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GEORGE HERBERT MEAD

FROM THE STANDPOINT OF MARXISM

by

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GEORGE HERBERT MEAD FROM THE STANDPOINT OF MARXISM

Introduction

(1) George Herbert Mead, author of four posthumously published books and numerous articles in contemporary philosophic journals, was a pragmatist and a social psychologist. Concluding my studies on Mind, Self and Society, a volume which contains the fundamental concepts and elaborates the premises of his whole system, I came to the conclusion that there was a great deal of valuable material in his researches, despite the obvious subjectivism of his conclusions. It seemed to me that Mead had done penetrating analytic work on the origin, nature and function of mind, and supplied the most illuminating hypothesis on the subject I had yet read.

The peculiar character of the subject matter of Mead's work, psychology, is that it is not yet disentangled from the realm of philosophic controversy. Most certainly it is not free from problems of epistemology. As a student of Marxism, it became a problem to me just how much of Mead's system was acceptable from the point of view of dialectical and historical materialism, and at what point or points it was to be rejected, as deviating into or implying that subjectivism which is so noticeable in Mead's writings, and which is anathema to Marxism. This became the problem of how much of the fundamentals of Mead's analysis were acceptable to Marxism, the problem, on the positive

(1) The Philosophy of the Present, 1932; Mind, Self and Society, 1934; Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century, 1936; The Philosophy of the Act, 1938 Mead died in 1931.

side, of the manner in which Mead contributed to the materialist epistemology in the way of positive scientific hypotheses.

It was at first my intention to examine the whole basis of Mead's social theory of mind, including the nature of the self, and of the social environment which he presupposes. However, it soon became evident to me that such an undertaking would be far beyond the scope of a thesis. Moreover, as Mead holds Darwinian views as to the nature and origin of society, and liberal views as to its organization, the difference between his sociological views and those of Marxism are immediately patent to anyone acquainted with the subject. On the other hand, his views on the nature of the self, and his analysis of its origin and development, are such as those interested in a materialist interpretation of mind and self-consciousness ignore to their disadvantage. Marxism can find little to criticize in the essential characteristics of Mead's conception of the self, marred although it is in its details by his sociological convictions.

I have therefore concentrated my attention upon the fundamental concepts utilized by Mead in his examination of mental behaviour, in an endeavour to discover if the roots of his subjectivism are here, for insofar as they are, his analysis is invalid for Marxism. My thesis is concerned with his conception of mind and its epistemological implications, and I ignore insofar as possible the sociological and self aspects of his work.

The reverse side of the problem is the problem of what is the actual position of Marxism on the subject of mind. The general tenets of Marxism on the subject are well known, that is, their position on the epistemological problem. Yet I experienced some confusion on the subject

with reference to the questions, how did they conceive of mind, and how was this conception possible. Such difficulties arose out of a certain amount of ambiguity which lingers in the terminology of the classical Marxists. It became necessary to answer these questions before it was possible to inquire to what extent Mead's contribution is significant, or in what manner he corrected classical Marxism.

My first chapter is, accordingly, an examination of the Marxist classics with specific reference to this problem, in which I arrive at my conclusions after an examination of the available writings of Marx, Engels, Plekhanov and Lenin on the subject.

Having reached these conclusions, I proceed to analyze the background and general character of Mead's work in the second chapter. In the third, which contains the corroboration of the criticisms of the second chapter, I proceed to a specific analysis of his basic concepts, and in the fourth, to his views on mind and rationality. The fifth chapter is a summing up and generalization of the conclusions reached. It includes broader suggestions concerning the origin of the mistakes and omissions discovered.

The whole thesis has been written from the point of view of dialectical and historical materialism, and from this point of view I have presumed to criticize not only Mead but certain statements of the Marxists themselves. The difficulty of assuming such a point of view is that the general background of my thinking, those assumptions and their theorems in terms of which the specific problem will be approached, will in all likelihood give rise to statements which from such a point of view seem evident, yet which from any other point of view may seem arbitrary and questionable. A further, although related, complication arises

from the fact that I shall be using terms which are not within the scope of this thesis to explain or defend, terms that derive their meaning within the framework of dialectical and historical materialism. I wish therefore to emphasize to the reader that for the purposes of this thesis, it is not my premises which are under discussion, except insofar as they are subject to criticism from the point of view of dialectical and historical materialism itself.

CHAPTER ONE

MARXISM AND THE PROBLEM OF MIND

The epistemological problem, the root and starting point of all modern philosophy, is widely dealt with in Marxist writings. If Marxist epistemology is defeated, it is possible for the whole edifice of Marxism to fall to the ground. The fact that Marxist economics, sociology and the implicit psychological premises cannot be taken apart from Marxist philosophy, the method of dialectical materialism, is what is meant by the unity of Marxism.

Notwithstanding, the philosophy of Marx and Engels was never stated by them in a unified fashion, but is to be found scattered throughout such volumes as the Dialectics of Nature, The German Ideology, Feuerbach, Anti-Duhring, La Misere du Philosophe, Die Heilige Familie, (not yet available in English) numerous polemics in contemporary journals not generally available to the English-speaking public, as well as in Capital itself. It is necessary, therefore, to search these works for such scattered statements as they contain on the subject in hand, and to draw definite conclusions concerning the views of Marxism, before it is possible to turn to a consideration of George Herbert Mead. The philosophic writing of Lenin, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, and the Fundamental Problems of Marxism of George Plekhanov, will also be examined, in view of the fact that both are accredited writers in the school of dialectical materialism, and approach epistemology from the point of view of this philosophy.

The position accredited to epistemological problems by the classical Marxists is indicated in the statement of Engels, that:

"The great foundation question of all, especially new, philosophies is connected with the relation between thinking and being." (2)

Engels divides the question of the relation of thinking and being, consciousness and existence, into two parts. The first part of the problem has to do with the origin and status of mind. This is the question of materialism versus idealism. "As this question was answered this way or that," Engels continues, "The philosophers were divided into two great camps. The one party which placed the origin of the spirit before that of nature, and therefore in the last instance accepted (sic) creation ... made the camp of idealism. The others, who recognized nature as the source, belong to the various schools of materialism." (3)

Materialism in this sense is the assertion of the prior existence of nature to mind and the dependency of mind on nature for its existence, whereas idealism is the doctrine of the prior existence of mind, and the dependency of nature upon the mental or some form of spirit. "Idealism and materialism, not originally used in any other sense, are not here employed in any other sense." (4)

Marxism, of course, takes a materialist position. Within this general materialist framework, that mind is secondary to and conditioned by natural processes, specific hypotheses concerning the manner of this

(2) Fauerbach: The Roots of the Socialist Philosophy, Chicago, Kerr, 1903, p. 56.

(3) Feuerbach: p. 58

(4) Loc. cit.

development, historically considered, are given, although not in a detailed manner. Among the most striking is the following excerpt from The German Ideology:

"Only now, after having considered four moments (5), four aspects of the fundamental historical relationships, do we find that man also possesses 'consciousness:' but even so, not inherent, not 'pure' consciousness. From the start the 'spirit' is afflicted with the curse of being {burdened' with matter, which here makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, of language. Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness as it exists for other men, and for that reason is really beginning to exist for me personally as well; for language, like consciousness, arises only from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men... Consciousness is therefore from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all." (6)

It is evident that in The German Ideology Marx and Engels reject any dualism of the old sort and base consciousness entirely on the social process and specifically upon language, itself a product of "the necessity for intercourse with other men." This necessity arises at a point "where they had something to say to one another," (7) and this something to say involved co-operation in labor, which is the characterizing form of relationship between man and nature. Mind then, as social, involves both natural and social processes and appears as a moment in the production of life. The content of mind at any time would be simultaneously natural and social, and would be dependent upon the stage of development of material production.

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- (5) These 'four moments' are material production, production of new needs, reproduction of life, and social relationships.
- (6) Marx, K. and Engels, F. The German Ideology, New York, International Publishers, 1939, p. 19
- (7) Engels, F. Dialectics of Nature, London, Lawrence & Wishert, 1940, p. 283

The question of the content of knowledge is connected with the second part of the problem under discussion. According to Engels, (8) "The Question of the relation of thinking and being has another side; in what relation do our thoughts with regard to the world surrounding us stand to this world itself? ... Can we, in our ideas and notion of the real world, produce a correct reflection of the reality?" Examination of this question brings out some corrolaries of the materialist position.

Engels points out that a positive answer to his question may be given by objective idealism - Hegel himself is an example of such a position - and that subjectivism by definition doubts the possibility of the correspondence of ideas and the real world. As a materialist, Engels asserts such correspondence.

An examination of the problem shows that materialism must so assert the possibility and actuality of the identity of thinking and being, for the reason that, if a negative answer is given the questions immediately arise, first as to the nature of the material world - "outside experience" - thence, as to its existence, outside of being perceived; thence, immediately, to the denial of its primacy, and the undermining of the premises of materialism. This process is clearly shown in the British empiricists from Locke to Hume. Locke, a materialist in the sense defined above, carried his own refutation with him, which was drawn out and made explicit by Berkeley and Hume.

The point of departure for such a transition from materialism to idealism is obviously and inevitably the bifurcation of the world into

(8) Feuerbach, p. 59

two different forms of being metaphysically distinguished, the material and the mental. Any form of dualism admits of this difficulty, and the emergent theory of mind, held by the Marxists and George Herbert Mead, admits it as unequivocally as the dualism of Descartes, if the mental is defined as something diametrically opposed to the material forms of existence, that is, if any trace of a substantial consciousness, mind or soul remains. It is further evident that the size or the degree of the consciousness does not alter the difficulty; whether it is the simple sensation of the organism or the developed mentality of the scientist that is under consideration, the problem remains.

