

G.H.Mead

During his more-than-40-year career, Mead thought deeply, wrote almost constantly, and published numerous articles and book reviews in philosophy and psychology. However, he never published a book. After his death, several of his students edited four volumes from stenographic records of his social psychology course at the University of Chicago, from Mead's lecture notes, and from Mead's numerous unpublished papers. The four books are *The Philosophy of the Present* (1932), edited by Arthur E. Murphy; *Mind, Self, and Society* (1934), edited by Charles W. Morris; *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (1936), edited by Merritt H. Moore; and *The Philosophy of the Act* (1938), Mead's Carus Lectures of 1930, edited by Charles W. Morris.

Notable among Mead's published papers are the following: "Suggestions Towards a Theory of the Philosophical Disciplines" (1900); "Social Consciousness and the Consciousness of Meaning" (1910); "What Social Objects Must Psychology Presuppose" (1910); "The Mechanism of Social Consciousness" (1912); "The Social Self" (1913); "Scientific Method and the Individual Thinker" (1917); "A Behavioristic Account of the Significant Symbol" (1922); "The Genesis of Self and Social Control" (1925); "The Objective Reality of Perspectives" (1926); "The Nature of the Past" (1929); and "The Philosophies of Royce, James, and Dewey in Their American Setting" (1929). Twenty-five of Mead's most notable published articles have been collected in *Selected Writings: George Herbert Mead*, edited by Andrew J. Reck (Bobbs-Merrill, The Liberal Arts Press, 1964).

Theory of Mind, Self and Society

In *Mind, Self and Society* (1934), Mead describes how the individual mind and self arises out of the social process. Instead of approaching human experience in terms of individual psychology, Mead analyzes experience from the "standpoint of communication as essential to the social order." Individual psychology, for Mead, is intelligible only in terms of social processes. The "development of the individual's self, and of his self-consciousness within the field of his experience" is preeminently social. For Mead, the social process is prior to the structures and processes of individual experience.

Mind, according to Mead, arises within the social process of communication and cannot be understood apart from that process. The communicational process involves two phases: (1) the "conversation of gestures" and (2) language, or the "conversation of significant gestures." Both phases presuppose a social context within which two or more individuals are in interaction with one another.

Mead introduces the idea of the "conversation of gestures" with his famous example of the dog-fight:

Dogs approaching each other in hostile attitude carry on such a language of gestures. They walk around each other, growling and snapping, and waiting for the opportunity to attack (*Mind, Self and Society* 14) The act of each dog becomes the stimulus to the other dog for his response. There is then a relationship between these two; and as the act is responded to by the other dog, it, in turn, undergoes change. The very fact that the dog is ready to attack another becomes a stimulus to the other dog to change his own position or his own attitude. He has no sooner done this than the change of attitude in the second dog in turn causes the first dog to change his attitude. We have here a conversation of gestures. *They are not, however, gestures in the sense that they are significant.* We do not assume that the dog says to himself, "If the animal comes from this direction he is going to spring at my throat and I will turn in such a way." What does take place is an actual change in his own position due to the direction of the approach of the other dog. (*Mind, Self and Society* 42-43, emphasis added).

In the conversation of gestures, communication takes place without an awareness on the part of the individual of the response that her gesture elicits in others; and since the individual is unaware of the reactions of others to her gestures, she is unable to respond to her own gestures from the standpoint of others. The individual participant in the conversation of gestures is communicating, but she does *not know* that she is communicating. The conversation of gestures, that is, is *unconscious* communication.

It is, however, out of the conversation of gestures that language, or conscious communication, emerges. Mead's theory of communication is evolutionary: communication develops from more or less primitive toward more or less advanced forms of social interaction. In the human world, language supersedes (but does not abolish) the conversation of gestures and marks the transition from non-significant to significant interaction.

Language, in Mead's view, is communication through *significant symbols*. A significant symbol is a gesture (usually a vocal gesture) that calls out in the individual making the gesture the same (that is, functionally identical) response that is called out in others to whom the gesture is directed (*Mind, Self and Society* 47).

