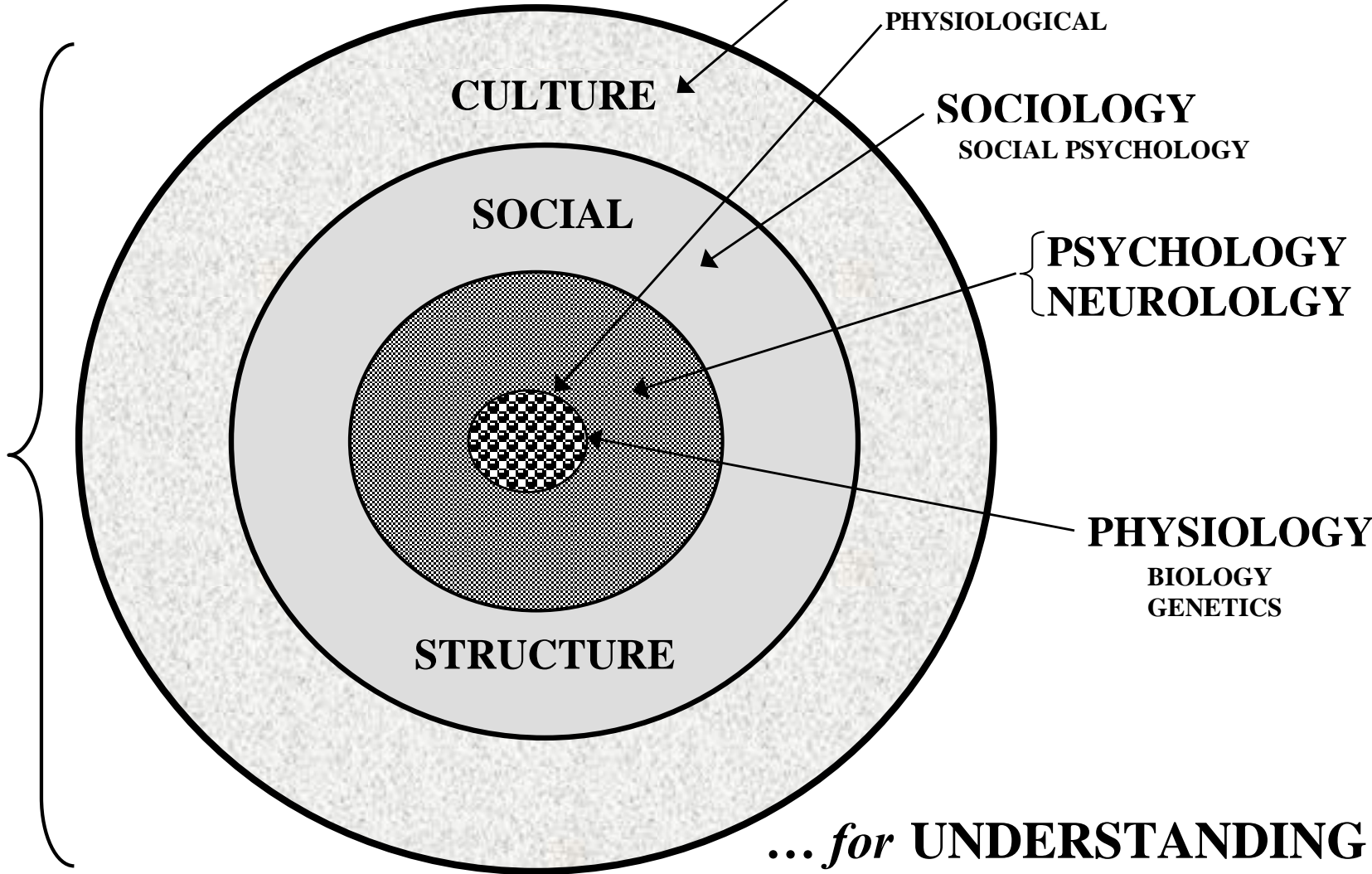
- ❖ 1932. The Philosophy of the Present.
- ❖ 1934. Mind, Self, and Society. (Ed. By C. W. Morris).
- ❖ 1936. Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century. (Ed. by C. W. Morris.)
- ❖ 1938. The Philosophy of the Act. (Ed. by C.W. Morris, et al.)
- ❖ 1964. Selected Writings. (Ed. by A. J. Reck).
[includes articles Mead himself prepared for publication.]
- ❖ 1982. The Individual and the Social Self: Unpublished Essays by G. H. Mead.
(Ed. by David L. Miller).

