

Classical Sociological Theory: Introduction

A. The Classical Tradition

1. Role of wisdom
  - a. People are naturally unequal: some have more wisdom
2. Language is for finding wisdom and truth
3. After Christianity, leading role of Church in finding truth
4. Great chain of being
  - a. God, Church hierarchy, King, Aristocracy, Commoners
5. Society as a family or body (corporatism)
  - a. Head of society like a father
  - b. The different parts fit together and are (or should be) in harmony
  - c. The parts are organized in corporate structures, not individuals

B. The Individualist/Utilitarian Tradition

1. Hobbes and Social Contractarianism
  - a. State of Nature
    - 1) Individuals as atoms
    - 2) Individuals have complete sovereignty over themselves
    - 3) People motivated by desire/pride and fear of death: maximizing their utilities
    - 4) People are equal: all have desires; all fear death; all are mortal
      - a) Implicitly democratic
    - 5) War of every person against every other person

- 6) Condition of anarchy and strongest person winning; but strongest person must also fear
- 7) Denial that religion is effective in reducing fear
- 8) Problem of aristocratic pride
- b. Social Contract to build state and society
  - 1) Rational people will give up sovereignty to state
  - 2) Note prisoner's dilemma: rationality of social contract ineffective against aristocratic pride and religious zeal
2. Locke's moderation of this view
  - a. Society can create state
  - b. Right of revolution
  - c. Toleration
3. Adam Smith and the harmonization of individualism
  - a. Theory of Moral Sentiments
    - 1) "Sympathy" leads to comparison
    - 2) Comparison leads to striving
    - 3) Striving changes whole face of the globe
  - b. Wealth of Nations
    - 1) People are equal, but have different talents; have tendency to "truck, barter and exchange one thing for another"
    - 2) This leads, not to war, but to peaceful complementarity
    - 3) Market society as a social contract:
      - a) Feudal society as anarchy, state of nature, warfare, mafia turf-battle

- b) Market society as a pacified society
    - (i) Order and good government
    - (ii) An expanding pie displaces violent confrontation
  - c) The Invisible Hand
  - d) The night-watchman state
4. Bentham and Utilitarianism
- a. Motto: The greatest good for the greatest number
    - 1) Calculation of pleasures and pains
  - b. Based on the same atomism, egalitarianism, and self-interest as Hobbes
    - 1) Now explicitly democratic
    - 2) Maintains the same peaceful and harmonious orientation as Smith
  - c. Promoted Liberal reformism in England
    - 1) Reducing privilege
    - 2) Widening franchise
    - 3) Improving living and working conditions
    - 4) Supporting toleration
5. Criticisms of Utilitarianism
- a. Economics became institutionalized and separated
  - b. Socialists criticized atomism as leading to new forms of privilege and thus being undemocratic
  - c. Sociologists criticized atomism as empirically false
  - d. Psychologists criticized pleasure/pain calculations as simplistic (Pygmalion: Bentham “Pushpin as good as Poetry,” JS Mill, GB Shaw, My Fair Lady)
  - e. Moralists criticized isolation of atoms, loss of community, decline of altruism

6. By the period between the two world wars, Utilitarianism appeared to be dead, but since the 1950s, it has made a come-back in sociology
  - a. Homans and Exchange Theory
    - 1) Criticizes Parsons' reification of "society"
    - 2) Society is composed of people doing things for each other and thereby forming solidaristic bonds
    - 3) Blau shifted theory from emphasis on individual psychology to structures of interaction
    - 4) Note anomalies discovered from structural perspective
      - a) Arrow's impossibility theorem
      - b) Schelling's theories of "bandwagon effects" or "tipping"
  - b. Limits of Rationality
    - 1) March and Simon's "bounded rationality" and the problem of information overload: "satisficing" rather than maximization of utilities
    - 2) Mancur Olson's "free rider" problem
      - a) Marwell/Oliver's solution in field of social movements
    - 3) "Prisoner's dilemma" and game theory (recall Hobbes)
      - a) Iterated games as a possible solution: problem of information overload
  - c. Limits of Atomism in social structure
    - 1) Networks in markets: White and Granovetter
    - 2) Corporate actors as powerful actors in markets (Coleman)
    - 3) Coleman's theory of social capital