It is necessary, therefore, to search for a definition of consciousness satisfactory to the dialectical materialist's point of view. Although the answer is certainly implicit in the above quotation from The German Ideology, (see page 7) a certain ambiguity remains in the body of Marxist works.

One form of statement common in classical Marxism concerning the nature of mental phenomena is the designation of these as "products" of material processes. In Anti-Duhring, Engels says: "But if the further question is raised: what are thought and consciousness, and whence they come, it becomes apparent that they are products of the human brain, and that man himself is a product of nature, which has been developed in and along with its environment" (9); and in Feuerbach, "Matter is not a product of mind, but mind itself is only the highest product of matter"(10) Similarly Lenin: "Sensation, thought, consciousness, are the supreme

(9) Anti-Duhring, New York International Publishers, 1939, p. 42

(10) Page 64

product of matter organized in a particular way," (11) and again, "Matter is primary, and thought, consciousness, sensation are products of a very high development." (12)

Such definitions are of high incidence in Marxist writings. It is clear that the designation of consciousness as a product is not an accurate definition, nor one that can solve the problem under discussion. The nature of the "product" is still left in doubt; whether it be pure, immaterial being of its own sort, an epiphenomenon, a parallel dependent thing, is not indicated. What sort of a product consciousness is, and what, specifically is its relationship to that of which it is the product is the difficulty that is not settled. The quotations are, in essence, a re-statement of materialist premises, that matter is primary and mind secondary, derivative, dependent.

Another characteristic type of statement concerning mental phenomena to be found in these works is concerned with the designation of these as "images" or "reflections" of the material world. According to Engels, "We conceived of ideas as materialistic, as pictures of real things, instead of real things as pictures of this or that stage of the absolute idea." (13) Although the phraseology here is conditioned by the context, which is anti-Hegelian, this conception of consciousness as a mirror is used throughout Marxist epistemological writings. "... sense perception" says Lenin, "is not the reality existing outside us, it is only the image of that reality," (14) and further, "sensation is a

(11) Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, New York, International Publishers Selected Works, Vol. XI, p. 141

(12) Ibid. p 122

(13) Feuerbach: p. 95

(14) Op. cit. p. 177

subjective image of the objective world..." (15) Of the relation of this image to reality, Lenin states that "The objects of our ideas are distinct from our ideas, the thing-in-itself is distinct from the thing-for-us, for the latter is only a part, or only an aspect, of the former, just as man himself is only a fragment of the nature reflected in his ideas." (16)

It is clear that such figurative modes of expression do not solve the problem in hand, that is, whether or not a dualism is to be established; that they are in essence a re-statement of the materialist assertion of the identity of thinking and being; and that, moreover, they suffer from a grave defect from the point of view of dialectics, in that they regard subjectivity or consciousness as passive. Whether the subjective refers to organic activity in this world and nothing else, or whether it refers to something entirely different, known only to its possessor and inaccessible to the methods of science is not settled by allusions to its mirror-like qualities.

Utilizing the same terminology, however, Engels throws some light on the subject when he states that "To the metaphysician, things and their mental images, ideas are isolated, to be considered one after the other apart from each other ... for him a thing either exists or it does not exist; it is equally impossible for a thing to be itself and at the same time something else." (17) The suggestion here is that ideas and their objects are not metaphysically separable entities, but that there is actual participation of the object in the idea. In conjunction with the basic concepts of dialectical materialism, that nature, including man and his idea, is an interdependence of material processes, it becomes

(15) Op. cit. p.182

(16) Op. cit. p. 182

(17) Anti-Duhring: p. 27

clear that the idea process is not in existence by and for itself, completely outside of and external to the object process, but that it participates in the object process. Engel's statement implies that the idea is a material process, for only under this condition could such participation exist. In precisely what manner it exists only the physical, biological and psychological sciences could determine.

On the same subject, Engels says, "The realities of the outer world impress themselves upon the brain of man, reflect themselves there, as feelings, thoughts, impulses, volitions, in short, as ideal tendencies, and in the form become ideal forces." (18) Omitting references to the error that thought has to do with the brain only, an error deriving from the relatively low development of the physiology and psychology of the time, one may infer that the response of the individual, is included in the subject-object relationship, and that "feelings, thoughts, impulses, volitions" are partly the activity of the materially existing subject in its relationship to the object. Here "reflections" include subjective activity, and the general tone of the passage implies that such activity is in the realm of material organic processes. Reflection in this sense includes the qualities of the subject as well as those of the object.

Reaching Spinoza through Feuerbach, Plekhanov, although he has much to say that is illuminating, takes a position which somewhat confuses the conclusions so far tentatively reached. Plekhanov takes the unity of thinking and being to mean that they are different aspects of the same thing. (19) He quotes with approval Feuerbach's statement,

(18) Feuerbach: p. 73

(19) Fundamental Problems of Marxism, New York, International Publishers (undated) p. 9

"That which for me, subjectively, is a purely spiritual, immaterial, non-sensible action, is, in itself, objectively, a material, sensible action!" It is not surprising that, accepting such a position, Plekhanov can reach the conclusion that the theory of "animated matter" (20) which he finds to be spreading among Neo-Lamarckians, would be of keen interest to Marx and Engels. This "new" theory is as ancient as Greek hylozoism, and is entirely unacceptable to dialectical materialism, or consistent materialism of any sort.

A third manner of referring to thought, subjectivity, mental phenomena, is found in both Plekhanov and Lenin. "Thought" says Plekhanov "is not the cause of being, but its consequence, or to put the matter more precisely, its property or quality." (21) (italics not in original) Discussing Diderot, Lenin quotes, "or we must make a simple supposition which explains everything, namely, that the faculty of sensation is a general property of matter, or a product of its organization" (22). (italics not in original), and further, "let us bear in mind this truly valuable admission of Mach's that the current widespread physical notions regard matter as the immediate reality, and that only one variety of this (23) " reality (organic matter) possesses the well-defined property of sensation.

What is a property or a quality to a dialectical materialist? Rejecting the form of analysis which divides qualities into primary and secondary, dialectical materialism regards the qualities of a thing from the point of view of its movements. According to the Textbook of Marxist

(20) Fundamental Problems of Marxism, New York, International Publishers, (undated) p. 30

(21) Op. cit. p. 11

(22) Op. cit. p. 105

(23) Ibid. p. 112

Philosophy, the accepted volume on the subject in the U.S.S.R., "... the movement of a thing -- its self-movement --- defines its internal nature, is its uniqueness, its quality.(italics in original) Engels was right. The world consists of processes, of qualitatively unique movements of matter. The quality of a thing is given by the particular kind of movement that is fundamental to it."(24) By that movement which is fundamental to it is meant such movement as belongs to the mode of existence of the thing, and failing in which, the thing itself ceases to exist. Further, "in actuality, there are no independent or isolated qualities. Quality exists in relation, and these relations flow out of the unique nature of each thing by internal necessity... its properties are nothing else than the manifestations of its quality in relation to other things." (25) Out of the unique movement of a thing are relationships formed which exhibit reflexively the properties of the referent, and the relatum.

In this sense of the words, quality and property, Lenin's sensation of salt, as pure sensation without apperception, is not a sensation "of salt" but purely a relationship of material processes and their interaction. Apperception and human thought in general must be regarded as qualitatively unique forms of organic movement of which the internal and the external phases are indissolubly united, but not identical. (26)

The quality of thought exists as a characterizing form of movement, not as "purely spiritual, immaterial, non-sensible action." In this sense of quality, the mind-body problem does not appear as a metaphysical problem, for all takes place within the unique relationships of material processes, and no substantial, non-material consciousness

(24) Leningrad Institute, A Textbook of Marxist Philosophy, London Gollanz, (undated) p. 246

(25) Ibid. p. 264

(26) Op.cit. p. 182

can find admittance. To fix thought, sensation, as something sui generis, absolutely separate from and over against being, to create an unbridgeable gulf between sensation and the sensed, is by definition impossible.

This point of view is closely associated with the Marxist criterion of practice, and is the feature distinguishing the Marxist criterion of practice from the pragmatic, which is accepted by George Herbert Mead. In the pragmatic theory of practice, the activity of the subject is advanced to the exclusion of the activity of the environment, and the "practice" and consequent "characteristics" of the environment are determined solely by the subject; all forms of contact with the external world are viewed subjectively, as forms of its activity, and sensation, thought, experience, as determined by itself alone. External reality becomes contingent and relative.

From the Marxist point of view of the relation as flowing from an internal necessity, the pragmatic conception is in a certain sense correct, but one sided. To Marxism the external world as known in experience is incomplete, one-sided, but as far as it goes essentially accurate representation of the external world, the qualities of which manifest themselves in relationship to living beings, as well as other things, just as the properties of sentient beings are manifested only through its other, its own environment, the external world with which it can come into its own kinds of relationships. Here the premise is not a subjective world, ~~rather~~ experience, over against which is put as something totally other an objective world which is in essence problematic.

The relationship between the object and the subject reflects the properties of both, is only possible at all insofar as it does so. Knowledge of mind or the mental is no longer the knowledge of things

ready made and stable, but knowledge of interdependent processes whose specific determination is a matter for natural science, not for philosophic speculation.

It is this conception of relationships which is embodied in the Marxist criterion of practice. Engels acknowledges the difficulty of refuting subjectivist arguments, but points out that "Nature solved the problem before man proposed it." (27) In other words, man was engaged in objective material activity, forming more and more complex relationships with natural processes, long before he brought up the question as to whether this was possible. It is just this connection with natural processes as part of them, ~~as part of them~~, as a different form of material activity, that makes man capable of possessing knowledge.

