THE SOCIALITY OF THE PRESENT: SOME CONSIDERATIONS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF GEORGE HERBERT MEAD

by

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B.A. SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY, 1972

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS (EDUCATION)

in the Department
of
Behavioral Science Foundation

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
October, 1973

APPROVAL

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Degree: Master of Arts (Education)

Title of Thesis: The Sociality of the Present: Some Considerations of the Philosophy of George Herbert Mead.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this essay is to explicate and examine an argument against the necessity of dividing the world we experience into two different categories: one, the category of physical processes that answer to the investigations of the so-called hard sciences; and two, the category of processes we refer to as living organisms and social selves (minds). The relationship of the self and the other (i.e. subject and object) is explored in terms of the social philosophy of George Herbert Mead. In its social sense, the relation of the subject and object is treated as the relation of the individual self to the society (i.e., the community of selves) within which the individual finds its identity.

The functional relationship of the self and the other is one which Mead has described as exhibiting those characteristics which he identifies as sociality. For Mead, sociality is the capacity of being several things at once, and sociality is exhibited, according to Mead, in the systematic character of the passing event. These two categories represent the novelty of ongoing change and the apparent order of the structure that we experience in the world. We shall endeavour to show that they are used as the cornerstones of Mead's philosophy of the present as the locus of reality.

It is our intention to describe in this essay the

development of Mead's thoughts regarding sociality and his philosophy of the present in terms of his own concern with a particular movement of philosophy in the nineteenth century, a movement referred to by Mead as Romantic idealism. In particular, we shall outline the thought of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel as they are represented by Mead in his posthumously published work Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century. Our concern with these philosophers will necessarily be limited to their treatment of the problem of the relation of the self to the other, as it is brought out in the dialectic of the Absolute self.

We will next look at those conditions that Mead sees as being responsible for the demise of Romantic philosophy; that is, the emergence of evolutionary theory and the growth of scientific methodology. The philosophy of Henri Bergson is examined as an alternative to the philosophy of the Romantic idealists, in that it is a philosophy based on the idea of evolutionary change. And finally it is in terms of Mead's arguments against the subjectivism of Bergson's philosophy that we reach the heart of Mead's own ideas as to the relationship between process and structure, the self and the other.

Throughout the essay, we attempt to describe the relationship between science and philosophy, a relationship that Mead treats as being vitally important in that the

world that science postulates is the world within which philosophy has made its home.

To bring about change is seemingly to destroy the given order, and yet society does and must change. That is the problem, to incorporate the methods of change into the order of society itself.

- G.H. Mead -

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to acknowledge the help and direction given to me in completing this thesis by the members of my Supervisory Committee:

Fred Brown

Robert Harper

Rowland Lorimer

I would also like to acknowledge Ms. Linda Einblau, for her imaginative and critical support of the ideas expressed in this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

The practical purpose of this thesis is to develop an argument for a pragmatic approach to social action. We shall argue against the necessity or efficacy of using either a strictly idealist model or a strictly materialistic model of social action; and in their place, propose a median position of social behaviorism as a possible model of social action. This model will be developed in terms of G.H. Mead's theory of sociality which accepts emergence as an objective fact in nature.

The scope of the investigation includes a look at the Romantic Idealism associated with three philosophers of nineteenth century Germany, insofar as that philosophy deals with the problem of our investigation (self and other). We point out that the tradition of "Absolute" idealism, which in trying to establish a "final" social world comparable to the absolute world of space and time of Newtonian mechanics, posited the existence of an Absolute self which would provide a finality to the flux of life. That is, they posited a transcendent bridge (the Absolute self) between the self (ego) and the external world.

The development of the idea of the Absolute, a universal which embodies the spirit of change in the experiential world of the individual, is traced through the philosophies of

Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. It is demonstrated that the philosophy of Absolute Idealism incorporates into its methodology, a basic dualism of nature and history. And thus the position is rejected on this ground.

As an alternative, we explore in Chapter II the impact of evolutionary theory on the problem of the self and the other in the philosophy of Henri Bergson. It is argued that Bergson's incorporation of evolutionary theory (the idea of the emergence of new forms in nature) and the idea of temporal duration, are in close harmony to G.H. Mead's own philosophy.

In Chapter III, we develop an argument based on Mead's thesis that the organization of perspectives is an objective process. Following Mead, we maintain that a perspective does not just belong to the individual, but to the gestalt or environment of which the individual is a part. Mead argues that the perspective is there in nature as an objective possibility. In explaining how perspectives arise in nature, we discuss the role of the present as the locus of this process.

In Chapter IV, the thesis that the present is the locus of reality is pursued. The relation of past, present, and future is explored by denying the existence of either a past or a future, and conferring to the present, a duration that answers to that which "past" and "future" previously answered to. The present is denied its traditional "knife-edge" existence.

The irrevocability of the past is recognized as a problem, and its resolution is attempted in terms of outlining the social nature of an event. The difference of an event qua event, and an event as a significant aspect of a social act is explored.

In order to lend credence to the argument posited for the objective organization of perspectives and the denial of an absolute, a-temporal physical world, we make reference to the impact of relativity theory on Mead's philosophy. We argue in Chapter V, that according to Mead the reintegration of the worlds of the self and the other is made possible. It is contended that the physical world around us is as dependent for its structuring upon habit, as is the world of social attitudes. In essence neither the so-called "mind" nor the so-called "physical world" is so much a content or a structure, as it is a process, an activity that for both categories is social.

The approach used in developing this argument entails the analysis of Mead's ideas in a particular historical context. We hope to show not only that there exists a continuity in the historical development of Mead's thoughts (satisfying the demand of sociality to be exhibited in a "systematic character of passage"), but also to show that Mead's interpretation of relativity theory satisfies the other aspect of sociality, namely that for an object to be what it is, it must be several things at once.

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM OF SOCIALITY: ROMANTIC IDEALISM

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to outline the growth of thought during the nineteenth century, paying specific attention to the relationship between the self, ego, or particular, and the other, absolute, or the universal. The German idealists (Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel) have been chosen to represent the development of thought about the relationship of the particular and the universal, not because they are exhaustive in their philosophy of the subject matter, but because they are directly relevant to the philosophy of G.H. Mead.

Mead has provided us with a convenient source to the historical background of his concern with the relationship of the particular and the universal, or, to be more to the point the individual and society -- the environment of the individual.[1] This source is a series of lectures taught by Mead in a summer course for undergraduates at the University of Chicago, entitled "Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century."

Merritt H. Moore, in his introduction to the posthumously published book of the same title, says that:

> Comparatively little has been done by way of synthetic studies of nineteenth century thought as a whole ... (and that) .. Professor Mead's lectures on the "Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century" are ... inclusive

> (and) ... that few significant thought developments have been neglected.[2]

Reference made to the thought of the nineteenth century idealists will be general in character. We are not so much concerned with developing a detailed and exhaustive description of Romantic idealism, as with the synthetic approach that Mead took in analyzing the whole of nineteenth century thought as it relates to that of the twentieth century and, more particularly to that aspect of nineteenth century thought in which Mead himself was vitally concerned: the development of the rationality of scientific methodology and its relation to ontology and epistemology in philosophy.

It is in terms of the relationship of the individual to the external force of society, and the relationship of the self (or mind, if you choose) to the external physical world of matter in motion, that the concept of <u>sociality</u> has its roots. The concept of sociality, according to Mead, allows us to overcome in theory, the radical distinctions of the subject and the object: a dualism which the German idealists accepted as necessary. In the course of this chapter we will see that it is Mead's contention that the dualism of the Absolute idealists was made necessary by their unquestioning acceptance of the physical description of the universe offered by the physics of the nineteenth century.

This physics is represented by Newtonian mechanics, the subject of interest of which is matter in motion. The universe of Newton is an infinite three-dimensional space in which matter is located as particles. It is analogous to a giant mechanical clock. There is no meaning in this mechanical behemoth, just matter subject to certain laws of motion. This then, largely constituted the world outside of the self or ego, and it was the problem of the prominent nineteenth century idealists, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegal, to place themselves in such a forbidding, lifeless world. They turned, quite predictably, to a universal that could give meaning to man and the Newtonian universe inhabited by him. The positing of such a universal intrigued Mead.

The Transcendental Self

Although Immanual Kant (1724-1804) published most of his works in the late eighteenth century, Mead chooses to include his philosophy with that of the nineteenth century German idealists in that Kant's philosophy of Pure and Practical Reason provides the basic groundwork for the Romantic idealists' philosophy of the self.[3] Mead tells us that the Kantian self had two aspects. One aspect is purely formal and is represented in the Critique of Pure Reason, while the other aspect of the self is dealt with in the Critique of Practical Reason.

You will remember that one part of the problem we stated that had to be overcome with the acceptance of a Newtonian picture of the world, was for man to place himself in such a world.[4] In his Critique of Pure Reason, Kant provided a means to complete the task of making the physical world sensible. Of this work Lewis Beck states:

> In the Critique of Pure Reason there are three cognitive faculties of the mind: sensibility, which is receptivity to sense data under the forms of space and time; understanding, which is the faculty of synthesizing these data into knowledge of objects..... ; and reason, which is the faculty of the synthesizing knowledge of objects into systems (such as the "realm of nature" ....)[5]

It is in the third faculty, the faculty of reason, that we are interested, for Kant attributes to it the power of synthesizing the knowledge of objects into systems. It is reason that answers to "the transcendental unity of apperception" -- that unifying power that brings together mere sensation into a coherent whole. As Mead observes the concept of pure reason (as a function of unity rather than as an entity or being) allows Kant to place the individual in the world at large, to account for the experience of inside and outside the self.

But what of the demand to give the individual meaning in terms of his own activities among other individuals who represent society, and in terms of the individual's relation to the world at large? Kant's Critique of Practical Reason

concerns reason as applied in conduct and, in particular, moral conduct.

On reading the Critique of Practical Reason one is struck by a feeling of indignation expressed by Kant in his protestation that our actions are based, by large, on "self-love". More explicitly he tells us that "all material practical rules place the ground of the determination of the will in the lower faculty of desire."[6] In addressing himself to this problem, Kant attempts to formulate a means of freeing the individual from the bonds of desire (i.e. empirical conditioning which does not allow for creativity, or freedom from the past), and he does so by postulating the "free will". He claims that the free will is independent of all empirical conditions relating to the lower faculty of desire, and yet he recognizes that the free will must be determinable if individuals are to share a common moral world.[7] Kant concludes that the will is determined by the moral laws of practical reason; and for Kant, practical reason does not just provide for the long-range control of impulses.

> As pure practical reason, it can provide also the motives and set the ends of action .. it is the moral law, and the imperative to obey it is a categorical imperative, not hypothetical and contingent upon the actual presense of a given impulse.[8]

Mead argues that both pure and practical reason answer to a self that must be "constantly postulated and that cannot

be known."[9] This self would be equivalent to the implied "I" of Mead's concept of the self; the "I" being implied by the empirical "me". And it is this transcendental self to which the Romantic movement, associated with the German idealists of the nineteenth century, was attached.

We must remember that the philosophy we have been outlining is a direct outcome of the rationalism associated with the so-called scientific explanation of the world.[10] Kant insisted that "there is such a thing as science and such a thing as necessity (causation)." This argument is stated at length by Kant in his critiques, in which he defines two aspects of the self; those of pure and practical reason.[12]

In the critiques, he is asking the question central to the scope of this essay: what is the relation between the "self" and the "other"? Does man have free will, or is he empirically conditioned?

Kant answers this question by saying that insofar as men reason, they are free.

> .... for reason to be legislative, it is required that reason need presuppose only itself because the rule is objectively and universally valid only when it holds without any contingent subjective conditions which differentiate one rational being from another.[13]

We suggest that Kant is doing nothing more than supporting Plato's argument that the only knowledge we can have is knowledge of things that do not change; that is, things that are not subject to the contingency of change.

According to Mead, Kant took the position that things are necessarily true in that our minds give laws to nature:

> Thus Kant finds necessity and universality within the limits of a world of experience, such as Hume had set up, by positing the existence of a priori categories of mind or cognition which, in a sense, determined what the world of experience would be.[14]

We find that it is the self, with which the mind is identified, which is responsible for the shape of our world.

