

Social Self vs. The “Stage”

Understanding who we are is a difficult subject that includes our self-perception and the impact of society. There are two perspectives on this: the social self and Erving Goffman's "stage" theory. Though they approach it differently, both concepts focus on helping us develop our identities. This essay will analyze the social self in relation to Goffman's "stage," highlighting the ways in which each concept contributes to our understanding of the complicated connections that exist between people and their social environments.

The elements of our identities that result from our interactions within society are all referred to as the social self. It has its beginnings in the roles we take on, the connections we make, and the ways we see ourselves in relation to other people. The concept of the "looking glass self", which was first connected by sociologist Charles Horton Cooley, is a fundamental feature of the social self. According to this theory, our perception of ourselves is influenced by how we think other people see us. In other words, a lot of external situations have an impact on our identity and it is not just an internal construct. An example of this would be someone who plays a team sport. Their positions as teammates, leaders, or supporters forms their identity within the social self-structure. Their social selves are shaped by team dynamics, shared goals, and friendship. The looking-glass self enters the picture as they absorb the opinions and criticisms of their coaches, teammates, and even bystanders. Their identity is shaped and refined within the larger social context by this process of social interaction.

The "stage" theory was developed by sociologist Goffman to describe social behavior. According to him, individuals live their lives like performers on a stage, constantly putting on an

individual character in a play. Goffman's concept of the "front stage" and "backstage" parts of life illustrates what our actions are like in a performance, with certain aspects intended for everyone to see and others for privacy. This demonstrates how a person's identity is like an ongoing act. An example of the "stage" is going to school. We act differently around our friends, as we have a front and don't say certain things so people around us don't perceive us differently.

The main difference between Goffman's "stage" and the social self is what they focus on from the inside as opposed to the outside. Based on Cooley's "looking glass" theory, the social self emphasizes how we process what other people say about us. It emphasizes how our relationships with individuals form who we think we are by saying that how we believe others perceive us affects how we think about ourselves.

On the other hand, Goffman's "stage" examines how individuals intentionally present themselves in various social contexts. It all comes down to how people consciously create their identities as performances, acting out specific behaviors in order to fulfill social expectations. Goffman's "stage" examines how we present our internal identities to the outer world, whereas the social self considers how outside views impact us internally.

The social self and Goffman's "stage" agree that human identity has multiple dimensions and is very complex, despite their differences. According to the social self, our relationships with others and the circumstances we find ourselves in have an immense effect on our identity. To this, the "stage" contributes by demonstrating how individuals actively perform their identities and adapt their behavior to the circumstances.

social self comes in when the person takes on the roles of a job seeker and someone who could be part of a team. The person carefully displays their abilities and behaves professionally to make a good impression on the "front stage." At the same time, the "backstage," they may consider their identity and prepare individually, revealing a side of themselves that isn't as visible to the public.

In conclusion, studying Goffman's "stage" and the social self gives important insights into the structure of human identity. The social self is concerned with how we absorb other people's opinions and the roles we play in forming our identities. However, Goffman's "stage" offers a perspective by showing how we perform our identities in various social contexts. Combining the two concepts provides us with an understanding of how individuals handle the dispute between their internal self-perception and how they present themselves to others in daily life. In the context of larger social relationships, this helps in our understanding of the dynamic character of human identity.