The ideational element of subjectivity proper to human thought, the logical and rational, also come within the materialist framework dialectically understood. According to the Marxists, reason and logic, the conceptual world, arises out of objective material practice as a qualitatively unique form of activity of the subject, and the problem of the relationship between the sensed and logical moments of knowledge, traditionally ruptured by the rationalists, receives its solution in rational practice. Human theoretical thinking is a new stage of practical social being, a peculiar form of subjective activity representing a working over of the sensed. In this context, practice is opposed to theory as objective and subjective forms of developing social intercourse with nature.

It is obviously impossible, from this position, to arrive at a

(27) Introduction to Socialism Utopian and Scientific, New York, International Publishers, 1935, p. 11

sceptical position concerning the identity of thinking and being or to arrive at a conception of rationality as the function of a rational ego or self, counterposed in some way to organic and social life and separable from it as pure concept.

Such are the outlines given by dialectical materialism to the question of consciousness, thought and mind. They are for the most part theoretical outlines, the "algebra", as Plekhanov notes, which must await the "mathematics" of positive science for a detailed analysis. (28)

The philosophic and the speculative approach was the only possible approach to the problem one hundred years ago. Since then, striking advances have been made in the scientific investigation of these questions. It is possible now to turn to George Herbert Mead, who has had the advantage of such developments, to see what contribution he is able to make, to find some sort of specific answer to problems with which the Marxists had dealt generally, to examine in what respect he diverges from Marxism, and to what extent philosophic controversies are still necessary in the as yet ill-defined field of the psychologies.

(28) Op. cit. p. 24

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND AND CHARACTERIZATION

OF MEAD

In modern philosophy, the problem of the relation between thinking and being was posed by René Descartes in a unique and distracting manner. Mind and body, thinking and being, were postulated as two realms absolutely differentiated from each other. The problem in the form it has dominated modern philosophy is a by-product of the Cartesian attempt to liberate the sciences from medieval theology.

The mechanistic and unhistorical bifurcation of the world into mind and body, res extensa and res cogitans, uncertainly related, opened the door to subjectivism, empiricism, phenomenism, and all forms of idealism. Today these philosophies predominate in the capitalist world. The Cartesian dualism, and the problems and philosophies that stem from it, no longer playing a liberating role and giving direction to the process of scientific investigation, actually hinder this development, especially in the field of social and psychological science.

Changes of the nineteenth century, Hegelianism, Marxism, and Darwinism, brought about the possibility of a new approach to the problem of consciousness, mind and knowledge, gave new premises to questions of epistemology. These premises, involving a way of thinking which is the logical alternative of the static and mechanistic interpretation, were emanated as early as the fifth and sixth centuries, B.C. by such men as Anaximander, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, and were negatively elaborated by Zeno, the Eleatic. The dialectical and evolutionary mode of thought was rejected, however, because society at that stage of development was

incapable of dealing with it, utilizing it, exploring its implications in the investigation of natural phenomena. Centuries of development were necessary before men could turn to the alternative of the logic of fixed forms. Hegel elaborated the alternative logic. Marx and Engels utilized it, on materialist premises, in the field of social phenomena, and Darwin, as all scientists who are studying things in their origin and growth, utilized it, albeit unconsciously, to handle his biological data. The impact of Darwinism on philosophy, sociology and psychology has been great.

George Herbert Mead, social psychologist and philosopher, received his philosophic and scientific training in the American intellectual circles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The intellectual atmosphere at that time was permeated with German idealism, chiefly Hegelian, and British empiricism. Equal and opposite arose the advancing front of materialist science, including scientific psychology, still largely mechanistic in its approach.

The specific influences upon Mead in his formulation of the theory of mind were five: the evolutionary theories of Darwin, the sociology of Charles Horton Cooley, the psychologies of John Broadus Watson and Wilhelm Wundt, and the philosophy of pragmatism.

Basing his speculations on Darwin, Mead conceives of mind and intelligence from the biological and evolutionary point of view. Thinking, from this standpoint, is inseparable from being, and dependent for its existence upon material being. Mind is an emergent in the development of the material universe, and as part of the natural processes, has "survival value"; that is, it is functional in the life of the thinking organism. Mead recognizes, in practice, emergents as new types of processes having

their own characteristics and laws, their own forms of movement and particular relationships.

For Mead, mind is dependent upon a certain complexity of organic and neurological development, Mead's problem in these terms is the precise manner in which mind arose in the process of material evolution, and the precise character of the mental process. So far Mead's premises are, although incoherently, dialectical and materialistic.

The social aspect of mind and self, stressed by Hegel who left his impression on such psychologists as Giddings and Cooley, is taken by Mead as a major premise of his investigations. Cooley says:

" And just as there is no society or group which is not a collective view of persons, so there is no individual who may not be regarded as a particular view of social groups. He has no separate existence; through both the hereditary and social factors in his life, a man is bound into the whole of which he is a member, and to consider him apart from it is quite as artificial as to consider society apart from individuals." (28)

Mead Accepts the view that individuals, minds, selves, can exist only in and through society, and that the individual reflects society from a particular point of view. He intends, however, to go beyond Cooley, to investigate the actual origin and development of consciousness in the social context. Self and society are not, for Mead, merely collective and distributive aspects of the same thing. Such a statement leaves his problem untouched. For Mead, society is logically and temporally prior to mind, and mind and its origin can only be explained in terms of a presupposed ongoing social process. Mead's objective is not only to make a bare statement of the unity and polarity of self and

and society, but to investigate the actual process of becoming, the origin and growth of mind. Compared to Mead's analysis of the self and its origin, Cooley's investigation of the development of self through social intercourse and the use of possessives, based as it is on a social and self-feeling which are somehow simply assumed, is poor and thin, although it doubtless gave direction to Mead's inquiries.

A third important influence on Mead was the behaviouristic psychology of Watson. Behaviourism, arising in opposition to introspective psychology and the inherent dualism or subjectivism of such a psychology, rejects altogether, in its pure form, the concept of consciousness. States of consciousness, fundamental concepts in the introspective and associative psychologies, are of no interest to the behaviourist. His interest lies in the observable behaviour of the subject, and the conditions under which such behaviour arises and is modified or changed. (22)

The basic concepts of behaviourism (29) are the reflex arc and the conditioned response. Mind and thinking are identified with behavior, the actual physiological response. The attempt is made to eliminate the mind-body problem by omitting one of the terms and explaining its content through the remaining term. In importing into the realm of physiology what had hitherto been put into consciousness, Watsonism utilizes the idea of the substitute vocal stimulus. Mental activity is explained as an implicit language habit, in which the individual stimulates himself to respond by means of the substitute stimuli, or subvocal activity. The subjective is now defined as the private responses of the individual, those which do not meet the eye, although they are in the same realm, that of material behaviour. The agency involved is language, regarded

(29) Watson, J.B. People's Institute Publishing Co. New York, 1925

as purely substitute stimuli. Behaviorism asserts that there is no residue from such an explanation to require a "consciousness" in the introspective sense, in which to reside.

Watsonism was a significant step forward in the materialist explanation of the mind-body problem. It had nevertheless serious limitations arising from its mechanistic presuppositions. Behaviourism breaks up behaviour into an atomism as complete as that to which introspection had reduced consciousness; it regards human behaviour as ultimately reducible to physiochemical processes; regards the individual as an isolated event in a physio-chemical or incidentally social world, and, not regarding the subject as a qualitatively unique process, neglects the activity of the subject in the process of knowledge. Watson's materialism is still in the sphere of the external relationship of isolated things - in this case, the reflex arc - a characteristic of earlier materialism severely criticized by Marx and Engels.

The result of his limitations is that there is as definite residue left over from the explanation of the mental that, lacking an explanation, must go over into a consciousness of which the residue is in some way the content. Ideas, concepts or universals, analysis, purpose, planning, foresight, almost all, in short, that constitutes the qualitative uniqueness of rational beings, is left unexplained by Watsonian mechanism.

Thoroughly familiar with Watsonism, Mead was acutely aware of the shortcomings of Watson's explanation.(30) His problem was to continue and perfect the physiological explanation of the mental from the social

(30) Mind, Self and Society, Part 1, passim, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1934

and evolutionary standpoint.

The failure of Watsonism, common to non-dialectical materialism, to conceive of the subject as qualitatively unique and active is remedied by Mead through his associations with pragmatism.

Watsonism implied a conception of the organism as a passive respondent to any and every stimulus reaching it from the environment. Mead emphasizes the attentive, selective and integrative characters of the subject, the active unity of the subject as found in its life-processes. The subject as subject is not only the receiver and respondent to any and every action, it is also the initiator and precipitator of action. The subject is conceived of as a more or less unified activity, and knowledge, insofar as Mead remains on materialist premises, as the increasing relationships entered into by the type of activity peculiar to the specific organism.

Marx says, "The chief defect of all materialism up to now, including Feuerbach's, is that the object reality, what we apprehend through our senses, is understood only in the form of the object or contemplation; but not as sensuous human activity, as practice; not subjectively." (31)

It is Mead's task, as a psychologist, to examine the characteristics of this human sensuous activity. As psychologist he is oriented to this, and to this end he uses as a basic concept the act, a process which involves the unique activity of the organism, as the essential unit or limiting area of the knowledge process. A further correction of Watsonism in Mead is that for human beings the act is essentially a social act, which implicated the whole past history and present relationships (31) First thesis on Feuerbach, quoted in The German Ideology, p.197

of the social group, from a specific point of view.

It is at this point, however, in the recognition of the active and social phases of the knowledge process, that Mead deviates into the subjectivism and relativism common to pragmatism. Attending to an analysis of the subjective characters of the knowledge process, he fails to take cognizance of the independent and objective reality of that through which subjective activity proceeds, the actual objective existence of natural processes, only in relation to which can human activity result in knowledge, or indeed, human or organic activity exist at all.