Significant communication may also be defined as the comprehension by the individual of the *meaning* of her gestures. Mead describes the communicational process as a social act since it necessarily requires at least two individuals in interaction with one another. It is within this act that meaning arises. The act of communication has a triadic structure consisting of the following components: (1) an initiating gesture on the part of an individual; (2) a response to that gesture by a second individual; and (3) the result of the action initiated by the first gesture (*Mind, Self and Society* 76, 81). There is no meaning independent of the interactive participation of two or more individuals in the act of communication.

Of course, the individual can anticipate the responses of others and can therefore consciously and intentionally make gestures that will bring out appropriate responses in others. This form of communication is quite different from that which takes place in the conversation of gestures, for in the latter there is no possibility of the conscious structuring and control of the communicational act.

Consciousness of meaning is that which permits the individual to respond to her own gestures as the other responds. A gesture, then, is an action that implies a reaction. The reaction is the meaning of the gesture and points toward the result (the "intentionality") of the action initiated by the gesture. Gestures "become significant symbols when they implicitly arouse in an individual making them the same responses which they explicitly arouse, or are supposed [intended] to arouse, in other individuals, the individuals to whom they are addressed" (*Mind, Self and Society* 47). For example, "You ask somebody to bring a visitor a chair. You arouse the tendency to get the chair in the other, but if he is slow to act, you get the chair yourself. The response to the gesture is the doing of a certain thing, and you arouse that same tendency in yourself" (*Mind, Self and Society* 67). At this stage, the conversation of gestures is transformed into a conversation of significant symbols.

There is a certain ambiguity in Mead's use of the terms "meaning" and "significance." The question is, can a gesture be meaningful without being significant? But, if the meaning of a gesture is the response to that gesture, then there is meaning in the (non-significant) conversation of gestures — the second dog, after all, responds to the gestures of the first dog in the dog-fight and vice-versa.

However, it is the conversation of *significant symbols* that is the foundation of Mead's theory of mind. "Only in terms of gestures as significant symbols is the existence of mind or intelligence possible; for only in terms of gestures which are significant symbols can thinking — which is simply an internalized or implicit conversation of the individual with himself by means of such gestures — take place" (*Mind, Self and Society* 47). Mind, then, is a form of participation in an interpersonal (that is, social) process; it is the result of taking the attitudes of others toward one's own gestures (or conduct in general). Mind, in brief, is the use of significant symbols.

The essence of Mead's so-called "social behaviorism" is his view that mind is an emergent out of the interaction of organic individuals in a social matrix. Mind is not a substance located in some transcendent realm, nor is it merely a series of events that takes place within the human physiological structure. Mead therefore rejects the traditional view of the mind as a substance separate from the body as well as the behavioristic attempt to account for mind solely in terms of physiology or neurology. Mead agrees with the behaviorists that we can explain mind behaviorally if we deny its existence as a substantial entity and view it instead as a natural function of human organisms. But it is neither possible nor desirable to deny the existence of mind altogether. The physiological organism is a necessary but not sufficient condition of mental behavior (*Mind, Self and Society* 139). Without the peculiar character of the human central nervous system, internalization by the individual of the process of significant communication would not be possible; but without the social process of conversational behavior, there would be no significant symbols for the individual to internalize.

The emergence of mind is contingent upon interaction between the human organism and its social environment; it is through participation in the social act of communication that the individual realizes her (physiological and neurological) potential for significantly symbolic behavior (that is, thought). Mind, in Mead's terms, is the individualized focus of the communicational process — it is *linguistic behavior* on the part of the individual. There is, then, no "mind or thought without language;" and language (the content of mind) "is only a development and product of social interaction" (*Mind, Self and Society* 191- 192). Thus, mind is not reducible to the neurophysiology of the organic individual, but is an emergent in "the dynamic, ongoing social process" that constitutes human experience (*Mind, Self and Society* 7).

b. Action

For Mead, mind arises out of the social act of communication. Mead's concept of the social act is relevant, not only to his theory of mind, but to all facets of his social philosophy. His theory of "mind, self, and society" is, in effect, a philosophy of the act from the standpoint of a social process involving the interaction of many individuals, just as his theory of knowledge and value is a philosophy of the act from the standpoint of the experiencing individual in interaction with an environment.