- 4) State as a social actor, not as a social contract: Tilly's theory of State as a protection racket or organized crime
- 5) Structural problems of democratic optimal solution
  - a) Polarization and Grand Coalitions block alternance
  - b) Minimum winning coalitions leaves out minority
  - c) Pivotal position can block/extort majority

## C. The Conflict Tradition

### 1. Marxism: The intellectual background

#### a. Hegel's dialectic as a conflict theory

- 1) Thesis, antithesis, synthesis
- 2) But this was also a theory of harmonization under the Prussian State
- 3) Left Hegelians (including Marx) stressed the conflict aspect

#### b. Classical political economy and Materialism

- 1) Much of Marxism and conflict theory can be derived from Adam Smith and his followers
- 2) Material interests and class conflict are at the basis of social action and social structure
  - a) Values and ideology stem from economic roots
- 3) Analysis of social classes according to the means of production
  - a) Capitalists - owners of capital; live from profit
  - b) Workers - work for capital; live from wages
  - c) Landlords - monopoly owners of land; live from rent
- 4) Classes are necessarily in conflict with each other, and history is the history of class conflict
  - a) Implicit in classical political economy; explicit in Marx

### 2. Marxist Sociology and Conflict theory

#### a. Social classes based on the means of production (capital)

- 1) Society is bifurcating into two main social classes, capitalists and proletarians (owners and workers)
- 2) Middle classes are being squeezed out

- 3) Lumpenproletariat results from unemployment: incapacity of capital to employ all workers
  - 4) Due to capitalist competition and concentration, most people will increasingly belong to the proletariat
- b. Theory of Ideology
- 1) Ideas or values stem from material conditions: thus, one's ideas stem from one's class position
  - 2) The dominant ideas of any epoch are the ideas of the dominant class
    - a) The dominant class controls the means of disseminating ideas (e.g. news media, advertising)
    - b) The dominant class can afford to hire professional ideologists or intellectuals
  - 3) This theory can be generalized as a theory of class cultures or of group subcultures, if the group has its own material interests
- c. The theory of political conflict
- 1) The dominant class must control the State to protect its economic position and prevent subordinate classes from rebelling
  - 2) Politics is a struggle to control the State
    - a) The dominant class wins this struggle
    - b) A rising class sometimes overthrows and displaces an existing dominant class
    - c) The capitalist class overthrew the old aristocracy in the French revolution
    - d) The proletarian class will overthrow the capitalist class in a socialist revolution
    - e) The class that wins generally has superior material resources and superior organization (networks of ties, unlike the peasantry: a sack of potatoes)
      - (i) Theories of resource mobilization

- f) Capital as a sorcerer's apprentice
  - (i) Brings together and organizes workers for production
  - (ii) Workers use this organization to seize political power
  - (iii) However, this prediction did not come true because of economic decentralization
- 3) In practice, revolutions involve unstable coalitions among classes
  - a) The lower classes sometimes act as shock troops for higher classes
    - (i) They have false consciousness
    - (ii) They have less internal organization and can be led
  - b) Theory of Bonapartism
    - (i) Bourgeoisie cannot rule directly in a democracy because they are not a majority
    - (ii) Lumpenproletariat and peasantry must defeat proletariat for the bourgeoisie
    - (iii) Bourgeoisie must rule with a friendly dictator
- 3. Max Weber's multidimensional theory of stratification: Three bases instead of one
  - a. Class is defined more broadly than in Marx
    - 1) Relations to the means of production is one basis
    - 2) Market position is another basis
      - a) Skills and the theory of human capital
      - b) NB more recent theory of social capital
  - b. Status crosscuts class lines
    - 1) Basis of status is honor: abhors market higgling
    - 2) Also based in patterns of consumption

- c. Parties are pure competitors for power
  - 1) Basis is pure organization and adherence to the organization
    - a) May well cross class or status lines
    - b) May involve disloyalty to or betrayal of class or status interests: NB Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy

#### D. The Functionalist Tradition

##### 1. Durkheim's Problem of Social Order

- a. The question is, What holds society together; what is the nature of the social bond?
  - 1) It focuses on the ties between individuals, not on the individuals themselves
  - 2) It is a critique of the atomistic assumptions of Social Contract theory
    - a) There must be precontractual elements of contract
    - b) Otherwise, people will not uphold their agreements if they have the opportunity to cheat
- b. Social density or concentration is the key factor
  - 1) The less the social density, the greater the social homogeneity
  - 2) The greater the social density, the greater the social differentiation or specialization: the greater the division of labor
    - a) Durkheim assumes a social evolution from simple, sparsely populated, homogeneous societies to large, densely populated, complex and differentiated societies
    - b) Spencer takes a similar view of social evolution toward large, complex societies, but unlike Durkheim, he bases it on methodological individualism
  - 3) Problems of coordination of this division of labor lead to problems for individuals and society
    - a) Especially the problem of anomie (lack of regulation), but also:
    - b) Forced division of labor
    - c) Egoistic or altruistic suicide
- c. Social bonds are created and reinforced in rituals
  - 1) These are moments of heightened social density

- 2) The highest points of social density, moments of social effervescence, create rituals
- 3) Symbols and ideas represent the power of the social bonds, even when rituals are not taking place
  - a) Therefore symbols are revered, and their violation is tabooed
- d. The content of these social bonds is Morality, Values, Norms, Rules, Law
  - 1) Society punishes those who break these morals or laws - that is, those who violate the social bonds
2. American functionalism around the 1950s: Robert Merton and Talcott Parsons
  - a. This functionalism looked at the contribution of any phenomenon to society
  - b. These may be divided into manifest and latent functions
    - 1) Manifest functions are those that people consciously strive for
    - 2) Latent functions are those whose purpose may not immediately be apparent
      - a) E.g., an urban political machine that is corrupt but serves the interests of its patronage clients and thus keeps the lower classes attached to society
      - b) Of course, such latent functions can be analyzed in the conflict tradition simply as different group interests
    - 3) Occasionally, when the functionalist analyst cannot see any purpose for a phenomenon, it may be labeled a “dysfunction”
  - c. This functionalism was generally conservative because almost anything that existed was considered to be all for the best
    - 1) An extreme example of this conservatism was Davis and Moore’s theory of stratification that says higher paid people earn more because they contribute more to society
    - 2) Durkheim’s own functionalism was not so conservative because he could be critical of some things that exist

3. Some examples of the power of Social Symbols and Rituals from cultural sociology and social anthropology
  - a. Marcel Mauss's analysis of the symbolic features of the Gift
    - 1) The "kula ring" of gift giving in the Trobriand islands illustrates the precontractual elements of contract
      - a) The islanders trade two types of goods, economic goods like fish and coconuts, and symbolic money-like goods which travel around the islands in a ring
      - b) Only after the chieftains have given gifts of the money-like goods does economic trading take place. Prior to that, an air of (potential) hostility would make market negotiations dangerous
    - 2) Some gifts establish social hierarchy
      - a) The one who can afford to give the most expensive gifts is shown to hold the highest status
      - b) Potlach gift-giving among the Indians of the Canadian Pacific takes this form and can be very competitive
      - c) Some chieftains on South Sea islands receive gifts from the tribal members and then give them back at huge ceremonial feasts
        - (i) This may appear to be circular, but it demonstrates the power of the chieftain
  - b. Erving Goffman and Randall Collins on interaction rituals and class subcultures
    - 1) Goffman posits that everyday interactions are actually ritual performances
      - a) They create ideal images of the self, negotiate social ties, control others
      - b) Some are "frontstage" performances meant for public consumption
      - c) Others are "backstage" activity meant for the privacy of intimate relations

- 2) Collins divides society according to how many orders people give or take
  - a) Those who give lots of orders constitute the “official class,” who uphold the “frontstage” ideals and formalities of society
  - b) Those who take orders are alienated from the official frontstage and retreat to a “backstage” subculture

