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Historical Notes on "Symbolic Interaction"

Of the many approaches to the study of social behavior, those titled "behaviorist" have tended to be descriptive in orientation, although they have involved various degrees of speculative inference in the formulation of theory. Some approaches have been general and indeed may be seen to have a strong initial descriptive-phenomenological base, relatively free from pre-conception. One of these broader developments of social behaviorism has been identified as "symbolic interactionism." In what follows attention is given to some aspects of this development and to the work of a few of the persons who contributed centrally to it.

Possibly a place to begin examining the development of this aspect of social behaviorism is through the work of James Mark Baldwin, a psychologist at Princeton University who published two major volumes relevant to this area of study before the turn of the century. The first of these was titled Mental Development in the Child and the Race (New York: MacMillan and Company, 1895). A close reading of this volume will impress persons familiar with the early social psychological writings for its affinity to the pragmatist work of William James and others, and to the developing empirical work on intelligence of James McKeen Cattell. On the other hand, concern with some evolutionary and more general problems suggest the influence of other sources, which would lead to a:

". . . conviction that no consistent view of mental development in the individual could possibly be reached without a doctrine of the race development of consciousness,--i.e., the great problem of the evolution of mind." (p. vii)

The perspective of Baldwin, however, may be seen in his assessment as follows:

". . . We have no social psychology, because we have had no doctrine of the socius. We have had theories of the ego and the alter; but that they did not reveal the socius is just their condemnation." (p. ix)

The two central concepts in Baldwin's analysis are imitation and suggestion, concepts taken over in part from Gabriel Tarde. Imitation, of course, is not defined as narrowly as our common conception, but refers to the responses to suggestion, and suggestion is essentially defined as composed of all those processes which influence the behavior of the individual. A notion of learning is implicit in the formation of habits, which are essentially identified with a tendency to repeat processes which are successful or useful in some way for the individual. Whenever habits are formed, they tend to persist, but they also require adaptation to new situations. Implicit in the process is a notion of differentiation and development, a dialectic process with refinement of complex responses to more complex situations. Ultimately, volition or consciousness of choice manifests itself in an imitative process where, involving memory, a complex response pattern is linked to other related patterns. While Baldwin's presentation is highly detailed, it has gaps, and while the above description is overly brief and does not indicate how such a notion as consciousness arises, equally Baldwin's presentation names rather than explains on many such details.

However, it must be noted clearly that in Baldwin's writing the interaction of individual and society in a symbolic interactionist framework is clearly outlined. The individual draws his personality from the social situation in which he arrives and is formed. He is a responsive and plastic organism, having some individuality as a physical being, and also exposed to selective values and experiences. Out of his own formation at some point arises an individual synthesis of person which interacts with the milieu, making such contribution as individuals can to the "social heredity" which is constantly being formed as historical process.

Baldwin's considerations are oriented towards the explanation not merely of how an organism becomes a person, but the evolutionary and developmental processes of mankind. The phylogenetic and genetic analogies play an important part in his volume, but this should not mask the fact that consideration is given to questions of the development of self. Similarly, the notion of imitation is complex, not merely an idea of mirror repetitions in an unmediated process.

A major problem with Baldwin's analysis is its incompleteness. There are gaps as has been noted above, but at least he did not make the error of trying to fill these gaps with instincts or other erroneous principles. Development of the self is difficult to trace when one moves from the general but simple principle to the complex being. For example, note the skeleton for a theory of development of the complex being in the following, along with the recognition of the incompleteness of knowledge.

"The one kind of organic process which would accomplish the selection of reactions in an organism's life-history is the one which we actually find--which is to say that our theory waits as it should upon facts. There is a process by which the theatre of the application of natural selection is transferred from the outside relations of the organism, its relations to its environment, to the inside relations of the organism. It takes the form of the functional adjustment of the life processes to variations in its own motor responses, so that beneficial reactions are selected from the entire mass of responses." (p. 176)

". . . The empirical analysis of pleasure and pain states requires the recognition of these two facts, on any theory of the hedonic consciousness, i.e., first, pleasure accompanies normal psycho-physical process, or its advancement by new stimulations which are vitally good; and second, pain accompanies abnormal psycho-physical process, or the anticipation of its being brought about by new stimulations which are vitally bad." (p. 177)