There are two models of the act in Mead's general philosophy: (1) the model of *the act-as-such*, i.e., organic activity in general (which is elaborated in *The Philosophy of the Act*), and (2) the model of *the social act*, i.e., social activity, which is a special case of organic activity and which is of particular (although not exclusive) relevance in the interpretation of human experience. The relation between the "social process of behavior" and the "social environment" is "analogous" to the relation between the "individual organism" and the "physical-biological environment" (*Mind, Self and Society* 130).

The Act-As-Such

In his analysis of the act-as-such (that is, organic activity), Mead speaks of the act as *determining* "the relation between the individual and the environment" (*The Philosophy of the Act* 364). Reality, according to Mead, is a field of situations. "These situations are fundamentally characterized by the relation of an organic individual to his environment or world. The world, things, and the individual are what they are because of this relation [between the individual and his world]" (*The Philosophy of the Act* 215). It is by way of the act that the relation between the individual and his world is defined and developed.

Mead describes the act as developing in four stages: (1) the stage of *impulse*, upon which the organic individual responds to "problematic situations" in his experience (e.g., the intrusion of an enemy into the individual's field of existence); (2) the stage of *perception*, upon which the individual defines and analyzes his problem (e.g., the direction of the enemy's attack is sensed, and a path leading in the opposite direction is selected as an avenue of escape); (3) the stage of *manipulation*, upon which action is taken with reference to the individual's perceptual appraisal of the problematic situation (e.g., the individual runs off along the path and away from his enemy); and (4) the stage of *consummation*, upon which the encountered difficulty is resolved and the continuity of organic existence re-established (e.g., the individual escapes his enemy and returns to his ordinary affairs) (*The Philosophy of the Act* 3-25).]

What is of interest in this description is that the individual is not merely a passive recipient of external, environmental influences, but is capable of taking action with reference to such influences; he reconstructs his relation to his environment through selective perception and through the use or manipulation of the objects selected in perception (e.g., the path of escape mentioned above). The objects in the environment are, so to speak, created through the activity of the organic individual: the path along which the individual escapes was not "there" (in his thoughts or perceptions) until the individual needed a path of escape. Reality is not simply "out there," independent of the organic individual, but is the outcome of the dynamic interrelation of organism and environment. Perception, according to Mead, is a relation between organism and object. Perception is not, then, something that occurs *in* the organism, but is an objective relation between the organism and its environment; and the perceptual object is not an entity *out there*, independent of the organism, but is one pole of the interactive perceptual process (*The Philosophy of the Act* 81).

Objects of perception arise within the individual's attempt to solve problems that have emerged in his experience, problems that are, in an important sense, determined by the individual himself. The character of the individual's environment is predetermined by the individual's sensory capacities. The environment, then, is what it is in relation to a sensuous and selective organic individual; and things, or objects, "are what they are in the relationship between the individual and his environment, and this relationship is that of conduct [i.e., action]" (*The Philosophy of the Act* 218).

The Social Act

While the social act is analogous to the act-as-such, the above-described model of "individual biological activity" (*Mind, Self and Society* 130) will not suffice as an analysis of social experience. The "social organism" is not an organic individual, but "a social group of individual organisms" (*Mind, Self and Society* 130). The human individual, then, is a member of a social organism, and his acts must be viewed in the context of social acts that involve other individuals. Society is not a collection of preexisting atomic individuals (as suggested, for example, by Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau), but rather a processual whole within which individuals define themselves through participation in social acts. The acts of the individual are, according to Mead, aspects of acts that are trans-individual. "For social psychology, the whole (society) is prior to the part (the individual), not the part to the whole; and the part is explained in terms of the whole, not the whole in terms of the part or parts" (*Mind, Self and Society* 7). Thus, the social act is a "dynamic whole," a "complex organic process," within which the individual is situated, and it is within this situation that individual acts are possible and have meaning.

Mead defines the *social act* in relation to the *social object*. The social act is a collective act involving the participation of two or more individuals; and the social object is a collective object having a common meaning for each participant in the act. There are many kinds of social acts, some very simple, some very complex. These range from the (relatively) simple interaction of two individuals (e.g., in dancing, in love-making, or in a game of handball), to

rather more complex acts involving more than two individuals (e.g., a play, a religious ritual, a hunting expedition), to still more complex acts carried on in the form of social organizations and institutions (e.g., law-enforcement, education, economic exchange). The life of a society consists in the aggregate of such social acts.

