THE SOCIAL NATURE OF SELF, ACTION AND MORALITY IN
THE PHILOSOPHY OF GEORGE HERBERT MEAD

by
William Martin O'Meara

July 1, 1977
Abstract:

Part 1 of the paper considers Mead's concept of the self as a social process which is essentially cognitive, necessarily related to the community of all rational beings and potentially free. Part 2 considers how rationality and freedom are so rooted in the evolutionary, social act that pragmatic intelligence and creativity are the evolutionary process become self-conscious. Part 3 considers morality as a social act which is both cognitive and creative. Mead's evaluation of Kant's ethics is judged insufficient; hence Mead's concept of the self cannot serve as the basis for a necessary transition from factual to value judgments. Distinctions made by Sellars, Castañeda and Baier are used.
The Social Nature of Self, Action, and Morality in
the Philosophy of George Herbert Mead

This paper discusses the social nature of self, action, and morality in the philosophy of George Herbert Mead. The first part of the paper presents Mead's theory of the genesis of the self in the social relationship and identifies the self as primarily a social process which is cognitive and potentially free. The second part of the paper presents Mead's theory of the social act as the basis of human freedom and cognition. The third part of the paper presents Mead's theory of the moral act as a socially cognitive and creative act.

I. The Social Nature of the Self

Mead contrasts two types of theories of self: the individualistic and the social. Hobbes, an empiricist, and Descartes, a rationalist, exemplify the individualist approach. Hobbes starts with individual humans as isolated units who construct their social relations through the social contract. However, Mead affirms that the social relationship of evolving animals is genetically prior to human individuals and is in fact creative of the human self. Furthermore, as we shall see in this part of the paper, self-awareness is logically dependent upon the social relationship since self-awareness presupposes for Mead that an individual looks upon himself from the viewpoint of a social other. Whereas the individualistic theory of the self held by Descartes takes the existence of mind and self as the beginning point of philosophy and proffers an extranatural origin of mind, Mead's theory proposes a natural, evolutionary explanation of the genesis of the self, both as cognitive and as potentially free. Although Mead's theory of the self mixes philosophical theory with what he believes is the proper empirical approach for sociology and psychology, his philosophical concept of the self is not reducible to a scientific approach. His theory of the self offers an analysis of the necessary relationship between the "I" and the "me" in self-awareness, as we shall see in this part of the paper. Furthermore, Mead attempts to use the
necessary interrelationship between the "I" and the "me" as the basis of a necessary transition from fact to value in moral philosophy. This attempt is discussed in the third part of the paper.

Mead affirms that there is a difference in our ordinary experience between the body and the self. The self is not present in the baby's body at birth. For the usage of the word "self" as a reflexive pronoun in the phrase "self-awareness" reveals that the self is both subject and object of its awareness, and the new-born infant cannot distinguish its body from its environment, much less distinguish the self from the body. Mead affirms that a philosophy which accepts evolution has for its basic problem the question: how does organic behavior become self-conscious behavior? (MSS, 136-137) Mead's intent in asking this is not to offer a neurological theory of the development of brain structure and its relation in detail to the animal's environment. Rather, he is attending to the social environment of organic behavior in order to answer the question: "How can an individual get outside himself (experientially) in such a way as to become an object to himself?" (MSS, 138) Mead's general approach to this question is to offer a behavioristic analysis of social interaction in terms of stimuli and responses. His general answer will be that "the self, as that which can be an object to itself (that is, as self-aware), is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience." (MSS, 140)

Mead analyzes the social experience or act as a conversation of gestures between two organisms. The gesture or incipient act of one animal is a stimulus calling out a response from the second animal. For example, a fighting gesture from one animal calls forth a defensive, fighting gesture from the second animal. Mead proposes that the response of the second animal should be viewed as the meaning or interpretation of the gesture of the first insofar as the response is directed toward or related to the completion of the act initiated by the first's gesture. If the second animal responds incorrectly to the gesture of the first, not relating to the behavioral completion of the first's act, the continued interaction of the animals will correct mistakes. Since the response of the second animal is interpretative and creative, or at least, novel, there may be several ways to respond to a gesture which enable the act of the gesturing organism to come to completion. (MSS, 63; 78)

Consciousness of the meaning of a gesture arises in the

---

1 Mead, Mind, Self and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934). Hereafter referred to as MSS.
first animal when it controls its gesture by its expectation of the response of the second animal. The vocal gesture of the human animal affects not only the ear of the second animal but also the ear of the one gesturing. When the first human animal is able to respond to its gesture as the second would respond and when the first controls its gesture from the viewpoint of the second and its response, the vocal gesture has become a significant symbol. (MSS, 145-146)

Ernst Cassirer's distinction between the sign and the symbol is similar to Mead's distinction between the gesture and the significant symbol, and both philosophers analyze the process by which Helen Keller achieved symbolic language. The animal's emotional utterance is a sign or signal that functions in the interaction of the species. The sign becomes a symbol when the individual becomes aware of the use of the sign as a sign in Cassirer's theory; in a similar way in Mead's theory the gesture becomes a significant symbol when the individual becomes aware of the gesture as a gesture which calls forth a response. The individual becomes aware of the gesture as a gesture by viewing his gesture from the viewpoint of the other's response. For example, Helen Keller achieved the essential basis of self-awareness only when she became aware of her tactile gestures as gestures calling forth the same response from others and herself. When she controlled her gestures from the viewpoint of the other, then her gestures became significant symbols. (MSS, 149)

The self-awareness involved in the control of one's gestures from the viewpoint of the other develops into adult self-awareness through role-playing in activities called play and game by Mead. At the age of two to five years, the child plays at various roles. He plays policeman or mailman or parent, for example. When the child plays the role of parent in relation to his teddy bear, he says something that his father would say to a child; then he responds in the role of his teddy bear, saying something that a child would to a father. The child can play the role of father only by controlling his act from the viewpoint of the imaginary other, the teddy bear as a child. (MSS, 150-151)

Game differs from play in that play involves only one role in relation to another role whereas game involves one role in relation to many other roles in the game. (MSS, 151) In a basketball game, for example, the individual playing the role of center can only do so by controlling his actions by means of what the guards and forwards on his team may expect him to do. Also, the center can play his role well

only by anticipating what the opposing players will do and by attempting to counter their actions. The complexity of the role of center, then, involves relating the role of center to the roles of the other nine players.