E. The Microinteractionist Tradition

1. Its greatest strength is the analysis of the Self and the immediate social situations it faces
  - a. Its analysis of macrosociology tends to be thin and rather naive
2. It is the most uniquely American of the major traditions: it was developed here, and most of its major proponents have been American
  - a. However, it has not necessarily been the strongest tradition in America; it simply hasn't been very strong elsewhere
3. Theoretical background
  - a. Pragmatism: the philosophy of Charles Pierce (also William James, John Dewey)
    - 1) Pierce criticized formal, deductive logic from the point of view of his new theory of "semiotics," the science of signs
    - 2) The mind does not directly apprehend objects; signs mediate
    - 3) Signs can include words/language, symbols, etc.
    - 4) Signs are necessarily social because each individual does not invent them
    - 5) These philosophers did not develop the sociological aspects of their insights very far
  - b. The sociology of Charles Horton Cooley
    - 1) Cooley begins with the observation that children often have imaginary playmates
    - 2) Cooley argues that also, for adults, there is no essential difference between real and imaginary persons because our perception of others is in our minds
    - 3) Thus, society is a mental phenomenon
    - 4) Cooley's idea of society was very benign and naive, excluding phenomena like domination or conflict, but it set the stage for further microsociological thinking

4. The microsociology of George Herbert Mead
  - a. Very similar to Adam Smith's theory in the Theory of Moral Sentiments
  - b. The Self is a reflexive entity because a person can be both a subject and also an object for himself/herself: an "I" and a "Me"
  - c. As children, we begin by imaginary role playing, and eventually acquire an idea of rules for games and rules for life
  - d. We apply these rules to others and to ourselves. In this sense, we both enforce and internalize the rules
  - e. As we grow older, we realize that these rules are created socially, interactively, by what Mead calls "the Generalized Other"
    - 1) The Generalized Other is the repository of social standards: rules, norms, values - but also language, signs and symbols (as with Pierce's Semiotics)
    - 2) The Generalized Other is also society, but it is not external to us because we are a component part of it
    - 3) Thus, we both internalize social standards, and we can also influence social standards
    - 4) The self is not completely determined from outside, but it has an element of freedom and initiative.
  - f. In this respect, society is a looking-glass world. We regard ourselves according to the standards of the Generalized Other, and we judge others according to these standards, which we internalize, but can also influence
  - g. And since we exist in different social situations (as child, parent, spouse, friend, employee, etc.), our Self is also divided into different roles, each of which may correspond to a somewhat different Generalized Other - i.e., into different sets of norms.

5. Mead's microsociology was developed in several different directions
  - a. Herbert Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism
    - 1) We constantly re-negotiate our social situation: in reality, it is very fluid and can change rapidly
    - 2) If social structures appear stable, it is because people keep re-negotiating their relations in the same way
    - 3) Part of this tradition has investigated deviant behavior (especially "victimless crimes" like prostitution, drug abuse) with sympathy for the underdog in society
  - b. Role theory
    - 1) Much more static investigation of the structure of interaction
    - 2) Different situations correspond to the different roles in which we act
6. Other branches of microsociology
  - a. Harold Garfinkel's Ethnomethodology
    - 1) Ethnomethodology stems from Husserl's philosophy and existentialism, which doubts reality much more radically than does Pierce's Pragmatism
      - a) We can't know reality for certain - though we wish we did - so we construct myths, conventional understandings, about the way the world works.
      - b) Ethnomethodology shows how easily these myths can be undermined
    - 2) The social world we perceive is a socially-constructed reality: a set of conventional roles, activities bundled together and labeled
    - 3) Social research must examine in detail the actual activities that make up some named role: the way, say, an astronomer or plumber actually goes about his or her work
      - a) By doing this, the researcher shows that the role of astronomer or plumber is actually a conventional justification of a set of activities, and not necessarily the overall role that those persons claim for it

- b) The social researcher is part of this world and must take his act of observing into account
- 4) This approach has been applied to an extremely detailed study of audio- and videotapes
- b. Erving Goffman
  - 1) Really, Goffman is more of a Durkheimian: he stresses social structure first, and subjective consciousness second
  - 2) Goffman criticizes ethnomethodologists and symbolic interactionists: why should we accept the actor's own definition of his situation rather than analyzing the "frame" (social context) within which he acts?
  - 3) Some frames are embedded in other frames, but actors are rarely confused about where they are. We can generally get easily to the core or primary frame.
    - a) The core or primary frame is the material world in the Durkheimian sense
  - 4) His analysis of speech acts is similar: we must investigate the underlying (material) social situation in which it takes place