Mead tells us that any object that is a thing has a certain unity and that Kant's problem is to discover <u>where</u> this unity comes from -- for we cannot account for a thing's

unity in terms of Humean analyses of the object into its various primary and secondary elements. Kant finds the source of this unity in man's judgment.[15] We find here also the backbone for Mead's dichotomization of the self into the "I" and the "me". We quote from Mead's description of Kant's belief that the unity of things is to be found in man's judgment:

> Back of all perception, of all thought, of all conception, lies this high judge. It is a priori because it is something which is given in advance of experience; it is transcendental because it is imposed on, and not derived from, experience -- it is necessary.[16]

Mead points out that this transcendental self which made judgments, was for Kant, a <u>function</u> of experience and not something actually given like a material object. The transcendental self was not a "thing". Empirical objects are there in experience, but they have reference to something beyond themselves "... which Kant called a 'thing-in-itself', that something which is not experienced but which experience implies."[17] We find that Mead's "I" aspect of the self is also not given -- it is implied. Most important, we find a reaffirmation of the idea of the self as, at least in part, being a free agent, " ... we assume that there is such a thing as a self which is not bound to the law of cause and effect -- a self which is responsible."[18] We are finally delivered into the age of Romantic Philosophy: the self asserts itself as its own ultimate reality.

Mead tells us that it was during the Romantic period that we discovered the circumstances through which this "self-discovery" became possible:

> One senses the self only in so far as the self assumes the role of another so that it becomes both subject and object in the same experience .. With the breakdown of the revolution came this attempt to re-establish the old order. It was because people in Europe, at this time, put themselves back in the earlier attitude (the social organization prior to the revolution) that they could come back upon themselves. [19]

Again, we get the implication that the transcendental self (that self which can travel back in history -- that self which can be self-critical) is not located in experience, but is implied by experience. It is that which passes judgment on experience.

What does Mead see as the fundamental difference, or link between the Enlightenment and the Romantic period? He best describes the relationship in terms of Kant's theory of antinomies. We have found that the categorical structures imposed by pure reason and which define our material world for us, and the pure practical reason which Kant says is implied by our moral attitudes, together form the limits of knowledge for Kant. In the words of Mead:

> What took place in the Romantic period along a philosophical line was to take this transcendental unity of apperception, which was for Kant a bare logical function, together with the postulation of the self which we could not possibly know but which Kant said we could not help assuming, and compose them into a new romantic self.20

We find that the antinomies which Kant set up as indications that we are going beyond the range of possible knowledge became, for the romanticist, the very process of creation. We moved from the attitude that we could live in a world of assured knowledge, into a world which was continually being created by " ... a Self that is infinite, divine, absolute -- one that inevitably has a not-self as its object." [21] We find that Romantic idealism has attached itself to: one, Kant's transcendental unity of apperception (Critique of Pure Reason); two, the free self which our moral attitude postulates (Critique of Practical Reason); and three, an end or purpose as determining the life-process of living things (Critique of Judgment). The fundamental philosophic problematic of Romanticism was that of the relation of subject and object: the self does not exist except in relation to something else. "The romantic attitude is the ability to project one's self upon the world, so that the world is identified in some fashion with the self.[22]

As we pointed out earlier, German romantic philosophy represents, for Mead, a return to past traditions and structures but a return from a novel perspective or attitude about what the "self" is. We found that Kant posited a transcendental self which was implied by experience, but was not directly ascertainable in experience, and he outlined the limits of our possible knowledge of this transcendental self

in his theory of antinomies.[23]

We find that, according to Mead:

> ..... a return was made to the transcendental philosophy of Kant from the point of view of Fichte's self, the self of Schelling, and that of Hegel, the romantic self which was identified with the Absolute Self; in which individuals were conceived as mere finite expressions of this larger self.[24]

Since our purpose is to outline the history of philosophic thought which leads up to Mead's theory of Sociality, and since Mead regards Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel as representatives of the German romantic idealists, we will first review their respective notions concerning the relation of the self to the other. We will then examine the subsequent breakaway, and in particular Marx's rejection of Hegelian idealism in favour of a so-called anthropological materialism. This, in turn, will permit us to view in its historical perspective, Mead's attempt to abstract from both idealism and materialism [25] those aspects that lend themselves to a new synthesis which for want of a more complete description, we might term <u>anthropological idealism</u>.

We will find that Fichte attempts to solve the problem of the self and its object in terms of moral experience; Schelling deals with it from the point of view of aesthetic or artistic experience; and that Hegel deals with it in terms of logical experience, the experience of thought. All three recognize that, "the passage from the conduct of the self,

this free self, over into the field of experience took place over contradictions or oppositions";[26] that is, they are all dialectical approaches to answering their problematic. The problematic is, of course, to place the world of man in nature -- to bring the self and the physical world together.

The Romantic idealists did not view the self as an object or soul that was born into the world with the body, "a self that was endowed by a divine fiat"; rather, the self was viewed as a process, something that was going on.

The Absolute Self as the Arena of Moral Action

Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), has been described as a transcendental idealist, one of the three greatest of the German idealists, and as a romantic idealist, the last description coming from G.H. Mead.[27] Mead tells us that the Fichtean position identifies the self with the task performed: it is the accomplishment of the task, the doing of the duty, which realizes the individual. He tells us that according to Fichte, the world is a world (that is, a real thing) only insofar as one constructs it or, to be more precise, organizes it for one's action. We find then, that the universe is a field of action, and that it is organized to the extent that one acts in it; in other words, the meaning of the universe "lies in the conduct of the individual". [28]

Whereas Kant saw categorical structures on the one hand and the free self on the other, as representing polar limits

to our knowledge; Fichte maintained that there can only be freedom within the confines of limitation. And from this perspective he looked for a "fundamental principle" which indicated, in Fichte's own words, some "deed-act which .... is .... the basis of all consciousness, and first and alone makes consciousness possible."[29]

Fichte is proposing that we may find, through introspection, or an appeal to a transcendental self, a means of sensibly organizing the world. He refers to a first, or fundamental, principle which will provide this organization, but which cannot itself be empirically shown. This approach that Fichte takes to placing the individual in the world -- for explaining how the world is organized, is reminiscent of Kant's appeal to a transcendental reason. But whereas Kant's faculty of reason is merely a function of unity, Fichte's first principle refers to that which Kant affirmed could not be found through introspection: a spiritual being. For Fichte, the world is organized in terms of a transcendental Absolute self.

Fichte tells us that "every science must have a fundamental principle ... but a science also cannot have more than one fundamental principle, for else it would result in many sciences." [30] In terms of our immediate interest in Fichte (that is, his influence on the thought of G.H. Mead), this statement can be viewed as the first clear formulation of the

problem of the relativity of perspectives. Fichte would not argue with us if we were to substitute "self" for "science" in the above quotation (as a matter of fact he himself makes just such a translation in the second part of his book The Science of Knowledge).[31] When we have made such a substitution, we find that Fichte's problematic now becomes how we can overcome the apparent conflict of the interests of the self with those of the others. We find that Fichte is telling us that tere is one fundamental reality to the complex world we live in -- one fundamental principle which can put order into the universe of chaos that he inherited.

Fichte brings together the self and the non-self in his general proposition:

> In and through the Ego both the Ego and the Non-Ego are posited as each limited through the other: ... (1) the Ego posits the Non-Ego as limited through the Ego; ... (2) the Ego posits itself as limited through the Non-Ego.[32]

We have here the basis of the dialectical relationship of self and other which Fichte grounds on the idea of the Absolute self or Absolute ego. Fichte accounts for nature in terms of the self, the Absolute self.

Mead in reviewing Fichte's acceptance of a Newtonian formulation of the physical world, asks the pointed question that if the meaning of the world is not to be had in terms of the atoms, molecules, and electrons that go to make it up, and yet this world of physical things is there and is there

"seemingly before the self comes into existence in it,"[33] then how are we to explain such a contradition? Fichte answers the question by assuming that the Absolute self, which is the organization of all selves, built up such a world, set it up as the field of endeavour, that it might realize itself."[34] We find then that Fichte cannot account for evolutionary theory except in the ideal sense that it belongs to the activity of the Absolute self -- something that completely transcends the physiological world of organic evolution.

Mead admits that it is true that on the moral side,for Fichte, man was the centre of the universe. As long as Fichte remained within his moral philosophy, he could conceive of the self as responsible for the world. But we find that according to Mead, the attempt to build up a science of knowledge out of this moral experience was not successful on Fichte's part.[35]

Let us remind ourselves again that our purpose here is to outline what may be considered the immediate historical-philosophical roots of Mead's concept of sociality. On the basis of Mead's own notes and essays, we are presenting some of the attempts of the Absolute idealists to establish a relationship between the ego and the physical world. The approach of the absolute idealists was to explain the physical world in terms of the ego or self. But the particular self of one individual is inadequate to the job, so there is posited an Absolute Ego, a psychic motive force which shapes the

world (and ourselves) through its own dialectic. In Fichte's words: "This fundamental principle of the science of knowledge is, therefore, absolutely not to be proven; ... but ... must have immediate certainty.[36]

Fichte argues that the character of the non-ego (the physical world) is multiplicity, and that the pure ego can only be conceived of negatively; that is, as the opposite of the non-ego. We find that Fichte is proposing that the absolute or pure ego, must consequently be characterized as "perfect and absolute unity". [37] Kant proclaimed the death of God, and Fichte resurrected the "unity" of man in the Absolute self:

> If, therefore, there is to be an absolute first principle of all knowledge..... the content of this first principle must contain all other possible content, but must itself be contained in no other content. In short, it must be the absolute content.[38]

Fichte claims that if this is not the case, then there are only two alternatives: one being, "either there is not immediate certainty at all"; the other being, "our knowledge consists of finite series, but many finite series ....."[39] Fichte is saying that, if we do not accept the doctrine of an absolute ego or absolute first principle around which the organization of reality may be mustered, then either we live in complete chaos, or we live a finite number of individual realities (perspectives).

Although he rejects it, Fichte has clearly formulated a multi-dimensional reality that anticipated relativity theory by almost a century. We shall find that Mead did not reject so readily, as did Fichte, the notion of a multitude of concurrently existing perspectives. Also, whereas Fichte would place these worlds in the mind, Mead would be more likely to place the mind in these worlds.

According to Mead, the task of Romantic philosophy, as Fichte presented it, was to make the subject-object relation "as it appears in our moral experience a relation of the knower to the known",[40] a relation between that which we sense and the organism which senses it. Again, Mead tells us that for Fichte, "if a self is to be a self, it must achieve this in the identification of itself with the not-self .... this is the fundamental process of the universe from Fichte's point of view".[41] It would not be unfair to say, that for Mead, the self can only become a self insofar as one can take the perspective of the not-self (the other).

We will later show how Mead accounts for the emergence of the self in nature by reference to that quality he sees exhibited in nature which he identifies as sociality. The main difference between the philosophy of Fichte and Mead on this point is that for Fichte the self is pre-eminent, whereas for Mead, the self arises after the perspective of the other has obtained.

The Absolute Self and Aesthetics

Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling (1775-1854), in a letter to Hegel in 1795, confides, "for Spinoza the world (the object utterly in opposition to the subject) was everything, to me everything is the ego".[42] We find here a reaffirmation of the Romantic idealists attempt to identify the self with with non-self. However, in Schelling, we find that this identification is attempted in terms of the artist, rather than Fichte's "moral action"; at least, this is the point of view of Mead. Mead tells us, that "in the case of the artist, the attitude which Schelling emphasized, the stress lies in the recognition that the self discovers its ideas, its meanings in the world, in its object".[43]

We find that Friedrich de Wolfe Bolman Jr., in his introduction to Schelling's Ages of the World, concurs with Mead's analysis of the stress in Schelling's philosophy on the aesthetic, or the artist. Bolman tells us that, Schelling's "influence upon the course of transcendentalism was felt not only in Germany, but in England and America as well. His philosophy of art has long been valued as a milestone in the history of aesthetics."[44]

Schelling, like Fichte, postulates a dichotomous world of subject and object as manifestations of the Absolute self, of which he says: "The living reality of the highest science can only be primal living reality, the essence, which is

preceded by nothing else and which is thus the oldest of all beings."[45] But whereas the contradition that Fichte set up was that of an opposition of duty and inclination("the thing that we have to do, that we ought to do, is the thing we do not want to do. It involves an effort."[46]), Schelling posited the existence of an aesthetic hierarchy as the base of the contradiction:

> A principle which is outside and above the world must be conceded to man ... in man, however, the supramundane principle is no longer free in its primordial purity, but is bound to another, lesser principle. But the higher principle, incessantly besought by this lower about its elevation, observes that the lower principle is not added to the higher in order that the latter may remain fettered by it, but in order that the higher itself may have another in which it can view itself, represent and become intelligible to itself.[47]

It is evident from this passage that Schelling isolates (or separates) the self, or ego, from the non-self, or other; the subject from object, when he states that "a principle which is outside and above the world must be conceded to man." We find that Schelling's metaphysics of self and other is not too different from that of Fichte. Fichte tells us that the ego posits the non-ego in order to limit the ego, so that it may come to know itself and be free.[48] Schelling is in complete accord with such a metaphysics of the self and the other as is evidenced by his declaration that "the lower principle is... added to the higher ... in order that the

higher itself may ... represent and become intelligible to itself."