This approach brings into question Mead's whole conception of practice, which has been briefly criticized above. (See page 15). Starting from the qualitatively unique process which is organic being, with its characteristic needs, upon which are based its characters of attention and selection, Mead cuts these adrift more and more from the only thing that can give them any actuality or meaning, the actual materially existing environment. Environment comes to be stated wholly in terms of the organism, as a function of the characters of the organism. Environment becomes subjectively constituted, no longer in the old terms of subjective states of consciousness or contents of a substantial mind, but in biological terms as a dependent of the on-going organism.

Here the whole relationship of being and thinking is reversed. Here knowing has assumed primacy, and objective being is relative, contingent, dependent upon being known. The character of the object is determined by the response, or the biological and teleological nature of the knower. The physical world is called into question, becomes relative to the responses - activity - of the organism, and ultimately to its needs.

As a result of this dependence of environment on the organism, the validity of the pragmatic emphasis on practice and the experimental method is called into question. The complement of the organism, that through which it expresses its own qualities - its actually existant environment - is put within the experience and character of the organism, receiving validity there only. Pragmatic practice becomes practice subjectively constituted, the field of practice is subjectively limited, its matrix tends to fall within the experience of the organism. The actual objective characters of the environment are put to doubt. They are adjuncts to or accidents in the experience of the organism. This experience is in an environment which is itself experience, constituted in its characters by the interests of the organism viewed subjectively, as experiencing subject.

From this point of view, objects at a distance are "promises of contact experience", (32), history is the present interpretation of a past centered in the needs or problem of the moment. (33) Actual objective history, of which Mead himself is a moment, is pure hypothesis. The past is what we make it. The scientific world and scientific objects are given validity only through being in common or social experience. Those characters which are there for everyone constitute the objective world.

It is this phase of Mead's thinking which indicates his intimate relationship with Wundt. Not only in isolating the concept of the gesture as a significant element within the social act did Wundt influence Mead.

(32) The Philosophy of the Act, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1938, p. 181

(33) Philosophy of the Present, Open Court Publishing Co., Chicago, 1932, Chapter 1, passim

The much more pervasive influence of his metaphysical concepts, which Mead is anxious to eschew, but never successfully escapes, is evident from amongst the earliest of his writings and is prominent throughout his work.

The fundamental concept of Wundt's psychology is experience. The world is essentially subjective, the known is dependent for its existence upon the knower. No objective and independently existing reality is acknowledged.

Experience requires an experiencing subject, and it is here that Wundt's parallelism enters. Within experience there are two different points of view, which correspond to the objective and the subjective, the scientific and the psychical worlds. In Wundt's own words:

"... every concrete experience immediately divides into two factors; into a content presented to us and our apprehension of this content. We call the first of these factors objects of experience, the second, experiencing subject. This division indicates two directions for the treatment of experience. One is that of the natural sciences... the other is that of psychology." (34)

Science and scientific objects constitute mediate experience, which is an abstraction and construction from immediate experience.

The importance of Wundt's influence can hardly be overestimated in an analysis of the basis of Mead's approach. It is safe to say that although he made the attempt, he is never able in a decisive manner to pass over from the conception of the world as experience to the world as objectively existent, although this objective existence is implied by his fundamental evolutionary thesis that mind and perception appear within a world logically and temporally prior.

(34) Outlines of Psychology, Engelmann, Leipzig, 1902, p. 3

Nevertheless, through his association with sociology, Mead is never in a position to accept a biological solipsism. The experience of that rational being implicate the whole social group. It is the relationship between society and nature that is contingent, subjective; nature becomes a function of social responses, unable to claim independent existence because it is recognized only as a phase of an act of a social individual. The position towards which Mead's thinking gravitates is that of a social subjectivism. He reaches this viewpoint because he is unable to recognize the particular character of the social process, as objective productive activity, by virtue of which deeper and more penetrating relationships with natural processes are formed, and in virtue of which only can the content of social knowledge ultimately be explained.

Is Mead then an idealist? The question cannot readily be answered either positively or negatively. From premises which are objective and materialistic - the evolutionary and social point of view, he reached a position which puts the organism - individual and social - into a position of primacy, and reduces his original premises to a position of dependency. Yet, by force of his original premises, he can never quite complete the process, and from this difficulty arises most that is elusive, inconsistent and contradictory in his handling of the subject matter.

Such ^{are} ~~is~~ the background and premises from which Mead starts his investigation of the mind, its origin, its structure, and the process of cognition. It is the task of this investigation to find just how much of his findings are acceptable from the dialectical and materialistic point of view, in what way his theory of mind is consistent with that of the classical Marxists, and in what way he can contribute to the often merely

formal propositions of Marxism to the mind - body problem, specifically, the nature and origin of consciousness.

CHAPTER THREE

BASIC CONCEPTS

TO MEAD'S THEORY OF MIND

Extensive although the suggestions of the Marxists are concerning consciousness and knowledge, much is left to be desired by them. Bare premises are given as to the nature, origin and content of consciousness, such premises as are involved in the theory of dialectical and historical materialism. From this point of view, consciousness belongs to the world of scientific investigation, it is in this world as part of the material organic and social processes of human beings. As to how this is possible, to place contents, sensory, logical and ideational, in the material world, only the slightest of outlines is given. How it is theoretically, philosophically possible, is very carefully worked out. How it is actually and practically the case was a question that awaited further scientific development.

At the same time, a certain ambiguity remains in certain of the Marxist classics, especially Lenin and Plekhanov, as to the definition and content of consciousness, a certain characteristic terminology that is reminiscent of the old views of a substantial stuff, a mind or self which received impressions from the outside world. It is this question, how to place the contents of consciousness in the material world, how to explain consciousness and self without reference to any metaphysical dualism, that occupies the attention of Mead.

The question of the identity of thinking and being involves two distinct problems, the relationship of sensation to the sensed, or the problem of "simple" consciousness, which is the point at which subjectivism traditionally arose in the British empirical school, and the problem

of rational and organized knowledge, the problem of the relation of the sensed and logical moments of knowledge. Marxists on the whole focus their attention on human consciousness, which involves both these problems simultaneously. Mead, to a certain extent, discusses them separately, as they can, in a logical sense, be separated.

Mead's intention in the definition of consciousness is to give the word a reference other than that which it traditionally had in both psychology and philosophy. Consciousness, for Mead, includes both the organism and its environment, it cannot simply be put inside the body or the head, it is not a "something" that flashes forth when a stimulus reaches a certain point in the nervous system. Consciousness is a character the environment has in virtue of its relationship to the organism.

The field of consciousness is the organism - environment relationship, and its content is objectively there within this relationship. "Consciousness as such refers to both the organism and its environment and cannot be located simply in either", (35) and its content involves the characters of both the subject and the object.

"... the losing of consciousness does not mean the loss of a certain entity but merely the cutting off of one's relations with experiences. Consciousness in that sense means merely a normal relationship between the organism and the outside objects. And what we refer to as consciousness as such is really the character of the object ... You may think of consciousness in terms of impressions made upon this spiritual substance in some unexplained fashion in the organism. Or you may think of it merely as the relation between the organism and the object itself." (36)

Consciousness is further "... a certain environment that exists in its relationship to the organism, and in which new characters can

(35) Mind, Self and Society, p. 332

(36) Ibid, p. 393

arise in virtue of the organism." (37) - "... conscious states are recognized as characters of the world in its relation to the individual." (38) "Consciousness as stuff, as experience, from the standpoint of behaviouristic or dynamic psychology, is simply the environment of the human individual or social group insofar as constituted by, or existentially relative to that of individual or social group." (39)

It is Mead's stated intention in such definitions to extend the concept to include the extra-organic in the field of consciousness, to take back what had gone over into the subject in the history of philosophy and return the "stolen goods" to their proper location. The statements are aimed equally at displacing the substantival view of consciousness and replacing it with a functional view of consciousness, and avoiding a physiological form of solipsism, in which the world is placed inside the brain. It is a sincere endeavour to overcome subjectivist and solipsistic conclusions.

An examination of his position reveals, however, that Mead is cutting with a two-edged knife, and that he takes back with one hand what he gives with the other.

Taken at face value, certain aspects of the definitions appear quite compatible with the dialectical and materialistic approach. The field of consciousness and its content is given as a relationship of processes between an organism and an environment that are objectively there. It is ⁱⁿ this field which Mead seems to be examining with a view to determining the specific form of relationships which are "conscious", and

(37) Mind, Self and Society, p. 330

(38) Ibid. p. 331

(39) Ibid. p. 111-12

their manner of movement. Relationships that arise by virtue of the presences of organic processes are different from other relationships by definition, and these specific relationships of the physical to organic processes do belong to the field of "consciousness" which is a field of the material and reflexive revelation of properties. Properties of objects exhibited in this relationship only are properly within the ambit of consciousness.

But further selections will throw the assumed objectivity of Mead into doubt. In particular, Mead's conception of the environment, and the characters "emergent" as the content of consciousness, reveal the subjective edge of the knife, and in what manner one can move the whole inorganic world over into the organic experience as a phase of organic activity, in the process of returning the content of consciousness to its objective habitat.