Lectures on Spencer

- A. Spencer developed a functionalist theory from utilitarian roots
  - 1. He conceived of society as a social organism
  - 2. Yet he argued for methodological individualism: the social organism is composed of the sum of its parts, namely human individuals
- B. His theory build directly on the utilitarianism of Bentham, and it parallels evolutionism of Darwin
  - 1. He believed that human happiness is divine will, and people will inevitably pursue happiness and they should
  - 2. Humans and human societies tend toward ever greater happiness, as they evolve to attain a better state of fitness for the environmental conditions of their lives
    - a. Evils are a condition of nonadaptation to the environment
    - b. People exercise their faculties in pursuing happiness and adapting to their environment
    - c. This process of adaptation constitutes evolution
- C. The Character of Social Evolution
  - 1. Society tends gradually to evolve toward a state in which all individuals have the liberty to exercise their faculties to the fullest degree without interfering in each other's liberty
  - 2. Authority, domination, and war act to educate or weed out those individuals, groups, or societies that are not well adapted
    - a. Spencer invented the phrase, "survival of the fittest," and Darwin acknowledged this in the preface to his book, Origins of Species. It paralleled Darwin's own concept of "natural selection."
  - 3. The higher the stage of evolution, the greater will be individual liberties: rights to own property, free trade, free press, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, universal suffrage
    - a. As these liberties are developed, the state will first be reduced to the role of a guardian

of liberties and then will eventually disappear

#### D. The Process of Social Evolution

1. Thomas Malthus had posited that population will increase geometrically and the food supply only arithmetically, and therefore population will outstrip the food supply, and there will be starvation
2. However, Spencer said that the same conditions - excess fertility over resources - will lead to efforts to improve faculties and cooperation to redress this imbalance
  - a. The result is selection of individuals and families that are better adapted to survive in these more complex conditions
  - b. Thus, population growth and density pushes social evolution toward improvement
3. Social evolution starts from incoherent homogeneity and proceeds toward coherent heterogeneity, that is, toward progressive differentiation, interdependence, and integration of the parts in a whole
4. Every initial act of specialization causes an endless chain of further specializations and a corresponding division of labor
  - a. More generally, every active force produces more than one result; every cause produces more than one effect. Thus, social evolution tends toward differentiation
5. The more the division of labor proceeds, the greater will be the interdependence and exchange between the parts, and hence, the parts will be integrated with each other
  - a. Note that this is a generalization of Adam Smith's description of the division of labor in a market society
6. Thus, population crowding leads to specialization and cooperative exchange relations, that is, to differentiation and integration, to greater complexity and heterogeneity
  - a. This anticipates Durkheim's theory of the division of labor, but Spencer bases it more clearly on individualism

#### E. Society as an Organism

1. There are several similarities

- a. They start life as small aggregations and grow immensely in mass
  - b. They start with simple structures and become increasingly complex
  - c. They start with little interdependence among their constituent parts, and develop great interdependence
2. And there are several differences
- a. Society has no specific external form, unlike an organism
  - b. The living tissues of organisms form a continuous mass, unlike societies
  - c. The living elements of organisms are fixed in their place, those of societies are not
  - d. In society, every member has feeling; in organisms, only particular parts have feelings
- F. The direction of Social Evolution
1. Social evolution also involves the modification of the environment by the evolving society; and evolving societies influence and become interdependent on each other
  2. Social evolution brings specialized institutions into existence that perform certain functions
    - a. The family prepares people for cooperation
    - b. Ceremonial institutions exert primitive social control
    - c. Political institutions direct collective action toward common ends
    - d. Ecclesiastical institutions establish social bonds, and religion gives people a sense of God's plan of evolution
    - e. Economic institutions increase technology, expand production, accumulate capital, and increase the division of labor
  3. Social evolution proceeds in several stages
    - a. Primitive societies with an incoherent homogeneity
    - b. Military societies with centralized authority, constrain, and status relationships