"Advantage has now been seen to lie in reactions by which certain stimulations are retained or repeated and certain others avoided. Now the former are the reactions to stimulations which give pleasure, the latter reactions to those which give pain." (p. 177)

"If development is by repetition, and if repetition can be secured only by variation which brings about what I have designated above a 'circular reactions,' or one which repeats or retains its own stimulation, then a new stimulus can be accommodated to only within the limits inside of which the organ can prepare itself, on the basis of former processes, to bring about such a reaction as will tend to retain this kind of stimulus for itself." (pp. 178 - 79)

At least the seeds of symbolic interactionism are seen in this process discussed by Baldwin. The skeleton is presented, but certainly much of the flesh is missing. However, what flesh there is deserves

to be identified in its origins, and Baldwin traces a theory of learning through Herbert Spencer to Reed Bain as follows:

"Mr. Bain's view is this: the organism is endowed with spontaneous movement, a certain spontaneity of action which must be assumed. Certain of these spontaneous movements happen by 'lucky chance' to succeed in bringing the organism into some special adjustment, better exposure, better protection, easier function, etc.; these movements are accompanied by pleasure. The pleasure lingers in the consciousness of the creature in connection with the memory of the particular movement which brought it; and the memory of the pleasure serves to incite the creature to execute the same movement again, whenever the same external conditions present themselves. The repetition thus secured serves to fix the new adjustment as a permanent acquisition on the part of the organism.

"It is evident that on this view of adaptation, Mr. Bain assumes consciousness with pleasure and pain in the organism and also assumes an association between the sense of the pleasure and the sense or mental picture of the movement which brought the pleasure. A third supposition should also be especially noted,--because it is usually so tacit an assumption as to go quite unremarked,--namely, that the circumstances or environment remain sufficiently constant to enable the creature to use the association between the pleasure and the movement. He must have various movements stimulated over again as before, and among them the one which before gave the pleasure, in order that the pleasant memory of this particular one may be suggested along with the other possible ones. Granting these assumptions, we have a means of 'selecting' the useful movement--what I have called 'organic selection.'" (pp. 181 - 82)

The description, it will be noted, is incomplete from the point of view of the symbolic interactionist, but it comes close enough and is inclusive enough to indicate the concern not only of Baldwin, but of

predecessors from which he drew in order to concentrate on the analysis of the development of the self. The notions of learning theory that became involved in the work of George H. Mead and, tied to language formation, are his major contribution to symbolic interactionist theory, and are at least anticipated by Bain, and acknowledged by Baldwin.

It is not appropriate in the context of this presentation to go into the detail of critiques and analyses presented by Baldwin but it is appropriate to indicate how he finally places, within this volume, the self in relation to society.

"The antithesis, for example, between the self and the world is not a valid antithesis psychologically considered. The self is realized by taking in 'copies' from the world, and the world is enabled to set higher copies only through the constant reactions of the individual self upon it." (pp. 487-88)

The processes of explanation for development of the social self by Baldwin are not clear, partly because of language which is insufficiently precise. What does it mean, for example, to say that:

". . .volition arises when a copy remembered vibrates with other copies remembered or presented, and when all the connections, in thought and action, of all of them, are together set in motion incipiently." (pp. 479-80)

What happens when something vibrates with something else? Surely the language is not less precise than when a recent sociological theorist says one structure articulates with another. Still, imprecision is imprecision. We may get a sense of the dialectic process through which

the self develops, but this is "understanding" in a primitive notion of talking around the topic. It is not understanding in the sense of description of the processes.

The greater elaboration of concern with development of self occurs for Baldwin in his volume Social and Ethical Developments in Mental Development. Our references here will be to the second edition which had only a few additions and revisions from the first edition of 1897. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1899, Second Edition) The materials described with regard to the development of the self thus far may not appear impressive, if one considers the pragmatist antecedents of William James, who distinguished the developmental process in a similar fashion, using habit as a central concept. Through his analysis of "states of mind," James arrived at a distinction between the I and the Me, the former being the self as knower and the latter the self as known. The Me can be described simply as the image the individual receives of himself, or in the euphemism of the time, the "empirical self" that is know physically through one's body and possessions, and socially through the responses he gets from others. And, James's distinction was not unsubtle as it involved such notions as there being as many social selves or aspects of the Me as groups to which an individual distinctly responds. James's analysis of the "empirical self" was, so to speak, a hard act to follow. In an anticipatory way, in fact, James's distinction of the I and the Me reaches into many modern conceptions of analysis of personality when modern theorists try to think of the

unities of personality. James's identification of the I as having no substantial identity, but merely a functional identity in the sense that various states of consciousness tend to know the same external world, to respond to the same aspects of the Me, is a subtle and persistent set of notions. (See especially William James, Psychology, Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1948.)

