I. The Self and Symbolic Interactionism

A. The Enlightenment Self

1. Rational autonomous individual

a. fundamentally and primarily: “I”

i. mind (consciousness)

ii. body (matter)

iii “endowed” with Reason

iv. Reason: attribute of consciousness

b. individual existence precedes social existence

i. civil society

ii. marketplace

iii. interpersonal

c. social existence

i. secondary phenomena

ii. Rousseau’s social contract

iii. Durkheim, Comte: individual needs to be socialized

B. Symbolic Interactionism

1. rational autonomous individual is social construction (myth)
   1. constructed through social interaction.

b. fundamentally and primarily: social self

1. humans have the capacity to reason but ability to reason

is the result of social interaction

3. social interaction

1. capacity to reason = ability to use symbols
2. selves develop through symbolic interaction

i. learning the meaning of symbols = interaction

ii. learning how to use the symbols = becoming a self

1. institutions are not external and coercive
2. organized social interactions create and recreate social institutions

II. George Herbert Mead

1. “Mind, Self and Society”
2. Influence

1. Darwin’s Theory of Evolution

a. human life process part of evolution

b. social behavior is adaptive behavior in relation

to environment

c. contra Social Darwinism (“survival of the fittest)

2. Behaviorism

a. object of study is social behavior

b. rejects: Pavlovian/ Thomas behaviorism

i. stimulus - response

ii. reduction of behavior to biology

iii. predict and control humans through

being able to predict behavior

c. social act is main focus

i. adaptive behavior

ii. stimulus-reflexivity-response

iii. allows humans to be creative

c. Pragmatism

a. reality is not “out there”

b. reality (knowledge and truth) is defined in human interaction directed towards problem solving (human evolution)

c. reject positivism (empiricism, positivism, determinism)

1. Mead’s Theory of the Social Self

1. What it is not? And who does not have one.

a. no self before social interaction

b. no mind before social interaction

c. consciousness or mind is not a thing

d. animals and children do not have selves or minds

e. self is not the body, and mind is not the brain

f. brain is necessary condition for mind but not sufficient

2. Mind

a. human’s are unique

b. human mind: capacity to use symbols

c. mind develops through symbolic interaction

i. conversation of gestures with others

significant symbols

language

ii. mind is also capable of internal dialogue of significant symbols (thought)

iii. self emerges with mind in this process of

symbolic interaction

iv. mind is fundamentally linguistic

3. Self (I, Me, and the Generalized Other)

a. process: outside in

b. . essential characteristic

i. object to itself: “me” (me precedes subjectivity)

“. . . in his social group (human beings) are able to become objects to themselves, a fact which constitutes him a more advanced product of evolutionary development than are the lower animals.”

ii. sees itself in field of action with other selves

iii. can anticipate the reaction of others to its behavior

iv. “taking the role of the other”

v. social interaction through the use of significant symbols

c. I

i. accounts for human spontaneity and creativity

ii. basis of social change

d. Generalized Other

i. organized attitudes of society

ii. self imports of social process

iii. a complete self

4. self develops through stages

a. role stage

b. game stage (baseball and the family!)

c. complete self: taking the role of generalized other

D. Society

III. The Dramaturgical Self

1. Erving Goffman
2. “Asylum” and “Presentation of Self in Everyday Life”
3. Asylums: Deconstructing and Reconstructing the Self
4. Dramaturgical Self
   1. Influence
      1. Looking Glass Self

b. Symbolic Interaction (“human being can be an object of his own action”)

* 1. Self is product : interaction between actor and audience

“The self is a dramatic effect arising . . .from the scene that is presented.”

* 1. drama is “presentation of self”
     1. metaphor: the play

b. self emerges in interaction between actor and audience

c. depends: self that will be accepted by audience

d. presentation needs to be strong

e. audience needs to be controlled

i. go along

ii.not be disruptive

* 1. impression management: techniques maintain and manage

presentation for successful outcome.

a. front or front stage

i. setting

ii. personal front

manner

appearance

iii. institutionalization

iv. concealment

v. deep acting vs shallow acting

vi. social distance

b. back stage

c. role distance

1. Frame analysis: dramaturgical self and social structure

1. frames of reference shape social interactions (“schemata of interpretation”)

a. make events or occurrences meaningful

b. organize experience and guide actions

c. rule or laws that fix social interactions

2. interaction as ritual

3. ritual as social order