In defining the environment in which organic activity and the cognitive process takes place, Mead's position is that the organism determines its environment. This position is reiterated frequently, taking such forms as:

There is a definite and necessary gestalt of sensitivity within the organism, which determines selectively and relatively the character of the external object it perceives. What we term consciousness needs to be brought inside just this relationship between organism and environment. Our constructive selection of the environment, color, emotional values, and the like - in terms of our physiological sensitivities, is essentially what we mean by consciousness. (40)

According to Mead, the environment is constituted by the organism in two senses. In the first sense, in the manner of the quotation above, the environment is by definition that only to which the organism can react

(carry on relationships) by virtue of its capabilities and characteristic modes of behaviour. All outside of such relationships or partial relationships is not "environment". Such a point of view involves the recognition of the qualitative uniqueness of the organism, and would be included in any scientific investigation of the life-processes of the organism. The definition is quite legitimate from the point of view of dialectical materialism.

In the second sense, the environment is "constituted" by the organism in the sense that its characters are not present in the physical world without the organism. These characters are "emergent" and exist only in relationship to the organism. From the point of view of dialectics, it is quite correct that upon entering into relationships with organic matter, "new" properties of inorganic processes are revealed; but these relationships are basically related to the specific quality of the thing in virtue of which it can carry on such relationships. Mead recognizes this emergence, but having obtained it, is at a loss to explain its relationship to the "thing-in-itself". He therefore places the emergent characters as dependent upon the organism, and defines them as often as not as constituted by the organism. The environment becomes a set of emergent characters having a very unsettled relationship to any objective world outside experience. By terminological sleight of hand, Mead reaches a position in which "environment" is equivalent to "experience." It is therefore not surprising that he discovers that he can put "consciousness" over into the "objective world" - in short, that the terms consciousness and experience are interchangeable. The end-product of this process is the acceptance of a complete subjectivism:

" It is my opinion that you have to recognize not only the organism but also the world as having its reality in relationship to the organism. The world is organized in relation to each organism. This is its perspective from that point of view. Reality is the totality of such perspectives. " (41) (*italics not in original*)

Such a statement exhibits Mead's affiliations with Wundt. Within this totality of perspectives there are certain common elements - "social objects" - according to Mead. This common element in the totality of perspectives constitutes for him the objective world. The individual parts of experience are the subjective. The analogy here between Mead's objective and subjective worlds and Wundt's mediate and immediate experience is clear.

Nevertheless, an examination of certain quotations above will reveal those inconsistencies mentioned in chapter two of this work. Consciousness as "a normal relationship between the organism and outside objects" is not a subjectivist statement. Nor is the statement that "Conscious states are ... characters of the world in its relationship to the individual." The root of the inconsistency, including the difficulty Mead finds with his emergent characters, seems to lie in the shift of point of view which accomplishes with great facility not alone throughout four volumes but within a single paragraph. In the above quotation, "... the losing of consciousness does not mean the loss of a certain entity but merely the cutting off of one's relations with experiences. Consciousness in that sense means merely a normal relationship between the organism and the outside objects," the shift is quite apparent. In the first sentence, "environment" means "experiences", and in the second, it is "outside objects". Far from being identical, the world as experience

and the world as outside objects have antithetical philosophic implications. Such inconsistencies are to be found everywhere in Mead's works. True to pragmatic doctrine, he uses whichever suits his purpose in a given point of discussion.

In general, Mead accomplishes the shift in this manner: in examining the organism, he adheres, on the whole to an objective and materialist point of view. The organism is regarded, as a material process going on, and is subjected to examination as such. The environment, however, is regarded wholly from the point of view of the organism. With the subject as first term, Mead finds it impossible to get beyond experience as the counter term. Materialism must start from the material world as first term and arrive at the subject and subjective as counter-term.

Such is the result of a materialist analysis of consciousness in its simplest sense as defined by Mead. It is found that Mead has not overcome the first difficulty of materialism, the relationship between perception and the world that is perceived, the content of consciousness, and the world which that content includes and presupposes.

The second meaning which the term "consciousness" has for Mead is in the sense of rational thinking or reflective intelligence. It is this type of specifically human consciousness which Mead subjects to a most penetrating analysis. In this analysis, it is Mead's intention to interpret mental phenomena, ideas, meaning, logic, all that it had been necessary to place in a mind somehow different from and other than the material world, in terms of organic processes of a particular sort - qualitatively unique types of process in the world of material relations.

The standpoint from which Mead conducts his investigations is

the standpoint of social behaviourism. The origin of mind according to Mead, presupposes an ongoing social process, and mind can be explained in terms of stimulus and response within this process. Response, for Mead, is a much broader term than the simple reflex arc utilized by Watson. For Mead, response includes the whole response to the environment or a particular phase of it involved in the act. As such, it includes many stimuli and responses in Watson's sense, and indefinite complications of these.

Mead follows up the behaviouristic analysis of Watson but from this new approach, that man's life, development, attitudes, thought, all aspects, are shaped and directed by the social process of which the individual is an interacting element. Within this framework the behaviouristic concepts of stimuli and response are utilized by Mead with this difference, that it is a social stimulus and a social response which is involved, and that accordingly, the sensory-motor arc and its complexities take on new ~~and~~ forms peculiar to the social and human situation. The origination of mind within this social process is dependent upon a degree of nervous and general physiological development common only to human beings, a condition which in its turn presupposes the whole of organic evolution.

The basic concepts utilized by Mead in his analysis, given such presupposition, are the social act, the gesture, attitudes and the delayed response.

The act, for Mead, includes the natural teleology of the organism, its tendency to maintain its life processes in virtue of which it selects the stimuli to which it will respond. The act, with the presupposition of such (natural) selection, would then include the reception of the stimulus and the response to it, carried on until the impulse from

from which the reception of the stimulus originated was satisfied. It is to be noticed here that the act as used by Mead differs from Watson's simple stimulus - response formula in that it originates in the life - process of the organism, its mode of existence, and consequently its needs and capacities. Such a conception is a fundamental correction of Watsonism of which dialectical materialism would approve. Here there is an integral relationship between the stimulus and the response which find common ground in the material mode of life of the organism.

The social act belongs to "... the class of acts which involve the co-operation of more than one individual, and whose object as defined by the act... is a social object. I mean by a social object one that answers to all parts of the complex act, though these parts be found in the conduct of different individuals. The objective of the acts is then found in the life-process of the group, not in those of the separate individual alone. " (42)

For Mead, individual experience cannot be taken by itself, nor can social acts be built up out of individual stimuli and responses. The psychical falls within the social act and presupposes it. It is a particular phase of the act, that phase which is internal to the individual, not in the sense of being in another world, metaphysically distinguished, but in the sense of being within his organism. In the definition of the social object, recognition is given to the social character of apperception. The individual or private character of apperception is not denied but brought into intimate relationship with the life-processes of the group.

The gesture, a concept borrowed with modifications from Wundt, is "that part of the social act which serves as a stimulus to other forms involved in the same social act." (43) The response of the form to which

(42) Mind, Self and Society, p. 7, footnote

(43) Ibid. p. 42

the gesture is a stimulus is in turn a stimulus to the first form, and the result is a conversation of gestures which terminates in the completion of the act. The gesture and the conversation of gestures as a whole fall within the concept of the social act. It is this situation, given the physiological and neural development common to human beings, out of which mind and reflective intelligence arise. In the conversation of gestures, however, no mind or intelligence, no "ideas" or rationality is implied. The conversation of gestures can be explained in terms of the conditioning of responses in a strictly Watsonian fashion, with these modifications noted above, namely, that it is social, and that the reception of the stimulus, in this case the gesture, bears an intimate relationship to the life-processes of the form.

Attitudes belong to the internal phases of the act. The attitude is an implicit readiness to respond in a certain manner to a specific stimulus or a specific situational feature. It is built up through the life history of the form through manifold interactions with natural and social processes, and its presence is explicable in terms of the conditioned response. The attitude determines what the response to the stimulus will be. It bears, in the human individual, a definite relationship to the attitudes of the group in terms of which the individual has his existence.

Mead places the attitude at the beginning of the act by analogy with the selection of stimuli by the form as explained above. This placement of the attitude as the beginning of the act is of doubtful validity. It implies that acts originate out of attitudes, instead of attitudes out of acts. Attitudes are responses to stimuli, and the stimulus is logically prior to the attitude both historically, in its origin, and, logically, in the act itself.

The analogy between the natural selectivity of organic life and the selection of stimuli by attitudes is false; in one case we are dealing with capability of response, and in the other we are dealing with the conditioned response itself, which presupposes a stimulus situation, either internal or external; in one case we are dealing with the overt life processes of a form, and in the other an internal part of these life processes. Mead defines attitudes as an internal part of the social process, and the behaviouristic theory implies that they are built up out of it and presuppose it. Such an analogy between the material life-processes of organisms and psychology, which is involved in but not identical to the life processes of the group is impossible.

{ It involves an identification of the subjective part of these processes, or experience, with these processes themselves. Materialism takes the position that the material life processes of the group are primary and attitudes are secondary and dependent. The complex functions of attention, which Mead is interested in analyzing, are not explained in terms of attention but in terms of something else. Here Mead's subjectivist philosophy influences the very seat of his scientific analysis.

The fourth concept utilized by Mead is the delayed response. This concept is not necessary to the conversation of gestures as such, but its possibility is a prerequisite to reflective intelligence. The delay of the response enables the breaking up of the individual phase of the social act, the separation of the initiation and consummation of the act. The delayed response enables that internal phase of the act to take place which is the basis of ideational and intelligent behaviour.

CHAPTER FOUR

MEAD'S THEORY OF MIND AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Within the context of these concepts, the social act, the gestures, attitudes and the delayed response, Mead elaborates his theory of mentality and reflection intelligence. The significant symbol is the key mechanism in Mead's explanation of mind.

A significant symbol is a gesture, usually verbal, which calls out the same response in the form whose gesture it is and in the other forms involved in the social act, with this difference, that the response in the first form is implicit, it does not achieve its overt completion. This implicit response is, further, simultaneously a stimulus to the individual making the gesture.

