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AUGUST 22
2020

E-Content
Semester III

CC-10: THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS IN SOCIOLOGY

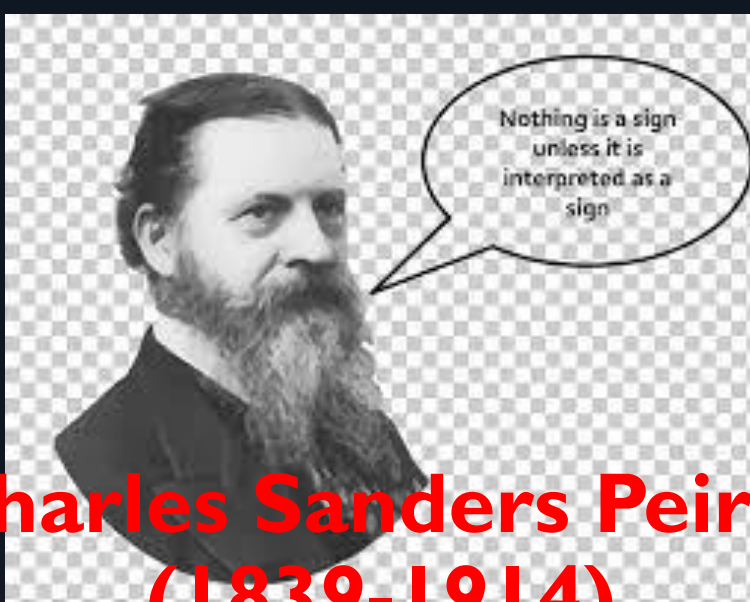
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

- ❖ Symbolic Interactionism takes a small scale view of society.
- ❖ Symbolic interaction is a perspective in sociology that places meaning, interaction, and human agency at the centre of understanding social life.
- ❖ This perspective grew out of the American philosophical tradition of pragmatism, an approach developed in the late nineteenth century by Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey.
- ❖ George Herbert Mead borrowed ideas from these pragmatists including Charles Horton Cooley and combined those ideas with his own insights to produce a synthesis, i.e., the conceptual core of modern interactionism.



INTRODUCTION





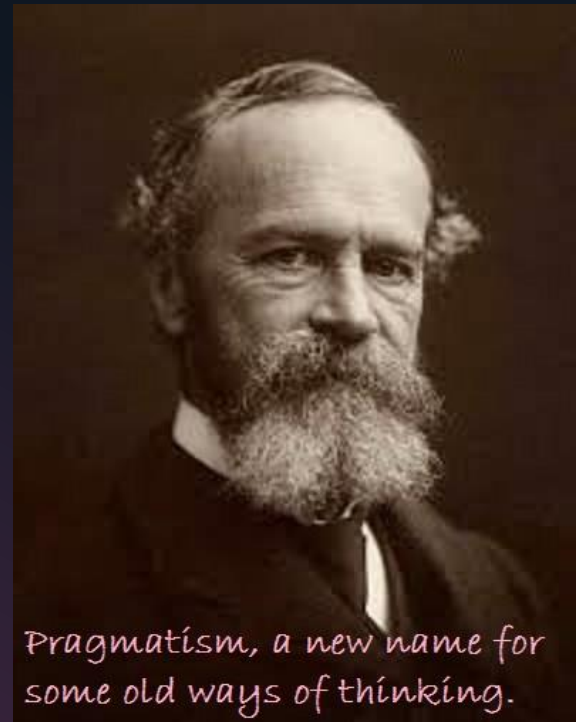
Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914)

Father of Pragmatism

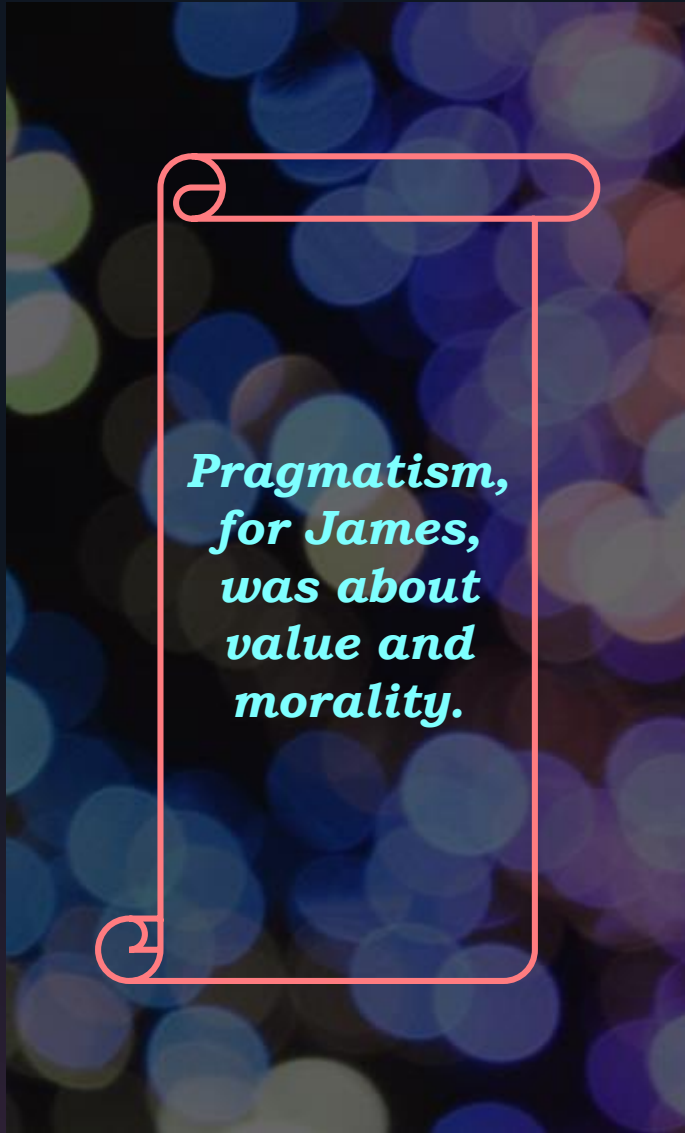
Pragmatism: for any statement to be meaningful, it must have practical bearings.