It is by way of the social act that persons in society create their reality. The objects of the social world (common objects such as clothes, furniture, tools, as well as scientific objects such as atoms and electrons) are what they are as a result of being defined and utilized within the matrix of specific social acts. Thus, an animal skin becomes a coat in the experience of people (e.g., barbarians or pretenders to aristocracy) engaged in the social act of covering and/or adorning their bodies; and the electron is introduced (as a hypothetical object) in the scientific community's project of investigating the ultimate nature of physical reality.

Communication through significant symbols is that which renders the intelligent organization of social acts possible. Significant communication, as stated earlier, involves the comprehension of meaning, i.e., the taking of the attitude of others toward one's own gestures. Significant communication among individuals creates a world of common (symbolic) meanings within which further and deliberate social acts are possible. The specifically human social act, in other words, is rooted in the act of significant communication and is, in fact, ordered by the conversation of significant symbols.

In addition to its role in the organization of the social act, significant communication is also fundamentally involved in the creation of social objects. For it is by way of significant symbols that humans indicate to one another the object relevant to their collective acts. For example, suppose that a group of people has decided on a trip to the zoo. One of the group offers to drive the others in his car; and the others respond by following the driver to his vehicle. The car has thus become an object for all members of the group, and they all make use of it to get to the zoo. Prior to this particular project of going to the zoo, the car did not have the specific significance that it takes on in becoming instrumental in the zoo-trip. The car was, no doubt, an object in some other social act prior to its incorporation into the zoo-trip; but prior to that incorporation, it was not specifically and explicitly a means of transportation to the zoo. Whatever it was, however, would be determined by its role in some social act (e.g., the owner's project of getting to work each day, etc.). It is perhaps needless to point out that the decision to go to the zoo, as well as the decision to use the car in question as a means of transportation, was made through a conversation involving significant symbols. The significant symbol functions here to indicate "some object or other within the field of social behavior, an object of common interest to all the individuals involved in the given social act thus directed toward or upon that object" (*Mind, Self and Society* 46). The reality that humans experience is, for Mead, very largely socially constructed in a process mediated and facilitated by the use of significant symbols.

c. Self and Other

The Self as Social Emergent

The self, like the mind, is a social emergent. This social conception of the self, Mead argues, entails that individual selves are the products of social interaction and not the (logical or biological) preconditions of that interaction. Mead contrasts his social theory of the self with individualistic theories of the self (that is, theories that presuppose the priority of selves to social process). "The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process" (*Mind, Self and Society* 135). Mead's model of society is an organic model in which individuals are related to the social process as bodily parts are related to bodies.

The self is a reflective process — i.e., "it is an object to itself." For Mead, it is the reflexivity of the self that "distinguishes it from other objects and from the body." For the body and other objects are not objects to themselves as the self is.

It is perfectly true that the eye can see the foot, but it does not see the body as a whole. We cannot see our backs; we can feel certain portions of them, if we are agile, but we cannot get an experience of our whole body. There are, of course, experiences which are somewhat vague and difficult of location, but the bodily experiences are for us organized about a self. The foot and hand belong to the self. We can see our feet, especially if we look at them from the wrong end of an opera glass, as strange things which we have difficulty in recognizing as our own. The parts of the body are quite distinguishable from the self. We can lose parts of the body without any serious invasion of the self. The mere ability to experience different parts of the body is not different from the experience of a table. The table presents a different feel from what the hand does when one hand feels another, but it is an experience of something with which we come definitely into contact. The body does not experience itself as a whole, in the sense in which the self in some way enters into the experience of the self (*Mind, Self and Society* 136).

