

Works of George Herbert Mead
volume 1

Mind, Self, & Society

from the Standpoint of a
Social Behaviorist

Edited and with an Introduction by
Charles W. Morris



MIND, SELF, and SOCIETY

FROM THE STANDPOINT OF
A SOCIAL BEHAVIORIST

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MIND, SELF, and SOCIETY

PREFACE

THE following pages present the larger outlines of George H. Mead's system of social psychology. His views were developed from 1900 on at the University of Chicago in the widely known and highly influential course, "Social Psychology." Year after year students with psychological, sociological, linguistic, educational, philanthropic, and philosophical interests attended the course—frequently for a number of years; and book after book has borne testimony to the impact of Mead's ideas on his numerous students. The present volume contains much that will be of value to those of similar interests. For many of his listeners Mead's point of view—at once humanistic and scholarly—came to function as a focus of orientation for their entire intellectual and valuational life. The course in social psychology gave the foundation of Mead's thought. It was in effect Mead as scientist; it was upon this foundation that his philosophical elaboration and social participation rested. It is hoped that the present volume will be followed by volumes on *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, and *The Philosophy of the Act*. Together these three volumes would represent the three main fields of Mead's work: social psychology and social philosophy, the history of ideas, systematic pragmatism. They are supplemented by the already published volume, *The Philosophy of the Present*, edited by Arthur E. Murphy, and published in 1932 by the Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago.

Though he published many papers in the field of social psychology (as the bibliography at the end of this volume shows), Professor Mead never systematized his position and results in longer form. The present volume aims to do this task of systematization, partly by the arrangement of the material and partly through references at the appropriate places to the pub-

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lished writings. It provides the natural entrance into the intellectual world of George H. Mead.

None of the material here used has been previously published. The volume is in the main composed of two sets of excellent student notes on the course, together with excerpts from other such notes and selections from unpublished manuscripts left by Mr. Mead. A stenographic copy of the 1927 course in social psychology has been taken as basic. This set, together with a number of similar sets for other courses, owes its existence to the devotion and foresight of Mr. George Anagnos. Sensing, as a student, the importance of the material of Mr. Mead's lectures (always delivered without notes), he found in Mr. Alvin Carus a sympathetic fellow-worker who was able to provide the means necessary to employ persons to take down verbatim the various courses. The completeness of the material varies considerably, but the set basic to this volume was very full. The whole is by no means a court record, but it is certainly as adequate and as faithful a record as has been left of a great thinker's last years. This material can be utilized through the Department of Philosophy at the University of Chicago.

The basic manuscript has been greatly enriched by the faithful and full notes of another devoted student, Mr. Robert Page, notes especially valuable since they are for 1930, the last year in which the course was given in its complete form at Chicago. Into the 1927 material (when rearranged, pruned of superfluous repetitions, and stylistically corrected) were inserted portions of the 1930 material, both into the text and as footnotes. The same was done to a much lesser degree with material from other courses, and selections from other sets than 1927 and 1930 are indicated by giving the year after the selection. Insertion of material from manuscripts has been indicated by inserting MS after the selection. All titles have been added by the editor. Other editorial additions are inclosed in brackets.

Supplementary Essays Ia, II, III taken together practically constitute one unpublished manuscript. Essay IV is a compilation made from a 1927 stenographic set of notes of an elemen-

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tary ethics course. I am grateful to Mr. Anagnos, Mr. Carus, and Mr. Page for making available the bulk of the material used. Professor T. V. Smith and Professor Herbert Blumer have read and commented on portions of the manuscript. Mr. John M. Brewster and Professor Albert M. Dunham have given freely of their time and of their intimate knowledge of Mead's views. Students too numerous to mention have kindly put at my disposal their class notes, and I wish to express to them my sincere thanks. The main work on the bibliography was done by Professor Dunham, though Mr. Brewster, Mr. V. Lewis Bassie, and Professor Merritt H. Moore have contributed items. Mr. Arthur C. Bergholz is responsible for the final bibliography. A grant by the Committee on Humanistic Research of the University made possible valuable assistance in the preparation of the manuscript. Mrs. Rachel W. Stevenson had the task of turning a confusion of marks into ordered copy. Professor James H. Tufts graciously aided in the reading of proof. My wife assisted in the preparation of the Index. At every stage of the work the staff of the University Press has given its efficient assistance.

