

## **George Herbert Mead (1863-1931)**

Received bachelor's degree from Oberlin College, never received a graduate degree

Taught at Chicago in psychology department from 1894 till end of life

Began famous course in social psychology in 1900

Had trouble writing; most famous book, *Mind, Self and Society* (1934), is based student notes

Other books:

*Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (1936) also based on notes

*The Philosophy of the Act* (1938) consists of previously unpublished papers

*Selected Writings* (1964) consists of papers published during lifetime

### **Some key ideas:**

#### The Self

The self is impossible without the social world. It is both a mental and social process.

The self involves the ability to take oneself as an object.

The self is developed through ability to “take the attitude of the other,” i.e., put ourselves into other people's places, and examine ourselves the way other would examine us.

#### Development of the self

Play stage: children learn to take the attitude of a particular others toward themselves

Game stage: children learn to take the attitude of everyone in the game

## Generalized other

Generalized other: attitude of an entire community or group

Learning to take the attitude of the generalized other allows abstract thinking and objectivity

Since people belong to multiple groups and can take multiple generalized others, they have multiple selves

## “I” and “Me”

“I” and “Me” are two processes in the self

“I” is the creative aspect of self. We are not totally aware of it and may be surprised by it

“Me” is the “organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes,” closely connected to the “generalized other”

Social control as self-criticism operates through me