All five players on one team control their actions from the viewpoint of the team, the organized social group. For example, a given team will play primarily to win the game, not to have any one individual score 50 points. By controlling their actions from the viewpoint of the team, the players control their actions from the viewpoint of what Mead calls the generalized other or the "me." Unless an individual controls his actions from the viewpoint of the team, one cannot be a member of the team. Being a member of a group logically involves for Mead controlling one's actions from the viewpoint of the group. Mead claims that anyone's identity, anyone's self as the "me" that I am, whether it be teacher, parent, basketball player, or chimney sweep, can be analyzed in terms of a role played in society. Even the identity of God, whether God is real or fictitious, can be analyzed in terms of a role played in society: God would be that which is supremely worshipful, for example, to some religious believers. Being self-aware involves for Mead being aware of oneself as a member of a group, controlling one's actions by and identifying with the generalized other or "me" of that group. (MSS, 153-162)

Mead sums up his argument:

What goes to make up the organized self is the organization of the attitudes which are common to the group. A person is a personality because he belongs to a community, because he takes over the institutions of that community into his own conduct. He takes its language as a medium by which he gets his personality, and then through a process of taking different roles that all others furnish he comes to get the attitude of the members of the community. Such, in a certain sense, is the structure of a man's personality. There are certain common responses which each individual has toward certain common things, and insofar as those common responses are awakened in the individual when he is affecting other persons he arouses his own self. The structure, then, on which the self is built is this response which is common to all, for one has to be a member of a community to be a self. (MSS, 162)

There is an ambiguity in Mead's conclusion. For it is not clear whether the necessity of being a member of a community in order to be a self is a necessity only for our evolutionary world or a logical necessity for every conceivable rational self. Mead has certainly begun his argument by providing a genetic analysis of the rise of human
self-awareness as causally dependent upon the social relationships of the human species. However, Mead is concluding that the presence of stimulus-response interaction is more than a necessary causal factor for the development of self-awareness and the significant symbol. For the stimulus-response interaction is a logical factor involved in the significant symbol since the meaning of the stimulus or gesture is the response expected and since self-awareness involves controlling one's actions by and identifying with the generalized other of a group. Since Mead's theory applies to our evolutionary world and experience, the question may yet be raised as to whether every conceivable rational self and significant symbol involves the social relationship.

Mead would not accept that question as legitimate since he does not view his theory of the self as an ad hoc hypothesis which introduces the category of the "social" only at the human level of evolution. Rather, the "social" is a basic category of Mead's metaphysics. For Mead, "sociality is the capacity of being several things at once." (PP, 49) For example, the animal in the forest is part of the system of physical things and at the same time part of the ecological balance of living species and environment. As an emergent event in evolution, the animal is both part of the physical order and of the organic order. In offering his theory of the self, Mead emphasized "the fact that the appearance of mind is only the culmination of that sociality which is found throughout the universe, its culmination lying in the fact that the organism, by occupying the attitudes of others, can occupy its own attitude in the role of the other." (PP, 86) Consequently, Mead's theory of the self would require an evaluation not only of his analysis of the self but also of his metaphysics. However, an evaluation is not developed since his theory of the self is being described as the basis of his moral philosophy, to be analyzed in the third part of the paper.

We have been considering Mead's theory of the development of the human individual's "me" as a complex social role which an individual plays by controlling his actions from the viewpoint of the generalized other of his social group. Mead goes on to argue that the self is more than just a "me;" the self is also an "I." Mead explicitly raises the question of the "nature of the 'I' which is aware of the social 'me.'" (MSS, 173) Mead is not trying to identify the metaphysical nature of the person but the pragmatic significance of the "I" in conduct. (MSS, 173-174)

3 Mead, The Philosophy of the Present (Lasalle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Company, 1932). Hereafter referred to as PP.
Mead's refusal to consider the metaphysical nature of the "I" which is conscious of the "me" causes his pragmatic interpretation of the effects of the "I" in conduct to neglect the conscious quality of the "I." For example, he writes: "The 'I' is the response of the organism to the attitudes of others; the 'me' is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes. The attitudes of the others constitute the organized 'me,' and then one reacts as an 'I.'" (MSS, 175) In saying that the "I" is the response of the individual to the "me," Mead neglects to consider who or what it is that has in the first place controlled the individual's actions from the viewpoint of the other. Of course, the controller has to be some form of the "I," some aspect of the individual himself, who adopts the viewpoint of the other and looks back upon his own gesture, endowing it with the conscious meaning by the expectation of the other's response.

There are, then, two aspects to the "I," the "I" which is conscious of the gesture as a significant symbol and of oneself as the "me," and the "I" which is the response of the individual to the immediate past significant symbol and to one's "me," the social role which the "I" either accepts, rejects, or modifies. Mead says very little about the "I" as conscious of the significant symbol and of the "me." This "I" does not appear directly to consciousness as an object but is similar to the "I think," the transcendental unity of apperception, which Kant affirmed accompanied all judgments. Since the "I" does not appear as an object in consciousness, there is a difference between the "I" which is conscious and the empirical ego which is experienced as part of one's "me," namely, the empirical ego which includes bodily feelings, memories, and social relationships, among other things. (MT, 45)

The second aspect of the "I," the "I" as the response of the individual which accepts, rejects, or modifies the individual's "me," is an act which can only be known in terms of what the act effects. What the "I" will do, what the "I" will become, what the "I" will say cannot be certain. For example, when the individual's ideal "me" or conscience calls out the "I" to act responsibly and pay money owed to others, perhaps the "I" will pay the debts with a smile, or with a frown, or not at all. But whatever the response of the "I" is then becomes the "me" of the conscious "I's" past self, appearing in memory as what the "I" has become for others. (MSS, 173-178, 203)

4 Mead, Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936). Hereafter referred to as MT.
The "I" is not limited in its response to the social role that others expect one to play. The "I" can do more than just accept or reject that role. The "I" can create a new role or an imaginative variation of an old role. Mead gives the example of Socrates. Socrates does not simply accept the role of rationality expected by others in Athens, nor does he reject it. Rather he creates an enlargement of the role of rational discourse in society. Against the Sophists, Socrates affirms his faith in reason's ability to know universal truth and goodness; against his fellow Athenians, he affirms the fundamental importance of the examined way of life. In one sense, he criticizes the prejudices and inadequacies of the traditions in Athenian philosophy and society; yet, in another sense, he makes explicit some principles of the universal community of rational discourse which have been implicit in the role of the philosopher and in the role of the Athenian citizen. It is only by viewing his actions from the viewpoint of this universal community of rational discourse that Socrates frees himself from the prejudices of his own community. What the genius such as Socrates does is potentially the behavior of every individual. Every "I" as the act of response to the "me" which others expect can continually modify the roles played by envisaging new roles in a new community. So the self is more than just the "me;" the "I" is the response of the individual, accepting, rejecting, or modifying the "me" which others expect the "I" to be. (MSS, 214-218)

As Mead has described the novel response of the "I" to the "me" others expect the individual to play, it appears that the "I" of Socrates is something other than Socrates. It appears that the novel response of Socrates to his community is as novel to him as it is to his community. Mead agrees that the novel response of Socrates to his community is at first "not as yet there in his own mind. His mind, rather, is the process of the appearance of that idea." (MSS, 197) Once the individual has experienced his novel response, it becomes easier to repeat and make the response part of the "I's" ideal "me" to be realized in the future. When Socrates first turned from the speculations of Anaxagoras to a Socratic investigation of human values by the Socratic maieutic, it is probable that he had moments of doubt and only gradually developed his famous method as his own. Just as a hypothesis appears to awareness when a scientist is considering a problem and he has to evaluate that novel flash of insight to make it part of his scientific theory; so also, when the "I's" novel response appears in an individual's actions, the response must be evaluated in order to become part of the "I's" ideal self or me.