I am well aware that all of our combined efforts have not been able to produce the volume which we wish George H. Mead might have written. But there is no evidence that even an added grant of life would have seen the material brought to volume form by his hands. That he was not the writer of a system is due to the fact that he was always engaged in building one. His thought was too rich in internal development to allow him to set down his ideas in ordered array. His genius expressed itself best in the lecture room. Perhaps a volume like this one—suggestive, penetrating, incomplete, conversational in tone—is the most fitting form for his thoughts; the form most able to carry to a wider audience in time and space the adventures of ideas (to use Mr. Whitehead's phrase) which made notable to smaller audiences for over thirty years Mr. Mead's lectures on social psychology.

C. W. M.

INTRODUCTION

GEORGE H. MEAD AS SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGIST AND SOCIAL PHILOSOPHER

I

PHILOSOPHICALLY, Mead was a pragmatist; scientifically, he was a social psychologist. He belonged to an old tradition—the tradition of Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz; of Russell, Whitehead, Dewey—which fails to see any sharp separation or any antagonism between the activities of science and philosophy, and whose members are themselves both scientists and philosophers. It would be difficult to overemphasize the contribution to philosophy made by those whose philosophy has been nourished in their own scientific activities. Mead stated in one of his lectures that “the philosophy of a period is always an attempt to interpret its most secure knowledge.” While that remark may need qualification in terms of the place that value considerations play in philosophical generalization, it provides the clue to Mead’s own development, and indeed to pragmatism in general.

By the end of the last century no item of knowledge seemed more secure than the doctrine of biological evolution. This doctrine had dramatically called attention to the factor of developmental change in the world, as physics and mathematics had previously exhibited the element of structural constancy. The implication seemed to be that not only the human organism but the entire life of mind as well had to be interpreted within the evolutionary development, sharing in its quality of change, and arising in the interactivity of organism and environment. Mind had to appear within, and presumably to stay within, conduct. Societies themselves had to be envisaged as complex biological entities and fitted into the evolutionary categories. It has been

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the philosophical task of pragmatism to reinterpret the concepts of mind and intelligence in the biological, psychological, and sociological terms which post-Darwinian currents of thought have made prominent, and to reconsider the problems and task of philosophy from this new standpoint. The task is by no means completed, as is evidenced by the fact that the system-forming period is hardly yet in evidence. But the outlines of an empirical naturalism erected on biological, psychological, and sociological data and attitudes are clearly discerned, a naturalism which sees thinking man in nature, and which aims to avoid the inherited dualisms of mind and matter, experience and nature, philosophy and science, teleology and mechanism, theory and practice. It is a philosophy which, in terms used by Mead, opposes "the otherworldliness of the reason of ancient philosophy, the otherworldliness of soul of Christian doctrine, and the otherworldliness of the mind of the Renaissance dualisms." Much, too, has been done in the way of tracing the implications of the accompanying attitudes for education, aesthetics, logic, ethics, religion, scientific method, and epistemology. The pragmatic reliance upon the experimental method, coupled with the moral and valuational relation of the movement to the democratic tradition, has resulted in a conception of philosophy as having a double concern with fact and value; and a conception of the contemporary moral problem as the redirection and reformulation of human goods in terms of the attitudes and results of the experimental method. Darwinism, the experimental method, and democracy are the headwaters of the pragmatic stream.

In many ways the most secure and imposing result of pragmatic activity to date has been its theory of intelligence and mind. Such a theory is, of course, basic to the whole structure. The development and elaboration of this theory defines the lifelong activity of George H. Mead. The work of Mead and Dewey is in many respects complementary, and so far as I know, never in significant opposition. They were close friends from the years at the University of Michigan, and constantly discussed

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their problems together during the years at the University of Chicago. A natural division of labor at a common task was the result. Neither stands to the other in the exclusive relation of teacher to student; both, in my opinion, were of equal though different intellectual stature; both shared in a mutual give-and-take according to their own particular genius.¹ If Dewey gives range and vision, Mead gave analytical depth and scientific precision. If Dewey is at once the rolling rim and many of the radiating spokes of the contemporary pragmatic wheel, Mead is the hub. And though in mileage the rim of the wheel travels farthest, it can go no farther as the crow flies than its hub can go. Mead's thought rests closely upon a few basic ideas which were refined and elaborated over many years. True to his own words, the philosophy upon which he was more and more engaged in his later years was an elaboration, a "descriptive generalization," of the basic ideas which, as scientist, represented the most secure relevant knowledge he could obtain. Our task, however, is not to consider that philosophy as a whole here,² but rather the scientific basis upon which it rests (a basis which Mead as scientist has done much to create), and something of its social and ethical dimensions.