The significant symbol arises within the conversation of gestures, but it is differentiated from the gesture in that it calls out the same response in both forms involved in the social act. In the conversation of gestures, an act of one sort calls out an act of another sort in the form to which the gesture is a stimulus. For a gesture to be a significant symbol, for the individual to have in his own experience the meaning of his gestures, it must call forth the same attitude in all those involved in the act. It is because the vocal gesture is one that is capable of affecting its author in the same manner that it affects other forms, because he is giving himself the same stimulus he is giving others, that this type of gesture is the most common in communication.

Through this type of gesture, the individual is capable of self-stimulation in the same fashion as he is capable of stimulation from others. He is able to influence himself as others influence him.

Conversely, he can influence others as he influences himself. Through the medium of the significant symbol, he can call out in himself the same attitude of response which his gesture calls out in the other. He has the response of the other in his organism as a further stimulus to his own activity or conversation. The role of the significant symbol in the social act is that of a further complication of the internal phases of the act which enables control by the individual of his participation in the act, by virtue of his knowledge of the manner in which others will participate. The significant symbol mediates in the social process in such a manner as to bring control of the act into implicit individual behaviour. The whole social act is brought into the experience of the individual.

The problem of the origination of the significant symbol out of such a situation as the conversation of gestures is one which Mead solves in a very unsatisfactory manner. (44) The difficulty of getting over from a situation in which a gesture which may or may not be common to two forms and which calls out a different response, in each form to a situation in which forms use the same gesture and have to it the same response is one which occupies an important part of his investigations.⁴⁴ He correctly realizes that both the stimulus and the response must lie within the life processes of both forms, and on this basis conducts a painful investigation into imitation in birds. This he explains as the picking out and strengthening of those responses which are common in the songs of both birds, a process which results in a marked similarity of their song. Yet he recognizes that the bird notes are not significant symbols. Indeed, the analogy of the birds has no rightful place within his investigations, for

(44) See: Mind, Self & Society, Part. II, Chapters 8 & 9

the birds are not involved in a social act, according to his own definition.

Granting that something of the origination of the significant symbol is discovered in his examination of the birds, (which is not granted) such an examination displays a fundamental weakness in Mead's whole conception of the origination of the symbol. For, granted that the bird situation is a social act by Mead's definition, which it is not, the sole stimuli in the situation are those provided by the social process itself, the actual activities of other forms or the internal stimuli of the form itself. The problem of the common stimulus which calls forth a common response, the problem of the symbol which has identical meaning for both forms is solved by Mead wholly in subjective or social terms - the objective world and the problem of the substitution of stimuli is left out. The problem of a verbal stimulus which is a significant symbol and at the same time a substitute stimulus for a physical object cannot be explained in terms of the picking out and strengthening vocal responses in a vocal situation alone.

Insofar as Mead does consider the problem of the substitution of stimuli, he finds no proper solution for it. Mead correctly realizes, in his criticism of Watson's explanation of language as the conditioning of reflexes and the substitution of stimuli, that such an explanation begs the question. The problem is exactly analogous to that outlined by Marx in the third thesis on Feuerbach: "The materialist

"The Materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and education forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that the educator himself must be educated. This doctrine has therefore to divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society." (45)

Mead says:

" You can explain the child's fear of the white rat by conditioning its reflexes, but you cannot explain the conduct of Mr. Watson in conditioning that stated reflex by means of a set of conditioned reflexes, unless you set up a super-Watson to condition his reflexes." (46)

Mead's answer to the problem is to take conditioning into the self-activity of the individual, in such a manner that through the significant symbol he conditions his own reflexes. The criticism here is obvious. The significant symbol, in terms of which this self-conditioning goes on, insofar, as it implies reference as well as commonality presupposes just those difficulties which it is now used to explain.

Mead's real problem is to find a situation in which organisms are involved in the same activity with the same objects and hence already have a common element of response to an identical physical stimulus. The activity carried on must be one that involves the life-processes of both forms and which can be participated in co-operatively by each in virtue of their common objective and common attitudes. This much is recognized by Mead in his definition of the social act.

But Mead fails to realize that a situation of this sort exists in cooperative activity in labor, in the production of the means of life, so that he describes the psychic side of this process but does not understand its basis and is hence led into absurd contradictions. The labor process is the only explanation of the common response to an identical object in virtue of which the substitution of stimuli, and the significant symbol, which presupposes the common response, can be explained. Mead approaches the problem from the point of view of getting from the same gesture

to the same response. Insofar as he looks for this situation in the sub-human conversation of gestures, insofar as he is ignorant of the specific determining character of human society and fails to realize that society cannot be compared to subhuman life in any manner, he cannot find that situation which he seeks.

In reality, Mead has approached the problem not only from the wrong premises, but upside down. The problem is not to get from the gesture to similar responses, but to get from similar responses and stimuli already explained by the primitive labor process to the substitution of the same vocal stimulus for the original object. This is a problem that, assuming vocal ability, should not be difficult to solve. The meaning of such a substitute stimulus is already in the experience of the individuals involved.

Mead's difficulty in accounting for the reference character of symbols is directly connected with his subjectivist philosophy, and there finds a quasi-solution.

- ✓ Symbolization constitutes new objects not constituted before, objects which would not exist except for the context of social relationships wherein symbolization occurs. Language does not simply symbolize a situation or object which is already there in advance; it makes possible the existence or appearance of that situation or object, for it is a part of the mechanism whereby that situation or object is created...for to repeat, objects are in a genuine sense constituted within the social process of experience, by communication and mutual adjustment of behaviour among the individual organisms which are involved in that process and which carry it on. (47) ✓ (italics not in original)

Objects are dependent upon the social process itself, and hence there is no need to explain the reference character of the symbol!

Language makes its own objects, so that symbolic reference is explained in terms of the symbol itself! Such are the scientific conclusions reached by pragmatic philosophy.

To reiterate, neither the reference nor the common characters of the symbol can be explained by the symbol itself, nor by social interaction itself. Without both characters the gesture is not a symbol, and this fact is the one that explains why the imitation of birds is not symbolization. Symbolization is a dialectic of reference and commonality. Abstract either and there is no symbol! In criticizing Wundt, Mead objects to his assumption that common ideas and objects exist prior to symbolization, and complains that no such situation can be found in the conversation of gestures. It is quite correct that no such situation exists within the subhuman conversation of gestures, but such a situation is found within the human labor process. In Mead's terms, the problem is threefold, to find a common gesture having a common response and a common reference. He cannot solve this problem, so he turns the whole problem on its head, and falls into logical fallacy, explaining that which is to be explained in terms of itself. It is clear that the only answer to triadic relation of the gesture to both forms and the object can only be explained by the dialectic of man in his natural and social relations, of which the dialectic of the reference and common characters of the symbol is a moment. Failing to understand the double aspects of man's mode of existence, the natural and the social relations as a unity of opposites within the labor process, Mead cannot understand the origination of the dual character of the symbol which arises out of the needs of such a situation.

It is not denied that in a very real sense this social process and the symbol make possible the appearance and (not or!) existence of

new objects. The symbol and social relations themselves are new objects, as well as the material produce which cooperative labor makes possible. As to the power and control which symbolization gives over social and natural activity, Mead's analysis is very good.

It is in terms of the social process and within the framework of the social act that Mead also develops his theory of meaning. This theory is a development and elaboration of the behaviouristic theory of meaning. "Meaning", says Watson, "is just a way of saying that out of all the ways an individual has of reacting to this object, at any one time he reacts in only one of these ways ..." (48) For Mead too, meaning lies in the response, but it is a social response and a social stimulus that are involved. "Meaning" says Mead, "arises and lies within the field of the relation between the gesture of a given human organism and the subsequent behaviour of this organism as indicated to another human organism by that gesture." (49) The meaning is given in the response of the other organism to this gesture. This response has reference to this gesture and to the completion of the act. The meaning of the gesture is made explicit in the adjustment to the gesture on the part of the other. Meaning involves this triadic relationship between gesture, response and the future phases of the act implied by the gesture.

Before the appearance of mind and the significant symbol, then, meaning is present in the field of objective social relations. Mead says "Meaning is thus a development of something objectively there as a relation between certain phases of the social act. It is not a psychological

(48) Behaviourism, p. 201

(49) Mind, Self & Society, p. 75

addition to that act, and it is not an 'idea' as traditionally conceived!" (50) Further, "the interpretation of gestures is not basically a process going on in a mind as such, or one necessarily involving a mind: it is an external, overt, physical or physiological process going on in the actual field of social experience." (51)

Meaning, objectively there in the relationships of the conversation of gestures, becomes a psychical content with the appearance of the significant symbol. With the mechanism of the significant symbol, which allows for the internalization of the objective relations of the act into the experience of the individual, the individual has the meaning of his gesture, its relationship to the response of the other which has this reference to the future phases of the ongoing activity. The role of the symbol in relationship to meaning is that of internalizing a relationship objectively there, of bringing the relationship into the implicit conduct of the individual and in this sense into self-conscious experience. This process of internalizing the act by means of the significant symbol is apprehension of meaning, although Mead frequently confuses it, once obtained, with meaning itself.

"What does it mean" in this sense means "how does the organism respond". It is obvious that such response implies the past conditioning and experience of the organism. An inexperienced organism cannot give an adequate response to the future reference which the gesture has. Even in the conversation of gestures there is present an inner phase of the act which Mead in this context overlooks. What Mead does emphasize is that

(50) Mind, Self & Society, p. 76

(51) Ibid, p. 79

in the conversation of gestures, organisms respond to each other as objects to which they have been conditioned. They do not respond to each other as subjects, which is only possible when the individual has the response of the other in his own experience through the mechanism of the symbol.