It is, moreover, this reflexivity of the self that distinguishes human from animal consciousness (*Mind, Self and Society*, fn., 137). Mead points out two uses of the term "consciousness": (1) "consciousness" may denote "a certain feeling consciousness" which is the outcome of an organism's sensitivity to its environment (in this sense, animals, in so far as they act with reference to events in their environments, are conscious); and (2) "consciousness" may refer to a form of awareness "which always has, implicitly at least, the reference to an 'I' in it" (that is, the term "consciousness" may mean *self-consciousness*) (*Mind, Self and Society* 165). It is the second use of the term "consciousness" that is appropriate to the discussion of human consciousness. While there is a form of pre-reflective consciousness that refers to the "bare thereness of the world," it is reflective (or self-) consciousness that characterizes human awareness. The pre-reflective world is a world in which the self is absent (*Mind, Self and Society* 135-136).

Self-consciousness, then, involves the objectification of the self. In the mode of self-consciousness, the "individual enters as such into his own experience . . . as an object" (*Mind, Self and Society* 225). *How is this objectification of the self possible?* The individual, according to Mead, "can enter as an object [to himself] only on the basis of social relations and interactions, only by means of his experiential transactions with other individuals in an organized social environment" (*Mind, Self and Society* 225). Self-consciousness is the result of a process in which the individual takes the attitudes of others toward herself, in which she attempts to view herself from the standpoint of others. The self-as-object arises out of the individual's experience of other selves outside of herself. The objectified self is an emergent within the social structures and processes of human intersubjectivity.

Symbolic Interaction and the Emergence of the Self

Mead's account of the social emergence of the self is developed further through an elucidation of three forms of inter-subjective activity: *language, play, and the game*. These forms of "symbolic interaction" (that is, social interactions that take place via shared symbols such as words, definitions, roles, gestures, rituals, etc.) are the major paradigms in Mead's theory of socialization and are the basic social processes that render the reflexive objectification of the self possible.

Language, as we have seen, is communication via "significant symbols," and it is through significant communication that the individual is able to take the attitudes of others toward herself. Language is not only a "necessary mechanism" of mind, but also the primary social foundation of the self:

I know of no other form of behavior than the linguistic in which the individual is an object to himself . . . (*Mind, Self and Society* 142). When a self does appear it always involves an experience of another; there could not be an experience of a self simply by itself. The plant or the lower animal reacts to its environment, but there is no experience of a self When the response of the other becomes an essential part in the experience or conduct of the

individual; when taking the attitude of the other becomes an essential part in his behavior — then the individual appears in his own experience as a self; and until this happens he does not appear as a self (*Mind, Self and Society* 195).

Within the linguistic act, the individual takes the role of the other, i.e., responds to her own gestures in terms of the symbolized attitudes of others. This "process of taking the role of the other" within the process of symbolic interaction is the primal form of self-objectification and is essential to self-realization (*Mind, Self and Society* 160-161).

It ought to be clear, then, that the self-as-object of which Mead speaks is not an object in a mechanistic, billiard ball world of external relations, but rather it is a basic structure of human experience that arises in response to other persons in an organic social-symbolic world of internal (and inter- subjective) relations. This becomes even clearer in Mead's interpretation of playing and gaming. In playing and gaming, as in linguistic activity, the key to the generation of self-consciousness is the process of role-playing." In play, the child takes the role of another and acts as *though she were* the other (e.g., mother, doctor, nurse, Indian, and countless other symbolized roles). This form of role-playing involves a single role at a time. Thus, the other which comes into the child's experience in play is a "specific other" (*The Philosophy of the Present* 169).

The game involves a more complex form of role-playing than that involved in play. In the game, the individual is required to internalize, not merely the character of a single and specific other, but the roles of *all* others who are involved with him in the game. He must, moreover, comprehend the rules of the game which condition the various roles (*Mind, Self and Society* 151). This configuration of roles-organized-according-to- rules brings the attitudes of all participants together to form a symbolized unity: this unity is the "generalized other" (*Mind, Self and Society* 154). The generalized other is "an organized and generalized attitude" (*Mind, Self and Society* 195) with reference to which the individual defines her own conduct. When the individual can view herself from the standpoint of the generalized other, "self- consciousness in the full sense of the term" is attained.