II

Mead as scientist was a social psychologist. It is commonly recognized today that science walks on two legs—theory and observation; that the logical phase of science (the phase of the isolation and definition of basic categories, and of system building) is of equal importance with the activity of the fact-finder and verifier. Mead adds little or nothing to the corpus of the facts of the social sciences as determined by distinctive methods

¹ Dewey discusses Mead in the *Journal of Philosophy*, XXVIII (1931), 309-14; and in the *University of Chicago Record* (New Series), XVII (1931), 173-77. For Mead's discussion of Dewey see *International Journal of Ethics*, XL (1930), 211-31; and the article on "The Philosophy of John Dewey," to be published in the 1936 volume of this journal.

² See Mead's works, *The Philosophy of the Present* (ed. Arthur E. Murphy); *The Philosophy of the Act* (ed. John M. Brewster, Albert M. Dunham, Charles W. Morris); *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (ed. Merritt H. Moore).

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of investigation; to the ideational and conceptual structure he adds much. It is true that the two aspects of science are ultimately inseparable, and that scientific ideas cannot be developed or analyzed fruitfully without reference to fact; but the observations to which Mead appeals are for the most part open to anyone—they involve no special scientific technique. Not in figures and charts and instruments is his contribution to be found, but in insight as to the nature of minds and selves and society.

The terms “social” and “psychologist” have not long appeared together, nor in company with biological categories. Tradition has identified psychology with the study of the individual self or mind. Even the post-Darwinian influence of biological concepts did not for a long time break up the inherited individualistic presuppositions (as is evidenced by the difficulties of a Huxley to find a place for moral behavior in the evolutionary process), though it did formulate the problem as to how the human mind appeared in the history of animal conduct. Mead traces in the following pages the process by which biological considerations forced psychology through the stages of associationism, parallelism, functionalism, and behaviorism. While Mead’s own position is behavioristic, it is a social behaviorism and not an individualistic and subcutaneous one; he did not find an answer in any of the stages or schools of psychology as to how mind—full-fledged, reflective, creative, responsible, self-conscious mind—appeared within the natural history of conduct. Another factor had to be brought into the account: society. It was nevertheless fortunate that Mead was at the University of Chicago when the heavily charged psychological air precipitated itself into functional and behavioristic forms.³

The entrance of the other factor, the social, into Mead’s

³ The atmosphere of those days, and the confidence that the functional psychology implied a complete philosophy, is caught in James R. Angell’s “The Relations of Structural and Functional Psychology to Philosophy,” *The Decennial Publications*, III, 55-73, University of Chicago, 1903.

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thought is less easy to account for, since he himself has not traced this development. Mead again was fortunate in being in environments in which sociology and social psychology were beginning to take the form of sciences. Idealistic philosophies such as those of Hegel and Royce stressed the social nature of the self and morality—and Mead had studied under Royce. Tarde and Baldwin had made many contributions toward a social psychology by 1900. Giddings had done his major work, and Cooley had begun his sociological career at the University of Michigan; Mead was a friend of Cooley and taught for three years in that environment. Attention had gradually been paid, especially by the Germans, to the social aspects of language, to mythology, to religion—and Mead had studied in Germany. Although he was at Berlin, and not at Leipzig with Wundt, there can be no doubt but that the influence of Wundt must be given credit for helping to isolate the concept of the gesture by seeing the social context in which it functions; instead of being simply “expressions of emotions” in the Darwinian sense, gestures were well on the way to being regarded as early stages of the act of one organism responded to by another as indications of the later stages of the social act. Mead specifically thinks of the gesture in social terms, and from such gestures traces the development of genuine language communication. In one sense, then, Mead may be said to follow a path partially indicated by Wundt; and certainly Wundt helped him to correct the inadequacies of an individualistic psychology by the employment of social categories.⁴

Nevertheless, Mead was no bare follower of Royce or Tarde or Baldwin or Giddings or Cooley or Wundt. As the following pages make clear, he had one basic criticism which he applied to them all: they did not go the whole way in explaining how

⁴ Wundt is given credit for his voluntarism and is said to have “brought in the vocal gesture” (1930). On the other hand, “Wundt has not analyzed the gesture as such as parts of acts. He has treated them as an anatomist and not as a physiologist.” “Wundt makes the social functions of the expressions of the emotions a later matter; at first he considers them merely as parallels of psychological processes” (1912). Wundt’s parallelism is rejected, and explained methodologically.