- c. Industrial societies with decentralized decision-making, liberty, and contract-based relationships

G. Problems and Shortcomings of Spencer's Theory

1. It is strongest as a description of economic development; other forms of development or change are rather vague
2. However, it does not explain where markets come from or how they expand into new areas
  - a. Sometimes military societies may be stronger than industrial societies, yet markets expand to the more "primitive" military societies
3. Durkheim explains moral development more adequately
4. Durkheim also noted that greater division of labor does not necessarily lead to greater human happiness. It may lead to anomie, compulsion, higher rates of suicide and criminality.
5. Weber gives a better explanation of the influence of religion on economic development
6. Marx argues, in contrast to Spencer, that the expansion of the capitalist market does not lead to liberty, but rather alienation, domination, and class conflict

Lectures on Simmel

A. Methodology

1. Distinction between form and content
  - a. This has Kantian roots; it is not mere “formalism”
2. Sociology is primarily the study of interaction (Wechselwirkung) and sociation (Vergesellschaftung)
3. Form and content (or substance) are related in a dialectical fashion
4. Pure or formal sociology is the study of “the societal forms themselves”

B. Group Dynamics

1. Group Affiliations: Intersecting Social Circles
  - a. Spencerian notion. As society becomes more complex and larger, people’s roles become more specialized and differentiated.
  - b. Group membership moves from “organic” (ascriptive) criteria to “rational” criteria.
  - c. People join multiple groups corresponding to different aspects of their (differentiated) activities.
  - d. This has consequences for society in the dialectic of conflict and solidarity (will return to this)
  - e. It also has consequences for the individual because it defines his or her identity and personality.
2. Group Size has independent consequences
  - a. As groups grow, their regulation will progress from personal morality to mores, conventions, and positive law.
  - b. Larger groups are more differentiated.
  - c. Relations in larger groups are more superficial and selective. Relations become less dependent on any given individual.

- d. Dyads are the simplest form of group (two people), but groups can be as big as all of society.
- e. In triads and larger groups, third parties have the opportunity to play the role of mediator.

### C. Conflict

1. Conflict often promotes social solidarity as much as disunity.
2. Conflict between similar people is often very intensive, sharp, or violent.
3. When conflict is regulated by norms, it tends to be depersonalized. And the more that people in such conflict understand each other, the more they can engage in intense and sharp conflict without breaking the relationship.
  - a. Examples are party competition, market competition.
4. Conflict between groups has several consequences:
  - a. It increases centralization of authority within the group.
  - b. It increases social solidarity and reduces tolerance of deviance within the group.
  - c. It encourages alliances between groups having a common opponent.

### D. Stratification and Power: Superordination and Subordination

1. Domination is an interactive relationship: subordinate parties express at least tacit consent.
2. One person rule produces solidarity among the ruled by leveling
3. When the subordinated are stratified, control is differentiated and less unified.
  - a. When there is stratification, there are reciprocal sub-rules.

### E. Individuality

1. Individual freedom is determined by the interaction between individual and society.
2. Freedom means liberation from control, and choosing one's group including the

domination of that group over oneself.

3. Larger groups control individuals less: individual differentiation and cosmopolitanism grow.
4. Individuality grows the more social circles one belongs to, and the more differentiated they are.

#### F. The Philosophy of Money

1. The study of money is part of the study of individuation.
2. Money is a tool for social exchange that:
  - a. Speeds up the exchange;
  - b. Allows for greater continuity of exchange;
  - c. Facilitates multiple social ties;
  - d. Permits exchange across greater distances;
  - e. Increases social solidarity and trust;
  - f. Increases the central authority that guarantees the value of money;
  - g. Creates new forms of social solidarity because everyone is subjected to taxes.
3. At the same time, people resist money's incursion into certain personal spheres of life, and anomie may increase.
4. Money permits individuals to:
  - a. Engage in more diverse activities and types of interaction;
  - b. Have more options for self-expression.
5. But money also makes it less necessary for people to know each other personally, because money "speaks" for them.
6. Thus, money also permits greater individuation because it creates more intersecting circles of sociation.
  - a. As this happens, it becomes less easy for any one person to control all others.