At the beginning of this part of the paper, it was
stated that self-awareness involves the self as both subject and object of awareness. Mead's distinction of the "I" as the "I think" and of the "me" as the object of awareness and his distinction of the "I" as unpredictable response of the individual to the "me" others expect him to play offers an analysis of self-awareness. Self-awareness of one's ideal self involves the "I" creatively aware of the future me the "I" wants to be, responding to the "me" of the past self and community in the light of the future "me" of which one's future community would approve. Self-awareness of one's past self involves the "I" aware of one's past acquiescence in or modification of the "me" which others expect one to play, this awareness occurring in the light of the future "me" which the "I" wants to be. Since the awareness of the past self occurs in the light of the future self and since the future self can be novel, the significance of the past self is not something fixed and final but rather something changing and developing. Although the occurrence of the past self is irrevocable, the significance of the past self in present awareness depends upon the response made to the past self from the viewpoint of the future self. Consequently, every conscious response of the present self to the past self is capable of seeing something new in the self in the light of what can be achieved for the future. (PP, 2)

The self is neither "I" nor "me" in isolation; rather it is essentially a social process which makes both responsibility and creativity possible. Insofar as the "I" has adopted as its "me" some social role in relation to others, the "I" is responsible to both their expectations and its own for its responses in that social role. Insofar as the "I" modifies the "me" or social role others expect the self to be, the self may be either creative or destructive. (MSS, 178)

As a social process of the interaction, differentiation, and fusion of the "me" and the "I" in an ever-repeating dialectic of stimulus and response, the self is not a thing that can be isolated from the social other and fixed for all eternity. Rather, Mead identifies the "I" as a locus of possibilities which the self is continually trying to realize in its conscious responses to the "me" others expect the "I" to be. The "I" is continually creating and modifying the "me," or at least it has this possibility to do so. (MSS, 204)

As a social process of the "I" and the "me," the self is essentially a cognitive reality, not primarily a feeling reality. When asked to identify the self, many an individual will say that the self involves a certain feeling about the self. The common sense view tends to affirm that to be
a self is to experience certain inner feelings. What makes one individual different from another is their difference in inner feeling. One individual's self might involve the experience of self-delight, happiness, and physical exuberance, whereas another's self might involve the experience of migrain headaches, inner tension, and bodily exhaustion. In this common sense view, the continuity and discontinuity of the self disclose themselves especially in the feelings of the self. For example, an individual might complain to his friends that he is not the same today since he feels different. William James expressed this common sense point of view when he tried to find the fundamental experience of the self in feelings turned back upon the self. (MSS, 173)

Mead argues that feelings by themselves cannot constitute the self. The experience of pleasure or pain, of physical exuberance or bodily exhaustion, and of satisfaction or extreme want do not involve the self as subject aware of itself as an object. The baby can experience pleasure and satisfaction in being fed or pain and want in hunger, but it is not evident that such experiences involve self-awareness. For the baby may not have begun to distinguish itself from its environment. It is true that the experience of being shy does involve the nine-month-old baby as aware of itself. Yet, this feeling involves self-awareness only because the infant looks upon itself from the viewpoint of the other. The infant is shy only in relation to another. This ability to look upon oneself from the viewpoint of the other is the cognitive basis of self-awareness. This basis develops through play and game, enabling the self to develop a mature "me." Consequently, self-awareness is essentially a cognitive act, although feeling may be always involved. Thinking or mind is the incorporation into the self of the social process of the conversation of gestures between self and others. Thinking is an internalized conversation in which the self plays the roles of self and other by means of the "I" and the "me." (MSS, 173, 186, 357)

As a social process, thinking implies that one's self-identity involves a relationship to a community. For example, if one thinks of himself as a citizen, then one thinks of himself from the viewpoint of his nation state, from the common viewpoint of all the citizens of his

5 James's position on self-awareness is more complex than Mead's characterization of it as involving feelings turned back upon the self; knowledge of the similarity between bodily feelings is the key to James's position. See William James, The Principles of Psychology (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952) pp. 214-216.
country. Again, if one thinks of himself as a parent, then one views himself from the viewpoint of the family. Particular identities are related to particular communities, whereas more general identities are related to more general communities. Hence, one's identity as a rational being, the most general identity implicit in any act of self-awareness, involves a relationship to the most general community, the community of rational beings. Mead affirms that the self:

belongs to a society of all rational beings, and the rationality he identifies with himself involves a continued social interchange. The widest community in which the individual finds himself, that which is everywhere, through and for everybody, is the thought world as such. He is a member of such a community and he is what he is as such a member. (MSS, 201; see also 155-156)

The human individual who possesses a self is always a member of a larger social community, a more extensive social group, than that in which he immediately finds himself, or to which he immediately and directly belongs. . . . It is especially in terms of the logical universe of discourse—the general system of universally significant symbols—which all thought or reasoning presupposes as the field of its activities, and which transcends the bounds of different languages and different racial and national customs, that the individuals belonging to any given social group or community become conscious of this wider social reference of that group or community beyond itself, to the further and larger context of social relations and interactions of human society or civilization as a whole in which, with all other particular human societies or organized social groups, it is implicated. (MSS, 272-273)

The first part of this paper has presented Mead's concept of the self. Self-awareness involves the self as subject aware of self as object. This self arises only in the social relationship by looking upon its gesture from the viewpoint of the other's response. This ability of seeing oneself from the viewpoint of the other develops through play whereby the self relates to individual others and through game whereby the self relates to the generalized other. The generalized other, real or imaginary, functions as the "me," controlling one's actions and endowing them with meaning. There are two aspects to the "I," the "I" as conscious and the "I" as response. The "I" as conscious never appears as such as the object of consciousness; the "I" as response of the individual to the "me" is an act knowable through its effects which can be either acceptance, rejection, or modification of the "me" others expect the "I" to be. Insofar
as the "I" accepts as its "me" a social role in relation to others, the "I" is responsible to those others and to its "me." Insofar as the "I" can create new "me's," it is the source of creativity. As both "I" and "me," the self is essentially a social process in a dialectical development of the "I" and the "me;" the "I" is a locus of possibilities never fully developed in the "me." As a social process, the mind or self is essentially a cognitive reality. Thinking is an internalized conversation in which the self plays the roles of self and other by means of the "I" and the "me." As a social process, every self's implicit identity as a rational being involves a necessary relationship to a generalized other which is the society of all rational beings.