We find that although a split is maintained, by Schelling, between the Natural and Historical world (i.e. the physical and the conscious, or the outer and the inner world), there is an attempt made to bring them together in the experience of the individual. We could call the process a kind of dialectical dialogue of the Absolute self, which is the motive force which moves the world. R.G. Collingwood succinctly describes Schelling's position:

> Fichte thought that the logical structure of the concept was complete before history began and served as a presupposition of the process; in Schelling the dynamic structure of the Absolute is not the ground of the dynamic element in History, it is that element itself.[49]

It is with Schelling that the first indications of a genuine attempt emerges to come to grips with the problems posed for nineteenth-century Romantic philosophy by evolutionary theory are exhibited. Schelling states that:

> Hardly had the first steps of reuniting philosophy and nature taken place, when one had to acknowledge the great antiquity of the physical, and how the physical, far from being the last, is rather the first from which everything, even the development of the divine life, originates.[50]

Schelling incorporates into his philosophy the necessity of accounting for evolutionary change in the world at large. As Collingwood points out, Schelling redefines the Absolute

as a dynamic structure rather than a static or complete structure. The Absolute self, that which organizes and gives meaning to the individual and the world, is itself going through a process of change. We must keep in mind, however, that this monumental statement that Schelling is making must be taken within the context of a metaphysics embodied by the spirit of the Absolute Self, where both the "physical" and the "divine life" are manifestations of the Absolute. They are logically distinct categories through which the Absolute comes to realize its own perfection.

We can draw a very tenuous analogy between the philosophies of Schelling and Fichte, as compared to those of Aristotle and Plato in order to clarify what has just been expressed. Plato's world was divided into two: the physical or existential world of flux and change, and the eternal world of forms. The only knowledge that we could have, according to Plato was of that which did not change: the eternal. The Idea preceded everything and provided for the Form of things. If we had any knowledge of anything, such as a tree or a stone, it was knowledge of the Form of the tree or the stone, that which represented the eternal, unchanging Idea of the object. The reality of the world was to be had in terms of so-called logical categories which the physical world was <u>trying</u> to conform to, but the physical world could never maintain the perfection of the world of the Idea and Form. We might

compare Fichte's metaphysics to that of Plato.

Aristotle, on the other hand, saw the flux of the natural world as indicating that the Form of an object was teleological in nature; that is, the object was emerging in nature over time as it strove to obtain the perfection of its Form which always lay in the future. This view we might compare more favourably to the metaphysics of Schelling.

It is this break with the traditional concern of knowledge lying in the identity of an object; that is, in an object's unique and radical "sameness," that allows Schelling to denounce the validity of so-called "formal logic" as compared to "dialectical thought":

> ... those are mistaken who have no concept of the character of true science, since they accept the first proposition, A = x, as unlimited, and then, perhaps elsewhere having ascertained or conceived that A = y, they oppose the second immediately to the first, instead of waiting until the incompleteness of the first would itself require the progress to the second.[51]

We will later see how Henri Bergson takes the notion of biological evolution and the experience of duration as starting points in developing an epistemology of the relation of the inner world of experience to the outer world of objects. We are content to have shown that these notions were becoming more and more important to the critical thought of the time.

The Absolute Self as Reason

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). Mead tells

us that, "Hegel's criticism of Schelling's philosophy is that it is a bare assertion of identity instead of being an actual presentation of the process by means of which the self and the object can be identified.[52] By stressing the so-called process of the self-object identification, we take it to mean that Hegel lays greater stress on the dialectic than did Schelling. But we find that the ontology within which the dialectic operates is not that different for Hegel from that of Schelling, at least not from the point of view of Collingwood, who indicates that evolution, for Hegel, is a logical process; "... its primary or fundamental form is logical becoming: a process, but not a process in time or a movement in space ... (it is) a process of the notion, a logical movement inherent in concepts as such.[53] We also find that, according to Collingwood, Hegel makes a split between the world of nature and history:

> ... the whole Hegelian theory of nature is rent by a dualism which in the long run breaks it in pieces. Hegel inherited the presupposition from the seventeenth century that nature is a machine, a moving congeries of pieces of dead matter. 54

Collingwood finds that Hegel's cosmology is self-contradictory in that according to his (Hegel's) cosmology, "all reality must be permeated by process and activity ... it has in it the power to evolve itself, by a logical necessity, life and mind."[55] That is, that nature <u>cannot</u> be a mere

machine. It is because Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel accepted the physical world of matter in motion as being incapable of doing anything more than redistributing itself in space, that they had to appeal to something that transcended that world to account for living forms and human consciousness.

And it is on this point that Mead's cosmology is radically different from that of Hegel's; that is, on their respective views as to the possibility of the emergence of living forms and consciousness processes, from physical processes. Collingwood insists, that for Hegel:

> There cannot be temporal transition (qualitative change) ... (because) a purely dead and mechanical world of matter, as conceived by the physics of his day (which he accepted as his starting point), cannot conceivably produce life by doing the only thing which it has the power to do, namely, redistributing itself in space." 56

As we indicated earlier, Hegel was left with the problem, as were Fichte and Schelling, of bringing together the natural world of physical processes and the historical world of human consciousness. Mead offers us one word to capture the essence of the problem: it was Hegel's problem to <u>redintegrate</u> subject and object.

> What Hegel undertook to do was to show how this opposition between subject and object could be overcome, in some sense, by means of the recognition of the nature of the process of thought itself. 57

And this process of thought, for Hegel, was dialectical.

The Hegelian dialectic is formally outlined as thesis, antethesis, and synthesis: in its most abstract form the movement of thought is provided by the dialectic of Being and Not-Being as two phases of Becoming. Mead gives us his interpretation of the process involved in Hegel's dialectic as follows:

> When we pass from one situation over into another ... we are putting ourselves at this moment in opposition to ourselves of a moment before. But we overcome the opposition of this fact by realizing that there is an identical subject-object relation which persists throughout. The stuff of the process is the same in both cases; but now it takes on this form, now that 58

It is of interest to note here the close relationship between the dialectic of Hegel, as Mead outlines it, and the characteristics which Mead ascribes to sociality. You will remember that in our introduction we stated that one aspect of sociality is the capacity of being several things at once. Compare this to Mead's description of Hegel's dialectic in that "when we pass from one situation over into another ... we are putting ourselves at this moment in opposition to ourselves of a moment before."

Again, another aspect of sociality, according to Mead, is that sociality is exhibited in the systematic character of the passing event. Compare this to the statement that we overcome the opposition of ourselves "by realizing that there is an identical subject-object relation which persists through-

out" the passing from one situation to another. What is the systematic character of a passing event other than the identical relation which persists throughout that passing event? Mead points out that it is in this process of bringing subject and object together that Hegel finds contradictions, and these contradictions are but phases which necessarily lead to a synthesis, or, "a higher expression of the self." For Mead, this point of view is illustrated by the research scientist who starts from a conflict or contradiction which comes up in the face of an accepted hypothesis, and who resolves the contradiction by synthesizing a new hypothesis which takes up both the old hypothesis and the brute fact in nature which answered to the original conflict. We will find that Mead again and again makes reference to the dialectical quality of the scientific method as being an objectification of natural processes, or, in other words, the process of the natural brought under conscious control.

Hegel, like Fichte, assumes that the universal (thesis) will always have in it the opposite of itself: the particular (antithesis). That the Ego (in the case of Fichte), or the Absolute Self, cannot know itself except in terms of the limitations it creates over and against its freedom. Mead posits, from this doctrine of the dialectic, that "...our development ... actually ... takes place through the conflict of universals, or laws, and some particular event,

some exception."[59] We find, then, Mead acknowledging that Hegel is correct in the general sense that the development of our knowledge takes place through conflict. Agreeing with both Schelling and Hegel in this sense, Mead states that, "..... the hypothesis does arise out of the mind of the thinker, the scientist. It is a creation of the self. And when it has been created, it carries with it a new world."[60]

As we have indicated, the world of our experience, for Hegel, is a world which we are continually creating in our thought; the development of mind is the same thing as the development of the world. The world is the expression of the thought of the Absolute. The process of this creation is the dialectic, and its motive force is Reason. But this dialectical development of the Absolute through particular minds is a logical one; that is, it has no temporal dimension. This means, for Hegel, that history ends in the present, and that the evolution of the natural world is nothing more than a reflection of the necessary development of the mind.

The Romantic idealists tried to bring about a synthesis between the conception of nature as a machine, and the conception of all reality as permeated by process. Mead tells us that, "the opposition, then, between the world as it appears as an absolute object, if there is such a thing, and the self that knows it, is a real problem....."[61] and this problem

stems from the period of philosophy known as Romantic idealism, as culminated in the philosophy of Hegel.

CHAPTER II

EVOLUTION AND SCIENCE: HENRI BERGSON

We have attempted to show in the previous Chapter, how thought in the nineteenth century had changed from a conception of the "static forms" which Kant told us must necessarily precede the object, to an idea of the development toward "forms" through process -- the process of the "dialectic" which the Romantic idealists put forth in order to account for the changes in the world that we experience. Let us stress, though, that this development of forms through process had no temporal significance.

From Mead's point of view, the term "theory of evolution" is one which undertakes to explain how the forms of things may arise within nature. And he suggests that the mechanical science of Newton, which was the accepted science of the nineteenth century could not explain how new forms might arise in nature. He tells us that, "What Darwin undertook to show was that some of these forms must conceivably have arisen through natural processes."[1] But mechanical science does not consider "form" as a relevant field of inquiry: "from the point of view of mechanical science, form does not exist."[2]

There are only two objects for mechanical science --" ... one the world as a whole, and the other the ultimate physical particles out of which it is made. All other so-

called 'objects' are objects that our perception cuts out."[3] For mechanical science, the objective world can only be measured in terms of extension; that is, the relative positions of "points" or particles, and mass, velocity, and density. All other qualities ascribed to these objects of mechanical science are seen as belonging to the perception of the sentient organism, and are thus beyond the scope of objective measurement. In short, mechanical science can only deal with static structures; that is, structures in which motion or change is predictable. What follows from this, for Mead, can be described as the need for the secularization of the transcendent arena in which the Romantic idealists couched their dialectic. Such a "secularization" demanded a new science that could deal with change and growth (with the transformation or becoming of forms), and for Mead, this science was represented by the biological sciences.

The work of Darwin and Lamarck was instrumental in pioneering new thought in this field. Lamarck and Darwin undertook to explain or show how forms[4] themselves might come into being, or might arise. Their question was, how do we get from the relatively formless to a form? "Lamarck started with the hypothesis that every activity of the form altered the form itself, and the form then handed the change to the next generation."[5]

Lamarck and Darwin introduced a process, which was formerly housed in the mind of the Absolute, into nature. The natural world is no longer explained in terms of the self, but is recognized as being prior to the self. In a word, the philosophy of Absolute idealism was turned on its head.

The problem of placing the individual into the world had changed from positing an Absolute mental category which would account for the physical world, to accepting the physical world as prior to the self. And the problem of science and philosophy had become one of accounting for the emergence of the human organism and the social self in terms of a natural evolution.