The criticism that there is an ideational element even in the conversation of gestures does not, of course, invalidate Mead's analysis of the role of the symbol in the having of meaning of his gesture by the individual himself. What the objection is, is that the respondent has the meaning of the gesture in his experience already, otherwise he would not be capable of an adequate response. Mead's point that the author of the gesture does not have the meaning of his gesture in the conversation of gestures is quite correct.

An oversight on Mead's part even more serious but closely allied, is that objects in the physical world have no meaning, if Mead is to stay strictly within his premises of the conversation of gestures. Mead overlooks the fact that there are two sorts of objects to which we respond: social objects, which are the gestures and responses of other organisms, and physical objects. When Mead does concede recognition to the physical object, he does one of two things. Either he points out that its meaning is given in our response to it, and this sense of the word falls outside his definition. Or he regards the physical object as being socially constituted within the social context of experience, in effect, denies its existence as an independently existing physical object.

Materialism would insist on the first of these alternants. It is to be noted that the response to the physical object involves precisely the same triadic relationship as the response within the conversation of gestures which, as is pointed out above, is response to the other as an

object, and not as subject. The response to the "gesture" of the physical object, the falling of a tree or the dropping of the stone, bears the same reference to the future activity of the object as response to organic gestures, assuming that the organism is in both cases capable of an adequate response. With this extension, which is suggested by Mead himself but is not logically included in his theory, the theory of meaning is acceptable to materialism, providing that meaning and existence are not identified. It would seem more accurate, however, to denote meaning as the characteristic activity of an object, and knowledge of this characteristic as reflected in the response of an organism as apprehension of this mode of activity. The significant symbol is then a qualitatively new stage in the apprehension of meaning arising within the labor process. Symbolization does constitute new objects, for it has as its consequence the internalization of still further phases of the act and the response to the other as subject. The significant symbol allows us to call out in ourselves and others the response which the objects which it means calls out.

In consideration of Mead's theory of meaning, it is not necessary to equivocate about the use of words. Mead is quite correct, however, in pointing out that language is not arbitrary, that it involves the whole social act and involves a complication of responses. (52) Nor is Mead's usage of the term meaning arbitrary, in the sense of a nominal definition but grows out of the subjectivism of his point of view.

One of the chief contributions of Mead to the materialist theory of mind is his interpretation of ideas and concepts in behaviouristic

(52) Mind, Self & Society, p. 74

terms, in terms that are dynamic and physiological. Ideas, for Mead, are implicit responses, organizations of attitudes corresponding to stimuli. "A behaviouristic treatment, if it is made broad enough, if it makes use of the almost indefinite complexities existing in the nervous system, can adjust itself to many fields which were supposed to be confined to an introspective attack." (53) Ideas are implicit activity and the skeleton of their structure is found in the central nervous system. Ideas, in short, are patterns of action in the central nervous system which are initiated but not overtly expressed. As such they fall within the field of social and natural interaction. "Ideas, as distinct from acts, or as failing to issue in overt behaviour, are simply what we do not do; they are possibilities of overt responses which we test out implicitly in the central nervous system and then reject in favor of those which we do not in fact act upon." (54)

Ideas as involving meaning imply significant symbols. Conscious ideas are ideas we can indicate to ourselves and to others; a pattern of responses, in other words, that we are able to initiate in ourselves and in others. Conscious ideas are a part of the social act, a subjective phase of the act in the sense that they are internal to the individual organism. In the conscious idea there is that self-activity, that self-stimulation of the organism through the medium of symbolization by virtue of which the individual has his reaction under his own control. When the individual is able to condition his own responses through a process of self-stimulation in the same manner that others stimulate him, he has a conscious idea, still explicable in physiological terms. The significant

(53) Mind, Self & Society, p. 12

(54) Ibid, p. 99

symbol is the mechanism fundamental to such self-conscious ideas. Mead is here explaining away the last refuge of idealism in materialist terms.

An important characteristic of the ideaxx as an implicit and organized readiness to act is what Mead calls its temporal dimension. As the external act, the process of interaction within the sphere of external activity, has a temporal span and a manner of organization in time; so, internalized through experience or conditioning this temporal phase is present in the act as the influence of the later stages of the act on the earlier stages:

"There is," stated Mead, "it is to be noted, an influence of the later act on the earlier act. The later process which is to go on has already been initiated, and that later process has its influences on the earlier process. Now, such an organization of a group of nervous elements as will lead to conduct with reference to the objects about us is what one would find in the central nervous system answering to what we call the object." (55)

The significance of this conception of the idea, as a validating case for the materialist epistemology, and dialectical materialism in particular, is fourfold. First, the whole interpretation is within the framework of material processes. Ideas themselves are not things, but material processes, as such; and as an internalization of external temporal activity, they have a temporal dimension, they are not static but fluid. Second, the analysis implies an answer to the epistemological question of the identity of thinking and being, the question of how our thoughts stand with reference to the world around us. As derived from the actual overt interactivity of processes, the idea reflects the characteristic activity of the external process: The idea, although removed from the "external world", originates in this world and reflects it in the form of temporal

and spatial organization of neural patterns. Thinking is a mode of behaviour of human being. Third, if the idea is erroneous, of something goes wrong with the internal organization, the proof of this is overt material practice. Something will go wrong with the act, which the idea no longer properly reflects. Finally, ideas in this sense cut across the old terminology and forms of thinking which gave rise to the conceptions of primary and secondary qualities. Ideas reflect the qualities of objects as their characteristic modes of action.

All of these implications of his theory of ideas are not explicitly drawn out by Mead. In particular, Mead overlooks the fact that the analysis implies the identity of thinking and being.

Abstraction, and the universal character of concepts has long been a point of difficulty in the materialist explanation of mind. It has seemed impossible for abstract ideas to be stated in physiological terms, and therefore necessary to place them over into "pure consciousness". How we pass from sense perception to concepts, how we abstract and generalize are key questions, for they are concern the point of transition from the sensed to the logical forms of knowledge, and as they are answered, so is answered the epistemological question, what correspondence has the conceptual world with the world of nature. In psychology, the problem of concepts takes the form of the problem of recognition.

Mead asks, "Can we find a structure there in the central nervous system that would answer to a certain type of response which represents for us the character of the object which we recognize, as distinct from mere
(56)

sensations?" Within the interactivity of the form and the object, which

proceeds according to the life processes and needs of the form and the characteristic activity of the object, universality is found in a certain type of response. Mead answers, "There is a universal in the form of the response that answers to a whole set of particulars, and the particulars may be indefinite in number, provided only that they have certain characters in relation to the response." (57)

The universal as conceptual, for Mead, is the relationship of a single form of response over against an indefinite number of specific objects. The response is universal, and the stimulus particular. This is the manner in which abstraction takes place, and the whole falls within the complex behaviour of the individual and the group.

In considering the universal as conceptual Mead to a certain extent ignores the universal characters of the objects themselves, which are implied by the analysis. Materialism would point out that in order for the universal response to be possible, in the sense either of origination or of adequacy, it must reflect properties which the individual objects have in common, the universal character of the object. The analysis implies and corroborates the dialectical conception of things as a unity of the particular and the universal.

Implying but not emphasizing the objective as well as the subjective nature of universality, Mead contributes to the Marxist thesis on the problems of conceptual knowledge by a scientific hypothesis as to how this is possible, that abstraction is a subjective phase of objective practice, and how it is possible that conceptual knowledge arises out of and corresponds to forms of activity of the material world. Mental

(57) Mind, Self, & Society, p. 84 loc.cit

objects, concepts, are forms of implicit response, temporally organized, that are built up out of experience. As physiologically implicit, they are indefinitely complex patterns in the central nervous system.

Another phase of universality considered by Mead is its social dimension in human experience, which involves the mechanism of the significant symbol. In this sense of, universality, is a common response on the part of a social group. The universality of the symbol lies in the fact that everyone in the group can take a similar attitude to it.

This form of universality introduces two questions, one of which ~~are~~^{is} dealt with in detail by Mead in his theory of the self, and one of which is in essence ignored. Including this relation to the responses of others, the response of the individual has itself an individual and a common character: the concept for the individual differs within the common limits according to his point of view, his past experience as a member of that society. Universality and particularity for the human individual have two dimensions, arising out of different but inseparable sets of relationships, the natural and the social.

The other question which arises with the inclusion of the social aspect is the relations of the social or common response to the objective world. With the introduction of the social dimension, Mead seems to lose sight altogether of the fact that even as the individual so the common response cannot do otherwise than reflect the characters of the object. By virtue of this neglect, Mead returns to his position of social subjectivism in which the external world is regarded as the totality of perspectives, and the object as in a real sense dependent upon social perception. Here the objectivity of the conceptual lies only in the fact that it is a common, as opposed to a private, response that is involved.

Here again Mead ruptures the unity of man's natural and his social relations. Universals "are meaningless apart from the social acts in which they are implicated and from which they derive their significance." Mead has explained the mechanisms of both natural and social universality, but he fails to explain that they find common ground in the unity of the natural and social relations of man, which has as its explanation the labor process.