II. The Social Nature of Action

The first part of the paper has discussed how human action as creative and rational involves in Mead's theory a concept of the self as a social process of the "I" and the "me." The second part of the paper presents Mead's theory of the social act as the basis for human freedom and cognition. Mead seeks the basis of rationality and freedom in the social behavior of organisms.

All living organisms exhibit the social relationship as basic in their behavior within their environments and towards their fellows. There is no living organism whose impulses and needs can be satisfied apart from its environment. (MSS, 227-228) Mead's analysis of the interaction between organism and environment avoids the stimulus-response fallacy involved in Watson's theory. For Watson, the founder of behaviorism, the environment controls organic responses by the stimuli it presents to the animal; whereas for Mead, "an act is an impulse that maintains the life-process by the selection of certain sorts of stimuli it needs. Thus, the organism creates its environment. The stimulus is the occasion for the expression of the impulse." (MSS, 6) For Mead, the environment does not determine the behavior of the organism, although it does establish general limits for the selectivity involved in animal life. But granted those general limits, an individual species creates its own environment, actualizing some potentialities which have not been actualized before. For example, when a new species develops in an environment, it may begin to use something in its environment as food which was not so used before. The interaction between species and environment creates a new object, a new food. (MSS, 129, 333)

Selective, preferential behavior is a characteristic of all realities, especially of organic realities. Whether
the subatomic particle is positively or negatively charged, whether the animal eats grass or meat, everything exhibits a selective orientation towards its environment. Any individual may be viewed as a history of events in which past selective behaviors cause a response from the environment, which either reinforces or extinguishes that selectivity. For example, there is the story of the elephants who become drunk when they eat the leaves of a certain tree and drink water, causing a rapid fermentation process in their stomachs. This selective eating which results in inebriation reinforces itself and further individuates these elephants' eating habits from those of other elephants.

Human freedom is grounded in the selectivity involved in organic existence. When an individual experiences conflicting impulses, for example, toward and away from smoking cigarettes, and when thought enables the individual to evaluate the different "me's" those impulses would lead to, thereby ranking one impulse as more important than the other, the selectivity of the individual becomes freedom of choice. Human freedom is lost to the extent that anyone one impulse selecting an end dominates the reflective process, preventing an evaluation of all the interests and goals of the individual. Human freedom is achieved to the extent that all the impulses and interests of the individual are so integrated through reflective evaluation and intelligent action that the organism as self as a whole enters into the act. Compulsion by the environment as selected by one unevaluated interest disintegrates the personality into discordant elements, whereas free action develops a harmony of the aspects of the personality through self-determination. In free action, the total self is the cause of itself in that the ideal self envisaged by the "I" integrates the total past and present self from its novel, creative point of view. The significance of the past for the future self depends upon the future, ideal "me" which the "I" envisages; hence Mead is not a determinist. The complete integration of an individual envisaged in the ideal "me" is rarely achieved; hence freedom is a matter of degree of integration; acts of the self will tend to become habits which either promote or hinder integration of the self. (PA, 153; 663)7


In summary, freedom involves freedom from and freedom for: freedom from determination or compulsion of the act by an unevaluated passion, impulse, or interest and freedom for integrating the past and present self in the realization of the ideal "me." Whether or not the self has been integrated can only be evaluated in terms of the results of action. Hence, freedom for is always in process of achievement, not something achieved as an unchanging characteristic.

Having discussed the basis of freedom in the social act, we may now consider the basis of rationality in the social act. The first part of the paper has identified the basis of the significant symbol in the conversation of gestures between two animals. In the animals' interaction the meaning of a stimulus-gesture is the response which it receives. In this theory, the meaning of a vocal gesture is not inherently private or subjective but rather common and objective. Furthermore, meaning is a pragmatic function of action whose results lie in the immediate or distant future. Meaning is not primarily a form to be known contemplatively, speculatively; rather meaning receives its basic understanding in the context of the social act.

A presupposition in many philosophies has been that human perception is a contemplative act which does not modify the object perceived. The best example is vision. For vision does not affect the object; it makes no difference to the behavior of the tree whether or not any animal sees it from a distance. It is also true that hearing and smell cause no alteration in their objects and that touch and taste need not modify their objects perceptibly. Nevertheless, Mead denies that such perception is the paradigm of experience. He views experience as an act, "an ongoing event that consists of stimulation and response and the results of the response." (PA, 364) Perception is only one phase of the total experience of the animal as it relates to the environment in an active manner.

Mead identifies four stages in the act: (1) the stage of impulse, (2) the stage of perception, (3) the stage of manipulation, and (4) the stage of consummation.

(1) The stage of impulse in the act discloses that the organism is not fundamentally passive in its relation to its environment. The animal has needs that give it a selective orientation to its environment, that give to each animal a different environment. For the different relationships which objects in the environment enter into with different species constitute those objects as different. The fundamental relationship of the organism to its specific environment is active, striving to maintain and advance the life process by fulfilling its needs.
(2) The stage of perception arises in organic activity as "an outgrowth of the behavior by which organisms relate themselves to what is spatiotemporally away from them. This relation is a form of conduct that leads the organisms toward or further away from the object according as the act predicates contact or the absence of contact." (PA, 141) The development in evolution of the perception of spatiotemporally distant objects enabled certain species to behave more successfully in relation to their environments since they had more time and space in which to act. The interpretation of the function of perception as contemplative sensuous knowledge arises because philosophers have assumed as primary a theoretical self-consciousness which is aware of the so-called "contents" of sense perception. This assumption overlooks the fact that self-consciousness is an emergent factor in evolution that comes after the development of perceptual awareness and the fact that animal perception evolved because of its pragmatic usefulness. Since for Mead self-consciousness develops in the interaction of animals in the species and functions primarily to advance the life process, he interprets consciousness and intelligence as functioning primarily pragmatically and not theoretically. Consistent with this view of consciousness, Mead also interprets perception pragmatically, in the context of the four stages of the act. (PA, 16-17)