Mead as a Social Behaviorist & Pragmatist

- ❖ The meaning of things is rooted in everyday practical conduct, the uses that are made of these things as individuals go about constructing their behavior.
- ❖ In the process, a “thing” becomes an object because of what we do with it, how we behave toward it and how it “behaves” back...
- ❖ Thus the world is not something “out there” to be experienced by the subject, but is rather “a task to be accomplished.”
- ❖ Furthermore the world is not something “out there” that can be experienced directly, but is only available through the filters of our biological physiology, our individual mental processes, our position (roles and statuses in the social structure) and the culture and sub-cultures in which we are embedded.

**CONCENTRIC
CIRCLES of KNOWLEDGE...**

WHAT EVER'S 'OUT HERE'



**... for UNDERSTANDING
HUMAN BEHAVIOR**

MIND

- The **first** component in Mead's trilogy is termed *mind*. Mead's conception of **mind** is a "social phenomenon--arising and developing within the social process, within the empirical matrix of social interactions."
- The mind emerges through such exchanges, thus its nature is that of an internal process of communication grounded in the utilization of *significant symbols*. Therefore, the mind is processually formed through self-conversation and interactions with others. Shared symbols, dominate the process. **Our most vital and distinctive symbolic communication is language. In Mead's words, "out of language emerges the field of mind."**
- For Mead and later symbolic interactionists, **language is the distinguishing criterion for being human.**
- **Mead believed that if one's actions evoke the same response in others, then the meaning of symbols is no longer private but a behavioral reality that can be studied.**

SELF

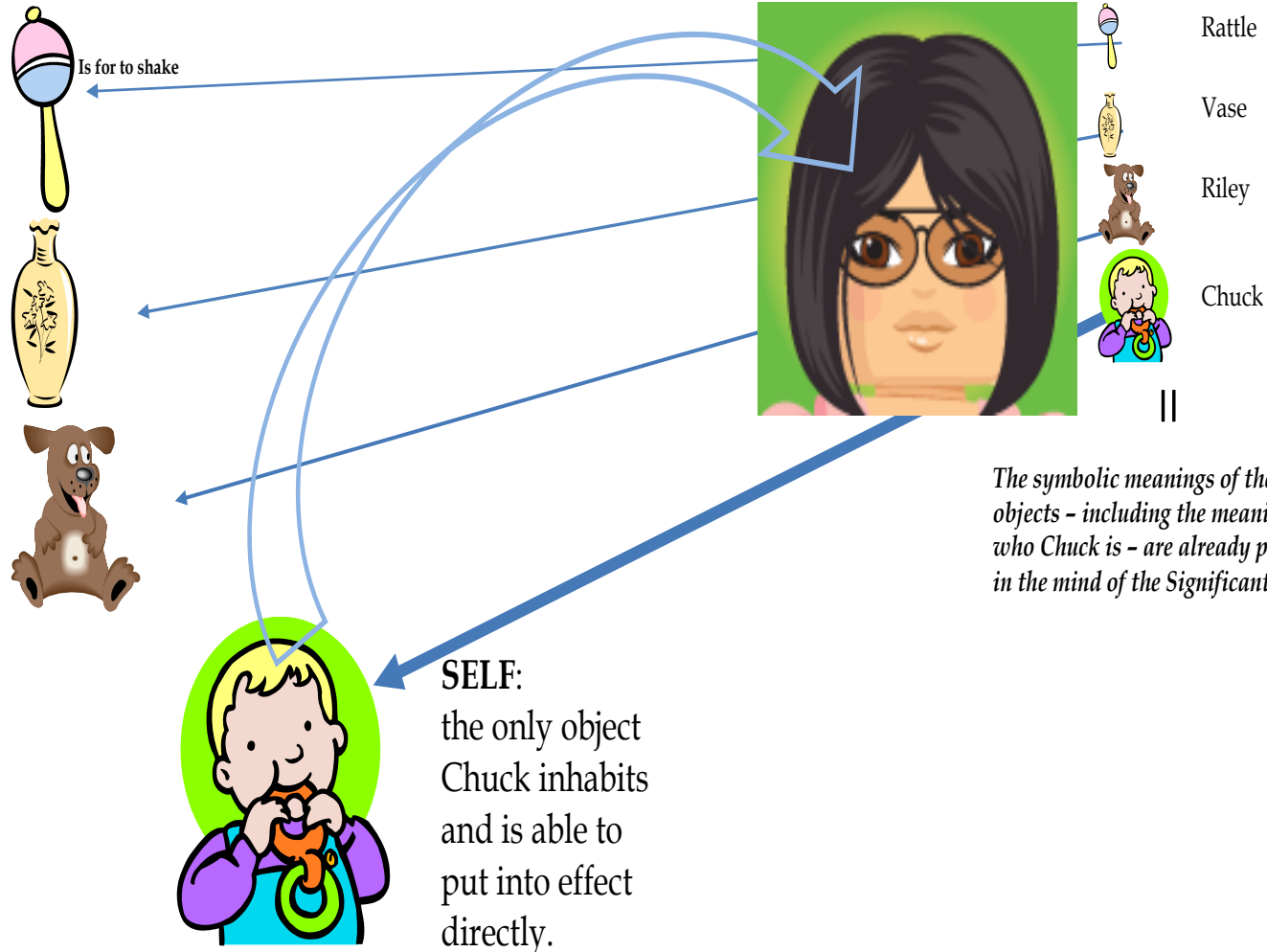
- The **second** component in Mead's trilogy is termed *self*. The self also "arises in social experience" and can be thought of as "**an object to itself**," possessing a "social structure". Individuals can conceive of their own being and convert that identity into a form of consciousness. So conceived, the self can be the recipient of both definition and emotion. Symbolic communication is crucial to the development of answers to the question Who am I? Mead argued that the self is best thought of as a process, and he traced its genesis developmentally.
- **The development of the self is dependent on learning to take the role of the other.** Role taking requires that we imagine how our behavior will be defined from the standpoint of others (as in Cooley's "looking-glass self"). For Mead, role taking occurs throughout the developmental process by which the self is constructed and refined. This process consists of three distinctive phases. From a period of *imitation* without meaning for infants, through the *play-acting* world of children, and finally to the phase of the *generalized other*, the self expands, changes, and comes into being.

