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superstructures which permit some men to play the part of macro-parasites with respect to other men are treated in *The Pursuit of Power* (1982).

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Further Reading

McNeill, W. H. (1967), *A World History*, Chicago.
McNeill, W. H. (1980), *The Human Condition*, Chicago.

Mead, George Herbert (1863–1931)

George Herbert Mead was an American philosopher whose works have had an enduring impact on sociological research and theory. He studied under William James at Harvard, and taught at the Universities of Michigan and Chicago. His posthumously published lectures from the University of Chicago on social psychology, collected in *Mind, Self and Society* (1934), represent his most critical social scientific work. Here, Mead presents a conceptual view of human action, interaction, and organization. This conceptualization represents a blending of general philosophical traditions, including utilitarianism, behaviourism, Darwinism and pragmatism, with specific concepts borrowed from such thinkers as Wilhelm Wundt, William James, Charles Peirce, Charles Horton Cooley, and John Dewey (with whom he founded the 'Chicago School' of pragmatism). In this synthesis, Mead argues that social life is a process of adaptation and adjustment to ongoing patterns of social organization, and that human capacities for symbol use, covert reflection, self-awareness, and self-control are learned responses to environmental pressures for regularized interaction. For Mead, the critical 'conditioned responses' among humans are the behavioural capacities for gesturing, role taking, self and mind. Through conventional gestures, humans signal their course of action; through reading these gestures, humans can mutually assume each others' perspective as well as more 'generalized communities of attitudes' associated with a social context; through minded deliberations, humans can 'imaginatively rehearse' alternative lines of conduct and select the most appropriate response; through the capacities for self, humans can see themselves as objects of evaluation in a situation; and through such self-awareness and self-evaluation, they can control and regulate their responses.

Mead's view of human action, interaction, and organization is the conceptual basis for most modern formulations of interaction in the social sciences, including those in such diverse schools of thought as role theory, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism, interactionism, cognitive sociology, action

theory, dramaturgy, phenomenology, and ethnosociology.

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Reference

Mead, G. H. (1932), *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviourist*, ed. C. Maris, Chicago.

Further Reading

Mead, G. H. (1938), *The Philosophy of the Act*, Chicago.
Natanson, M. (1956), *The Social Dynamics of George H. Mead*, Washington.

See also: *ethnomethodology*; *symbolic interactionism*.

Mead, Margaret (1901–78)

The 'favoured child' and eldest of an academic family, Margaret Mead was born in 1901 near Philadelphia, and was encouraged by her parents to believe that anyone could accomplish whatever he or she set out to do. She did her first degree at Barnard College, New York, and as a graduate student in anthropology at Columbia University, was greatly influenced by Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict. In anthropology she discovered the vehicle for critical, optimistic revisions of accepted conventions. From studies of child-rearing in the Pacific, through pioneering discussions of gender, into studies of culture change, cultural pluralism, complex societies, race relations, and 1960s drug culture, Mead regarded disciplinary findings in terms of usefulness to the ordinary individual facing everyday problems.

Mead entered the nature-nurture debate, on the side of nurture, learning and custom (see *Coming of Age in Samoa*, 1925). Recently her work has been criticized for an overemphasis on culture, and a need to prove a point that prevented her from doing effective fieldwork. Derek Freeman (*Margaret Mead and Samoa*, 1983), impugns her methods, her view of Samoa, and her argument for cultural determinism. He fails both to understand her purposes and her position; Mead did not neglect biology and in the nature-nurture debate emphasized the extent to which human beings are tied to 'rhythms of the body'. *Sex and Temperament* (1935) and *Male and Female* (1949) argued against universal sex-role stereotypes, while recalling the significance of gender distinctions.

Her confidence that people could choose alternative individual paths and create wiser sociocultural arrangements remained firm. During return trips to the Pacific, Mead monitored the passage of the Maori into a modern capitalist world; she urged that continuities be part of change (*Growing up in New Guinea*, 1930; *New Lives for Old*, 1956). Mead's anthropologist was