



My Father, My Self

Employing a Sociological Imagination to Transcend the Imaginary in Both Self and Society

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Abstract: I reluctantly revisited a paper I wrote 2 years ago, and realized that my reluctance may have had a lot to do with the fact that the problems I explored in the earlier paper were not only still a part of my life, but have in some ways worsened. My relationship with my father was almost the same as it had been, and until very recently my avoidance tendencies had spiraled into dangerous levels of alcohol abuse. I decided to rethink this paper attempting to incorporate a basic sense of psychoanalytic theory gained since the time it was written, in an effort to utilize C. Wright Mills' sociological imagination to better understand the intersection of self and society by reevaluating my relationship with my father. In a broader sense I hope to point out the importance of the individual in macro-social change that starts on the micro-social level but begins with the potential for individual change that is afforded by the pursuit of self-knowledge.

“Liberation, then, depends first upon the realization of the truth about our condition.”

—Kathleen Riordan Speeth

I became angry recently when my father tried to take my dog to my sister's room for the night. To me, he was insinuating that I would neglect to take him to my own room, and allow the dog to run amuck during the night. I became intensely angry at him and at everyone else I live with, though this time, I internalized the anger and said nothing. I have, on occasion, reacted in a much more volatile fashion. In reality, his decision to take the dog was proba-

bly based on past instances in which I had forgotten to do as needed. He most likely intended no personal slight toward me in taking the dog, and did so without malice. The perceived slight stems from my own disappointment with myself for not living up to my own standard of responsibility and for allowing my actions or inactions to present to others a self which does not measure up to that which I desire to be. Erving Goffman tells us that

...the individual may deeply involve his ego in his identification with a particular establishment,

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and group, and in his *self-conception* as someone who does not disrupt social interaction or let down the social units which depend upon that interaction. When a disruption occurs, then, we may find that the self-conceptions around which his personality has been built may become discredited. These are consequences that disruptions may have from the point of view of individual personality. (quoted in Farganis, 362)

Because of the nature of human perception, and its tentative relationship to *reality*, many of our perceptions are in part *imaginary*. This is because they are constructed from within a socio-historically situated biographical nexus of needs met and feelings created through our primary and secondary socializations. It is imperative, therefore, for one to gain self-knowledge through a critical investigation of one's own biography in order to gain awareness of the imaginary aspects of the way one tells one's own story to both oneself and others and how it determines his or her motivations and consequent actions.

Autobiography itself is a type of "social interaction in which one tries to influence others" (Bjorklund, 17). This being true, the writer of an autobiography, in choosing what he or she will write goes through the same role taking process that goes on in any symbolic interaction. In selecting the content of the narrative the same social forces apply. "Life histories are accounts, representations of lives, not lives actually lived," Bjorklund adds. Our conceptions of our own lives are subject to our own interpretation and definition. We define our own roles, and assume the role of the audience when we write; the purpose of the tale we tell is contingent on our perception of each. "It would indeed be a nice problem in the descriptive geometry of narrative," Ralph Keeler writes, "to determine the exact point

where the lines of the two interests meet, that of the narrator and that of the people who have to endure the narration" (Bjorklund 16-17). These facts will inevitably affect the content of this very essay.

The individual is the implement of social change. If one can recognize the imaginary aspects of one's own perceptions and through this awareness try better to form one's actions in the best interest of a definition of the situation that is grounded in the real then one will be better able to discern the real needs of self and other and act in an appropriate proximity to where the two intersect. By doing so one contributes to the chain of individual actions that make up society as a whole in a constructive way. Therefore to reduce the reliance on the imaginary in the individual is to reduce the imaginary in society as well. The desired outcome of course is still a compromise between many selves and others but one that is located closer to the needs of the situation at the place where self and other meet. Perhaps more simply stated, an increase in self-knowledge affords us the ability to *act* consciously in our relationships with others rather than *react* to what is imagined by our automatic cognitive processes since *self* is a concept which is inextricably linked to the individual's conceptualizations of *others*.