(3) The stage of manipulation in the act: The stage of perception functions as a hypothesis about an object in the world to be manipulated, grasped by the hand and used. For example, to see an object in the distance as a saw involves expecting how one will act with that object and how that object will respond to one's act. The carpenter will see the saw as a tool, whereas the country musician may see it as a musical instrument. David Miller explains that "seeing is never passive; it always involves an attitude. We cannot see without looking, and a camera does not see at all, since it cannot take into account, by use of present light waves, a nonpresent future object." For "the percept is a collapsed act." (PA, 128) An individual can see an object only because he incorporates his past action and the response of that object into his perception. So the carpenter sees the saw as a tool because he incorporates his past usage of the saw and the results he obtained with it; in a similar manner, the country musician incorporates his past usage of the saw into his seeing of the saw. Miller points out that the results of recent experiments in psychology "support Mead's contentions that in perception we build up our future from past experiences of handling and manipulating objects and

that without action there would be no perception at all."9

Because of the interrelationship between the perceptual and the manipulatory phases in the act, Mead concludes that the "aroused future" in the perceptual stage has always a hypothetical character. It is not until this initiated response is carried out that the reality is assured. The experimental method is imbedded in the simplest process of perception of a physical thing." (PA, 25) Past action and its manipulatory results structure a present act of perception directing future action by the expectation of similar resulting responses. Only the manipulatory phase of the act can verify or falsify the object expected in the perceptual phase. Just as an "I" has its "me" by looking upon its act from the viewpoint of the response of the social other, so also the organism perceives a physical object by looking upon the perceived object from the viewpoint of the response of the object to the action of the organism upon it. Just as the correctness of the "I's" interpretation of the social other is tested by the actual response of the other to the gesture, so also the correctness of the organism's perception of the physical object is tested by the actual response of the object to the action of the organism upon it. (MSS, 279-280)

(4) The stage of consummation is the last phase of the act in which the second and third stages, perception and manipulation, enable the animal to satisfy the first stage, the phase of impulse and need. In the animal's consummatory relation to the object, the object is immediately experienced in terms of value or disvalue. The object is satisfying or dissatisfying, good or harmful or indifferent, beautiful or ugly. Such qualities are directly experienced and not known in the consummatory stage of the act. (PA, 25)10

In summary, pragmatic rationality is rooted in the four stages of the social act. Mead has argued that on this planet thought has developed only within the context of activity and functions primarily to satisfy the needs of human life. Perception arises within the act, not primarily as a contemplation of sense contents, but as a hypothesis based on past action and its results, enabling the individual to guide his immediate future action by an anticipation of the response of the object to be manipulated. Hence, the scientific method is imbedded in perceptual experience; and

9 Miller, George Herbert Mead, p. 132.

10 See also Bernstein, John Dewey, pp. 94-96, and the fine exposition of Mead's theory of aesthetic experience in Miller, George Herbert Mead, pp. 218-227.
the development of scientific method is not for the sake of contemplative knowledge, but for the sake of enhancing the consummatory aspects of human action.

Mead affirms not only that pragmatic rationality is rooted in the four stages of the human act but also that the scientific or pragmatic method is evolution become conscious of itself. There are three comparable stages in scientific method and evolution. First, there is the stage of observation in terms of a problem. For example, trying to understand why gases behave the way they do, the scientist collects data concerning the relationships between the pressure and volume of gases. In a similar way, an animal may face the problem of starvation in its environment and may search about for a food supply. Secondly, there is the stage of hypothesis. The scientist will deliberately propose a model from which the observed behavior of gases and other behaviors can be deduced; so also the animal may mutate, making possible a new way of relating to the environment which may solve the problem. Third, there is the stage of testing the hypothesis. Experiments will either confirm or falsify the hypothesis of the scientist, just as interaction between the mutation and its environment will enable the species either to evolve or to die. Both evolution and human thought are the process of meeting and solving problems. The solution of problems recreates the environing world for the successful species and for the verified hypothesis. Just as the evolution of a new species creates a new relationship between the environment and the species, so also the Einsteinian revolution in physics creates a new world for our century. (MT, 141-143)

III. The Social Nature of Morality

The first part of the paper has identified Mead’s concept of the self as a social process of the "I" and the "me" which is essentially both a cognitive and potentially creative act. The second part of the paper has identified how rationality and freedom are so rooted in the evolutionary, social act that pragmatic intelligence and creativity are the evolutionary process become self-conscious. This third part of the paper develops Mead’s concept of morality as essentially a social act which is both cognitive and creative. There are the following subsections: (1) the human agent as a moral agent, (2) Mead and Kant, (3) the nature of the overriding moral imperative, and (4) the creative nature of morality.

(1) The Human Agent as a Moral Agent

David Miller, who has in his possession at the University of Texas, unpublished writings of Mead, summarizes a
distinction made by Mead in those writings of three levels of human conduct. The first level, that of prehistoric men before they have become human and of the infant at very early stages, exhibits behavior which is almost entirely determined by the present and the need for immediate satisfaction with little regard for the future. The second level, that of prehistoric men who have become human, exhibits behavior dominated by the "me," the generalized other of the social group. There is an orientation to the future, but it is one which wishes to repeat the past, maintaining traditions without change. The third level of conduct is exhibited by individuals who act for an open future in terms of new "me's" or social roles created by their "I's." For example, when Henry Ford revolutionized industrial production by his new method of production and when he doubled the prevailing wage rate of his employees, to the consternation of his fellow stockholders, he was attempting to create a new future in which mass production and good wages would make car owners out of the producers of the cars. Ford was an individual who did not let his "I" be dominated by old social roles. It is at this third level of conduct that we shall identify the human agent as a moral agent most precisely; however, not every act at this level will be identified as the act of a moral agent.

Some individuals would identify the human person as a moral agent by the second level of conduct. The moral imperative would be experienced as an internal compulsion to do certain acts, this compulsion perhaps being interpreted as the law of God. However, Paul Pfuetze would recognize Mead as identifying the third level of human conduct as the level at which moral agency can reach its highest development. Pfuetze notes that Mead affirms that the moral agent is best exemplified by an individual like Socrates who criticizes the limits of his present Athenian society, envisioning a universal human community implicit in the customs of that society. However, Pfuetze criticizes Mead's theory of the social self as being unable to explain how it is that social conditioning permits an individual to arise as a social self who can envision a new society.

This criticism may be quickly answered. For Mead holds that the development of the self as a social process of the "I" and the "me" implies a potential membership in a universal community of discourse. One's most general and potential

11 Miller, George Herbert Mead, pp. 229-230.

identity as self-conscious is to be a member of a universal community of rational beings. It could be granted to Pfuetz's objection that one who is raised within a traditional, tribal society, aware of no other cultures, will be unlikely to envision a new community. However, the potentiality to envision such a community is inherent in one's identity as a rational being; and in the Greek city states, communities aware of many diverse cultures, it will be easy for the universal, rational attitude of philosophy to develop as a necessary means for evaluating myths and customs. For conflicts between customs and/or conflicts between human impulses and customs create the situation in which the human agent may achieve moral agency at the third level of human conduct.

