

George Herbert Mead and The I and The Me

. . .Mead borrowed [these terms from William James]. . .for his own purpose. In speaking of an I and a me Mead sought to make the point that the human individual or self may enter into conduct [i.e., social behavior] in two distinguishable senses. On the one hand, the self may enter into conduct as a meaningful stimulus for the intelligent control of action. In this case the self functions as an object; this is what Mead had in mind when he spoke of the me. The me is thus a presentation that performs a mediating role within an ongoing process of experience or action. On the other hand, . . .the human individual may also enter into conduct as an agent of reconstruction. . . .The self functioning in this latter sense is what Mead meant by the I ; it is the self in the disintegration and reconstruction of the its universe,[i.e., the introduction of novelty in human conduct].

Gary A. Cook (1993) George Herbert Mead: The Making of a Social Pragmatist