In this essay I will continue my ongoing investigation of myself, specifically in relationship to my father. It is a glimpse of my current state of progress in enacting social change in the most feasible and necessary way I can: by examining my role as a part of it. I will discuss a few applicable social theories, always keeping in mind the sociological imagination in my own way by attempting to integrate sociological and psychoanalytic concepts. In the words of C. Wright Mills,

The sociological imagination...in considerable part consists of the capacity to shift from one perspective

to another, and in the process to build up an adequate view of a total society and its components. . . . Since one can be *trained* [his italics] only in what is already known, training sometimes incapacitates one from learning new ways; it makes one rebel against what is bound to be at first loose and even sloppy. But you cling to such vague images and notions, if they are yours, and you must work them out. For it is in such forms that original ideas, if any, almost always first appear. (Mills, 211-12)

Neil J. Smelser selected Freud's *theory of ambivalence* to describe situations where he observed people "locked-in" by commitments, whether to a person or institution, and their contradictory feelings toward that entity. He called such situations "...seedbeds of ambivalence and its consequences—spite, petty wrangling, struggles for recognition, and vicious politics" (Wallace and Wolf, 60). In the instance of my relationship with my father, my own ambivalence stemming from my dependence on him has caused feelings of spite and a struggle for recognition. I am dependent on my father and my self-image has been injured by my inability to escape that dependency. This could be partly the construction of, or at least exacerbated by, an internalization of what I perceive to be my father's, as well as American cultural ideas of, individualism, masculinity, and adulthood.

Goffman brilliantly uses a sociological imagination to connect the social to the psychological. The way my own ego is invested in my particular establishment, or role, in my family has vast implications on my perception, definition of the situation, and consequently the actions I contribute. The ego is in constant need of protection. It seems most likely that various ego defenses are survival techniques. Goffman's description of the relationship of the ego to part es-

tablishment in a social group manifests how important others are to our self-concept. I believe that as social animals these others, the groups to which we belong, are necessary to our survival. It becomes very evident how important ego protection (or the preservation of our self-concept as valuable, reliable, and accepted members of society) is when one considers that it is analogous to the most basic need we have: the need to survive.

In defense of my own ego I seem to have taken to procrastination, and to the avoidance of situations that I might fail or that may injure my self-concept. The paradox is that this defense only creates that which it seeks to avoid. I am dependent on my family and my self-image has been injured by my inability to escape that dependency. That inability has in turn been shaped by my procrastination. The procrastination stems from the fear of losing approval by disappointing others, especially my parents, and in particular my father. Instead of acting in a way that will stop the paradoxical cycle and gain the approval I seek, I procrastinate.

In "The Roots of Procrastination: A sociological Inquiry Into Why I Wait Until Tomorrow" (2003/4), Jennifer M. Kosmas describes a similar relationship with her father. She writes, "The gestures I received from my father includes such things as making sure that I saw him shaking his head in disgust and walking away in the middle of a softball game while I may not have been having my best day at pitching" (Kosmas, 76). The difference is, whereas she describes a harsh paternal figure who clearly displays disappointment with her when she fails to live up to his standards, my own father does no such thing. I am sure that there are more subtle cues that I interpret as disappointment, or disapproval, but my own father offers me support. He isn't perfect at it, but he seems even to try to support me in endeavors which I am sure are not congruent to his

own interests and values. During moments when I let down my guard he even tells me that he is proud of me. At the very least he does his best to make me feel like he *is* proud of me. It is then something I have internalized, some image of my father that exists within me that I feel I will disappoint. It is in a way myself who I avoid disappointing through procrastination and by doing so end up disappointing everyone.

Since the pattern of disapproval has gone on for so long, I feel the impression others have of me is beyond repair or will take more action to reverse than I am able to give. This feeling of futility fuels the procrastination. I do tend to let myself and others down quite often. I make an exorbitant number of mistakes sometimes. I have locked myself out of my house or my car, or left the lights on and killed my battery more times than a reliable self-concept can endure. I have *three* sets of keys and *two* wallets. Since my father found *one* of each yesterday I can now tell you where *two* sets of keys and *one* wallet are. I maintain a good sense of humor about these things but sometimes the jokes I tell at my own expense cease to be funny when those around me tell them too often. When they are my jokes they are *defenses*. When they become other peoples jokes about me they become *offences* and force my awareness of the fact that I don't live up to my ideal self-concept. I have a deep desire to be respected as the man I see myself one day being—even though I have difficulty sometimes respecting the one that I am now. If I don't respect myself all the time, I can't expect others to do the same, but when they don't I sometimes feel spiteful just as Freud's theory of ambivalence predicts.