SELF, continued

- ❖ For the very young, role playing is simply a matter of doing what others do (**Imitation**). In time, however, the child begins to play "pretend" roles such as parent, sibling, even the imaginary friend. In the course of switching identities and imaginary conversations, the self through play becomes both separate and defined. The child is learning to see a unique self from the various perspectives of other role players (**Role Playing**).
- ❖ When egocentric play gives way to the rules and "teamwork" of games, the individual learns that the behaviors of other players are somewhat fixed, impersonal, and predictable. In playing the multiple and interlocking roles of the game, and other organized endeavors, self-control emerges. Through such play, one develops and internalizes a group of perspectives on the self that Mead termed the "**Generalized Other**." As this collective frame of reference matures, the player becomes a social being who will demonstrate some consistency in future behavior. Thus, the "**inner voice**" of the generalized other continues to whisper the complex requirements of being "human."

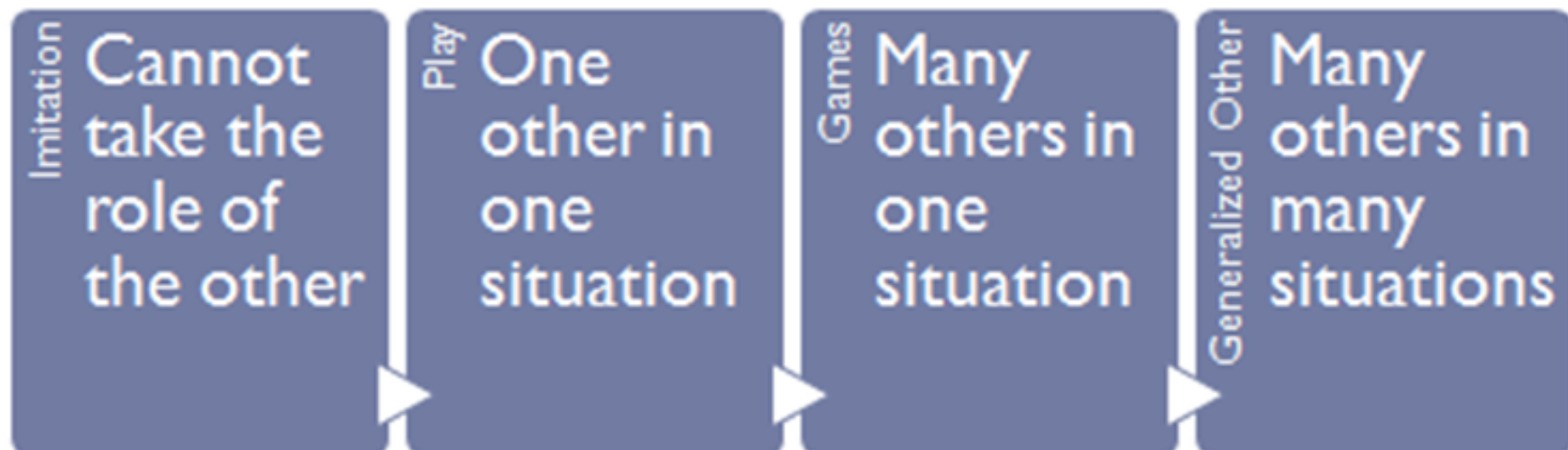
THE MEANING OF OBJECTS IS LEARNED THRU TAKING THE ROLE OF THE SIGNIFICANT OTHER

SIGNIFICANT OTHER



How do we explain socialization?

George Herbert Mead's Theory of the Social Self



SOCIETY

- ❖ *Society* is the third component in Mead's system. It is little more than an *extension of his "organized self."* More precisely, *through interaction the self takes on "generalized social attitudes" toward a wider environment.* Such references are beyond the immediate spheres of personal relationships, intimate groups, or communities.
- ❖ For Mead, the institution of society consist of "common responses" rooted in such attitudes by which "the modern civilized human individual is and feels himself to be a member not only of a certain local community or state or nation, but also of an entire given race or even civilization as a "whole."
- ❖ **Society is thus maintained by virtue of humans' ability to role-take and to assume the perspective of generalized other.**