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minds and selves arose within conduct. This criticism breaks into two parts: (1) they all in some sense presupposed antecedently existent minds or selves to get the social process under way; (2) even in respect to the phases of mind or the self which they did attempt to account for socially, they failed to isolate the mechanism involved. The magic hat of the social, out of which mind and the self were to be drawn, was in part loaded in advance; and for the rest there was merely a pious announcement that the trick could be done, while the performance itself never took place. Mead's endeavor is to show that mind and the self are without residue social emergents; and that language, in the form of the vocal gesture, provides the mechanism for their emergence.

It is my belief that Mead has been successful in these tasks, especially in the isolation of the language mechanism by which mind is socially constituted and through which the self that is conscious of itself as an object appears. There is a question whether in identifying mind with the operation of symbols it must be held that such symbols are all language symbols of a social-vocal origin. If this is not so there may be individual aspects of mind in men and animals that do not come within the scope of Mead's terminology. In current terms, the question is as to the genetic priority of sign-situations (non-language symbols) and symbol-situations (language symbols). The issue here is largely as to the denotation of the words "mind" and "symbol," since Mead in some places admits the facts of redintegration which Hollingworth stresses, and the facts of delayed reaction which Hunter emphasizes, but unlike these men, feels that such processes do not come under the classification of "significant symbol" or "mind." Mead admits that the individual organism must have certain physiological prerequisites for developing language symbols; those who wish to use mind and symbol in a wider sense might add that the individual could not develop language symbols without being able to respond to non-linguistic, and so non-social, signs, in which one event leads at some organic center to the expectation of and redintegration

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of some other event.⁵ However this may be, with the acceptance of Mead's use of the terms "mind" and "self," it seems to me that he has shown that mind and the self are, without remainder, generated in a social process, and that he has for the first time isolated the mechanism of this genesis. It is hardly necessary to say that a much smaller achievement would be sufficient to serve as a milestone in science and philosophy. Mead's work marks an early stage in the actual birth of social psychology as a science, since his basic ideas go back to the early years of this century.⁶

So it is that the problem as to how the human mind and self arise in the process of conduct is answered by Mead in biosocial terms. He does not neglect with the traditional psychologist the social process in which human development takes place; he does not neglect with the traditional social scientist the biological level of the social process by falling back upon a mentalistic and subjective conception of society as being lived in antecedent minds.⁷ Both extremes are avoided by an appeal to an ongoing social process of interacting biological organisms, within which process, through the internalization of the conversation of gestures (in the form of the vocal gesture), mind and selves arise. And a third extreme of biologic individualism is avoided through the recognition of the social nature of the underlying biological process in which minds arise.

The individual act is seen within the social act; psychology

⁵ H. L. Hollingworth, *Psychology*; W. S. Hunter, *The Delayed Reaction in Animals and Children*. Also his articles in the 1924 *Psychological Review*. A position essentially akin to Mead's is developed by John F. Markey, *The Symbolic Process and Its Integration in Children*. Mead remarked that he thought the account was, however, oversimplified. Mead's distinction between non-significant and significant symbols is not the same as the foregoing distinction of sign and symbol, since the former two are both social. Section 23 contains a hint of Mead's distinction and the nature of the difference.

⁶ A stenographic copy of the 1912 lectures on social psychology shows that his root ideas were already in a mature form.

⁷ The criticism of Watson is made clear in this volume. The brief indications to the divergence of Mead's views from Cooley's may be amplified by reference to his article, "Cooley's Contribution to American Sociological Thought," *American Journal of Sociology*, XXXV (1930), 693 ff.

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and sociology are united upon a biological basis; social psychology is grounded upon a social behaviorism. It is in these terms that Mead endeavored to carry out a major problem posed by evolutionary conceptions: the problem of how to bridge the gap between impulse and rationality, of showing how certain biological organisms acquire the capacity of self-consciousness, of thinking, of abstract reasoning, of purposive behavior, of moral devotion; the problem in short of how man, the rational animal, arose.