Baldwin in his second volume begins by quoting himself. Again, in his initial quotation the bases of the symbolic interactionism are emphasized, but the explicit mechanisms are not provided, and we shall repeat here part of the quotation used in the initiation of the second work.

"Further observation of children shows that the instrument of transition from such a projective to a subjective sense of personality [the self], is the child's active bodily self, and the method of it is the function of imitation. When the organism is ripe for the enlargement of its active range by new accommodations, then he begins to be dissatisfied with 'projects,' with contemplation, and starts on his career of imitation. And of course he imitates persons.

"Further, persons are bodies which move. And among these bodies which move, which have certain projective attributes, a very peculiar and interesting one is his own body. It has connected with it certain intimate features which all others lack--strains, stresses, resistances, pains, etc., an inner felt series added to the new imitative series. But it is only when a peculiar experience arises which we call effort that there comes the great line of cleavage in his experience which indicates the rise of volition, and which separates off the series now first really subjective. What has formerly been 'projective' now becomes 'subjective.' This we may call the subjective stage in the growth of

the self-notion. It rapidly assimilates to itself all the other elements by which the child's own body differs in his experience from other active bodies--all the passive inner series of pains, pleasures, strains, etc. Again it is easy to see what now happens. The child's subject sense goes out by a sort of return dialectic to illuminate the other persons. The 'project' of the earlier period is now lighted up, claimed, clothed on with the raiment of selfhood, by analogy with the subjective. The subjective becomes ejective; that is, other people's bodies, says the child to himself, have experiences in them such as mine has. They are also me's; let them be assimilated to my me-copy. This is the third stage; the ejective, or social self, is born.

"The 'ego' and the 'alter' are thus born together. Both are crude and unreflective, largely organic. And the two get purified and clarified together by this twofold reaction between project and subject, and between subject and eject. My sense of myself grows by imitation of you, and my sense of yourself grows in terms of my sense of myself. Both ego and alter are thus essentially social; each is a socius and each is an imitative creation." (From Mental Development, 1st Edition, p. 335 ff., as quoted in Social and Ethical Interpretations, pp. 7-9. The text is similar but not identical to that in the 1895 edition, pp. 336-38.)

Except for the fact that there is no indication of how the imitation occurs, this in essence is a description of the development of the generalized other which marks the later work of the symbolic interactionists. It should be noted that the parallelism between our actions and other actions more explicitly noted by George H. Mead later is involved clearly in Baldwin's presentation. The centrality of this consideration of the person as a self is emphasized by Baldwin in taking this description as the starting point for the second volume.

And, this leads to the set of questions to which Baldwin addresses himself. His concerns as a symbolic interactionist may be seen in these:

". . . What is in consciousness when one thinks of himself or of another person? This, it is evident, is a sufficient introduction to a number of questions of high social import; for we may ask: When a man asserts himself, what is it that he really asserts? When he sympathizes with another, what exactly is that 'other'? And how do all the emotions, and desires, and mental movements of whatever kind which pass through his consciousness involve others who are in social connection with him?" (pp. 12-13)

The crucial problem recurs in looking at the work of Baldwin that we have noted earlier. How does the child imitate? Essentially, the phenomenological description of the process externally viewed is not sufficient. As we find later in history, the imitative processes do become reasonably well outlined, at least in descriptive externals. Does Baldwin involve himself in this type of description? He does indeed as noted in the following:

"Let us look at the life of the child with especial reference to his attitudes to those around him; taking the most common case, that of a child in a family of children. We find that such a child shows, in the very first stages of his sense of himself as a being of rights, duties, etc., a very imitative nature. He is mainly occupied with the business of learning about himself, other people, and nature. He imitates everything, being a veritable copying-machine. He spends the time not given to imitating others very largely in practising in his games what he has picked up by his imitations, and in the exploiting of these accomplishments." (pp. 16-17)