Mead's theory of concepts indicates the possibility of a materialist interpretation of logic which, indeed, has been announced and outlined by Marxist philosophy. Logic, for the Marxists, is a qualitatively unique form of subjective activity arising out of sense perception. The laws of formal logic are ultimately derived from material intercourse with nature, reflect nature in such a way that it is possible for logical deductions to be validated in material practice. "The practice of men," says Lenin, "by repeating itself millions of times, is fortified in consciousness by the figures of logic." (58)

Mead's theory of logic is that it bears an intrinsic relationship to the organization of attitudes and involves his whole theory of ideation:

"Our so-called laws of thought are the abstractions of social intercourse... all the enduring relations have been subject to revision. There remains the logical constants, and the deductions from logical implications. To the same category belong the so-called universals in concepts. They are the elements and structure of a universe of discourse. Insofar as in social conduct with others and with ourselves we indicate the characters that endure in the perspective of the group to which we belong and out of which we arise, we are indicating that which relative to our conduct is unchanged, to which, in other words, passage is irrelevant." (59)

(58) Quoted in A Textbook of Marxist Philosophy, p. 107

(59) Mind, Self & Society, p. 90, footnote

② ibid., p. 90

This striking passage reveals the manner in which Mead would have approached the question of logic, had he ever undertaken a thorough investigation of the subject.

Unfortunately, Mead's characteristic fault mars these extremely suggestive remarks. He fails to note the source of the "characters that endure in the perspective of the group." The implications of this passage are that such characters and relations are derived from social interactivity in itself. Bearing in mind that social intercourse does imply natural intercourse, and is a reflection of the stage of development of natural intercourse, it becomes evident how it is possible for the order and connection of ideas to correspond with the order and connection of events. A corollary of this thesis of historical materialism would be that the type of logic utilized by a social group reflects the stage of material development of that group, the state of its natural relations which are one and the same thing as its mode of production.

Reflective intelligence, including foresight, purpose and planning is also brought by Mead within the context of the social act, as an internal phase of the act in which future phases of the overt activity are brought within the control of the individual in terms of implicit behaviour. In reflective intelligence an important role is played by ideas or concepts as previously defined, and their temporal organization in the sense that the later stages of the acts they imply bear upon the present stages of the idea. Based on the delayal of overt response, whihh occurs upon the appearance of a problem, or the blocking of the ongoing act, mental behaviour requires the significant symbol as its primary mechanism.

Reflection, or feflective behaviour arises only under conditions of self-consciousness (the use of the symbol-M.P.) and makes possible the purposive control and with

organization by the individual organism of its conduct with reference to the social and physical environment, i.e. with reference to the various social and physical situations in which it becomes involved and to which it reacts. (60)

The role of the significant symbol in intelligent behaviour can be considered in these two relations, the natural and the social. In the social relation, the individual is able by its use to indicate to himself the attitudes of others towards his own actions. As he has the stimulus to his own attitudes and those of others in his own control, he is capable of self-stimulation by which he can become an object to himself. He can indicate to himself what the social situation will be before hand, how others will tend to respond and he will answer such responses. He is able to test out implicitly - in thought - the implications of his own actions in the social field.

In the natural relation, the symbol is especially important in analysis. Analysis requires the picking out and holding on to the characters of the stimulus situation which call out a certain response. The symbol enables the individual to hold on to the character, as the symbol is under his own control. Through the symbol he stimulates himself as the object stimulates him. It is in this manner in relation to analysis that voluntary attention can also be explained. Conscious attention is the ability to hold on to characters and the responses related to them. Analysis and conscious attention are an internal dialectic of stimulus and response, in which the stimulus and consequently the response is under the individual's own control.

For each situation or object, the organism has a number of alternative responses dependent upon his past experience. The delay of the response, analysis, and attention, enable the selection of responses with

(60) Mind, Self & Society, p. 91

reference to the future, their isolation, implicit testing, and recombination. Thinking is an implicit reconstruction of the act involving attention, analysis, choice and purpose. It is an internal self-activity made possible by the symbol.

It is to be noticed that in consideration of reflective intelligence, Mead preserves a purely materialist approach throughout. One difficulty which presents itself is that Mead assigns analysis alternatively to the symbol and to the hand. In one case the symbol picks out the object, and ^{the} the other/hand. It seems possible that the hand may be assigned this ability of picking out the object in the first instance, although the use of the hand and the symbol are closely interwoven; and that the primary character of the symbol is that it holds on to the character of the object in the absence of the object; it enables the individual to think about a situation which is not materially present.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

It is now possible to draw more coherent conclusions concerning the problem posed in this work; namely; of what value are the conceptions of Mead to the theory of dialectical and historical materialism.

It has been observed that dialectical materialism regards subjective activity as a qualitatively unique form of material process; that "simple" consciousness, sensation, is purely a material relation which reflects the characters of the subject and the object; that language and conceptual knowledge is a form of activity which reflects that activity of the external world, is derived from it through practice and receives its validation in practice, in overt material activity. As to origin, mind arises out of material processes as a new form of these, and is especially dependent, coincidental, according to Marx and Engels in The German Ideology, with the growth of language. (See page 7).

Language itself arose in the primitive labor process out of the necessities of the labor process, when, as Engels remarks, men had something to say to one another. Historical materialism is the position that the qualitatively unique feature of the human group is the labor process, which is the mode of existence of that group. The labor process has a natural and a social aspect. Human development is a result of the unity and conflict of these two relations. In these terms, the social act is, in the first instance, directly, and subsequently directly or indirectly, related to the labor process. Ideas, concepts, attitudes, are a subjective moment of this objective social and material practice, derived from it and validated by it.

How does Mead stand on these two great questions, the origin and nature of thought, and the identity of thinking and being?

It is seen that to the former question, Mead too answers that thought is a new form of material activity developed in and along with natural processes and contingent upon the development of language. He does not, however, conceive of language as developed in and along with the labor process; consequently, although he analyses in a masterly way some of the effects of having language, he cannot explain the process of getting it.

It is seen that to the second question, Mead has again, although unintentionally, made a very positive contribution to materialism. His theory of ideas and concepts, logic and intelligence, if made consistent, logically imply this identity of thinking and being. Of course, it is impossible for pure philosophy to say that his analysis is the correct one in all its details. But it is clearly possible from the point of view of materialism, and is a validating form of the assertion of the identity of thinking and being.

It is nevertheless true that, although such conclusions may be legitimately reached from an examination of his work, Mead is capable of denying the identity of thinking and being and consequently denying those premises themselves which his analysis and his scientific statements presuppose. This position stems from his affiliations with the psychology of Wundt and the philosophy of pragmatism. These affiliations influence his work in a very concrete and specific way, which has been specifically pointed out in his analysis of the origination of the significant symbol, his theory of meaning, and his treatment of the concept or universal.

The concrete starting point of many of his difficulties is

obviously his conception of the social act. This basic concept is the focus of all the contradictions which his mixed philosophic approach, the combination of evolutionary materialism and pragmatic subjectivism, would presage.

In the first place, the social act, especially as utilized in the conversation of gestures, takes in consideration man's social relations only, not the fundamental unity of his social and material relations. This omission expresses itself in the fact that although ^{Mead} ~~he~~ recognizes the social act and the responses involved as related to the life-processes of the group, he has no conception of these life-processes themselves as productive activity, objective material practice. Secondly, the implication is already there in his definition of the social act, (see page 37), otherwise one of his best statements, that the objective world is constituted by social experience, by his substitution, for the term "social object" which may mean materially existent independent objects, the subjective term "objectives" of the act. This ability to confuse the objective world with the subjective world is adequately demonstrated, of course, in his explanation of simple consciousness.

Such an approach is consistent with the fact that Mead places the attitude at the beginning of the act, in some sense thereby identifying attitudes and their resultant social activity as constituting the life-processes of the group, whereas the truth of the matter is that attitudes are built up out of objective social and material activity and presupposes this activity. With the attitude at the beginning of the act, the real world becomes an appendage to these attitudes, as determined in a real sense by them, and the whole relation of thinking and being is reversed.

It is not denied, of course, that, an act once initiated, the attitudes involved may not and do not exert an influence on its course. As Engels has pointed out, if ideal forces in this sense constitute idealism, then no materialists can exist.(61) The point at issue is, that with attitudes at the beginning of the act, as defining the world in a real sense, without consideration of the derivation of the attitudes themselves and the fact that they exist through overt material practice, Mead has made the step of transition to subjectivism in which objects are defined as experience. It has been pointed out that Mead is not consistent in his definition of objects as experience, as indeed it is impossible for him to be if he once takes into consideration the origination of the attitudes themselves. Nevertheless, with attitudes as the starting point of the act as that in terms of which objects have their definition, Mead is not in a position to recognize as an acute problem the difficulty of accounting for the origination of the symbol in its reference character.

It is seen, then, in what manner Mead's philosophic predilections influence his basic concepts themselves, which imply those contradictions which become explicit in his consequent analyses of mental behaviour. It is also seen that, from a consistently materialistic point of view, Mead's difficulties can be easily resolved, and the results tentatively incorporated into a materialist interpretation of mind.

It is nevertheless clear that, unable to understand in a self-conscious fashion the tenets of dialectical and historical materialism, influenced by philosophies which are anti-scientific and which occasion absurdities in the midst of scientific hypotheses, Mead exhibits the

(61) Feuerbach, p. 73

absolute necessity of a consistently scientific philosophy to the psychologist.

The error which Mead makes in his social theory of mind, the one fundamental error which subsumes all others, is the bifurcation of the world into society and nature, and the assumption, Philosophically, and contrary to his own premises, of the primacy of society, the primacy, in short, of ^{experience} ~~expansion~~ to reality. The relationship of this position to the Cartesian splitting asunder of the mental and the physical is clear. The extent to which Cartesianism and its philosophical offspring, with the scientific content of four hundred years development, have been transformed from a mode of thought liberating scientific inquiry to one which hinders and comes into open contradiction with it; the extent to which Darwinism as a sociological basis impairs the understanding of his subject matter by the social psychologists; the extent to which pragmatism encourages the vague and indefinite use of terms, which is the key-note of reaction; to this extent does modern psychology stand in need of a philosophy consistent with science itself.

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