The game, then, is the stage of the social process at which the individual attains selfhood. One of Mead's most outstanding contributions to the development of critical social theory is his analysis of games. Mead elucidates the full social and psychological significance of game-playing and the extent to which the game functions as an instrument of social control. The following passage contains a remarkable piece of analysis:

What goes on in the game goes on in the life of the child all the time. He is continually taking the attitudes of those about him, especially the roles of those who in some sense control him and on whom he depends. He gets the function of the process in an abstract way at first. It goes over from the play into the game in a real sense. *He has to play the game.* The morale of the game takes hold of the child more than the larger morale of the whole community. The child passes into the game and the game expresses a social situation in which he can completely enter; *its morale may have a greater hold on him than that of the family to which he belongs or the community in which he lives.* There are all sorts of social organizations, some of which are fairly lasting, some temporary, into which the child is entering, *and he is playing a sort of social game in them.* It is a period in which he likes "to belong," and he gets into organizations which come into existence and pass out of existence. *He becomes a something which can function in the organized whole,* and thus tends to determine himself in his relationship with the group to which he belongs. That process is one which is a striking stage in the development of the child's morale. It constitutes him a self-conscious member of the community to which he belongs (*Mind, Self and Society* 160, emphasis added).

The "Me" and the "I"

Although the self is a product of socio-symbolic interaction, it is not merely a passive reflection of the generalized other. The individual's response to the social world is active; she *decides* what she will do *in the light of* the attitudes of others; but her conduct is not mechanically determined by such attitudinal structures. There are, it would appear, two phases (or poles) of the self: (1) that phase which reflects the attitude of the generalized other and (2) that phase which *responds to* the attitude of the generalized other. Here, Mead distinguishes between the "me" and the "I." The "me" is the social self, and the "I" is a response to the "me" (*Mind, Self and Society* 178). "The 'I' is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; the 'me' is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes" (*Mind, Self and Society* 175). Mead defines the "me" as "a conventional, habitual individual," and the "I" as the "novel reply" of the individual to the generalized other (*Mind, Self and Society* 197). There is a dialectical relationship between society and the individual; and this dialectic is enacted on the intra-psycho level in terms of the polarity of the "me" and the "I." The "me" is the internalization of roles which derive from such symbolic processes as linguistic interaction, playing, and gaming; whereas the "I" is a "creative response" to the symbolized structures of the "me" (that is, to the generalized other).

Although the "I" is not an object of immediate experience, it is, in a sense, knowable (that is, objectifiable). The "I" is apprehended in memory; but in the memory image, the "I" is no longer a pure subject, but "a subject that is now an object of observation" (*Selected Writings* 142). We can understand the structural and functional significance of the "I," but we cannot observe it directly — it appears only *ex post facto*. We *remember* the responses of the "I" to the "me," and this is as close as we can get to a concrete knowledge of the "I." The objectification of the "I" is possible only through an awareness of the past; but the objectified "I" is never the subject of present experience. "If you ask, then, where directly in your own experience the 'I' comes in, the answer is that it comes in as a historical figure" (*Mind, Self and Society* 174).

The "I" appears as a symbolized object in our consciousness of our past actions, but then it has become part of the "me." The "me" is, in a sense, that phase of the self that represents the past (that is, the already-established generalized other). The "I," which is a response to the "me," represents action in a present (that is, "that which is actually going on, taking place") and implies the restructuring of the "me" in a future. After the "I" has acted, "we can catch it in our memory and place it in terms of that which we have done," but it is now (in the newly emerged present) an aspect of the restructured "me" (*Mind, Self and Society* 204, 203).

Because of the temporal-historical dimension of the self, the character of the "I" is determinable only *after* it has occurred; the "I" is not, therefore, subject to predetermination. Particular acts of the "I" become aspects of the "me" in the sense that they are objectified through memory; but the "I" as such is not contained in the "me."

The human individual exists in a social situation and responds to that situation. The situation has a particular character, but this character does not completely determine the response of the individual; there seem to be alternative courses of action. The individual must select a course of action (and even a decision to do "nothing" is a response to the situation) and act accordingly, but the course of action she selects is not dictated by the situation. It is this indeterminacy of response that "gives the sense of freedom, of initiative" (*Mind, Self and Society* 177). The action of the "I" is revealed only in the action itself; specific prediction of the action of the "I" is not possible. The individual is determined to respond, but the specific character of her response is not fully determined. The individual's responses are *conditioned*, but not determined by the situation in which she acts (*Mind, Self and Society* 210-211). Human freedom is conditioned freedom.