"The child's sense of himself is, as we have seen, one pole of a relation; and which pole it is to be, depends on the particular relation which the other pole, over which the child has no control, calls on it to be. If the other person involved presents uncertain, ominous, dominating, instructive features, or novel imitative features, then the self is 'subject' over against what is 'projective.' He recognizes new elements of personal suggestion not yet accommodated to. His consciousness is in the learning attitude; he imitates, he serves, he trembles, he is a slave. But on the other hand, there are persons to whom his attitude has a right to be different. In the case of these the dialectic has gone further. He has mastered all their features, he can do himself what they do, he anticipates no new developments in his intercourse with them; so he 'ejects' them, as the psychological expression is: for 'eject' is a consciousness thought of as having only those elements in it which the individual who thinks of that consciousness is able, out of his own store of experience, to read into it. It is ejective to him, for he makes it what he will, in a sense. Now this is what the brothers and sisters, notably the younger ones, are to our youthful hero. They are his 'ejects'; he knows them by heart, they have no thoughts, they do no deeds, which he could not have read into them by anticipation. So he despises them, practises his superior activities on them, tramples them under foot." (pp. 18-19)

So, in poetic language Baldwin essentially phrases the aspect of the development of the self through the interaction with the social environment. The social environment tolerates certain classes of actions but not others. With regard to domination and subordination, development of relationships is seen as one of trial and error, of learning, and of establishing the location of the self among the alters. Now, here we see the antecedents of modern ego psychology. Baldwin goes on to state as follows:

"Now at this earliest stage in his unconscious [emphasis added] classification of the elements of his personal world, it is clear that any attempt to describe the child's interests--the things which he wants, as we have agreed to define 'interests'--as selfish, generous, or as falling in any category of developed social significance, is quite beside the mark. If we say that to be selfish is to try to get all the personal gratification possible, we find that he does this only part of the time; and even on these occasions, not because he has any conscious preference for that style of conduct, but merely because his consciousness is then filled with the particular forms of personal relationship--the presence of his little sister, etc.--which normally issue in the more habitual actions which are termed 'aggressive' in our social terminology. His action is only the motor side of a certain collection of elements. He acts that way, then, simply because it is natural for him to practise the functions which he has found useful." (pp. 19-20)

Here, going beyond our topic, we note a more subtle and durable notion of unconscious motivation than the instinctual theories of Freud which as influences in America come later and which have at times been given so much vogue.

With regard to the development of the self in the dialectic process, differentiation occurs with constant exposure to new stimulus situations. New persons are met, and old persons as well as new are met in new circumstances as each day passes. Thus, the notion of learning which is implicit is the same one which occurs subsequently in the work of other symbolic interactionists. How the generalization occurs is not specified, merely the principle, and some of the external manifestations are noted.

"So it then becomes his business not to classify [merely] persons, but to classify actions. He sees that any person may, with some few exceptions, act in either [any] way: any person may be his teacher or his slave, on occasion. So his next step in social adaptation is his adaptation to occasions; to the groups of social conditions in which one or the other class of actions may be anticipated from people generally. . . . And so he gets himself equipped with that extraordinary facility of transition from one attitude to another in his responses to those about him, which all who are familiar with children will have remarked." (p. 23)

Baldwin harps on the importance of the development of the self for the interpretation of social behavior both at the individual and societal levels. The centrality of this is emphasized in his identification of the social self, and he notes that the conscious interpretation of human action is essentially of one kind.

". . . We think the deeds of others as we bring ourselves up to the performance of similar deeds; and we do the deeds of others only as we ourselves are able to think them. In the case of the young child in the family, we may often tell how far he is learning correctly; also the particular alter from whom he has taken his lesson. But in the larger social whole of adult life both elements are so complex--the solidified self of the individual's history is so fixed, and the social suggestions of the community are so varied and conflicting--that the outcome of the fusion, in a particular instance, is a thing which no man can prophesy." (pp. 27-28)

So, in the very recognition of how in essence to "understand" the actions of an other one must place himself in the self of the other, and Baldwin notes that the generalization of learning principles is

lost in the complexity of the organism and in the society that it meets. So, he points to the difference which is sometimes noted between "learning theorists" and "gestaltists." The latter emphasize the cognitive jumps in learning and solution, while the former emphasize the principles of learning along the simple stimulus-response conditioning model. In the view of Baldwin recognition is given to the existence of both aspects, the simple in principle as recognizable in the early development of the child, for instance, and the generalization as complexity is visible to types of learning that appear to be associated with gestalt notions. Also, it should be noted that the type of interaction involved is sophisticated. It is a form of joint process, and with others known as symbolic interactionists, involves the notion later identified as "transaction."