The main connection between the philosophical view of the Absolute idealists and the thought of G.H. Mead is provided for us in the philosophy of Henri Bergson. Mead says that in Bergson's philosophy:

> Life is a process of continual reconstruction involved in the world as experienced. The new is always appearing, with the consequent appearance of new forms answering to that construction.[6]

And F.L. Pogson, in his preface to Time and Free Will states that for Bergson,

> ... reality is not to be reached by any elaborate construction of thought: it is given in immediate experience as a flux, a continuous process of becoming, to be grasped by intuition, by sympathetic insight.[7]

We find in these two passages, the central core of

Mead's concern with epistemology and ontology in his philosophy; that is, how do we know what we know, and what is the nature of that which we know. His position is first, that reality is reached in immediate experience, and second, that life (indeed, all of nature) is a process of reconstruction. We have to take for granted that our world of experience does indeed exist as we experience it, in the same sense that the physical scientist accepts the world of brute facts as there, as given in his experience. He must do so in order to test his hypothesis.

The two assumptions indicated above represent a radical break with the two fundamental assumptions common to most philosophers from the time of the ancient Greeks to the present; namely, (1) that the real is fixed or immutable -- it does not exist but has being; and (2) we can know that which exists only insofar as we can see in it its eternal form. In other words, the effect is in and like the cause, and time is not an essential character of reality -- the temporal is unreal.[8]

It is the antithesis of these two assumptions that Bergson brings out in his philosophy of time and free will. And it is the notion of temporal duration and the notion of effects going beyond their causes that sociality must answer to for Mead. Sociality must allow for the fact that new

forms can emerge in nature (the effect going beyond the cause). And sociality must allow for temporal duration.

In the previous Chapter, we pointed out through numerous references that the prevalent attitudes of science and philosophy involved the assumptions that the universe was akin to a giant mechanical clock, the past and future of which could be casually predicted, and that history could also be known in that it is an expression of the eternal and immutable Absolute. What Bergson asserts is that neither the so-called natural world nor the historical world can be known as absolutes. He said, "like the rest of the world, we are en route to something which we cannot foresee."[9]

Bergson recognizes that we can predict some things though, like eclipses of the sun and moon, and the orbits of the planets. But he also points out that these predictions are made in terms of laws (Newtonian mechanics) that are being "continually re-written." He correctly points out that, "Even such fundamental facts as that of the relative motion of heavenly bodies with reference to each other cannot be stated once and for all."[10]

If we refer to predictions as comprising one area of the field of general adjustment to novel situations that emerge in our experience, then we may correctly state that for Bergson, this adjustment only takes place with reference to solving the

problems of immediate situations and that the solutions we adopt are never certain. He says of the changing world, that we must adjust ourselves to it at the moment as best we can. According to Mead, this indicated that Bergson:

> Interpreted the movement of development as anti-intellectual. He assumed that reason... simply served immediate purposes and it served them by distorting the world.[11]

The criticism that Mead levies against Bergson indicates that for Bergson, the forward movement of natural and human history does not come from a rational, reflective element but from a blind impulse from behind. In Bergson's terms, an elan vital.

Mead strongly disagrees with Bergson here, and offers us an insight into his own complete acceptance of the scientific method as a reasonable approach to the solution of social problems.

> What Bergson failed to realize is that there is nothing so rational, so self-consciously reflective, as the application of scientific method to immediate conditions, and that the use of this method is just the means, under these conditions, that the human race is using for advancing. 12

Mead argues that the "anti-intellectualist" attitude of Bergson represents a failure to grasp the import of the scientific method; that is, that the scientific method puts the environment under the control of the individual, or at least that it offers the opportunity to the individual, for

controlling his environment.[13]

It is out of this criticism that Mead raises concerning the anti-rationalist approach of Bergson that Mead brings out a third assumption concerning his philosophy of sociality. That is, that the meaning of the world is to be had in terms of our actions, our adjustments to the continually emerging present. You will remember that the other two assumptions Mead posits are: one, the reality of the temporal; and two, the fact of the emergence of novel forms in nature. Bergson has already admitted (from Mead's point of view), that " ... intelligence ... does enable us to direct our immediate steps (italics mine); but intelligence cannot tell us the meaning of the world."[14] We must assume that Mead wants to stress the possibility of a rational control of the environment, in the course of our adjustments to the unpredictable events that emerge and come into contradiction with our traditional modes of action.

Let us digress for a moment and compare the Kantian notion of reason as a faculty of synthesizing objects into "systems" and of guiding personal action, to the arguments put forth by Mead in the preceding pages. Both Mead and Kant are proposing a particular kind of knowledge as being adequate to give man an explanation of the world he lives in and to guide his activities in such a world. But there has been a

shift made in the emphasis of what constitutes the objects of this knowledge.

The objects of pure reason and the categorical imperatives of pure practical reason have given way to a pragmatic approach to truth. Kant's concept of reason had been seen as a means of describing a world of "things in themselves," an unchanging world that answered to the laws of pure reason. Mead's notion of reason (as embodied in the scientific methodology) is seen as a means of constructing hypothetical worlds and testing out their efficacy in answering to the needs which fostered such hypotheses.

Mead stresses that Bergson's philosophy arises out of a view of the world which is evolutionary as opposed to mechanical in nature:

> the world is not simply a process of readjustment of physical particles with reference to each other, a situation that remains always the same; it is a process that is going on, always moving into a future which lies ahead of it, which is just appearing and, as it appears, influencing what is taking place. [15]

Evolution presents to us the conditions out of which new forms can arise. And, according to Mead, we are no longer bound to the ontological problem brought forward by Fichte; namely, that we cannot account for the emergence of new forms if we posit, as a beginning, only a simple distribution of physical particles which are constantly readjusting their respective positions in space.

The organic theory of evolution, which Mead sees Bergson proposing as an alternative to the materialism of the nineteenth century, admits not to matter as a thing in itself, but it does admit to the endurance of structures of activity. And further, evolutionary theory assumes that these structures have evolved in nature, and that they are continuing to evolve into something other than what they were.

The practice of explaining the world in terms of structures taken at a point in time, has been overthrown in favour of explaining the world in terms of the quality of its duration. We are aware, from our own experience, that things do not take place in an instant. Objects and events take on meaning in our experience over time -- they have the quality of duration. Mead's main argument with Bergson is that Bergson admits only to the qualitative experience of duration in the "inner world" of thought.

> It seems that Bergson has failed to recognize that this process (involving interpenetration and duration upon) which he lays so much stress must be recognized wherever an effort, a process, is essential to the nature of the object. Thus the description he makes must hold for the atom, for which the present is just as much weighted with the future as it is for more specifically 'organic' structures. 16

Mead's intent in the above passage is to criticize Bergson's philosophy in terms of its pronounced subjective idealism. We find that from Mead's point of view, Bergson had not escaped the subjective idealism of the Romantic idealists. Bergson contends that all particles in the universe are interconnected in <u>one</u> final process, and that the self has the

intuitional capacity of "pure perception" which indicates the position of the self within this process.

Reflection, for Bergson, involves an arrest of process. If we attained pure perception, we would catch reality at its core. But we cannot do this on a conscious, reflective level for "conscious perception arises only when the process is checked."[17] In other words, Bergson is positing a monistic world which transcends and includes the individual self. As process, all aspects of this world of process are immediately related. It is this "noumenal world" of process that provides the immediate, intuitive connection that bring all unique particular selves together. And it is through arresting this process that the self comes to experience particular objects and events.

Bergson makes much the same argument for the experience of memory. According to Mead, Bergson claims:

> Our conscious memories are an expression of the selection that we make among the stimuli presented. Pure memory, on the other hand, answers to the whole of our experience, as pure perception answers to our instinctive contact with the whole of reality. The function of the central nervous system is the same in each case (perception and memory) -- it is a selecting and dissecting organ .. and .. the central nervous system is itself simply one of the images. 18

The view that Mead is rejecting here, is the assumption that there is a world of process external to ourselves, and that this world is only made sense of in terms of our subjective

interpretation of the stimuli presented by that world of process. To take the view that the world is what it is because of the subjective interpretation of the individual, can only lead to a solipsism that is denied by the fact that we do communicate with each other about a world we have in common.

Mead argues that he does not want to abandon the "noumenal world" which Bergson posits by his use of "pure perception" and "pure memory." For Mead recognizes that the ontological problems of relativity theory (at least in the case of the Special Theory of Relativity) come back to such a noumenal world. Mead notes that according to Einstein's STR (special theory of relativity) we must assume that our space-time world is entirely relative to the individual. [19] But he counters as follows:-

> But among these worlds we find uniformities which seem to lead us even here to the necessity of setting up a noumenal reality the events and interrelations of which lie beyond our own experience. 20

We find, then, that Mead rejects the subjective idealism implied in Bergson's philosophy, although he does retain the notion of "emergence" and "duration" as primary to his own philosophical system.

> Bergson's immediate intention furnishes the blind spot in his philosophy. He fails to see that the flow, the freedom, the novelty, the interpenetration, the creativity, upon which

> he sets such store, are not necessarily limited to the interpenetration of experiences in the inner flow of consciousness. They may also be gotten in an objective statement just as soon as we see that the objects of experience have the same type of interpenetration, the same essential spread, as that which Bergson discovers in our inner experience..... 21

Mead is challenging the necessity of Bergson's idealism in his philosophy of the inner experience. He is in effect taking what Bergson is presenting as belonging to the inner world of the experiencing self and pointing out that emergence and duration (the two prime qualities of sociality) are aspects of the natural world as much as they are of Bergson's inner world of experience.

In the next Chapter, on the organization of perspectives, we shall attempt to outline the relationship between subject and object (the self and the other) as Mead develops it. It is here that Mead shows himself neither to be a "subjective idealist" nor an "objective realist."

CHAPTER III

THE ORGANIZATION OF PERSPECTIVES

The idea was earlier presented that the Romantic idealists were limited in their philosophy by the science of their day, which happened to espouse the doctrine of Newtonian mechanics. That is, the reduction of the physical world to a conglomerate of moving particles of dead matter. And moving particles of dead matter, it was argued by Fichte, do not bring forth life forms and consciousness. The solution that the Romantic idealists opted for, in bringing the self and the non-self together, was to explain the physical world in terms of the Absolute Self.

With the acceptance of evolutionary theory, the natural world (or physical world) was conceived as existing prior to man and the consciousness of self. The problem of bringing the categories of self and other together was tackled by Bergson by his admitting to the reality of the physical processes of nature, and then conferring meaning onto that process through the experiencing self. Bergson had replaced the Absolute idealism of the German romantics with an intersubjective idealism. We found that Mead rejected Bergson's philosophy on the grounds that he (Mead) would generalize to nature, what Bergson had limited to the iinner experience."

In this Chapter we will outline the emphasis that Mead places on the relationship between science and his philosophy.

We shall also explore the social nature of what Mead refers to as the organization of perspectives, and also his strong support of the idea that mind and the self arise in realm of co-operative activity. By co-operative activity, we mean the same kind of activity that Marx refers to as constituting the basis of idealogical super-structures: the actual material relations of men involved in their mutual physical labours.

It is pointed out by Mead that Einstein's general theory of relativity reflects, in physics, the attitude that had already emerged within the biological sciences: namely, that the natural world was not exclusively a congery of dead matter. The brute fact of the existence of life forms demanded alternative descriptions as to the nature and the composition of the natural world. Mead offers us an eloquent description of the impact of relativity theory on the social sciences:

> It is the relativity of time, that is, an indefinite number of possible orders of events that introduces possibility in nature. When there was but one recognized order of nature, possibility had no other place than in the mental constructions of the future or the incompletely known past. But the reality of a spatio-temporally distant situation lies ahead, and any present existence of it, beyond the manipulatory one, can be only a possibility. Certain characters are there, but what <u>things</u> they are can only be realized when the acts these distant stimulations arouse are completed. What they are now is represented by a set of possible spatio-temporal structures. 1

Mead is telling us that the cosmology implied in the accepted science of our culture is reflective of, and limits,

the horizon of our accepted world. For over two hundred years we lived (in the so-called western world) in a three-dimensional world -- an infinite "cube" of "space" in which particles of "matter" roamed according to certain laws. Space was infinite, and time was infinite. They were considered to be the absolutes out of which the structure of our world was created. There was but one and only one real order to the world, and this order was described in terms of simple location. This mechanical science could not tell us "what" something was, but it could tell us "where" something was relative to other things.

There was but one world and one world alone, and it could not be known to us in terms of our immediate experience, but only in terms of the Cartesian coordinate system which mapped out the word as a huge grid within a cube of absolute space and time. To make any other evaluation of an object except its simple location within this cube, was termed as being the equivalent of subjective -- as belonging to the consciousness of the individual.