Lectures on Mead

- A. Mead's microinteractionism is very similar to Adam Smith's theory in the Theory of Moral Sentiments. (Note that Mead studied Smith.)
1. According to Smith, human nature is not completely selfish; it involves sympathy. But this leads to comparison and, by implication, envy. So despite sympathy, man is dangerous to man "like wild beasts."
  2. Sympathy comes from our imagination, e.g., dread of death.
  3. Approval and disapproval take place in a social setting: we put ourselves in others' place. Society provides a "mirror" for the self.
  4. We begin by judging others; we imagine others judging ourself. The self is thus divided in two.
  5. The Impartial Spectator, the Man within the Breast, stems from this. It leads to the formation of general rules of morality.
- B. Mead proposes a similar, reflexive theory that is divided into three parts, Mind, Self, and Society.
- C. Mead views Mind in a behavioristic fashion.
1. Behaviorism conceives of behavior in terms of stimulus and response.
    - a. For higher animals, like humans, stimuli include gestures.
  2. Two organisms meet and coordinate their activities by means of gestures. Mead calls this the "conversation of gestures."
    - a. Gestures include language and symbols.
    - b. The more language and symbols are used, the more complex the interaction can be. This can develop into very long chains of possible conduct and response.
  3. "Mind" (and thinking) develops in a social setting, it is not simply a physical organism.
    - a. Thinking is internalized communication.

- b. As children, we learn to respond to our parents and other people in our environment.
  - c. As children, we continue this responsive behavior with role-playing games, including games we play alone (that is, children talk to themselves).
4. In this way, the human mind evolves from social communication.
- a. This theory is pragmatist because it describes goal-oriented behavior.
- D. The Self is the organizing center of the individual's experiences, thoughts, motives, and plans. It is the mediating unit between the human organism and its social environment.
1. Whereas the human organism is present from birth, the Self needs time to develop.
  2. The Self evolves out of the (behavioristic) interactions between an individual and other people.
  3. The Self develops when we realize that other people respond consistently to us, and we learn to view ourselves as objects of other peoples' perception, not just subjects of our own desires.
    - a. The more consistently we interact with others, the more consistent our Self will become.
    - b. Likewise, the wider the range of interaction we have, the broader our Self will become. (The different spheres in which we interact creates the different roles we play.)
  4. The Self is a reflexive entity because a person can be both a subject and also an object for himself/herself: an "I" and a "Me"
    - a. As children, we begin by imaginary role playing, and eventually acquire an idea of rules for games and rules for life
    - b. We apply these rules to others and to ourselves. In this sense, we both enforce and internalize the rules
  5. As we grow older, we realize that these rules are created socially, interactively, by what Mead calls "the Generalized Other"
    - a. The Generalized Other is the repository of social standards: rules, norms, values - but also language, signs and symbols.

- b. The Generalized Other is also society, but it is not external to us because we are a component part of it
    - c. Thus, we both internalize social standards, and we can also influence social standards.
    - d. The Generalized Other is very similar to Smith's Impartial Spectator, or the Man within the Breast.
  6. The self is not completely determined from outside, but it has an element of freedom and initiative.
    - a. The more an individual outgrows dependency on a small set of significant others and learns the underlying unity and ideas of conduct and games of ever wider groups and communities, the more autonomous he or she becomes.
    - b. This dynamic and balance between individual and society determines how much power society has over the individual and, contrariwise, how much autonomy or freedom the individual has from society.
- E. In this respect, Society is a looking-glass world. We regard ourselves according to the standards of the Generalized Other, and we judge others according to these standards, which we internalize, but can also influence.
  1. Since we exist in different social situations (as child, parent, spouse, friend, employee, etc.), our Self is also divided into different roles, each of which may correspond to a somewhat different Generalized Other - i.e., into different sets of norms.
  2. However, Mead's conception of Society is fairly undifferentiated.
    - a. It is a democratic conception because it describes the interaction of autonomous individuals.
    - b. It is not well adapted to describe sociological phenomena like power, dominance, class, conflict, alienation or anomie.