In my relationship with my father, the spite is manifested as silence. I don't know where to begin to fix things because I see too largely the problem as a whole rather than the day to day solutions. For instance the last time I saw him he asked me how school was, and I sort of grumbled rather

than give him a solid answer. Every time he tries to talk to me I give a one word answer or a conversation ender before a conversation even begins. According to Spencer Cahill,

Participants [of social interaction] commonly share an implicit understanding of its organization and, therefore, similar expectations of what each is likely to do under different circumstances. This shared but implicit understanding turns both action and inaction, the expected and unexpected, into meaningful events. For example, individuals who are acquainted expect to exchange greetings when they meet. If we walk past those whom we know without greeting them, they will probably consider it a snub. Our failure to greet them is meaningful, because they expect a greeting. Although we may blatantly ignore expected patterns of interaction, we do so at the risk of sending unintended messages to others and often unflattering ones about ourselves. (Cahill 155)

The messages my silence sends, intended or not, are examples of the way my procrastination and avoidance perpetuates a snowballing problem. It is partly because of how I *imagine* my father will respond to me that I avoid contact with him. What he might in turn *imagine* my silence to mean could engender negative feelings in him. I have succeeded in creating a "self fulfilling prophecy" (Merton, 196).

The more experiences I avoid, the less I experience anything at all and consequently what may have begun as an effort to protect my ego has left me farther from my ego-ideal than I know how to return from. The lack of having experienced so many situations has left me with little but social anxieties and a strong compulsion to retreat

from stimulating experiences. In my late adolescence the desire to retreat found its soulmate when I discovered alcohol and drugs. Perhaps that's a topic for another essay, but it is a prime example of how far from an ideal self my avoidant defense of an imaginary ideal self-concept have taken me. If ego protection is as analogous to self preservation and survival as I have proposed, then the avoidant way I protect mine is all wrong because if left unchecked it will slowly lead to my destruction.

Perhaps it will take years of psychoanalysis to uncover the precise reasons why I have perceived such disappointment from my father or feel so disappointed in myself that I have fallen into such gross patterns of avoidance. Especially since he doesn't seem to fit the description of the harsh punitive father figure that Kosmas describes as having contributed to her patterns of procrastination. Whatever the reasons, however, the outcome is the same, and it is a desire for *approval* that fuels or contributes to each of our conflicts.

In chapter 7 of Wallace and Wolf's *Contemporary Sociological Theory* (1999), George C. Homans describes approval as a sort of currency in social exchange—as a valued commodity that people are constantly seeking and willing to give to those they deem worthy. Our social worth or value seems dependent on how much we receive, and our actions reflect that amount. Approval serves as one of the mechanisms that glues society together. On a microsociological level the giving and taking of approval fuels the connections between individuals and small groups, guiding their behaviors and solidifying their conformity to the group norms. This is one of the mechanisms by which the socialization process is conducted. The feeling obtained from gaining the approval of another is pleasurable. It is all the more pleasurable when this person is a *significant other* or one that is imbued with a high degree of immediate importance. Thus, the feeling obtained from

appeasing many others or the *generalized other* is rewarding as well, which then creates the basis for social conformity since the generalized other is an overall sense of society's norms and values. It could be said that our primary socialization is conducted primarily by significant others while our secondary socialization is more concerned with fine-tuning the sense of the generalized other—though they are never separate since our parents are operating out of their perception of the generalized and our own concept of society is thus forever linked to the one we learned from them.

So we learn what to do by seeking and gaining approval. The opposite is also true, since some actions which are considered deviant—because they threaten the social order—are punished. My own ambivalence toward my father which, as I stress, stems from ambivalence toward myself, is fueled in large part by this currency of approval. I certainly want his approval, however, the path of least resistance has been to be inactive in seeking it. This creates an equal and opposite situation of disapproval. Homans writes, “rewards such as approval or recognition are attendant on certain behaviors” (Farganis 294). I also want to approve of myself. In this search I have done the same thing. I have withdrawn from and avoided those situations through which my self-concept could be tested. It is important to note that approving of myself is the same as being approved of by my parents or society since it is an internalization of these others that become the self and its governing structures.