This is what Mead is referring to when he says that "possibility had no other place than in the mental constructions of the future or the incompletely known past." This may help us to understand Mead when he claims:

> The grandiose undertaking of Absolute idealism to bring the whole of reality within experience failed ... it left the finite ego hopelessly infected with subjectivity and consequently unreal ...

> the theoretical and practical life of the individual had no part in the creative advance of nature.2

Mead is doing much more than merely placing the individual "in the world" as an experiencing subject (as did Bergson).

> It is my opinion that you have to recognize not only the organism but also the world as having its reality in relation to the organism. The world is organized in relation to each organism. 3

By organism, Mead does not mean just the human animal, or a conscious life form, as we usually accept organism to indicate. He tells us that "Nature is composed of structures; atoms, stellar galaxies, tables, living beings -- all these are organisms ....."[4] This definition is not Mead's alone. A.N. Whitehead defines the subject matter which science studies (having discarded materialism in its mechanistic form) as "organisms" -- "Biology is the study of larger organisms; whereas physics is the study of the smaller organisms."[5]

Whitehead agrees with Mead that if we reject materialism as an ontological base for science, then we must recognize that process, or activity, has to be fundamental to any description of the world.

> A theory of science which discards materialism must answer the question as to the character of these primary entities. There can be only one answer on this basis. We must start with the event as the ultimate unit of natural occurrence. 6
>
> The total temporal duration of such an event bearing an enduring pattern, constitutes its specious present. Within this specious present the event realizes itself as a totality, and also in so

> doing realizes itself as grouping together
> a number of aspects of its own temporal parts.

What these men, and particularly Mead, are pursuing is the idea that a garden with an apple tree in it does not only exist as a unique perspective for the person who tends the garden as opposed to the individual who walks by and admires the garden. The idea that is being put forth here is that the garden also exists as a unique perspective for the apple tree (as an organism).

Perspectives, then, do not merely have a home in the "mental constructions" of individual selves. The relationship between the sun and the earth is an objective perspective, just as the perspective I have of a motorist speeding by myself is objective as compared to his perspective of passing by a person standing by the side of the road is objective. These are all real perspectives in nature.

Perspectives arise, then, out of a relation of the organism (as earlier defined) and its environment. According to Mead, perspectives arise only in relation to living organisms, that is, structures that are continually making adjustments to their environment by behaving in certain ways. Our interest is, of course, the behaviour of human organisms. We find that for Mead, the act is the basic unit of existence, and it is the act which is the basis for the selection of alternative perspectives which arise with the emergence of novel events in the present.

As we have pointed out, perspectives may refer to what we call our physical world, the world of grass and trees, the so-called external world. Perspectives may also refer to such things as organized attitudes; for example, the way we react to news broadcasts on television or to the printed news. We may take an attitude that causes us to react to the news as entertainment, or as a source of information. These so-called attitudes are as real and as significant as the "objects" of the physical world. Attitudes are instrumental in defining or suggesting the "direction" of our activity; in providing the basis for how we will"tend" to organize, or select our environment.

Mead says he wishes to call attention to "two unconnected movements wich seem to be approaching a strategic position of great importance -- which may be called the objectivity of perspectives." [8]

> These two movements were, for Mead, "that phase of behavioristic psychology which is planting communication, thinking, and substantive meanings as inextricably within nature as biological psychology has placed general animal and human intelligence; and second, an aspect of the philosophy of relativism which Professor Whitehead has presented. 9

Mead claims that Whitehead interprets relativity theory in terms of passing events in a four-dimensional Minkowski world,[10] and that the order in which these events pass is relative to a consentient set. Consentient set, would refer to a "perspective" taken within which all facts concur in their

significance. For example, our solar system may be described in terms of a consentient set, having the sun as a constant and the planets as variables; or, our solar system may be described in terms of a consentient set having theearth as a constant around which the sun and other planets revolve (the Ptolemaic system).

Mead further states that a "consentient set is determined by its relation to a percipient event or organism"[11]. Mead says that the organism which perceives the event determines the character of the event in terms of the consentient set to which that event relates. We find an example of such a process when we characterize the appearance and disappearance of the sun in the sky as "its rising and its setting"; that is, we relate to the sun as if it were moving across the sky. We do not generally perceive or characterize this event in terms of the earth turning on its axis and the sun remaining stationary in the sky. But if we assume the attitude of the astronomer setting up his telescope in order to view the sun, then we find ourselves characterizing the sun's movements in terms of the earth's rotation -- both on its own axis and around the sun.

If we accept the claim that Whitehead makes from his interpretation of the Minkowski geometry, that there are, for all practical purposes, an infinite number of so-called "perspectives" or "consentient sets," then we must address our-

selves to the question of how these many perspectives are organized into a common intelligible world. We find that Mead rejects the mutual exclusivity of these consentient sets which is entailed in the Minkowski geometry for precisely this reason: it offers no avenue for the establishment of a common world of experience which communication entails. In general, Mead argues that an object is what it is in one consentient set only in terms of what is is in all other possible consentient sets. And he describes the principle for the organizations of perspectives on the level of conscious selves as follows:

> The principle is that the individual enters into the perspectives of others, insofar as he is able to take their attitudes, or occupy their points of view. 12

For Mead, communication is a social process whose natural history shows that it arises out of co-operative activities. Such activities as those involved in sexual union, parenthood, fighting and herding, in which some phase of the act of one form, which may be called a gesture, acts as a stimulus to others to carry on their parts of the social act." [13] We clearly see here, that communication, for Mead, arises in the context of co-operative activity -- which implies some kind of social organization. And the conditions which allow for such an organization to develop are represented in the concept of sociality. Further, if Mead is to remain consistent in his philosophy, those same conditions of sociality must be

exhibited in the so-called external world of physical processes.

Mead argues that perspectives are socially organized, and that the so-called common perspective obtains before the individual perspective. Or in Mead's words, "in the process of communication the individual is another before he is a self."[14]

Mead points out that societies other than the society of man (e.g. bee and ant societies), obtain their social organization in terms of a division of labour or "role differentiation" based on physiological differences, while in human societies, "physiological differentiation, apart from the direct relations of sex and parenthood, plays no part in the organization of society."[15] He means this, of course, in a universal sense; that is, we would have to show that <u>all</u> human cultures are organized around some physiological differentiation, and not just one or a few aspects of some cultures, if we are to support an argument for the organization of human society based on physiological differentiation.

> The mechanism of human society is that of bodily selves who assist or hinder each other in their co-operative acts by the manipulation of physical things. 16

Minds, or selves, arise in terms of, and are limited in extent, to the co-operative activities (in the material sense of manipulating physical things) of man as a biological organism. Our conscious world relates back to, or is dependent upon, what Mead refers to as "contact experience."[17] The

self, for Mead, then, does not transcend the world of physical objects, but is indeed inexorably tied to the world of physical events and things. In responding to the relationship between man as a social self and the physical world around him that he manipulates, Mead says, "Social beings are things as definitely as physical things are social."[18]

But what does he mean by such a statement? One interpretation of the above statement might go as follows: when Mead says that physical things are social, he means that the meaning of physical things is socially derived; that is, things only become things (something of interest) within specific social contexts -- the meanings of physical things being ascribed to them by the experiencing subject. Mead would flatly reject such an interpretation of his statement. He states that:

> It is important to recognize that the self does not project itself into the other. The other and the self arise in the social act together ... the key to the genetic development of human intelligence is found in the recognition of these two aspects (of social action)." 19

"Things are what they are in the relationship between the individual and his environment, and this relationship is that of conduct." [20] In a very general sense, the relationship between self and other -- the individual and his environment, which is the main area of Mead's thought can be described as one of exhibiting sociality. The common field of action or "common perspective" provides the consentient set which we

identify as the "stable" or recognizable (predictable) world, while the passage involved in action entails the emergence of novel perspectives answering to individual selves and objects in the environment. The most generalized form of such a consentient set would be, of course, the universe of stars and galaxies that we inhabit.[21]

Mead assumes that perception and reflection (thinking) are rooted in action, and that action (in Mead's sense) involves contact experience; that is, the manipulation of a resistant object. We have already indicated that for Mead, the present constitutes the locus of reality, and that the basic unit of the individual's existence is the act. The act, according to Mead, can be described in terms of four phases: impulse, perception; manipulation; and, consummation. According to Mead, "all perception involves an immediate sensuous stimulation and an attitude toward this stimulation."[22] The attitude toward the stimulation answers to the impulse (e.g. hunger could be defined as an impulse which would determine one's attitude toward the presentation of a bowl of fruit as possible food, rather than as decoration for a table).

Mead tells us that this attitude "appears in consciousness only as an attitude, but as such it is the first stage in the complete response... which the situation calls out,"[23] and further that there accompanies this attitude, some imagery "which has been taken from past experience in which

the responses have been carried out" (Mead refers to this process as a collapsed act, and its duration is termed a "specious present"). The manipulatory stage of the act answers to bringing the object of distance experience into contact experience (e.g. picking up one of the pieces of fruit in the bowl to determine whether or not it is wax or a real apple).

The consummation of the act entails the whole process of perception, manipulation, and finally eating and digesting the apple. This very simple example of one possible act constitutes, for Mead, the limits of a present, "The functional boundaries of the present are those of its undertaking -- of what we are doing."[25] Unlike Hegel's view of the perceptual object as "alienated subject,"[26] the relation between the subject (self) and the perceptual object is, for Mead, a social relation that makes neither the subject nor the object more real than the other.

The act describes not only the temporal limits of a "present" but it also gives a pragmatic definition of the self and the other within the existential present which constitutes reality.

> The perceptual object is primarily the organization of the immediate environment with reference to the organism ... the 'what' of the object is, then, the expression of the whole of which both environment and organism are essential parts. 27

This social relationship, in which the perceptual object arises; that is, sociality, has been described as the principle and the form of emergence in Mead's philosophy.[28] In the next Chapter we will examine how Mead develops this principle in his treatment of passage -- the relation of the past and the future to the present -- where the present is seen to be the locus of reality.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRESENT AS THE LOCUS OF REALITY

You will recall that we have stated that Mead's concept of sociality is characterized by its capacity of being several things at once, and its demonstrability in the systematic character of the passing event. We have also presented the hypothesis that, for Mead, sociality is the principle and the form of emergence. It is our intent, in this Chapter, to outline the arena in which emergence occurs -- in which the characteristics of sociality are exhibited. And this arena is the so-called present.

The notion of a "knife-edge" present that is associated with the physics of Newtonian mechanis is questioned. Mead denies the kind of strict causality that is demanded in order to explain how an infinite series of instantaneous presents can slip one-into-the-other, thus creating a past that follows behind.

Arthur E. Murphy correctly points out, in his introduction to Mead's Philosophy of the Present, that the most daring development in Mead's theory of sociality (considered in its specifically human aspect as the conscious organization of perspectives) is that he generalized this theory "so as to characterize the whole course of natural development."[1] In short, Mead is presenting a philosophy that will account for mind as "an evolution in nature, in which culminates that

sociality which is the principle and form of emergence."[2] And Paul Pfuetze, in Self, Society, Existence, tells us that sociality, in Mead's view, must be seen as the ultimate explanation of mind, self, and society, and further, that sociality is inseparably linked with the occurrence in nature of the novel.

Mr Murphy admits that in his own view "sociality, like Whitehead's 'feeling' is too essentially subjective a category for this metaphysic of process with which they were both concerned."[3] But he does not explain what he means by "too essentially subjective." Let it suffice to show that he has brought to the front the central concern of Mead's book - Philosophy of the Present; that is, that mind is an evolution in nature, in which culminates that sociality which is the principle and form of emergence.

The principles on which Mead's concept of sociality is based are: one, the present constitutes the locus of reality; and two, that there is an emergence of qualitatively novel forms in nature. Both "the present" and "emergence" have in common with each other, a temporal dimension -- something that traditional structural and functional models presented by the social sciences have usually either neglected or dismissed as irrelevant to the enterprise.[4]

According to David Miller, "the emergent is that which by definition is not only unpredicted, but unpredictable ...

from the epistemological standpoint the emergent is that to which neither habitual ways of acting nor, consequently, categorical interpretations of experience will answer."[5] In the lecture notes used by Mead for a summer course in Romantic idealism, and later posthumously published under the title Movements of Thought in the 19th Century, we found that Mead attempted to show that the German Romantic (or Absolute) idealists (e.g. Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel) recognized the problem of emergence. But they tried to overcome the implied relativity of perspectives that goes along with a theory of emergence by appealing to categorical interpretations, or to an "absolutism," that would transcend and overcome this problem of relative perspectives. These absolutes were described as the morality of right action (FICHTE), the aesthetics of art (Schelling), and the logic of reason (Hegel).