Thus, the "I" and the "me" exist in dynamic relation to one another. The human personality (or self) arises in a social situation. This situation structures the "me" by means of inter-subjective symbolic processes (language, gestures, play, games, etc.), and the active organism, as it continues to develop, must respond to its situation and to its "me." This response of the active organism is the "I."

The individual takes the attitude of the "me" or the attitude of the "I" according to situations in which she finds herself. For Mead, "both aspects of the 'I' and the 'me' are essential to the self in its full expression" (*Mind, Self and Society* 199). Both community and individual autonomy are necessary to identity. The "I" is process breaking through structure. The "me" is a necessary symbolic structure which renders the action of the "I" possible, and "without this structure of things, the life of the self would become impossible" (*Mind, Self and Society* 214).

The Dialectic of Self and Other

The self arises when the individual takes the attitude of the generalized other toward herself. This "internalization" of the generalized other occurs through the individual's participation in the conversation of significant symbols (that is, language) and in other socialization processes (e.g., play and games). The self, then, is of great value to organized society: the internalization of the conversation of significant symbols and of other interactional symbolic structures allows for "the superior co-ordination" of "society as a whole," and for the "increased efficiency of the individual as a member of the group" (*Mind, Self and Society* 179). The generalized other (internalized in the "me") is a major instrument of social control; it is the mechanism by which the community gains control "over the conduct of its individual members" (*Mind, Self and Society* 155). "Social control," in Mead's words, "is the expression of the 'me' over against the expression of the 'I'" (*Mind, Self and Society* 210).

The genesis of the self in social process is thus a condition of social control. The self is a social emergent that supports the cohesion of the group; individual will is harmonized, by means of a socially defined and symbolized "reality," with social goals and values. "In so far as there are social acts," writes Mead, "there are social objects, and I take it that social control is bringing the act of the individual into relation with this social object" (*The Philosophy of the Act* 191). Thus, there are two dimensions of Mead's theory of internalization: (1) the internalization of the attitudes of others toward oneself and toward one another (that is, internalization of the interpersonal process); and (2) the internalization of the attitudes of others "toward the various phases or aspects of the common social activity or set of social undertakings in which, as members of an organized society or social group, they are all engaged" (*Mind, Self and Society* 154-155).

The self, then, has reference, not only to others, but to social projects and goals, and it is by means of the socialization process (that is, the internalization of the generalized other through language, play, and the game) that the individual is brought to "assume the attitudes of those in the group who are involved with him in his social activities" (*The Philosophy of the Act* 192). By learning to speak, gesture, and play in "appropriate" ways, the individual is brought into line with the accepted symbolized roles and rules of the social process. The self is therefore one of the most subtle and effective instruments of social control.

For Mead, however, social control has its limits. One of these limits is the phenomenon of the "I," as described in the preceding section. Another limit to social control is presented in Mead's description of specific social relations. This description has important consequences regarding the way in which the concept of the generalized other is to be applied in social analysis.

The self emerges out of "a special set of social relations with all the other individuals" involved in a given set of social projects (*Mind, Self and Society* 156-157). The self is always a reflection of specific social relations that are themselves founded on the specific mode of activity of the group in question. The concept of property, for example, presupposes a community with certain kinds of responses; the idea of property has specific social and historical foundations and symbolizes the interests and values of specific social groups.

Mead delineates two types of social groups in civilized communities. There are, on the one hand, "concrete social classes or subgroups" in which "individual members are directly related to one another." On the other hand, there are "abstract social classes or subgroups" in which "individual members are related to one another only more or less indirectly, and which only more or less indirectly function as social units, but which afford unlimited possibilities for the widening and ramifying and enriching of the social relations among all the individual members of the given society as an organized and unified whole" (*Mind, Self and Society* 157). Such abstract social groups provide the opportunity for a radical extension of the "definite social relations" which constitute the individual's sense of self and which structure her conduct.

