

## PREFATORY NOTES

**G**EORGE HERBERT MEAD was one of the founders of the distinctively American philosophy of pragmatism. He pioneered tirelessly for its acceptance as the system most germane to modern American ways of living. A genuinely original and independent thinker, Mead nevertheless had little consciousness of his own genius. Rather, with his characteristic effort to introduce the scientific method into philosophy, he regarded himself as a co-worker of all other investigators. Thus, as an associate of John Dewey during the formative years of the Chicago school of pragmatism, he contributed much to the development of the ideas of his better-known colleague. Indeed, the latter has said: "I dislike to think what my own ideas might have been were it not for the seminal ideas which I derived from him."<sup>1</sup>

Mead was born February 27, 1863 and died April 26, 1931. From 1893 to the time of his death, he was a member of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Chicago. He published no systematic works, and his writings for journals were predominantly in the fields of psychology, education, and sociology.

Mead had a certain diffidence that kept him from giving his ideas the finality of printed form or the inflexibility of systematic organization. True to his theory that men do their significant thinking in the course of conversation, he found extemporaneous speaking his best medium. Consequently, students have available only a loose accumulation of his random remarks, lecture notes, fragmentary manuscripts, and tentative drafts of unprinted essays. These have been posthumously collected and edited. But this collection is an aggregation rather than an organization; its chief aim is completeness rather than arrangement or interpretation. Yet this heterogeneous body of thought has been signally praised by such great thinkers as Whitehead and Dewey. And a glance at it is sufficient to impress the reader with Mead's originality and penetration. Hence, there is manifest need that this chaotic miscellany be presented systematically and be given a concrete interpretation. What are Mead's basic ideas, and how do they fit together? The purpose of this book is to answer these questions.

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. xxviii, 1931, p. 311.

The posthumous collection of Mead's unpublished writings consists of four volumes:

*The Philosophy of the Present* (Chicago, Ill., publ. 1932)

Edited by Arthur E. Murphy.

*Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago, Ill., publ. 1934)

Edited by Charles W. Morris.

*Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, Ill., publ. 1936) Edited by Merritt H. Moore.

*The Philosophy of the Act* (Chicago, Ill., publ. 1938)

Edited by Charles W. Morris.

*The Philosophy of the Present* contains the Paul Carus Foundation lectures delivered in 1930, the year before Mead's death. In these lectures, Mead presents a philosophy of history from the pragmatists' point of view. In addition to this, there are fruitful suggestions regarding the latest developments in Mead's thinking. The last two lectures, especially, on "The Present as Social" and "The Implications of the Self," indicate a trend of thought which interested and excited Mead just before his death. This trend of thought, the most original and at the same time the most difficult part of Mead's philosophy, represented his self-conscious effort to apply to nature in general the categories implied in the functioning of human nature.

*Mind, Self and Society* is a collection of lectures delivered at the University of Chicago to Mead's classes in social psychology. Their contribution to the development of Mead's metaphysical ideas chiefly in his theory of communication and in his conception of the relation between the *I* and the *me*. The lectures have further significance in the field of ethics and politics, in which Mead held the naturalistic view that human conduct in its normal functioning contains the elements required for ethical action and political progress.

*Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century* is a collection of lectures delivered to Mead's classes in the history of philosophy. These lectures are interesting because they indicate Mead's affiliations in the traditional schools of thought. Besides being readable and non-technical, they show that Mead, unlike the average American teacher of philosophy of his day, urged his students to relate the ideas of the great philosophers to the periods in which they lived and the social problems which they faced.

References to these volumes, *The Philosophy of the Present; Mind, Self*

*and Society*; and *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century*; will be indicated by the initials PP, MS, and MT, respectively.

*The Philosophy of the Act* is made up of essays and miscellaneous fragments, which are technical and repetitious, obscure and difficult. Of all Mead's writings, these were evidently least intended for publication in the form in which they appear. However, their extensiveness has made them invaluable for the reconstruction of Mead's ideas. In the following pages, references to this volume will be indicated simply by page numbers.

I wish to acknowledge my sincere appreciation of the stimulation and guidance which I have received both during and after my five years of graduate study at Bryn Mawr College from Professor Paul Weiss of the Department of Philosophy. I am grateful to Professor Charles W. Morris of the University of Chicago for placing at my disposal Mead's unpublished manuscripts. To my friends, Doris Carland, H. M. D. and M. A., I am indebted for their constant encouragement during the period in which I was preparing this volume for publication. To my family, I am grateful for indispensable financial aid.

I also wish to thank the following for permission to quote from their publications: University of Chicago Press, publishers of Mead's works; Harvard University Press, publishers of the *Collected Works of Charles Sanders Peirce*; The Macmillan Co., publishers of A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality* and I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. K. Smith; Longmans Green & Co., Inc., publishers of William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*; E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., publishers of William James, *Selected Papers on Philosophy*; Henry Holt & Co., publishers of *Essays in Honor of John Dewey* and *Creative Intelligence*; and University of California Publications in Philosophy.