What is of primary interest to us here, is a systematic description and analysis of the basic epistemological principles on which Mead bases his philosophy of mind, self, and communication. The first of these principles (epistemological assumptions) that we will develop is Mead's treatment of the present as the locus of reality, and the relationship of the present (or better, a present) to a past and a future belonging to that present. We must point out that when we say that Mead treats a present as the locus of reality, we do not mean that he is reducing the past and future to the present. Rather,

in the words of David Miller, "he is explaining the meanings of 'past' abd 'future' with reference to the present."[6]

Mead brings out a problem that involves what we can call "common sense" observation about how things happen, or, causality. We believe that we can effect the course of our own lives, in the future, by the actions we take in the present, and that to the same extent, our present situations are answerable to our past activities. Mead suggests that:

> The basis of this determinism of the future by the past is found in the fact that something is taking place that has a temporal spread -- that reality cannot be reduced to instants -- and that earlier stages must be conditions of later phases. 7

Mead's thesis is that reality "exists in a present," and he denies the existence of a past and a future. There is, for Mead, no contradiction involved in denying the existence of a past and a future, and at the same time affirming the genuineness of the experience of "before" and "after." For Mead that which "marks a present is its becoming and its disappearing"; past and future represent the "horizons" of the ongoing present (or better, an ongoing present).

This is a most difficult idea to accept. How can we say that there is no past, which exists in an exclusive sense from the present, and yet offer such evidence as a photograph of ourselves standing in front of a building that had been levelled to the ground five years previously? Do not things

happen that are irrevocable? Do not events -- historical events (like the Canadian-American border wars) occur that cannot be changed? The Atom Bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, and we can still find evidence of that fact.

Let us examine the argument that the battles that Canada and the United States have fought over border disputes are quite different battles -- depending on whether the description comes from a Canadian or an American text-book. And again, let us examine the argument that the significance of Hiroshima is quite different for Americans in 1973 than it was for Americans in 1946. In these above situations, we are willing to admit that pasts do change in relation to present situations. We would not expect the two opposing sides of a battle to agree on how the battle "went" for them. They would both maintain that each was victorious in some way. And we can also accept the fact that the significance of the Hiroshima bombing would change as political and economic relations between the U.S.A. and Japan changed.

In the above examples on irrevocability, a distinction has been made between what we call an "event" and the "past" in which that event is located. Mead admits that events do not change -- they are irrevocable, but it is the "what it is" of the event that changes. Mead is challenging the historists thesis that "there has been some real past with all its events, in independence of any present, whose contents we are slowly

and imperfectly deciphering."[18]

Mead argues that as we increase the critical exactitude of our study of the past, we find that pasts are steadily succeeding each other with increasing rapidity. The science of anthropology provides, along with archeology, abundant examples to confirm Mead's argument. We find that the world that will be cannot be different from the world that is without rewriting the past to which we now look back.

If pasts are continually being rewritten, then in terms of what are they being rewritten? The answer is, of course, that it is constantly being rewritten in terms of some new piece of information (a fact) which contradicts the old past. It is being rewritten in terms of the emergent event. For example, in archeology, we create a past by digging in the ground for clues (facts). If we come across a fact that does not fit within an established past, then we "rewrite" the past to accommodate that fact, and in doing so, we also rewrite the present. For Mead, the surfacing of a new fact or clue is synonymous with the emergence of a novel event. According to Mead we must treat all of the past -- both our historical and natural past as hypothetical in character. This means that as individual personalities we are hypothetical, as cultures we are hypothetical, as organisms we are hypothetical. The universe is hypothetical in the sense that the meaning it takes

on is contingent upon the emerging present. We redefine our pasts in order to meet the uncertainty of an emerging present. This is the methodology of research science. Mead generalizes from this, that:

> ... the present in which the emergent appears accepts that which is novel as an essential part of the universe, and from that standpoint re-writes its past. [9]

Mead makes the novel or exceptional central: the novel or emergent is that with reference to which a present is defined, and a present is for Mead, as we have already suggested, the seat of reality.

The space-time associated with Galileo-Newton mechanics allowed an objective separation between past and future events -- the so-called present instant of absolute time separating them. [10] And for Mead, it is this cosmology which supports the misguided notion that there does exist an irrevocable past and future. We developed, in the previous Chapters, a description of the evolutionary perspective that ran counter to a structural; instantaneous representation of on-going processes. And we indicated that the temporal duration of living forms demanded a physics that went beyond an instantaneous present. Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity (STR) or more particularly, the space-time associated with STR, represented such an alternative.

The space-time of the STR admitted no longer to just

a two-fold distribution of events into past and present, but demanded a three-fold distribution of events over time. This space-time is represented by Mindowski's geometry.[11] Although the geometry of the Minkowskian world described events "over time," Mead argued that it had severe limitations.

In its Einstein-Minkowski form, the STR had become a fatalistic theory according to which all events are written, once and for all, in an unchangeable four-dimensional block universe. It is the absolute quality of this "unchangeable" four-dimensional Cartesian block universe that Mead rejects:

> ... From the standpoint of the special theory of relativity there is a choice between alternative orders of events, while from the standpoint of the general theory of relativity there is a creative advance. 12

In accepting Mead's position that the seat of reality is the present, and that the present is defined in terms of the emergence of the novel (passage), it becomes problematic for us to explain that things do, to some extent, remain the same over time. In other words, the notion of causality comes into question as to its adequacy in providing a connection between the old order of things (the world as it was) and emergence of novel forms. Mead tells us that in "passage, within which what is taking place conditions that which is arising, ... everything that is taking place takes place under necessary conditions."[13] But he qualifies this statement by saying that the so-called necessary conditions,

while necessary, "do not determine in its full reality, that which emerges."[14]

This is a well known phenomenon in both industry and research science. In industry, great pains are taken to establish so-called "quality controls" to ensure the production of a uniform product: for example, in the optical and ball bearing industries. But we find that we cannot completely duplicate situations (for testing results), nor can we manufacture products which demand low tolerances to deviation (e.g. optical lenses) to exacting standards, we can only approximate the desired result.

As we have already argued, from an historical perspective, Mead posits that the past, or pasts, are as hypothetical as the futures that they help us to predict. Pasts become valid in interpreting nature:

> ... insofar as they present a history of becomings in nature leading up to that which is becoming today, insofar as they bring out what fits into the pattern that is emerging from the roaring loom of time. 15

He argues that our reference is always the present --- "the structure of the present," and that the test of that present which we have formulated is always that of "successfully carrying out our calculations in a rising future."[16] And the field of mind is for Mead, the "temporal extension" of the environment of the organism.

The field of mind, then, is the larger environ-

> ment which the activity of the organism calls for but which transcends the present. 17

We find, then, that for Mead, the locus of reality -- the present -- is a passage constituted by "processes whose earlier phases determine in certain respects their later phases." 18. His thesis is that reality is <u>always</u> in a present. And as we pointed out earlier, in our statement on irrevocability, the problem of whether or not the past referred to events which were part of "continuous" presents passing into each other (the historicist's argument) became problematic for Mead. Mead, of course, rejected the notion of an independent past, and argued that the past refers to that "conditioning phase of the present which enables us to determine conduct with reference to the future which is also arising in the present."[19]

CHAPTER V
EMERGENCE AND IDENTITY : THE SOCIAL NATURE OF THE PRESENT

It is argued by Mead and others that the organism is not passive in its relationships to its environment; the organisms activity (the act of adjustment) is essential to the organization of perspectives.[1] And it is in this light that the problem of emergence and identity can be looked at in more detail. We are referring to emergence and identity as being problematic in the sense that traditional views of causality do not satisfactorily explain how something can maintain an identity over time and at once be evolving into something other than it was.

If we accept a thorough-going evolutionary theory, as did Mead, to account for our own presence on this planet, then we must address ourselves to such a problem. This problem can encompass not only the so-called external world of physical processes and the world of organic life forms; it also involves the growth of individual selves.

It was argued in the previous Chapter that Mead rejects the idea of a four-dimensional continuum, as represented by the geometry of Minkowski, the events and intervals of which were forever determined by its own internal logic.[2] Mead was much more receptive to the cosmogony which answered to the

general theory of relativity, which stressed the constant creation of novel forms in an objective world, rather than alternative worlds that were completely determined.

Mead claims that Minkowski is presenting us with a four-dimensional, but just as absolute, frame of reference as was Newton's three-dimensional frame of reference. Mead's cosmogony demands that any perspective (or dimension in the classical sense) can only be known from a perspective at least once removed from that frame of reference. For example, we can only recognize a two-dimensional frame of reference if we are once removed from that frame of reference; that is, if we occupy an observational position within a three-dimensional frame of reference. In its social sense, dimensionality is treated as a perspective. To see ourselves as an object we must remove ourselves from the immediate interaction we are involved in, so that we can view ourselves as a "social object" in interaction, rather than just being limited to the perspective of being involved in a social interaction. For Mead, this is an instance of sociality on the level of the organization of perspectives as conscious process.

J.A. Coleman (Modern Theories of the Universe) tells us that the discoveries of the twentieth century have led to the concept of a universe which not only had a beginning at some finite time in the past but has also passed through certain evolutionary changes. We had established, at the beginning of

the twentieth century, what were considered as three distinct areas of evolutionary process: one, historical evolution; two, the natural evolution of life forms; and three, the evolution of the stars and planets. We have also indicated that during the first two or three decades of this century, there were very few men who had the "insight" or overall perspective which enabled them to try and formulate a relationship between these three movements.

The task that George Mead set for himself was indeed monumental. He was attempting in his philosophy to come up with a general principle which would allow the objective integration of: physical process; life processes; and, processes of consciousness. And the principle is, of course, sociality. It was the rejection of absolute space and time (the stumbling block of the nineteenth century) by the science of physics that led the way for a formulation of a finite universe. And when we speak of evolutionary processes in a finite universe, we cannot logically argue that such so-called evolutionary processes can be limited to only "this" or "that" part of the universe. We come on the notion of a "unitary thing" -- an "organism" as being the adequate metaphor to describe the universe of man and nature.

In such a universal "organism," what would constitute a qualitative change which could have appended to it such

descriptions as the "evolution of novel forms," or "emergence"? Mead answers this question in three parts:

(1) Events "cannot be simply parts of a passage... events have always characters of uniqueness. Time can only arise through the ordering of passage by these unique events"; 3

(2) "The relation of the event to its preceding conditions at once sets up a history, and the uniqueness of the event makes that history relative to that event"; 4

(3) "All of the past is in the present as the conditioning nature of passage, and all the future arises out of the present as the unique events that transpire." 5

Compare these three principles of evolution that Mead puts forth to the ideas of Michael Polanyi (in his book, Personal Knowledge) as to the organizing principles of emergence.

(1) Evolution, like life itself, will .... be said to have been originated by the action of an ordering principle 6

(2) It is a fundamental property of open systems, not described before now, that they stabilize any improbable event which serves to elicit them.?

Polanyi, a physicist, chemist, and sociologist by profession, published his works some twenty to thirty years after Mead, but the similarity of their positions on emergence is striking. It is more striking that Polanyi should say of the property - of an open system stabilizing the improbable events which give rise to them, - that it had never before been described, and yet it had been described quite lucidly some thirty years before he made the statement.

Events cannot be simply parts of passage. By event, Mead means anything which happens, something which exhibits change, a process, hence opposed to the traditional idea of an object as a static structure. Although for Mead, an object does constitute an event, an event does not necessarily constitute an object. Mead's position on this point has already been made clear in our analysis of Fichte and his argument that a mere redistribution of particles of matter in space do not give rise to life forms and consciousness (the ego or self). Emergence then, must involve what we call "creation" -- some event or some thing comes into the world in an "unexplainable" fashion. But the fact of creation or emergence, although unexplainable in itself, is open to common experience. I cannot explain my existence to my complete satisfaction merely in terms of the "sperm and egg" story. Neither can the experts of the field (embriologists and micro-biologists) explain the creation of a new life form in terms of the causal relation of "sperm and the egg" = newborn infant.