Nevertheless, Pfuetze's criticism is partially relevant in that there is no necessity that the agent, aware of conflicting impulses and customs, become a moral agent in attempting to solve his problem. The individual may be very rational in considering all the relevant factors concerning a conflict between the impulse towards pleasure for its own sake and the custom of not hurting others and conclude that what he ought to do, above all else in life, is to maximize pleasure and forget about others. As Castañeda has pointed out, the overriding ought, that is, ought everything being considered, need not be the moral ought. For the agent may not have the moral community as part of his fundamental goal in life, even when he considers rationally all relevant factors.

Mead, however, does attempt to argue that the overriding ought which arises from the consideration of all relevant factors by reason is the moral ought. One way in which he attempts to do so is as follows:

In our reflective conduct we are always reconstructing the immediate society to which we belong. When it comes to the problem of reconstruction there is one essential demand—. . . . One should act with reference to all of the interests that are involved: that is what we would call a "categorical imperative." (MSS, 386)

A second way in which Mead attempts to show that the overriding ought of the social act is the moral ought is found in his statement that the:

process of continuing reconstruction is the process of value, and the only essential imperative I can see is that this essential social process has got to go on—

the community, on the one hand, and the selves that make up the community. It has to continue not so much because the happiness of all is worth more than the happiness of the individual but, being what we are, we have to continue being social beings, and society is essential to the individual just as the individual is essential to society. That relationship has to be kept up, and the problem is how the essential social values involved can be maintained. (PA, 460-461)

The first statement argues from the is of the reflective attempt to reconstruct conflicting interests to the overriding moral ought of harmonizing all relevant interests. The second statement argues from the is of the reflective attempt to reconstruct the social process of the self as the "I" and the "me" involved in social relationships to the overriding moral ought of maintaining the essential values of the social process.

As a deductive inference, the argument from the fact of the universal community of rational discourse as an implicit, constitutive factor of the human self and society to the value of a universal human community as a kingdom of ends can be formulated in the following modus ponens argument:

Premise 1: If, as a member of any particular rational community, "I" am potentially a member of a universal community of rational discourse, then "I" ought to develop as my basic "me" my membership in a universal community of rational discourse, thereby trying to create a kingdom of ends.

Premise 2: As a member of a particular rational community, "I" am potentially a member of a universal community of rational discourse.

Conclusion: Therefore, "I" ought to develop as my basic "me" my membership in a universal community of rational discourse, thereby trying to create a kingdom of ends.

Sellars has argued that rational beings would constitute a moral community if the following two premises were established: "(a) To think of oneself as a rational being is (implicitly) to think of oneself as subject to epistemic oughts binding on rational beings generally. (b) The intersubjective intention to promote epistemic welfare implies the intersubjective intention to promote welfare sans phrase." (Sellars, Science and Metaphysics (New York: Humanities Press, 1968) p. 225) I have reformulated (a) as premise 2 and (b) as premise 1. Similar to Sellars, I believe that (a) or premise 2 is not implausible but that (b) or premise 1 is difficult to justify. Much of the remainder of the paper is a consideration of premise 1.
In the modus ponens argument, the conclusion must be true if both premises are true. In Mead's philosophy, the second premise is necessarily true. He has argued that self-consciousness can only arise in relation with a social other and that one's most general identity implicit in any act of self-awareness involves a relationship to a community of rational beings. For any significant symbol requires that an individual be aware of the gesture as calling forth an expected response from another. Hence, the meaning of a significant symbol is inherently social. Furthermore, for Mead, all thought or reasoning presupposes a logical universe of discourse that is common to all rational beings. Hence, an individual who is explicitly a member of a particular rational community is implicitly a member of a universal rational community.

Although Mead can easily establish premise 2 as necessarily true through his concept of the significant symbol, premise 1 is difficult to establish. From one point of view, premise 1 is not necessarily or analytically true. For granted that one is a member of a universal community of rational discourse, one need not seek to develop that identity; one might try to ignore it as much as possible. From another point of view, if one tried to give a rational justification of why he need not develop the full potentiality of his identity as a rational being, he would be contradicting himself: he would be rational in his very denial of rationality as a goal of behavior. As Kurt Baier has argued, such an individual would be asking "whether doing what is supported by the best reasons is doing what is supported by the best reasons."15

However, to question whether a rational being should be a moral being may not be self-contradictory, if one adopts the viewpoint of the egoist. An egoist may be able to give very good reasons from his point of view as to why he should not develop what Mead is affirming to be every individual's most general identity, namely, the moral self. The egoist could give reasons for the general end which he has chosen, namely, his own happiness with indifference towards the happiness of others. The egoist could say, "Every individual for himself!", and this attitude of his could be adopted by every rational being without contradiction. From the egoist's point of view, premise 1 is not analytically true. When the egoist denies that he ought to work towards a community which is a kingdom of ends, he does not contradict himself.

Nevertheless, Baier's argument that one cannot rationally

reject rationality may be able to be developed into an argument supporting premise 1. Miller argues that in Mead’s perspective a commitment to the community is implicit in any rational discourse. For meaning arises only in the context of the social act, and to communicate with others implies that the communicator will enact his role in the social relation. If the child asks for the toy, he commits himself to accepting it. If an adolescent enters into a basketball game, he commits himself to achieving the goals of that game according to the rules through appropriate interaction with other members of the team. Miller argues that anyone who enters into the social process has made a commitment to live by the generalized other of that social process as accepted or modified by that individual.16

The question, then, is: Does the egoist by entering into social relations with the community as a whole adopt the generalized other of the community, and could his egoistic conduct then be judged as immoral by his own standard, that is, as contradictory to the generalized other of the community which he has accepted as part of his "me?" The answer is that the egoist need not adopt the generalized other of the community as the ideal by which he judges all his conduct. He may simply relate to the community for some economic necessities. By this relationship he is committing himself to be responsible for his behavior to the community according to community standards. However, this commitment may be only an agreement to abide by external legalities. So if he violates a contractual agreement, the community may convict him if the community can catch him. For the egoist may not care about the community but only about his own welfare, and he may very well violate community standards if he believes he can do so without getting caught. It would be true that the egoist would have two roles, one being his external relation to the community for some economic necessities and the other being his relation to himself as an egoist; these roles would not exactly fit together. Yet this inconsistency need not bother him unless his fundamental commitment were to develop a full consistency in his roles.

