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Q2(c)

"Self and society are twin-born " Examine the statement of Mead.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · Sociology GS 1 · 15 marks · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx - Historical materialism, mode of production, alienation, class struggle; Emile Durkheim - Division of labour, social fact, suicide, religion and society; Max Weber - Social action, ideal types, authority, bureaucracy, protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism; Talcott Parsons - Social system, pattern variables; Robert K. Merton - Latent and manifest functions, conformity and deviance, reference groups; Mead - Self and identity.

Core demand of the question

- "Self and society are twin-born " Examine the statement of Mead
- Keep the examination within a 15-mark length

Revision summary

- **Mead:** mind, self, and society arise together in significant symbols.

Play, game, and **generalised other** form the "me"; the "I" answers.

The claim rejects a pre-social self and a society without selves.

Durkheim, **Weber**, Cooley, and **Blumer** sit nearby; class and caste still structure which others count.

Introduction

George Herbert Mead argued that the self is not a private soul that later enters society. Mind, self, and society arise together in communication. The statement "twin-born" names that simultaneous birth, not two finished things glued later.

Body**Mead's mechanism**

- The gesture becomes a **significant symbol** when it arouses in the speaker the same response it arouses in the other, as language does.
- **Role-taking:** the child plays particular others, then the organised game, then the **generalised other** of the group.
- The "I" is the spontaneous response. The "me" is the organised set of others' attitudes. Self is their conversation.

Why twins, not sequence

- **Emile Durkheim** stressed external social facts. Mead agrees that the group is prior as a conversation, but he refuses a self-less heap of constraints.
- **Charles Horton Cooley's looking-glass self is a neighbour:** we see ourselves in others' imagined judgments.
- **Max Weber's** social action already orients to others. Mead supplies the social psychology of how that orientation is learned.

Examination

- The claim attacks both a Robinsonade individual and a society that never lives in persons.
- **Karl Marx's** species-being and later interactionists, including Herbert **Blumer's** symbolic interactionism, extend the same direction.
- **Limits:** Mead underplayed class, caste, and state power that structure whose "**generalised other**" counts. Talcott Parsons later folded the "me" into socialisation, which can flatten conflict.

Indian illustration

- Caste and gender train the **generalised other** early. SHG talk and school peer groups show new others without erasing the twin birth.

Flow diagram

Communication symbols -> Role-taking
Role-taking -> Me generalised other
Role-taking -> I spontaneous spontaneous
Me generalised other -> Self
I spontaneous -> Self
Self -> Society in persons

Conclusion

- **Mead's statement holds:** self and society are born in the same communicative process of role-taking. **Durkheim's** constraint and **Marx's** structure still organise which others matter. The twin image fails only if it is read as harmony without power.

Facts & figures

Significant symbol

A gesture that calls out the same meaning in self and other, typically language.

Generalised other

The organised attitudes of the group, taken by the person as the "me".

I and me

Mead's split between spontaneous response and socialised self-image.

Blumer

Named symbolic interactionism from Mead: meanings are handled in interaction.