Peirce defines pragmatism in his work *'How to Make our Ideas Clear'*: "Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object" ([1878]1992, p. 132).

- ❖ For Peirce, pragmatism was a method for attaining clarity of ideas within a normative conception of logic.
- ❖ So, what is this logic that Peirce is talking about?
- ❖ This logical meaning is found in the context of the community of the self-correcting inquiry.
- ❖ Peirce identifies three grades of clarity or understanding:
 - a. The first grade of clarity about a concept is to have an unreflective grasp of it in everyday experience.
 - b. The second grade of clarity is to have, or be capable of providing, a definition of the concept.
 - c. He introduces his own third grade of clarity – the definition of pragmatism.



Pragmatism, a new name for some old ways of thinking.

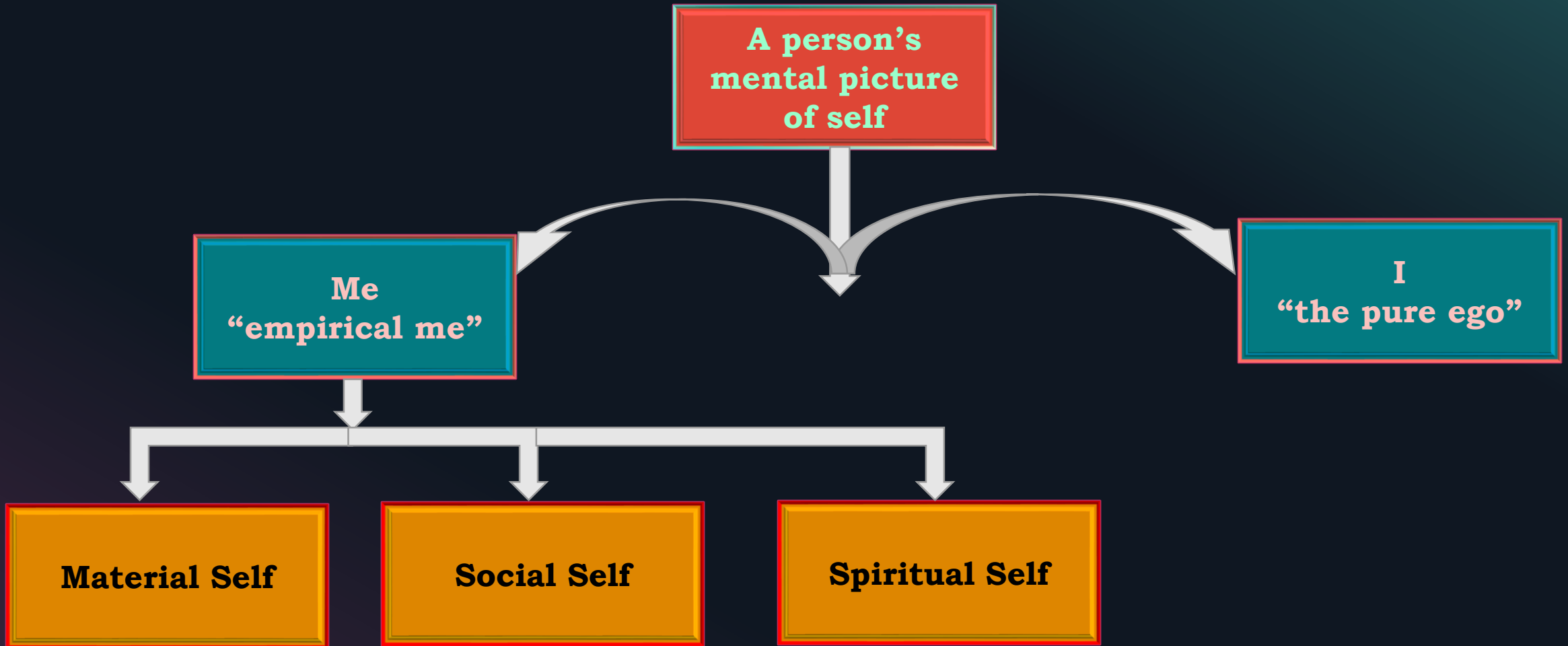


William James (1842-1910)

Father of American Psychology

- James was interested in the experiencing individual, for whom practical events marked the test of ideas.
- As he put it in *Pragmatism*: "The whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants of our life, if this world-formula or that world-formula be the true one" ([1907] 1977:379).