For Mead, then, the crucial factor in creating moral ideals would be the fundamental commitment to one’s basic role. By this fundamental role, premise 1 may be evaluated in two ways. On the one hand, if the individual does not choose the examined way of life as his fundamental commitment, then he is not choosing his rational self as his basic "me." Since his basic "me" is other than the rational self, he can deny the truth of premise 1 without contradiction. For he does not judge himself by the universal community. On the other hand, 16 Miller, George Herbert Mead, pp. 245-247.
if the individual does choose the examined way of life as his fundamental commitment, then he is choosing his rational self as his basic "me." Since his basic "me" is his rational self, he cannot deny the truth of premise 1 without contradiction. For the individual who has chosen to be fully rational must be willing to submit his decisions to reasonable examination by others; otherwise he would not be fully rational. For rationality is primarily a social process even in the self. In being willing to submit his fundamental commitment to rationality and all his other choices to reasonable examination by others, the individual is affirming that the ideal self is the self which every knowledgeable rational being would approve of.

Now even to say that the ideal self is the self which every knowledgeable rational being would approve of is ambiguous. Mead recognizes this ambiguity in a summation which he makes of the necessary transition from the fact of the self as a social process whose significant symbols are inherently social to the value of a universal rational society. He argues as follows:

Reason is the reference to the relations of things by means of symbols. . . . A system of these symbols is what is called a language. . . . It always involves . . . a co-operative social process. . . .

The universality of meanings implies, then, the organized medium within which it obtains and prevails, what is logically referred to as a universe of discourse. Language is ultimately a form of behavior and calls for the rationally organized society within which it can properly function. It implies common ends, and common ends are ipso facto rational ends.

The very existence, therefore, in human experience of universal meanings sets up the demand for a society in which the common meanings shall become means that embody common ends. . . .

It is possible to conceive of a society whose individuals can all be at one, that is, be good, because wants are eliminated, an ascetic society, whose logical ideal Indian philosophy presented . . . in the form of a Nirvana; or a society of individuals whose abstract common end brings no strife—for example, the society of the New Jerusalem whose common good is the glory of God.

The other conceivable type of a rational society is one . . . in which the common ends may be so embodied in highly organized means that to procure food (for example) is to take part in procuring it for everyone else. Adam Smith enunciated the ideal when he maintained that every sound economic bargain was good for both of those who were involved in the exchange. (PA, 518-519)
The fact that the self can arise as conscious only in relation to another self, sharing a common meaning as the selves interact socially for the ends they intend, establishes those selves as existing in a community. Mead neglects in the above summary to say that these selves could choose to remain within a particular rational community and not to develop their potentiality for a universal moral community. However, as self-conscious, as rational, these selves are potentially members of such a universal community; it is this potentiality which Mead calls a "demand for a society in which the common meanings shall become means that embody common ends." This demand is one which can be evaded by one who does not believe that the unexamined life is not worth living. However, for one who believes that the unexamined life is not worth living, this demand or ideal of a universal society attaining goals common to all, cannot be rationally denied.

What form this universal society may take is partially dependent upon the world-view, philosophical or religious, within which individuals think. One possible universal society is Confucianism, another Stoicism, another Buddhism, another Christianity, another rugged individualism or Social Darwinism, and the list is endless. All of these attitudes could be universalized by adherents of their respective points of view. For example, as long as the Confucian is willing to approve reflectively of what he chooses to do as worthy of the approval of every knowledgeable social other evaluating that role within the Confucian perspective, then the Confucian is being true to his conscience. Of course, his view may be less adequate as a total world-view than Mead's pragmatic naturalism and also less adequate as a theory guiding fruitful moral practice than Mead's theory, but it is not to be judged as an immoral viewpoint by the criterion of a universal society. So the mere recognition of the point of premise 1, namely, that one ought to develop a universal moral society, does not present us with Mead's concept of pragmatic ethics. It is in Mead's evaluation of Kant that we can find the need for a pragmatic justification of premise 1.

(2) Mead and Kant

Mead agrees with Kant that the moral ought, the voice of conscience, does involve a universal form. He argues that:

Only a rational being could give universal form to his act, the lower animals simply follow inclinations; they go after particular ends, but they could not give a universal form to acts. Only a rational being would be able so to generalize his act and the maxim of his act, and the human being has such rationality. . . .
When a person has done something that is questionable, is not the statement that is first made, "That is what anyone would have done in my place"? .... Do unto others as you would have them do unto you; that is, act toward other people as you want them to act toward you under the same conditions. (MSS, 380)

Mead defends Kant's principle of universalization in morality partly as Kant does, that is, logically, but also pragmatically. Mead says that the universalization of the maxim of an immoral act would destroy logically and pragmatically the value of the proposed act. One who would universalize the maxim "Steal the property of others" would have no logical right to claim that his own property ought morally not be stolen. For "if everyone stole, there would not be any such thing as property." (MSS, 380) One who claims rights for himself as a rational being must logically extend those rights to all rational beings. Just as a man who affirms value for himself on the basis that his "me" includes a certain nationality must extend value to all others of his nationality since they share the same generalized other, so also an individual who claims value for himself as a rational and free being ought logically to extend value to every rational and free being since they share the same generalized other.

Mead's logical defense of Kant's universalization principle in morality neglects to consider that an individual through the relationship of his "I" and "me" can constitute himself as a logically consistent, immoral person. As Castañeda has pointed out, the following principle is morally repugnant, but it violates no principle of logic: Everybody but me ought to refrain from inflicting pain just for the sake of enjoying the sight of pain behavior. The individual could be universalizing his maxim of action, claiming that there is a relevant difference between himself and all others, that relevant factor being his own unique identity. Such a difference between him and all others is not relevant from the moral point of view, but it is relevant to one who constitutes his "I-me" process as an immoral person in this case. Of course, Mead could point out that such an individual fails to realize that others can also claim unique identities. More crucially, such an individual fails to realize that what essentially enables him to make a claim for value for himself is not the fact of his unique "I," but the fact of his rationality which has arisen within the social process and always remains relatable to the social process. By such an argument Mead could attempt to persuade this individual to value the community, but this argument does not

---

16 Castañeda, The Structure of Morality, p. 162.
establish that the individual who says "everybody but me" is contradicting the social nature of rationality. For such an individual is constituting himself as a class or community with only one member. He may want to be by himself and to talk with himself only; he can logically restrict himself to a society with only one member. So Mead's logical defense of Kant's universalization principle does not succeed in establishing that one must value the social process of the whole community.

Mead's concept of rationality does establish that the moral ought does involve a universal form, but not what kind of community within which the moral judgment is universalized. For we may identify various forms of community within which an individual might universalize what ought to be done. But some forms of community are antagonistic to the moral community. For example, the individual who constitutes himself as a community with only one member, not interested in others, will very likely create hostility and indifference in others towards himself. Also, the individuals who would constitute themselves into a community such as a band of robbers, will create hostility against themselves. In Mead's viewpoint, such individuals are pragmatically unwise. For in excluding themselves from the entire social process, they tend to exclude themselves from creative developments in art, music, literature, science, philosophy, and friendship. Individuals who exclude themselves from the entire social process would tend to exclude themselves from the values of social life in their best form. As Mead points out, the qualitative achievements of Athenian dramatists and philosophers came to them and the community of Athens because those geniuses participated in a universal community of emotion and rationality. (MSS, 266) Although individuals may logically create exclusive communities without contradiction, they are pragmatically unwise to do so. Hence, the point of premise 1, that people ought to develop their membership in the universal human community, requires for its truth the pragmatism of Mead.