Human society, then, contains a multiplicity of generalized others. The individual is capable of holding membership in different groups, both simultaneously and serially, and may therefore relate herself to different generalized others at different times; or she may extend her conception of the generalized other by identifying herself with a "larger" community than the one in which she has hitherto been involved (e.g., she may come to view herself as a member of a nation rather than as a member of a tribe). The self is not confined within the limits of any one generalized other. It is true that the self arises through the internalization of the generalized attitudes of others, but there is, it would appear, no absolute limit to the individual's capacity to encompass new others within the dynamic structure of the self. This makes strict and total social control difficult if not impossible.

Mead's description of social relations also has interesting implications vis-à-vis the sociological problem of the relation between consensus and conflict in society. It is clear that both consensus and conflict are significant dimensions of social process; and in Mead's view, the problem is not to decide *either* for a consensus model of society *or* for a conflict model, but to describe as directly as possible the function of both consensus and conflict in human social life.

There are two models of consensus-conflict relation in Mead's analysis of social relations. These may be schematized as follows:

1. Intra-Group Consensus — Extra-Group Conflict
2. Intra-Group Conflict — Extra-Group Consensus

In the first model, the members of a given group are united in opposition to another group which is characterized as the "common enemy" of all members of the first group. Mead points out that the idea of a common enemy is central in much of human social organization and that it is frequently the major reference-point of intra-group consensus. For example, a great many human organizations derive their *raison d'être* and their sense of solidarity from the existence (or putative existence) of the "enemy" (communists, atheists, infidels, fascist pigs, religious "fanatics," liberals, conservatives, or whatever). The generalized other of such an organization is formed in opposition to the generalized other of the enemy. The individual is "with" the members of her group and "against" members of the enemy group.

Mead's second model, that of intra-group conflict and extra-group consensus, is employed in his description of the process in which the individual reacts *against* her own group. The individual opposes her group by appealing to a "higher sort of community" that she holds to be superior to her own. She may do this by appealing to the past (e.g., she may ground her criticism of the bureaucratic state in a conception of "Jeffersonian Democracy"), or by appealing to the future (e.g., she may point to the ideal of "all mankind," of the universal community, an ideal that has the future as its ever-receding reference point). Thus, intra-group conflict is carried on in terms of an extra-group consensus, even if the consensus is merely assumed or posited. This model presupposes Mead's conception of the multiplicity of generalized others, i.e., the field within which conflicts are possible. It is also true that the individual can criticize her group only in so far as she can symbolize to herself the generalized other of that group; otherwise she would have nothing to criticize, nor would she have the motivation to do so. It is in this sense that social criticism presupposes social- symbolic process and a social self capable of symbolic reflexive activity.

In addition to the above-described models of consensus-conflict relation, Mead also points out an explicitly temporal interaction between consensus and conflict. Human conflicts often lead to resolutions that create new forms of consensus. Thus, when such conflicts occur, they can lead to whole "reconstructions of the particular social situations" that are the contexts of the conflicts (e.g., a war between two nations may be followed by new political alignments in which the two warring nations become allies). Such reconstructions of society are effected by the minds of individuals in conflict and constitute enlargements of the social whole.

An interesting consequence of Mead's analysis of social conflict is that the reconstruction of society will entail the reconstruction of the self. This aspect of the social dynamic is particularly clear in terms of Mead's concept of intra-group conflict and his description of the dialectic of the "me" and the "I." As pointed out earlier, the "I" is an emergent response to the generalized other; and the "me" is that phase of the self that represents the social situation within which the individual must operate. Thus, the critical capacity of the self takes form in the "I" and has two dimensions: (1) explicit self-criticism (aimed at the "me") is implicit social criticism; and (2) explicit social criticism is implicit self-criticism. For example, the criticism of one's own moral principles is also the criticism of the morality of one's social world, for personal morality is rooted in social morality. Conversely, the criticism of the morality of one's society raises questions concerning one's own moral role in the social situation.

Since self and society are dialectical poles of a single process, change in one pole will result in change in the other pole. It would appear that social reconstructions are effected by individuals (or groups of individuals) who find themselves in conflict with a given society; and once the reconstruction is accomplished, the new social situation generates far-reaching changes in the personality structures of the individuals involved in that situation." In short," writes Mead, "social reconstruction and self or personality reconstruction are the two sides of a single process — the process of human social evolution"