It is equally as important to note that in the course of the discussion of the development of the self Baldwin emphasizes the importance of the family as an example. Indeed, much of the learning is related to the structure of the family, and as the first place in which the child experiences behavior, it sets the foundations of personality. Socialization is described as a process of a growing circle of social contacts. The extension is from the immediate contact with the mother or her surrogate, the family, to expansion of the socius to include other objects in the broader environment and exposure to broader social contacts which increase with the child's cumulation of knowledge and the increase in his mobility. The end product is the fully mobile person in the larger society.

The essence of conscience, or aspects of the "ethical self" as it might have been called by Baldwin, is equally discussed in terms familiar to later symbolic interactionists. Indeed, the example is not unfamiliar of demonstrating the principle through the example of the child (in the third year).

"Now this new self arises, as we have seen, right out of the competitions, urgencies, inhibitions of the old. Suppose a boy who has once obeyed the command to let an apple alone, coming to confront the apple again, when there is no one present to make him obey. There is his private, greedy, habitual self, eying the apple; there is also the spontaneously suggestible, accommodating, imitative self over against it, mildly prompting him to do as his father said and let the apple alone; and there is--or would be, if the obedience had taught him no new thought of self--the quick victory of the former. But now a lesson has been learned. There arises a thought of one who obeys, who has no struggle in carrying out the behests of the father. This may be vague; his habit may be yet weak in the absence of persons and penalties, but it is there, however weak. And it is no longer merely the faint imitation of an obedient self which he does not understand. It carries within it, it is true, all the struggle of the first obedience, all the painful protests of the private greedy self, all the smoke of the earlier battlefield. But while he hesitates, it is now not merely the balance of the old forces that makes him hesitate; it is the sense of the new, better, obedient self hovering before him. A few such fights and he begins to grow accustomed to the presence of something in him which represents his father, mother, or in general, <u>the lawgiving personality</u>." (pp. 48-49)

So, essentially the censor or conscience notion is developed. And, the process described is one of generalization of learning, and it is an extension which goes beyond prior work. In essence, Baldwin

has developed the notion of the internalization of norms which is so crucial to the whole symbolic interactionist view of behavior.

Baldwin does not treat merely with the development of the self, but also with the problem of the interaction of the person and society, and indeed the conception of society itself. He concerns himself with the questions of heredity within society, and within this context considers selective factors that may influence the development of mankind. The illustration of the operation of norms as social influences for selection is acute, and the notion of selective social environments within the greater environment is clearly outlined. This, of course, is the type of notion so basic to any analyses of "differential association" in criminology. However, returning to the social psychological focus of his work, he notes as follows:

". . . a man is a social outcome rather than a social unit. He is always, in his greatest part, also some one else. Social acts of his--that is, acts which may not prove anti-social--are his because they are society's first; otherwise he would not have learned them nor have had any tendency to do them. Everything that he learns is copied, reproduced, assimilated, from his fellows; and what all of them, including him,--all the social fellows,--do and think, they do and think because they have each been through the same course of copying, reproducing, assimilating, that he has." (pp. 87-88)

Now, it may be useful to point to some limitations of Baldwin's work, and not to attribute to him the entire development of symbolic interactionism. For example, in the discussion of language, its acquisition and development by the child, the application of the concept