Kurt Baier has analyzed the question, "Why should I follow reason?" in one sense as not worth asking, as self-contradictory. For the question itself is asking for a reason. In agreement, Mead would affirm that if one believes that the unexamined life is not worth living, the ideal of a universal society attaining goals common to all cannot be rationally denied. There is another sense in which the question of why be rational could be meaningful. The question could mean "What values will I find by being rational?" This question asks for a pragmatic justification of
rationality, and Mead's answer has been that pragmatic intelligence enables human cultural evolution to progress. Pragmatic rationality and creativity are evolution become conscious of itself, and the world becomes a moral order when humans approach it morally with pragmatic rationality and creativity. In Mead's words:

The order of the universe we live in is the moral order. It has become the moral order by becoming the self-conscious method of the members of a human society. . . . The world that comes to us from the past possesses and controls us. We possess and control the world we discover and invent. And this is the world of the moral order.\textsuperscript{18}

(3) The Nature of the Overriding Moral Obligation

The previous two sections of this part of the paper have been reflecting upon the modus ponens argument which concludes to the overriding moral obligation: "I' ought to develop as my basic 'me' my membership in a universal community of rational discourse, thereby trying to create a kingdom of ends." The question arises whether this statement is true analytically or synthetically or both. Castañeda's commentary on Kant can provide a helpful perspective: Kant's moral imperative is both analytic and synthetic. Castañeda affirms that:

while a perfect agent needs no oughts because he analytically moves from wanting effects to wanting the necessary means, a finite imperfect agent needs oughts which by revealing the analytic nature of a perfect agent projected from him can synthetically by thinking an ought proposition, approximate somewhat his perfect projection by acquiring an inclination to adopt the necessary means.\textsuperscript{19}

Mead's distinction between the "me" and the "I" can fit in with Castañeda's analysis. The "me" or generalized other which is the ideal moral agent as a member of the universal community analytically or necessarily wills the moral ends and means. As the first section has argued, for the individual who has made the Socratic commitment to the full development of rationality, the overriding moral obligation is analytically true. However, insofar as the self is always

\textsuperscript{18} George Herbert Mead, Selected Writings of George Herbert Mead, edited, with an introduction, by Andrew J. Reck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964) p. 266.

an "I," always capable of rejecting the ideal "me" calling the "I" to be moral, the overriding moral obligation is synthetically true. As the first section argued, an individual need not adopt as his overriding ought the moral ought; he has inclinations contrary to morality which he might let dominate his action. Furthermore, even when the "I" tries to appropriate the viewpoint of the ideal moral agent who considers all relevant factors, the individual cannot be sure that he has correctly defined the problem and considered all relevant factors. (PA, 622) The proposed moral act should be considered as a hypothesis which has taken into account all relevant facts and values. (PA, 464-465)

(4) The Creative Nature of Morality

In section 2, we saw Mead's agreement with Kant that the moral point of view involves a formal universality: one's moral obligation is what anyone ought to have done in one's situation. Mead is not advocating a naive universalization test such as: Would I want everyone to do what I am doing, no matter what the relevant circumstances? Rather, the test is: Would the ideal moral agent, a member of a kingdom of ends, do what I intend to do? The ideal moral agent, the generalized other of the moral community, considers all relevant factors and approves one's role as harmonizing with all the relevant interests and roles of other agents.20

Mead goes on to argue that Kant's universalization test is fundamentally a negative limitation upon action. The test identifies that act as immoral which would not be approved of by the knowledgeable generalized other of the moral community. (MSS, 381) For example, indiscriminate killing is immoral since this kind of action is the killing of others in a wanton and foolish manner, and the universal community cannot approve of such unreasonable action which does not even reflect upon who it is that is being killed. So, for example, the shooting of a rifle into a crowd of shoppers by a madman is indiscriminate killing which does not consider the rights of those being killed; the moral community must condemn such acts as violating the very nature of a reasonable community.

However, Kant's universalization test will not identify the moral act to be done when there is more than one way of acting which would be approved by the knowledgeable generalized other of the moral community. In such a situation, Kant's principle cannot function in a positive manner to identify only one of the alternatives as the overriding

20 Miller, George Herbert Mead, p. 247.
obligation. For example, in human history there have been diverse customs of marriage, and in our recent culture there have been attempts at diverse marriage customs. Furthermore, the roles of men and women in our culture are being redefined. Add to this complex situation the possibilities of cloning and artificial fertilization of the human egg and its growth in an artificial environment, and we have a bewildering moral situation. What sexual and marriage customs and what child conceiving and rearing customs shall the generalized other of the moral community approve? Without attempting to answer that complex question, we can point out that any human act, especially an act in a complex, novel situation, is a hypothesis directing one's interaction with the world and one's social others in terms of how one expects the world and one's social others to respond. As a hypothesis anticipating the response of the world and of one's social others, any human act is attempting to create one's future. The creative act which would be approved of by the knowledgeable generalized other of the moral community is the moral act. This approval must take the consequences of the act into account and be willing to change the approval in the light of the resulting consequences.

This paper has discussed the social nature of self, action, and morality for George Herbert Mead. The self arises only within the social process by taking the viewpoint of the other upon its own action. As a social process, the self is primarily a cognitive reality and is a locus of possibilities for the creation of a new self. Any self as essentially related to a particular rational community is also essentially relatable to a universal rational community, and the self can freely choose to make that membership in the universal rational community its primary identity. This is the choice Socrates made in affirming that the unexamined life is not worth living. Since pragmatic rationality and creativity are the evolutionary method become self-conscious, Mead recommends that the wise manner of developing the universal rational community is to use pragmatic rationality and creativity. On the one hand, the individual who claims value for himself as rational and free ought logically to extend the same value to every other rational and free being for the same reason. On the other hand, the individual who claims value for himself on some basis which excludes value from others may be logically consistent in that exclusion but is pragmatically unwise, depriving himself of the benefits of participating in the universal community. The moral act is the act which would be rationally approved of by the universal moral community. The moral act is essentially a hypothesis to be approved in the light of its consequences for the ideal of humanity as a kingdom of ends.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Dr. William Martin O'Meara
Philosophy & Religion Dept.
James Madison University
Harrisonburg, Va. 22801