For Mead, then, the very fact that we experience passage, demands that a category of ongoing creation or emergence of novel events, be admitted to our cosmogony. The relation of the unique event to that which went before it cannot be a logical or necessary relation. For by definition, if the event logically follows from past conditions, then the event is not unique -- it is entirely predictable. Unlike Bergson, Mead

does not relegate time to "subjective experience." We can readily see that time (passage) is, for Mead, an objective phenomenon, inseparably connected to the objective phenomenon of emergence in nature.

Mead's second statement ("the relation of the event to its preceding conditions at once sets up a history, and the uniqueness of the event makes that history relative to that event") provides us with an elegantly simple solution to the problem of the Romantic philosophers: providing an identity of subject and object.

Let us consider the Realist argument (given an evolutionary account of the natural world's development) that our environment -- the natural world, must have existed prior to human existence, and hence it has a reality <u>independent</u> of ourselves as human organisms. If we accept Mead's postulate that the relation of the event to its preceding conditions at once sets up a history, then we find the following answer to the Realist argument made available. There did indeed exist, prior to the emergence of the human organism, those conditions necessary for the maintenance of that life form: those conditions which we label as our environment. But, prior to the emergence of the human organism, our environment, <u>as we know it</u>, did not exist. The conditions existed, but the particular organization of processes we call our environment is relative to our species only.

In its generalized form, Mead's analysis of the relation of subject and object is much closer to the methodology of contemporary science, rather than that of nineteenth century positivism. The positivist attitude is that there is a real world out there of which we can discover the meaning, if only we can collect enough information about it. Contemporary science takes the epistemological position that we "create" the world out there in terms of the hypothesis we invent.

We can ask the question (if we accept the postulate of emergence), "Why do things stay the same as much as they do?".

How do we account for the continuity in nature and ourselves that we do find, if the emergence of a novel event changes that which went before it. In short, the problematic in Mead's philosophy of process, is to account for how things maintain their identities (things being either selves or objects). And we propose that his third statement on emergence offers an answer to this problem. He tells us that all of the past is in the present "as the conditioning nature of passage," and all the future arises out of the present as the unique events that transpire.

The above description of how objects "arise" in a present, and in relation to emergent events, takes us away from the materialist argument that an object's identity is to be had in terms of its internal structure. Mead argues that the essential character of an object is not that which "undergoes

transformation, but in the process itself and in the forms which the object assumes within that process."[8] The social nature of the present arises out of the fact of emergence and the process of readjustment that emergence involves. It was earlier stated that according to Mead the relation of the event to its preceding conditions at once sets up a history, and the uniqueness of the event makes that history relative to that event. In the case of the emergence of life forms, it would follow for Mead that those conditions which gave rise to these life forms must be able to maintain them, and the only way that this is possible is that those conditions radically change themselves. Mead tells us that:

> If life is a reality, its operation within form and environment must confer its characters within its whole field of operation. 9

Mead means that those characters which we attribute to life forms (i.e. that they come into existence and go out of existence as a part on an ongoing process which is social in nature), must also be conferred to the physical world which gives rise to life forms, since the physical world is within the field of operation of the life forms.

Mead uses the term "social" in reference to the process of readjustment. This is easy enough to accept on the level of consciousness, where we are constantly assessing how we should respond in terms of the others with whom we share a common situation with. Mead, as the above quotation indicates,

extends this view of sociality to nature as a whole. Accordingly, the objects of the "old" system must readjust to fit the "new" system which is brought on by the emergence of the novel event.[10]

Mead argues, on the basis of his acceptance of general relativity theory and its methodology (concerning the conditions of change), which eradicates a monistic history altogether, that "in scientific procedure there is no longer anything that conflicts with new pasts arising with emergent events."[11] This position obviously denies the possibility of a single "reality." Mead is not a realist in this sense. He is a pragmatist insofar as his criterion for truth is to be found in "the discovery or construction of such objects as will mediate our conflicting and checked activities and allow conduct to proceed."[12]

Knowledge is not, according to Mead, to be identified with the presence of <u>content</u> in experience. Mead argues against a description of knowledge as the content of a "structure" called the mind. He views mind as indicating a special kind of activity, and knowledge indicating the specific methods we use for carrying out that activity. Mind, or rather minding, is a reflective activity based on the arrestation of "habitual" response to stimuli. Activity is halted in the face of a conflict and knowledge answers to the means or methods we adopt to continue that arrested activity. For example, if an individual drives to work along the same route every day, we can describe his driving that route - discounting stopping for

red lights, pedestrians, etc., - as constituting an habitual activity. If one day he finds his route blocked (i.e. his habitual response arrested), the selection of a successful alternative route, although he had no prior knowledge of such a route (i.e. he had not driven that particular alternative route before, or if he had, did not know that it also was not blocked) would constitute for Mead knowledge, because it allowed him to reach his place of work.

Life, for Mead, is a process in which the individual organism, by its actions, tends to maintain this process both in itself and in later generations. It is a process which, "defines so much of the world as is found within the sweep of these activities as the environment of the individual" (italics mine).[13] Further a conscious life form is one that can make phases of its own life process a part of its environment.

> I have wished to present mind as an evolution in nature, in which culminates that sociality which is the principle and the form of emergence. 14

Past and future refer to that activity which is central to the present, and as we have stressed before, the present is defined in terms of passage. Change is taken, by Mead, as an a priori condition of reality. Things come into existence and things go back out of existence. The permanence of structure is unique to the mind of the individual, and the structures with which we cover the process of the present are

but short-lived.

Mead provides us with an apt example as to the extent of the relationship of the activities of men in present situations and the pasts that these activities create. The example concerns the relation between the history of the sun and other stars to the structure that physicists have formulated of the atom.

Our present theories about the age and internal structure of our sun are based upon theories that have come out of research directed toward the composition of the atom. It was not until the hypothesis of sub-atomic particles (protons and neutrons) was developed and tested, that the fusion reaction theory of the sun's energy emission was put forth. And it was the fusion reaction theory that allowed astro-physicists to extend the life of the stellar universe to a magnitude that could account for the great span of time required in an evolutionary theory of its development. Until that time, there had been an ongoing conflict between those who posited an evolutionary theory and the then accepted life span of the stars.[15] Mead suggests that, "given another analysis of the atom, the sun will have another history and the universe will be launched into a new future."[16]

To paraphrase Mead, the view that the present is social in nature, frees us from bondage to either the past (a deterministic account of our situation) or the future (a teleo-

logical and equally deterministic account of our situation). He says that we are neither creatures of the "necessity of an irrevocable past,"nor of any "vision given on the Mount." All of our values lie in the present. And past and future give us only the schedule of the means for their realization.

Let us address ourselves to the problem of the relationship of the emergent event to those conditions antecedent to the emergence of a novel situation. If Mead's model of sociality and emergence is to be of any use as an instrument for gaining some control over social action, then we must show that there is some relationship (of a systematic or rational character) between the emergent event and that which went before it (the old order).

It was earlier stated that the emergent event is not a-priori implied or contained within the structure of the old order: the emergent event was described as transcending, in a novel fashion, its antecendent conditions. But the emergent event is bound by or limited by those conditions which precede it. Emergence allows for novelty and change to take place in the world, but not in an ad hoc fashion. As Mead says, there is a systematic character exhibited in the process of emergence.

For example, by bringing oxygen and hydrogen together under specific conditions, the emergence of a totally unique

quality arises that is not a part of either gas taken by themselves; that is, the wetness of water. There is nothing that we can point to in either hydrogen or oxygen that would lead us to predict, in an a-priori fashion, that taken together (under the right conditions) they would give rise to the emergence of water.

In a social sense, if we find that a specific emergent arising which conforms to our present value system (i.e., is efficacious as a means to a desired end, or is a desired end itself), we can strive to obtain that emergent by isolating and maintaining those conditions out of which such a desirable emergent will tend to obtain. It is in this sense that we may gain some control over our social relationships. Just as we may expect the emergence of water from hydrogen and oxygen, so we may expect the emergence of social forms to be consistent in relation to particular antecedent social conditions.

CONCLUSION

Leszek Kolakowski, in presenting a critique of "historical understanding" and "individual responsibility," puts forth the argument that, "The belief in eschatology, like the belief in theology, is an attempt to find absolute justification for our life outside its limits, to establish a reality that makes all other reality meaningful and comprehensible."[1] We can certainly apply this argument to a Platonic philosophy of "Forms" which constitute the "Idea" behind the transient world of experience: a world of objects which grope toward attaining that perfection of universality. But the world of experience remains bent and twisted -- a mere shadow of its essential nature.

The Absolute Idealism of the nineteenth century carries with it the movement of the dialectic -- activity becomes a mediator between subject and object. But we find that the object from Hegel's point of view is alienated subject: the Hegelian concept of activity is "abstract mental activity which can mediate only thought-entities."[2] It seems then, that the Absolute Idealism of the nineteenth century also made an appeal to establish a reality that "transcended" experience, that appealed to an Absolute Self (Mind) which could bring the ever-changing worlds of subject and object together -- to unify them in a Universal reality.

We have found that the introduction of evolutionary

theory to the philosophy of Absolute Idealism via Henri Bergson and the subsequent efforts of G.H. Mead to refine this application, had resulted in a philosophy of pragmatism. The main thrust of pragmatism is to stress the relationship of man's practical activity to so-called epistemological thought. In short, to answer the question, "How do we know what we know?" we must turn to our practical activity for an answer: the concept of practical usefulness becomes a factor in the definition of truth.

We cannot justify a claim that Mead's philosophy is eschatological in character. His philosophy of sociality does not provide a "reality that makes all other reality meaningful and comprehensible." But his philosophy of sociality does provide us with a perspective of the relation of man and nature as being reciprocal and interdependent: as being social. The world at large is marked by process and change, and insofar as this is true, we cannot hope to make an appeal for one Universal reality, for the nature of change is to subvert the given order, to confer to the universal the character of the particular.

> If structures, in fact, characterize the reactions of men to different problems which their relations with the surrounding social and natural world raise, these structures always fulfil, in a particular context, a function within a larger social structure. And when the situation changes, they cease to fulfil the function and thus lose their rational character, which leads men to

> abandon them and to replace them with new and different structures. 3

What Goldman is referring to in the above quotation is the idea that the importance of historical facts (structures) is not so much their "material being," but their "human meaning." You will remember that this is the argument that was developed in Chapter IV (The Present as the Locus of Reality). Historical facts take on significance in terms that constitute the coherent and adequate expression of a world-view. In this sense world-views are social facts.

If we accept the analysis of the relationship of the subject and the object that is exhibited in Mead's philosophy concerning sociality, then we must accept that the world view we share as concerns the physical structure of our world is reflective of and defines the limitations of how we conceptualize other selves, and social institutions. We find ourselves looking at governments, large companies, and educational institutions as constituting a structure analogous to the buildings that house the individuals that create the institution and maintain its existence through their mutual social interaction. The acting selves who <u>maintain</u> the structure are no longer seen as necessary to its existence. They become <u>particles</u> moving to and fro, inhabiting that which they have created.

This is the situation that we of the so-called western civilization have inherited from the mechanistic world view of

Newtonian mechanics and the ghost-in-the-machine world view of Descartes. Mead's philosophy of sociality does not only offer one alternative world view, but it does offer a perspective which allows for a continual emergence of new world views.

If reality is a process, then by implication passage is real, or objective. In then follows that there be continuous novelty, creativity, and adjustment. We are necessarily always becoming other than our selves, just as the natural world is necessarily always becoming something other than it was.

The mechanical explanation of the world associated with so-called contact experience has given way, in part, to the electro-magnetic explanation of the world associated with distance experience. But the test of the distance object of sight (which is always located in a possible future), must always come back to the here and now of contact experience.

The fusion reaction of an hydrogen explosion becomes the test of the rationally created particles of protons and neutrons that exist always in some possible future. The killing and eating of the prey becomes the test of the reality for the hunter, of that promised object that always lies in a possible future of distance experience. And each and every action is but again and again the re-testing of that promised future that is held in the temporary organization of the past.

