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G. H. Mead’s symbolic interactionism: On emotions significance for self-formation
Classics in symbolic interactionism

Abstract

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On emotions significance for self-formation

Among the classics in symbolic interactionism we find A. Smith, C. H. Cooley and G. H. Mead. Smith is commonly remembered for his idea of the invisible hand, rather than his ideas on sympathy or moral sentiments; Cooley for his idea of the looking-glass self, in the sense of self-reflexion, rather than self-feeling; and Mead for how we through attitude taking become selves with minds, rather than with emotions. In this paper Mead’s thinking on self-formation is perceived from a perspective that focuses on emotion. Especially, Mead’s thought of emotional experience as a felt inhibition of our interchanges with the outer world is examined. As a result, a systematization of the logic behind Mead’s theory of the evolving self is presented. Three distinct forms of our interchanges with the outer world, then, come to the forefront: (1) *functional identification* with the outer world, (2) *attitude taking of the thing*, from which he means that *self-feeling or emotional experience* emerge, (3) *attitude taking of the other*, from which he means that *self-reflexion or reflexive experience* emerge.

*Keywords*: self-formation, self-feeling, self-reflexion, emotion, social behavior, social interaction, attitude taking, G. H. Mead.