III

Though not used by Mead, the term "social behaviorism" may serve to characterize the relation of Mead's position to that of John B. Watson. Mead considered Watson's views as oversimplified, as having abstracted the individual's segment of the act from the complete or social act. Though Watson talks much about language, the essence of language as found in a certain type of social interplay has escaped entirely, and hidden itself under the skin. And even there it hides in the movements of the vocal cords, or in the responses substituted for vocal responses, and is finally lost entirely among implicit responses. In contrast, for Mead language is an objective phenomenon of interaction within a social group, a complication of the gesture situation, and even when internalized to constitute the inner forum of the individual's mind, it remains social—a way of arousing in the individual by his own gestures the attitudes and rôles of others implicated in a common social activity.

A second difference lies in the treatment of the private. As Köhler has remarked in his *Gestalt Psychology*, Watson's position is essentially the preference for an epistemology; it says in effect that the private cannot fall within science even if it could be known to exist; hence we must write with the human animal in front of us. To describe what is so observable is perfectly proper, but as human animals we do in fact observe aspects of ourselves in our attitudes, our images, our thoughts, our emotions which we do not observe so completely in others; and

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that fact is communicable. Watsonism gave the impression of ruling out of court the very contents that a mature psychology must explain. Mead was keenly conscious of this situation, but clearly believed that his own version of behaviorism was adequate to the task. Not merely was it to include the neglected social aspects of the act, but also the internal aspects of the act open mainly, but not exclusively, to the observation of the acting individual himself. Mind was not to be reduced to non-mental behavior, but to be seen as a type of behavior genetically emerging out of non-mental types. Behaviorism accordingly meant for Mead not the denial of the private nor the neglect of consciousness, but the approach to all experience in terms of conduct. Some may feel that this wider use of the term is inadvisable, that the term is Watson's. However, the present use includes all that may be observed and quantified by the radical behaviorist, and where any confusion may result, behaviorism in this wider sense may be distinguished from Watsonism. The judgment of time will perhaps regard Watsonism as behaviorism methodologically simplified for purposes of initial laboratory investigation. Mead's (and Dewey's) use of the term "behaviorism" to suggest the approach to experience—reflective and non-reflective—in terms of conduct simply signalizes with an appropriate name the direction implicit in the evolutionary approach of pragmatism, a direction established long before Watson appeared on the scene and continuing after he has professionally left it.

A third difference arises from the fact that Mead, in harmony with Dewey's 1896 paper on "The Reflex-Arc Concept in Psychology," stresses the correlativity of stimulus and response. Aspects of the world become parts of the psychological environment, become stimuli, only in so far as they effect the further release of an ongoing impulse.⁸ Thus, the sensitivity and activity of the organism determine its effective environment as

⁸ For a development of this position that owes much to Mead, see L. L. Thurstone's *The Nature of Intelligence*. Mead's behaviorism assimilates much of psychoanalysis, Gestalt psychology, and existential psychology.

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genuinely as the physical environment affects the sensitivity of the form. The resulting view does more justice to the dynamic and aggressive aspects of behavior than does Watsonism, which gives the impression of regarding the organism as a puppet, whose wires are pulled by the physical environment. Thus, in the case of reflective thinking, which Watson treats quite on a par with the conditioning of the rat, Mead is able to give a penetrating analysis of such reflection in terms of the self-conditioning of the organism to future stimuli in virtue of being able to indicate to itself through symbols the consequences of certain types of response to such stimuli. This account is able to explain the behavior of Watson in conditioning the rat, and not merely the resulting behavior of the conditioned rat.

Finally, a basic difference is reflected in the circumstance that Watsonism has seemed to many not only to deny private experience, but to empty "experience" itself of any meaning not possessed by "response." Certain of the radical behaviorists have frankly identified "I see *x*" with "my ocular muscles have contracted"; and have as frankly admitted that this identification leads into a behavioristic form of solipsism. Such a situation is simply the appearance in psychology of the logical and methodological scandal which has long harassed scientific thought: on the one hand science has prided itself upon being empirical, on bringing its most subtle theories to the test of observation; on the other hand science has tended to accept a metaphysics which regards the data of observation as subjective and mental and which denies that the objects studied have the characters which as experienced they appear to have. The pragmatist of Mead's type cannot agree with the attempt of critical realism to make this situation palatable. Such a pragmatist holds that the world, as conceived by science, is found within the wider and richer world that is experienced; instead of being the "real" world in terms of which to depreciate the world as experienced, the world of science is something whose origin is to be traced in experiential terms. Thus, Mead held that the physical thing, though prior for science, is experientially