Insofar as traditions (representing temporary organizations of the past) are efficacious in allowing present action

to continue, they can be maintained. In this sense, Mead's social philosophy is conservative. Our values arise out of the selection of those past conditions which will allow present activity to continue. But as new conditions emerge in the present with the emergence of novel events, so new pasts and values must arise in order to support the new system.
Mead's philosophy of sociality does provide for a naturalistic emergence of the self, but it does not provide us with a final reality. Our selves (as objects) are as subject to the finiteness of temporality as are the objects that go to make up our environment.

LIST OF REFERENCES

CHAPTER I

1. See Chapter III

2. George Herbert MEAD - Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936), pp. v.—vi.

3. IBID., p.66

4. The problem of accounting for experience in terms of a mechanical theory of nature is taken on by Berkeley and Hume also. Berkeley asks of the so-called real world, "Why should we assume that that which causes in us the sensation of extension, be extended, if that which causes in us a sensation of red, is not red?". His question refers to the corpuscular theory of light, which was offered by Newton as an alternative explanation to the "essential" theory of colour.

   We find that Hume argued that the mechanical description of a vibration from outside produced in us a certain succession of colour and sound, actually lies inside experience. The reality of the situation, it was argued, was the experiencing self rather than the mechanical vibrations.

5. Immanuel KANT - Critique of Practical Reason trans. L.W. Beck (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Col.1956), p.x.

6. IBID., pp. 20-21

7. IBID., pp. 28-29

8. IBID., p. xii.

9. G.H. MEAD -
Movements of Thought p.67

10. KANT tells us that all things in nature, including human beings, behave in accordance with laws. And it is in terms of laws that we know things and guide our actions.

11. G.H. MEAD -
Movements of Thought p.37

12. I. KANT -
Critique of Practical Reason, p.x.

13. IBID., p.19

14. G.H. MEAD -
Movements of Thought p.40

15. IBID., p.43

16. IBID., p.45

17. IBID., p.46

18. IBID., p.50

19. IBID., p.63

20. IBID., p.67

21. IBID., p.74

22. IBID., p.75

23. Antinomy is referred to by Runes Dictionary of Philosophy as paradox, or contradiction. For KANT, they represent the limits of knowledge.

24. Idealism is referred to as that philosophical view which emphasizes mind as pre-eminent. Materialism is referred to as the philosophical view that matter is the fundamental constituent of the universe.

25. G.H. MEAD -
Movements of Thought p.86

26. IBID., p.86

27. This description FICHTE, as a transcendental idealist, was given by William Smith in his prefatory notes to FICHTE'S Popular Works.
The term - German Idealist - was taken from Frederick deWolfe Bolman Jr., in his introduction to The Ages of the World.
The term - Romantic Idealist - is taken from G.H. Mead - Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century.

Note: that all three of these terms shall apply to that philosophy of the nineteenth century represented by the philosophies of FICHTE, SCHELLING and HEGEL.

28. G.H. MEAD -
Movements of Thought pp.89-90

29. Johann FICHTE -
The Science of Knowledge
trans. A.E. Kroeger (Philadelphia; J.B. Lippincott & Co. 1868). p.63

30. IBID., p.15

31. IBID., refer to the section entitled "Practical Part of the Science of Knowledge."

32. IBID., pp. 103-104

33. G.H. MEAD -
Movements of Thought p.91

34. IBID., p.91

35. MEAD's contention that FICHTE's attempt, to build up the world in terms of man's moral experience, was a failure, is supported by Lucien Goldmann in The Human Sciences and Philosophy, p.21 Goldmann says that the Absolute idealists tried to introduce mind and consciousness into the physical world, and that the development of the physical sciences seems to have proven that this attempt was ill-conceived.

36. J. FICHTE -
The Science of Knowledge -pp. 21-22

37. Johann FICHTE -
The Popular Works of Fichte
trans. W. Smith (London: Trubner & Co., 1889), p.152

38. J. FICHTE -
The Science of Knowledge -p.27

39. IBID., pp. 27-28

40. G.H. MEAD -
Movements of Thought p.99

41. IBID., p.105

42. Friedrich SCHELLING -
The Ages of the World
trans. F. Bolmon Jr. (New York: AMS Press, 1942), p.ii

43. G.H. MEAD -
Movements of Thought p.111

44. F.W. SCHELLING -
The Ages of the World, p.ix

45. IBID., p.83

46. G.H. MEAD -
Movements of Thought pp.119-120

47. F.W. SCHELLING -
The Ages of the World, pp.84-85

48. J.G. FICHTE -
The Science of Knowledge, pp.221-235

49. R.G. COLLINGWOOD -
The Idea of History
(New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.112-113

50. F.W. SCHELLING -
The Ages of the World, p.90

51. IBID., p.95

52. G.H. MEAD -
Movements of Thought p.127

53. R.G. COLLINGWOOD -
The Idea of Nature
(New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.121

54. R.G. COLLINGWOOD -
The Idea of History, p.128

55. IBID., p.128

56. R.G. COLLINGWOOD -
The Idea of Nature, p.131

57. G.H. MEAD -
Movements of Thought p.129

58. IBID., pp. 130-131

59. IBID., p.135

60. IBID., p.137

61. IBID., p.142

CHAPTER II

1. G.H. MEAD -
   Movements of Thought p.158

2. IBID., p.158

3. IBID., p.158

4. By form we mean the intelligible structure of an object as distinguished from the matter in which this structure is embodied., e.g. the elements that go to make up an object.

5. G.H. MEAD -
   Movements of Thought p.159

6. IBID., p.292

7. Henri BERGSON -
   Time and Free Will
   trans. F.L. Pogson (New York: George Allen & Co. 1912) p. vi

8. David MILLER -
   "G.H. Mead's Conception of 'Present'",
   Philosophy of Science, Vol. 10 (1943) pp 40-46

9. G.H. MEAD -
   Movements of Thought p.292

10. IBID., p.292

11. IBID., p.294

12. IBID., p.294

13. The attitude that scientific methodology offers man an opportunity to control his environment and his own development has been expressed by others - e.g. Michael Polanyi, Personal Knowledge (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

    By environment we refer to the gestalt or transactional relation of sentient perceiver and the field of perception as constituting one frame of reference. We do not mean to imply that experiencing individuals are radically separated from the so-called surrounding environment; to the contrary, the experiencing individual constitutes one aspect of the environment within which he identifies himself.

14. G.H. MEAD -
    Movements of Thought p.293

15. IBID., p.304

16. IBID., p.317

17. IBID., p.321

18. IBID., p.322

19. Refer to the Minkowski footnotes in Chapter IV (#11)

20. G.H. MEAD -
    Movements of Thought p.324

21. IBID., p.325

CHAPTER III

1. G.H. MEAD -
   Philosophy of the Present, p.174

2. IBID., p.161

3. G.H. MEAD -
   Philosophy of the Act, P.315

4. IBID., p.314

5. Alfred North WHITEHEAD -
   Science and the Modern World
   (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), p.97

6. IBID., p.97

7. IBID., p.99

8. G.H. MEAD -
   Philosophy of the Present, p.162

9. IBID., p.162

10. "Minkowski World" is explained in detail in Chapter IV, see especially footnote #11

11. G.H. MEAD -
    Philosophy of the Present, p.162

12. IBID., p.165

13. IBID., p.167

14. IBID., p.168

15. IBID., p.169

16. IBID., p.169

17. By contact experience we mean an experience that involves the actual manipulation of a resistant object.

18. G.H. MEAD -
Philosophy of the Present, p.169

19. G.H. MEAD -
Philosophy of the Present, p.169

20. G.H. MEAD -
Philosophy of the Act, p.218

21. See, Leopold Infeld and Albert Einstein -
The Evolution of Physics
(New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961)

22. G.H. MEAD -
Philosophy of the Act, p.3

23. IBID., p.3

24. IBID., p.3

25. G.H. MEAD -
Philosophy of the Present, p.88

26. Istvan MESZAROS -
Marx's Theory of Alienation
(London: Meslin Press, 1970), p.87

27. G.H. MEAD -
Philosophy of the Act, p.16

28. David L. MILLER -
Self, Language, and the World
(Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973), p.188

CHAPTER IV

1. G.H. MEAD - Philosophy of the Present, p.xxix

2. IBID., p.85

3. IBID., p.xvi

4. Lucien GOLDMANN argues "if one separates structure from function, he has already committed himself to the creation of either an historifal and formalistic structuralism or a functionalism with the same orientation". (The Human Sciences and Philosophy), p.14

5. David L. MILLER "G.H. Mead's Conception of 'Present'", Philosophy of Science, Vol. 10 (1943), p.41

6. IBID., p.45

7. G.H. MEAD - Philosophy of the Present, p.38

8. IBID., p.6

9. IBID., p.11

10. Olivier Costa de Beauregard,"Two Principles of the Science of Time", New York Academy of Sciences, Annals, New York 138(2) (1967), pp. 407-421.

11(a) Cornelius Lanczos, Albert Einstein and the Cosmic World Order. (Interscience Publishers; New York, 1965).

Lanczos points to the inadequacies of the Minkowskian form of geometry - and thus Einstein's STR. In Minkowski space-time, "time" is, in fact, an added geometrical

11(a) continued

dimension that people live in. People live in different worlds as far as space and time is concerned. "Minkowski's formulation of the theory of relativity has shown that this theory is completely equivalent to an extension of our ordinary geometry from three to four dimenions."(p.59). The implication inherent in this geometry as to selves, is that they exist in space as does matter -- in terms of the simple location of Newtonian mechanics, but over time. There is lacking in this geometry a principle which organizes these particles so as to give them a common frame of reference. The fact that we can communicate with each other about a common world is outside the field of explanation that the Minkowskian geometry entails. And it is on this basis that we accept Mead's rejection of the Minkowski formulation.

11(b) Herbert Dingle, "Scientific and Philosophical Implications of the Special Theory of Relativity", Albert Einstein: Philosopher Scientist. Edited by Paul Schilpp; (Open Court, LaSalle, Illinois, 1949). If we accept the measurement of motion in terms of space and time, we must also accept the notion that our measurements of "time" depend on the measurement of space. "Only on this account is it possible, as Minkowski did, to represent the time-co-ordinate as a fourth space-co-ordinate and describe motion geometrically as a track in a four-dimensional continuum." (p.544)

11(c) Kurt Godell, "A Remark About the Relationship between Relativity Theory and Idealist Pholosophy", IBID. "The assertion that the events A and B are simultaneous loses its objective meaning, insofar as another observer, with the same claim to corrections, can assert that A and B are not simultaneous (or that B happened before A)."(p.557) Godell argues that according to the Minkowski geometry, all events are simultaneous... there is no "objective" passage in nature.

11(d) Aloys Wenzl, "Relativity and Critical Realism", IBID. On the space-time geometry of Minkowski, Wenzl writes .... "....motion is merely appearance which arises by splitting the world-continuum into space and time; it is merely our consciousness which goes along with the world-line of our body; and the objectively real is precisely the four-dimensional continuum. In this way, we get to Minkowski's world - a world of absolute existence ....". (p.587).

12. G.H. MEAD - Philosophy of the Act, p.607

13. G.H. MEAD - Philosophy of the Present, p.16

14. IBID., p.16

15. IBID., p.21

16. IBID., p.27

17. IBID., p.25

18. IBID., p.28

19. IBID., p.28

CHAPTER V

1. D.L. MILLER -
Self, Language and the World, pp. 207-217

2. M. Caped, The Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics, (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1968), p.165
Adolf Grunbaum, Philosophical Problems of Space and Time, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), pp. 3-65

3. G.H. MEAD -
Philosophy of the Present, p.33

4. IBID., p.33

5. IBID., p.33

6. Michael POLANYI -
Personal Knowledge
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p.384

7. IBID., p.384

8. G.H. MEAD -
Philosophy of the Present, p.34

9. IBID., p.36

10. The "old" system and the "new" system are abstractions; they do not exist in an objective sense as separate and mutually exclusive categories. They represent poles of an ongoing process of adjustment.

11. G.H. MEAD -
Philosophy of the Present, p.46

12. IBID., p.68

13. IBID., p.69

14. IBID., p.85

15. For a more complete description refer to Fred Hoyle, Astronomy (New York: Crescent Books Inc.,)

16. G.H. MEAD -
Philosophy of the Present, p.89

CONCLUSION

1. L. KOLAKOWSKI -
Marxism and Beyond, p.35

2. I. MESZAROS -
Marx's Theory of Alienation, p.87

3. L. GOLDMANN -
The Human Sciences and Philosophy, p.14

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