Goffman's concept of “*face*” or the “positive social value” people attribute to themselves through “the lines they take or parts they perform during interaction” is a good description of the complexities of psychological processes which make up self-image. His concepts of *face-work* describe two methods or *rituals* for maintaining face: “*Corrective process* is like a religious ritual, expressing individuals' mutu-

al reverence for face. The countless times a day that we say 'excuse me,' 'I'm sorry' and 'thank you' indicate just how highly we regard both our own and others' face" (Cahill 156). The other is "*self-explanatory*: we attempt to avoid places, people, situations, and topics that might threaten our own or others' face and attempt to ignore events that do" (Cahill 156). My father and I have both taken to employing the latter ritual. Instead of making the effort to express apology or thanks, we avoid and ignore each other in one way or another. We walk on egg shells when we approach each other for necessary conversations. I don't know for certain how he feels, but there is a palpable tension in the room when the two of us are alone.

Anthony Giddens believes that the actions of the constrained serve to reinforce the social structures that constrain them. (Wallace and Wolf, 180). My avoidance has led directly to such behaviors and results as laziness, failure, social withdrawal, and alcohol abuse, among others—all of which serve to perpetuate the problem. These behaviors are all directly related to procrastination, and procrastination is central to perpetuating both my perception of a disapproving father and my own inadequate self-concept. My own behaviors contribute to the failure to make progress that keeps me stagnant and prevents the realization of my better self. It also contributes to the deterioration of my relationship with my father since, "inadequate rewards lead to a deterioration of social ties" (Farganis, 294). I am not equipped to conclusively determine my own unconscious processes which may serve to perpetuate this cycle of self constraint. However, since my intent is to point to the psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious to better understand the workings of a society made of individuals, I will point to one hypothesis about my own unconscious processes.

At the outset of this essay I told of an anger with those who threaten my self-con-

cept, even, or especially, when it is grounded in the truth. In this way I am unconsciously making *them* the problem by faulting others for not seeing me for the self I wish to be and, out of ego protection, convince myself that I am. It could be that blaming others as a means for keeping my self-concept intact has been a defense mechanism for so long now that unconsciously I seek to continue behaviors that will precipitate the negative reactions that allow me then to continue being angry at an object other than myself. This is just an idea and could never be the *whole* truth, but it is an illustration of how unconscious processes can hold us in constraint when they remain unconscious. We have no hope for a defense against them if we remain unaware of them. It is important to note that after identifying the tendency for the constrained to further constrain themselves Giddens adds, "They may also modify and change them" (Wallace and Wolf, 180). We cannot change them until we know what they are and why they exist.

Since we rely on social ties for our survival, the currency of social approval which we seek to confirm our self-concept as valued members of society is as important to our ability to thrive as the economic currency with which we buy food, water and shelter. I have alluded to the fact that our perception of approval and disapproval is not always grounded in reality but what the participants imagine to be real according to how they define the situation based on complicated unconscious processes that may cause us to act in a manner contrary to the real needs of the situation. This is done through processes of interpretation.

Herbert Blumer's article "Society as Symbolic Interaction" (in Manis and Meltzer 1972), shows us that "human beings interpret or 'define' each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions. Their 'response' is not made directly to the actions of one another but instead is based on the meaning they attach to such

actions" (Manis and Meltzer, 145). This is the mechanism by which Thomas' *definition of the situation* gets employed in social situations. Blumer tells us further that sociological thought "rarely recognizes or treats human societies as composed of individuals who have selves. Instead they assume human beings are merely organisms with some kind of organization responding to forces which play upon them...this approach or point of view denies, or at least ignores, that human beings have selves—that they act by making indications to themselves" (Blumer, quoted in Manis and Meltzer, 149). I think it is precisely this ignorance of self that dooms many social movements to fail. I do not pretend to have a solution to any particular social problem myself. However, I wish to point out the importance of the individual to the formation of society using Blumer's symbolic interaction perspective. Since "the group or collective action consists of the alignment of individual actions, brought about by the individuals interpreting or taking into account each other's actions" (Blumer, quoted in Manis and Meltzer, 148), then how we act as individuals is instrumental to what kind of society we create.

My intention is to show that our definition of the situation which is so instrumental in our choice of action is most of the time based in unreality or the imaginary. It is therefore up to the individual to decide if he wants to investigate the veracity of his interpretations with the intention of decreasing the amount of action he adds to society that finds false and inappropriate motivation.