of imitation is too facile. The distinction later outlined in greater detail in the work of Mead, particularly, between learning as a selective process and imitation, is really not found in any detailed way in Baldwin's writing. In the development by Mead, the notion of acquisition of language is associated with a stricter behaviorism. The child is rewarded for making some sounds rather than others, and thus tends to repeat. This repetition in use is selective, and thus the chance occurrence of the word "papa" elicits all sorts of favorable stimuli for the child. So, rather than learning by imitation, the notion is that language develops in a selective process of learning. Imitation, in the sense used by Baldwin, occurs at a much later stage of development, as the child establishes the parallelism say, between his sound of "papa" and the sound of "papa" he hears made by others. The clear association of a conditioning process is not present in the materials of Baldwin, but similarly, the popularization of notions of learning in the model of conditioning had not been widely circulated in the theories of learning and psychology. This development is located roughly a decade after Baldwin was writing. This is a difficult criticism to make, however, for a series of analyses presented by Baldwin which are so complete and suggestive in other ways. For example, the work of Piaget with the rules of the game notion are clearly anticipated in Baldwin's section on the analysis of play. Play is not only seen as a form of exercise, potentially providing for the realization of the biologically based behavior, but as a method of experimental verification of appropriate action, of development of social structures, and of taking various positions within the structures.

While Baldwin was not a sociologist, his excursion into social psychology certainly took him as far into sociology as social psychologists venture. Indeed, his social psychology led him even to examine, as we have noted, some aspects of societal process. And, in a tradition of the time, he became concerned even with the notions of social progress. More important, in this vein, however, is that he ends his volume on an explicit consideration of the Society and the Individual. He emphasizes the interplay between norms which are viable for individuals, and individuals who reflect behavior compatible with the norms. He emphasizes the necessity for accounting for the social psychological component in the analysis of society, and equally emphasizes constantly the vital requirement of taking into account the society in attempting to explain social psychological processes. In this sense, a conclusion of one of our authors on the development of sociological theory appears to be at least partially in error. He states:

"Cooley's famous 'looking-glass self' was his particular form of what James had described as the social self. Even the elements had been developed in more detail by James. The general argument, of course, is that the social self arises reflectively in terms of the reaction to the opinions of the others on the self."

"If the only claim for Cooley's importance lay in the 'looking-glass self,' he would hardly deserve the place he holds in the development of sociology, for the idea was only a neat re-statement of James's 'social self.' But Cooley went beyond the 'looking-glass self' to develop a general theory of society, expanding this type of social behaviorism to the explanation of groups and social organization. Cooley's foremost contribution to the theory of groups was the

was the re-evaluation of what have been called since Cooley 'primary groups.'" (Martindale, Don. The Nature and Types of Sociological Theory, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960, p. 345)

This appears to be in some ways an inadvertent and unnecessary condemnation of Cooley, for it implies that only originators have value. Cooley's interests in primary groups certainly are well represented in the work of Baldwin, and of course, it is well-known that the concept of "primary" is not attributable to Cooley, who merely used it as one part of the descriptive introduction to his volume on Social Organization. (Cooley, Charles H. Social Organization, New York: Scribner's, 1909) Cooley is inappropriately identified as an innovator, but it would be misleading to suggest that his contributions were minor. Quite to the contrary, Cooley's volume titled Human Nature and the Social Order (New York: Scribner's, 1902) essentially represented the first broad coverage of what would be called the content of social psychology today. And, it is no small virtue to be able to clearly formulate the morass of knowledge and speculation into a relatively compact and comprehensive volume. If the language of Baldwin has been opaque as quoted here, the language of Cooley is much clearer and concise. Cooley emphasized more clearly than Baldwin, and more definitively, the social selective factors in the development of individuals which must be considered in interaction with the individual organism. The emphasis on the social psychological nexus and a model for social behaviorism in social psychology is clearly marked by Cooley as a sociologist.

Turning now to George Herbert Mead, the problem of attributing importance to his work is mediated in part through the post-humus representation. From our point of view, the most significant work is Mind, Self and Society. (Edited by Charles W. Morris, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934) The stenographic notes used for this edited version were taken in 1927, which, of course, prohibits giving weight to them as early in the development of symbolic interactionism, and possibly the influence exerted by G. H. Mead as a teacher created an enormous halo for him. A review of the bibliography of articles published by G. H. Mead is not at all impressive of individual and new contributions in social psychology.

Mead's analysis of how language arises is central to understanding his view of social behaviorism. First, he begins by rejecting the ordinary concept of imitation as basic to learning, but it should be remembered that the ordinary concept of imitation was something to which essentially none of his predecessors subscribed, their concepts of imitation generally being highly complex and implying learning processes.