First Social Scientist to Develop a Clear Concept of Self



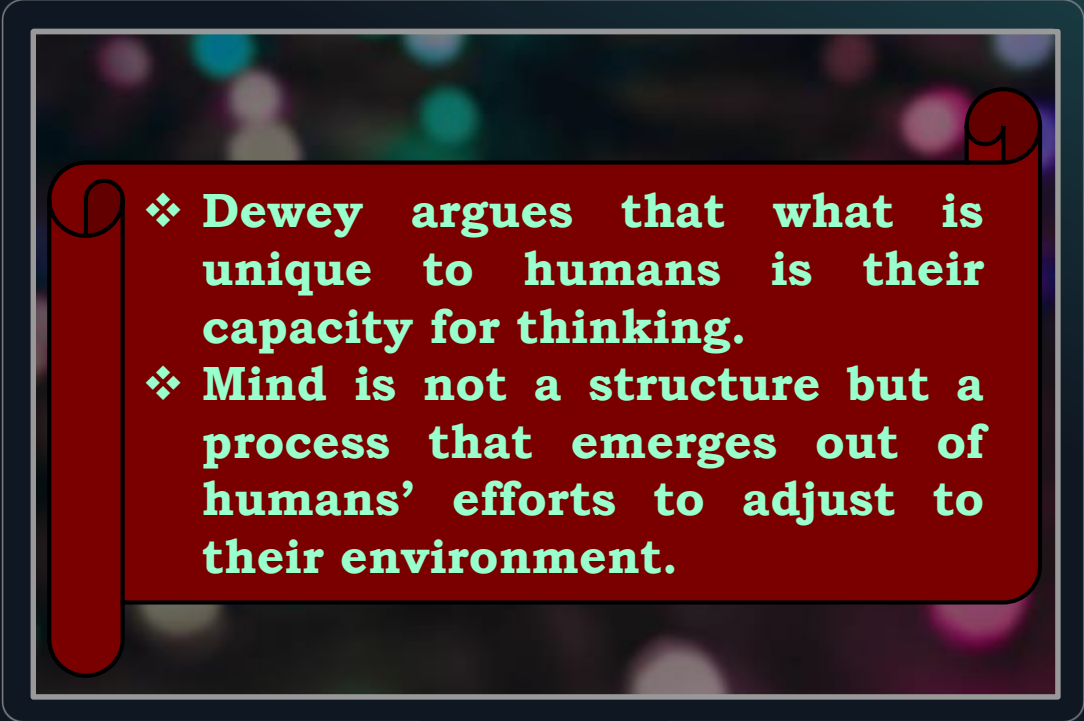


John Dewey (1859-1952)

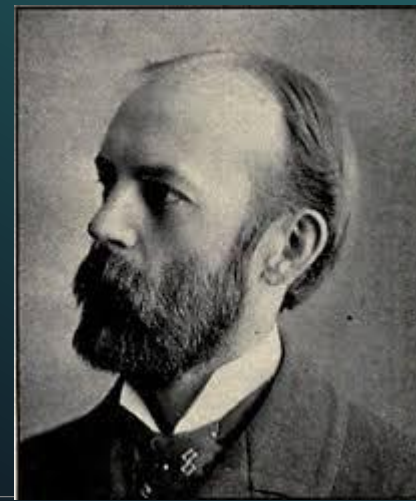
Exponent of Pragmatism

Father of Modern Experiential Education

- Dewey stressed on the process of human adjustment to the world.
- To explain this he attempted to combine both Peirce's and James' idea of pragmatism.
- He called this philosophical theory as instrumentalism.

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- ❖ Dewey argues that what is unique to humans is their capacity for thinking.
- ❖ Mind is not a structure but a process that emerges out of humans' efforts to adjust to their environment.

Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929)



Founding Member of American Sociological Association

- Cooley argues that – individuals see themselves as objects, along with other objects, in their social environment and 'self' emerges out of communication with others.
- Coined the term 'looking glass-self'.
- Developed the concept of 'primary group'.

How should I react in front of her so that she acknowledges me?

OMG! What she might be thinking of me?

She looked at me like I am stupid.

What do we get through looking glass-self?

1. We imagine how others see us.
2. We imagine how others judge us.
3. We react accordingly.

These pragmatists influenced **George Herbert Mead** and the result was the **theory of symbolic interactionism**, which was refined by **Herbert Blumer**.



THANK YOU!

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