Blumer shows us the potential of the individual when he writes, "I wish to point out that any line of social change, since it involves change in human action, is necessarily mediated by interpretation on the part of the people caught up in the change" (Ibid, 153). He then adds, "interpretations of new situations are not predetermined by conditions antecedent to the situations but

depend on what is taken into account and assessed in the actual situations in which behavior is formed" (Ibid). It is this latter statement that gives rise to the issue I am discussing. I almost wholeheartedly agree with Blumer on these points; however, while he does mention briefly that individual interpretations may vary in what aspects of a situation specific individuals or groups will value and consider in forming their interpretations, he does not offer an explanation for why they vary. He illustrates quite accurately the social potential of the individual but in attempting to do so, by confronting the social science's "preoccupation with categories of structure and organization," he underestimates the extent to which these antecedent entities *do* determine "what is taken into account and assessed." I'm not convinced it was his intent to do so, and of course this sentiment is the result of my own interpretation, but his approach implies a higher degree of freedom of choice in individual interpretation (freedom from the antecedent conditions and larger institutions he so astutely shows as collections of individual selves) than I am convinced we have.

It sounds as though I am contradicting the very point I would like to borrow from Blumer, that of the individual's potential as a unit of social change, by going against his point that the "interpretations of new situations are not predetermined." In a way I am. However, it is because Blumer may not be fully taking into account the existence of an unconscious that undoubtedly affects the interpretations of the conscious. I contradict Blumer in this way not to make futile the individual's potential by pointing to yet another entity that holds us in sway, but to point more deeply to the task at hand. If one believes in the existence of the unconscious, which I do, and also that the contents of the unconscious are products of our socialization, primarily through our parents and secondarily through the social structures that ourselves and our parents

are a part of, then our interpretations *are* to a great extent “predetermined by conditions antecedent to the situation.”

As a brief illustration of how “what is taken into account and assessed” can be influenced by unconscious elements, I offer up a recent experience of mine:

I have been corresponding with a professor for some time. These correspondences have been an instrumental part of my attempt to remain sober. Through discussion of my experiences with newfound sobriety, and my future plans for graduate school, I have found in this correspondence some much needed support. I recently compiled these correspondences and while doing so decided it would be therapeutic to read through them and see how I’ve progressed. What I found was that there were many lines in the professor’s letters that I didn’t remember reading. Sometimes these were lines meant as compliments which I may have unconsciously glossed over or repressed since they were incongruent with my self-deprecating patterns of defense. Other times they were sentences which aroused fears and anxieties. I don’t doubt that some filtering process, designed to protect my self-concept for the better or worse, took place on some unconscious level. What’s more, and what is even more exemplary of the imaginary nature of my perceptions, sometimes during our correspondence a single word or phrase with a mundane or even benevolent intent triggered a response that is entirely a construction of my own mind. For instance the professor once referred to me as a “talented young man.” It may be obvious to the reader that this was a compliment, and indeed on a conscious level I thought so as well. However something in my unconscious allowed, or rather *compelled* me to interpret the word “young” as *incomplete, impotent, not yet able*, and triggered anxieties of an inability to attain objects of my desire in both my academic and personal life.

Perhaps this only illustrates my gross

insecurities, but I have to believe that similar processes of my own mind could go on in a voting booth, behind the wheel of a car, at home, at work, at school, etc.—all of the places where my interpretations of the symbols in my interactions with others determine the actions I contribute to the composition of the society of which I am a part. I also find it hard to believe that I am the only one whose interpretations of symbols are at times grossly inaccurate due to unconscious elements. If we are to believe that repressed or unknown elements of the unconscious can influence our interpretation, and also that these elements are the products of earlier experiences in our socialization—of which many of the most influential occurred in the earliest stages of our primary socialization which are unknown to conscious memory—then interpretations of new situations are undoubtedly predetermined by antecedent conditions. By obtaining the greater self-knowledge that comes from trying to gain awareness of these conditions through investigation of one’s unconscious, the individual puts himself in a better position to add to society with a greater degree of conscious choice in how he does so. My interpretation of the word “young” as a symbol was based on pre-existing unconscious structures and did not fit with the reality being interpreted. When one considers how many of the seemingly small interpretations that determine the actions which compose society may be similarly incorrect, it becomes apparent how much of society is derived from the incorrect interpretations of its individual parts. This is what I mean by the *imaginary* in self and society.