The substitute for the imitative process is provided in the abstract by Mead in the following passage:

". . . This stimulus A calls out the response B. Now if this stimulus A is not like B, and if we assume that A calls out B, then if A is used by other forms these forms will respond in the fashion B. If this form also uses the vocal gesture A, it will be calling out in itself the response B, so that the response B will be emphasized over against other responses because it is called out not only by the

vocal gestures of other forms but also by the form itself. This would never take place unless there were an identity represented by A, in this case an identity of stimuli.

"In the case of the vocal gesture the form hears its own stimulus just as when this is used by other forms, so it tends to respond also to its own stimulus as it responds to the stimulus of other forms. That is, birds tend to sing to themselves, babies to talk to themselves. The sounds they make are stimuli to make other sounds. Where there is a specific sound that calls out a specific response, then if this sound is made by other forms it calls out this response to the form in question. If the sparrow makes use of this particular sound then the response to that sound will be one which will be heard more frequently than another response. In that way there will be selected out of the sparrow's repertoire those elements which are found in the song of the canary, and gradually such selection would build up in the song of the sparrow those elements which are common to both, without assuming a particular tendency of imitation. There is here a selective process by which is picked out what is common. 'Imitation' depends upon the individual influencing himself as others influence him, so that he is under the influence not only of the other but also of himself in so far as he uses the same vocal gesture.

"The vocal gesture, then, has an importance which no other gesture has. We cannot see ourselves when our face assumes a certain expression. If we hear ourselves speak we are more apt to pay attention. One hears himself when he is irritated using a tone that is of an irritable quality, and so catches himself. But in the facial expression of irritation the stimulus is not one that calls out an expression in the individual which it calls out in the other. One is more apt to catch himself up and control himself in the vocal gesture than in the expression of the countenance." (pp. 64-65)

Further, the elaboration on social symbols is most important, as will be noted in the following passages. Similarly, the emphasis on the experiential base of all knowledge one has is crucial.

"The peculiar character possessed by our human social environment belongs to it by virtue of the peculiar character of human social activity; and that character . . . is to be found in the process of communication, and more particularly in the triadic relation on which the existence of meaning is based: the relation of the gesture of one organism to the adjustive response made to it by another organism, in its indicative capacity as pointing to the completion or resultant of the act it initiates (the meaning of the gesture being thus the response of the second organism to it as such, or as a gesture). What, as it were, takes the gesture out of the social act and isolates it as such--what makes it something more than just an early phase of an individual act--is the response of another organism, or of other organisms, to it. Such a response is its meaning, or gives it its meaning. The social situation and process of behavior are here presupposed by the acts of the individual organisms implicated therein. The gesture arises as a separable element in the social act, by virtue of the fact that it is selected out by the sensitivities of other organisms to it; it does not exist as a gesture merely in the experience of the single individual. The meaning of a gesture by one organism, to repeat, is found in the response of another organism to what would be the completion of the act of the first organism which that gesture initiates and indicates.

"We sometimes speak as if a person could build up an entire argument in his mind, and then put it into words to convey it to someone else. Actually, our thinking always takes place by means of some sort of symbols. It is possible that one could have the meaning of 'chair' in his experience without there being a symbol, but we would not be thinking about it in that case. We may sit down in a chair without thinking about what we are doing, that is, the approach to the chair is

presumably already aroused in our experience, so that the meaning is there. But if one is thinking about the chair he must have some sort of symbol for it. It may be the form of the chair, it may be the attitude that somebody else takes in sitting down, but it is more apt to be some language symbol that arouses this response. In a thought process there has to be some sort of a symbol that can refer to this meaning, that is, tend to call out this response, and also serve this purpose for other persons as well. It would not be a thought process if that were not the case." (pp. 145 - 46)

The crucial contribution, in this review of symbolic interactionists' approaches, stemming from George Herbert Mead appears to be in his more explicit description of the process of internalization of behavior and differentiation of the self, particularly as described in substitution for a common notion of imitation. The learning process is tied specifically to the idea that the individual learns to imitate himself as well as others, and, in establishing the parallel between self and other, eventually he distinguishes his self from that of others. And, through his contacts in interaction, he establishes by the differential responses he encounters the identity of his self. Similarly, what unity there is for the self is provided by the organized community or social groups to which he belongs and is called <u>the generalized other</u>. This process is noted in detail and leads to the following:

"If the given human individual is to develop a self in the fullest sense, it is not sufficient for him merely to take the attitudes of other human individuals toward himself and toward one another within the human social process, and to bring that social process as a whole into his individual experience merely in these terms; he must also,

in the same way that he takes the attitudes of other individuals toward himself and toward one another, take their attitudes 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; and he must then, by generalizing these individual attitudes of that organized society or social group itself, as a whole, act toward different social projects which at any given time it is carrying out, or toward the various larger phases of the general social process which constitutes its life and of which these projects are specific manifestations. This getting of the broad activities of any given social whole or organized society as such within the experiential field of any one of the individuals involved or included in that whole is, in other words, the essential basis and prerequisite of the fullest development of that individual's self: only in so far as he takes the attitudes of the organized social group to which he belongs toward the organized, co-operative social activity or set of such activities in which that group as such is engaged, does he develop a complete self or possess the sort of complete self he has developed. And on the other hand, the complex co-operative processes and activities and institutional functionings of organized human society are also possible only in so far as every individual involved in them or belonging to that society can take the general attitudes of all other such individuals with reference to these processes and activities and institutional functionings, and to the organized social whole of experiential relations and interactions thereby constituted--and can direct his own behavior accordingly.

"It is in the form of the generalized other that the social process influences the behavior of the individuals involved in it and carrying it on, i.e., that the community exercises control over the conduct of its individual members; for it is in this form that the social process or community enters as a determining factor into the individual's thinking. In abstract thought the individual takes

the attitude of the generalized other toward himself, without reference to its expression in any particular other individuals; and in concrete thought he takes that attitude in so far as it is expressed in the attitudes toward his behavior of those other individuals with whom he is involved in the given social situation or act. But only by taking the attitude of the generalized other toward himself, in one or another of these ways, can he think at all; for only thus can thinking--or the internalized conversation of gestures which constitutes thinking--occur. And only through the taking by individuals of the attitude or attitudes of the generalized other toward themselves is the existence of a universe of discourse, as that system of common or social meanings which thinking presupposes at its context, rendered possible.

"The self-conscious human individual, then, takes or assumes the organized social attitudes of the given social group or community (or of some one section thereof) to which he belongs, toward the social problems of various kinds which confront that group or community at any given time, and which arise in connection with the correspondingly different social projects or organized co-operative enterprises in which that group or community as such is engaged; and as an individual participant in these social projects or co-operative enterprises, he governs his own conduct accordingly." (pp. 154-56)

Thus, finally, the essence of the social self is encompassed through the concept of the generalized other. While the sentence structure may be complicated, the outline is clear. And, the statement certainly is the most lucid one shade among those who are known as symbolic interactionists. Mead's analyses in other areas are equally lucid and elaborative of the position. He tends, for example, to add meaning to the notions of role-taking in examining the distinction between play and games. Certainly the influence subsequently found

in the development of role theory or theories of roles in more recent times have been highly influenced by his statements.

In contrasting the symbolic interactionists with other sociological theorists, difficulty arises in characterizing the "school." It is not a school any more than any other scientific approach to behavior. The unity of the approach arises with the subject matter, being the study of the self, socialization, and in corresponding manner the study of social processes. The frame of reference is social psychological in a modern sense. It is easier to contrast symbolic interactionists to groups that have other interpretations of the development of the self, and, of course, the Freudians are most convenient for this purpose, as their theory involves instincts, compartments of the mind, and other such assumptions. Contrast to theorists like Durkheim or Simmel is more difficult, as essentially they were also concerned with empirically based systematic description and analysis. Differences occur more in the choice of subject matter than in assumptions about science.

This presentation has been cursory in the sense that it has traversed the enormous work of the symbolic interactionists by selectively emphasizing some aspects of their work. It is the crucial aspect, however, concentrating on the notions of the development of the self, which in close scrutiny is seen as the arena for defining the social aspects of the individual and for interpreting social processes in

the context of the individual. Some of the historical precedent has been emphasized, particularly since there has been some misreading of history, and possibly some reconstruction of history by students of teachers. But, aside from such minor issues, the impressive fact is that at the turn of the century a basic social psychology was available which, save for refinement, survives today as a major approach to knowledge about the individual and society.