
Session 1: Role Theory as Social Theory in International Relations

„G.H. Meads Pragmatist Role Theory and IR or
what Harry Bauer might have said!“

Outline

1. What pragmatism has to offer to IR.
2. What G. H. Mead has to offer to role theory in the IR context.
3. Toward a pragmatists reading of US role behaviour.

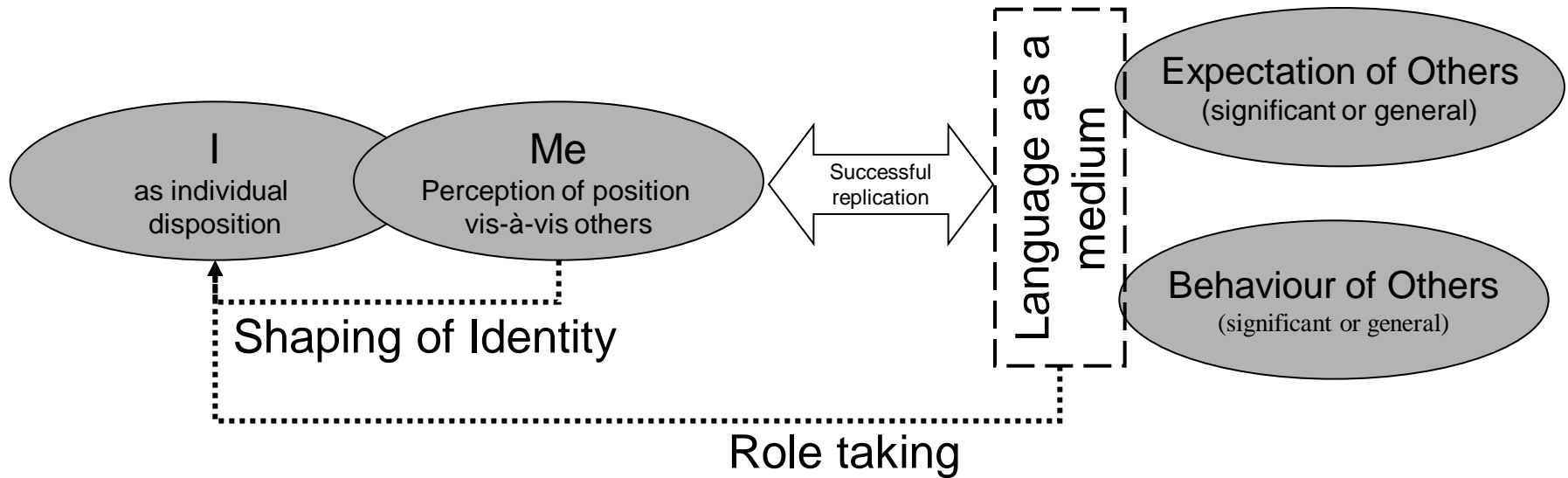
What pragmatism has to offer to IR

1. A solid alternative epistemological foundation vis-à-vis constructivism.
2. Encouraging interdisciplinarity, experimentation and dialogue.
3. Reinvigorating the normative and ethical vocation of IR theory.

Pragmatism: Epistemological and methodological common ground

1. Rejection of a theory of knowledge that strives to establish „true“ statements, which in turn try to mirror image reality
2. Rejection of a general scepticism
3. Self-reflected fallibilism
4. Contextualisation of awareness
5. Importance of discourse and language for the construction of true statements

Mead's Concept of role



Toward a pragmatists reading of US role behaviour

1. Recently, American exceptionalism has become a stumbling block for compliance behaviour in international organizations and for a custodian role outside these organizations.
 1. Strong sovereigntistic school in US interpretation of international law.
 2. Increasing unilateral cooperation by allies and foes to tie the US to a rules based international order.
2. Recently, American conventional military primacy has „created“ asymmetric war strategies by state-based foes and transnationalized non-state-based terror groups.
 1. Conventional primacy and RMA has led to a lowering of the political intervention threshold in the US.
 2. Conventional primacy in Iraq and Afghanistan has pushed Al Quaida to transnationalize and the Iraqi insurgents to disperse.

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