

George Herbert Mead

The Making of a Social Pragmatist

Gary A. Cook

University of Illinois Press *Urbana and Chicago*

Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Bibliographical Abbreviations xi

Introduction xiii

1. Early Life and Letters: Part 1 1

2. Early Life and Letters: Part 2 20

3. From Hegelianism to Social Psychology 37

4. The Development of Mead's Social Psychology 48

5. Behaviorism and Mead's Mature Social Psychology 67

6. Taking the Attitude or the Role of the Other 78

7. Mead and the City of Chicago: Social and Educational Reform 99

8. Moral Reconstruction and the Social Self 115

9. Whitehead's Influence on Mead's Later Thought 138

10. Mead's Social Pragmatism 161

Epilogue: Mead and the Hutchins Controversy 183

Notes 195

Bibliography 215

Index 227

Introduction

The work of the American philosopher and social psychologist George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) has been the object of growing scholarly interest from several different quarters in recent years. Sociologists and historians of the social sciences have been debating the legitimacy of his long-standing honorary status as one of the founding fathers of symbolic interactionism in American sociology; they have devoted attention not only to his social psychological ideas but also to such matters as his influence upon the Chicago School of sociology and his involvement in Progressive social reform.¹ Meanwhile, philosophers have increasingly come to regard him as one of the canonical figures in the history of American pragmatism; they have sought to specify his contributions to the pragmatic tradition and to assess the relevance of these contributions for issues of current concern.² And, in addition, certain German thinkers have begun to investigate Mead's writings with an eye to suggestions bearing upon their own research in the areas of philosophical psychology and critical social theory.³

Despite the increasing attention being paid to his work, however, Mead's thought remains to this day an only partially explored territory. This is due in large measure to the often fragmentary character of his writings: "I am vastly depressed by my inability to write what I want to," he lamented in a letter to his daughter-in-law late in his career. "The distance between what I want and what I can is so unbridgeable. It is an ancient theme."⁴ Perhaps because of this inability, or because of what his long-time friend and colleague John Dewey called "a certain diffidence which restrained George Mead from much publication,"⁵ he never published a systematic treatment of his many social psychological and philosophical insights. Anyone who wishes to do justice to the full scope and coherence of Mead's intellect must therefore struggle to