GEORGE H. MEAD'S MODEL

MIND

INTERNALIZATION -

ROLE TAKING: *ascertaining
the intentions of others*

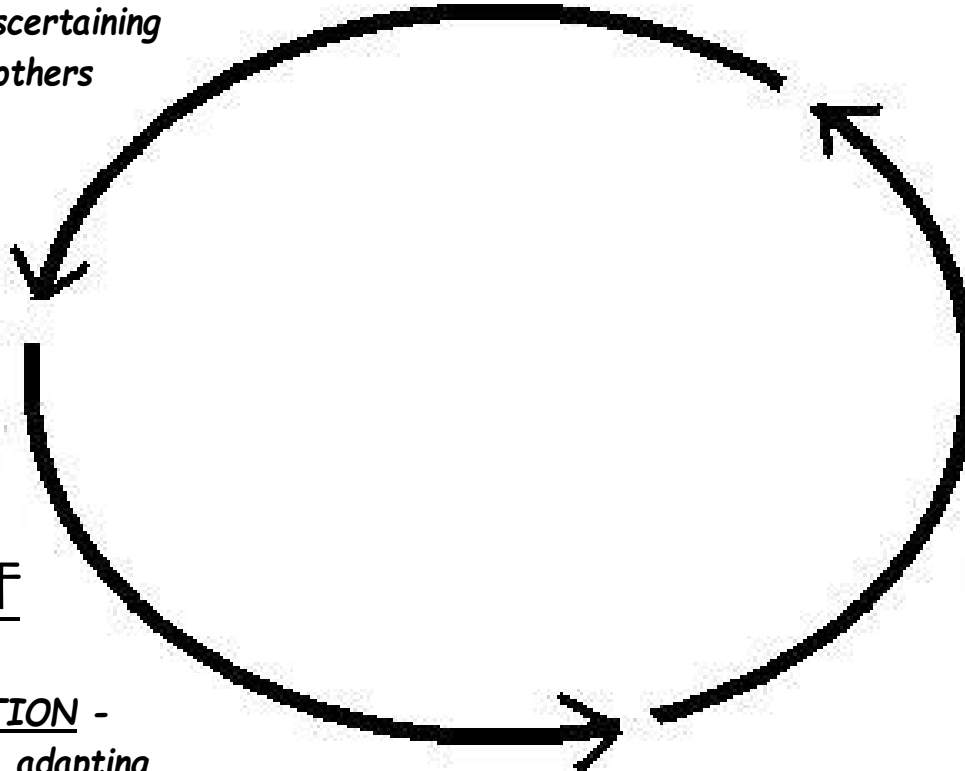
SOCIETY

OBJECTIVATION -
SOCIETY: *social
consensus via
significant
shared symbols*

SELF

EXTERNALIZATION -

ROLE PLAYING: *adapting
to the intentions of others*

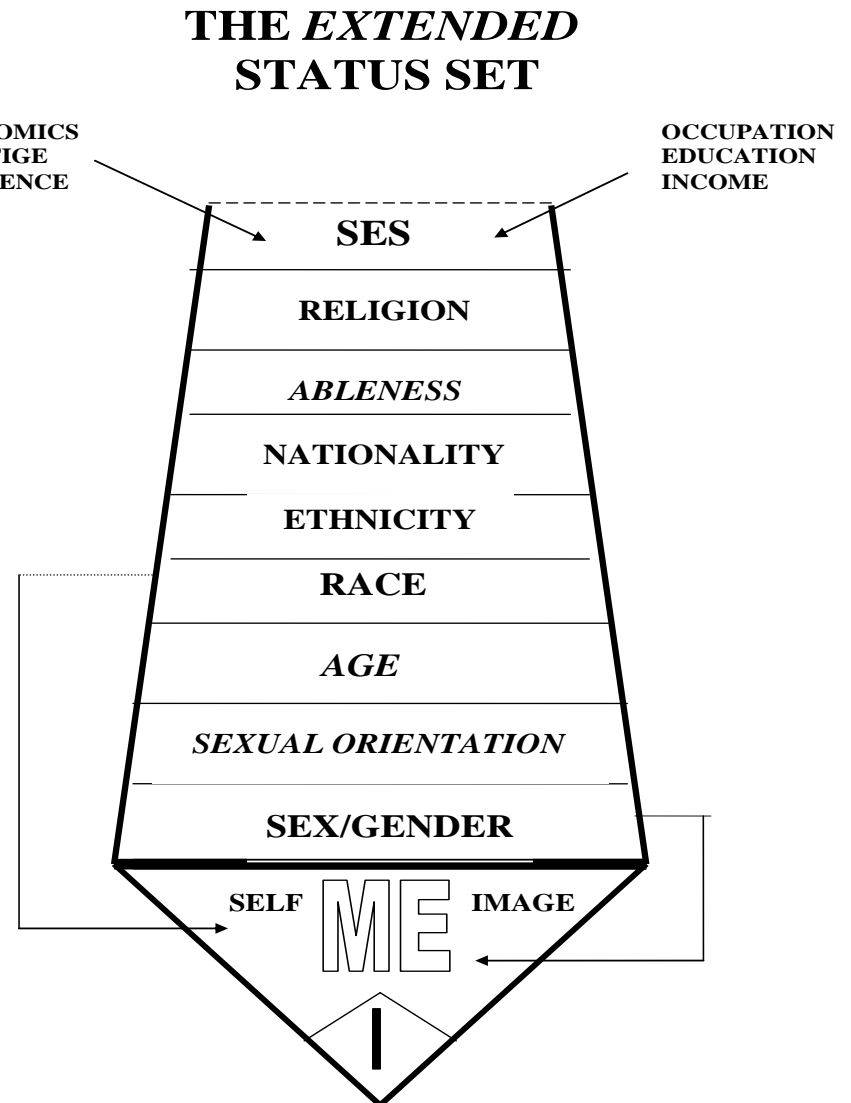


-ala Peter Berger

THE EMERGENCE OF THE SELF (ME & I)

- Imitation (mimicry) =
role taking
- Play (taking turns) =
role-making
- Games (rules) =
role-playing
- Society/Generalized Other =
normative order,
conscience collective
- Mind =
internalized conversation

AND THE ROLES WE PLAY



Summarizing GEORGE HERBERT MEAD

- ❖ His treatment of human society took the form of showing that human group life was the essential condition for the emergence of consciousness, the mind, a world of objects, human beings as organisms possessing selves, and human conduct in the form of constructed acts
- ❖ He reversed the traditional assumptions underlying philosophical, psychological, and sociological thought to the effect that human beings possess minds and consciousness as original “givens,” that they live in worlds of pre-existing and self-constituted objects, that their behavior consists of responses to such objects, and that group life consists of the association of such
- ❖ reacting human organisms.
- ❖ Mead saw the self is a process and not as a structure:
- ❖ The human being is an object to him or her self...and thus a self-referential symbol with which we each interact in the activity of minding, of carrying on an internal conversation....

Summarizing GEORGE HERBERT MEAD

- ❖ The individual experiences oneself as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the **particular** standpoints of other (**significant**) individual members of the same social group...
- ❖ ...or from the **generalized** standpoint of the social group as a whole to which one belongs...
- ❖ ...and one becomes an object to oneself only by taking the attitudes of other individuals **reflexively** back toward oneself.
- ❖ Society consists of the generalized social attitudes that continually emerge through coordinated interaction between individuals and groups.
- ❖ Social order is continually emerging through the ongoing activities of individuals who are reflexively taking the attitude of others and attempting to make sense of (i.e., define) and navigate the situations in which they collectively find themselves.

Thankyou