In my relationship with my father the symbols have been interpreted and misinterpreted so many times now that nearly everything is imagined. From his responses I gather that he takes my silence to mean loathing, when it really stems from a desire for approval that my own imagination finds impossible to gain. When he tells me

that he is proud of me, I think it is out of guilt or obligation, or because I have become so frail and thanatic from states of alcohol use and depression that he acts supportive out of fear for my safety. In reality much of this may have some truth to it. But through our process of symbolic interaction, we have each made our own realities, and based on these no real communication occurs which will allow us to sort out the imaginary. I'd like to tell you that a knowledge of the problem alone gives me the power to change the situation. However, for instance, I have known that I have been an alcoholic for years, and it takes several people, situations, and distracting activities to get me through each day of sobriety. Tomorrow will be the 100th day since my last drink, and it is more obvious to me than ever that the knowledge of the problem alone doesn't empower me to change my behavior.

If it sounds as if I am falling further and further into pessimism about the individual's potential to change society, let alone himself, it is not my intention. Rather I wish to illustrate that the actualization of this potential takes great effort and the work is never done. Blumer empowers us with the ability, arguably the responsibility of our actions, to influence society when he tells us, "There is no empirically observable activity in a human society that does not spring from some acting unit" (Manis and Meltzer, 150). I guess what I'm trying to get across is something my father told me when I was quite young, "Most things in life worth doing aren't easy." It could be that the remnants of internalization of certain social structures in our unconscious, because they and their influence upon us are unknown to us, are precisely why society is so resistant to change.

Many of the struggles of my youth involved a desire and failure to live up to an idealized image of my father. All ideals are imaginary in some way. I wanted to be like he was whether it was in track and field,

my social life, or at work. An ego-ideal I internalized in my primary socialization that was an internalization of an idealized concept of my father became wrapped up in the idealized self-concept I carried with me into all aspects of my secondary socialization. Somewhere along the way I perceived a failure in living up to the ideal, perhaps because I had set the standard so high that I doomed myself to fail. As part of a defense mechanism that included procrastination and avoidance, I put off having to become anything like my ideal self-concept and imagined that there would be a time and place in the future when it would be easier to do so rather than face the reality that it takes a series of small efforts to make any progress toward this goal. The small efforts do not seem so small at the time, and even less so after they are allowed to add up into bigger problems.

Just as there is a gap between who I really am on a day to day basis and who I believe I am, or will be one day, there is a gap between my desired actions and those I actually carry out. It is as though there is a river between the two, and I have yet to find a boat or a bridge or the will to swim it. There is a vague separation in my mind between the present reality and the possible future. I can see the present and I don't like it. Somewhere across that great divide, which has manifested in my mind like a black river through whose fog I can't see but a glimmer of light, I see that glimmer in the form of a possible future and my more idealized self actualized. The timeline is broken, and the two don't connect. If I never find a way to pull them together the possible future will give way to the ever deteriorating present and the ideal self will never be. Thus far my response to this conundrum has been a self-defeating cycle of procrastination. It's possible that looking for a bridge or a boat has been the wrong plan of action. I was looking for a boat to cross an imaginary river. But an imaginary river doesn't need to be crossed. It only

needs to be unimagined.

The river is itself the postponement. I have created it out of the abandoned actions I have left as a trail behind me. Every time I choose the path of least resistance and put off progress toward a goal such as reuniting with my father, a single drop of the black water falls into the imaginary river, filling it from shore to shore. Along its banks lie the people and things associated with the separate states of myself that I conceive of, spreading farther and farther apart until they can no longer see one another. *Both* of these selves are imaginary. Each time I make the right decision and refuse to abandon or postpone, and instead I *act*, a pebble is thrown into that river and displaces one of the drops. As many drops as I have put in I must take out, maybe more. This is the effort part. Each time I act against procrastination, and each time after that, another pebble is thrown in, until one day the river narrows to a creek, then a stream, and finally the two pieces of land are pulled together and the self that wants desperately to get across the river finds that there never was a river at all. He has become the other self which was in his potential all along. The imaginary river, and all of the negative precipitations of my avoidant defenses are products of unconscious fears and elements, most of which are still unknown to me. An attempt to gain awareness of the unconscious is an imperative part of the self knowledge that allows us to incorporate biography, culture, social theory and historical situation to employ Mills' sociological imagination to reduce the imaginary in both self and society and act in ways more appropriate to the reality of the situation.

Society *is* Blumer's series of actions and reactions. I would go so far as to say that without a doubt the fabric of society is woven by a chain of re/actions by individuals. Every single one of our actions perpetuates or sets into motion another chain. So, if we make the effort to increase our self-knowl-

edge so that we may learn how many of our actions find their roots in the imaginary, then we are doing our part to change society. My father gets home from work at 6:00 pm tonight. I have an opportunity to try to change myself and society then.

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