In this study I propose to suggest the lines of investigation which ought to be taken by anyone wishing to determine whether some of the ideas discovered in the theory of games, and supported by the philosophy of culture and the theory of finite automata, can be productively employed in epistemology.¹

I. Orientations

Games are common social phenomena; games of all sorts exist in every society. And they are played for all sorts of reasons; for relaxation, for profit, or just for the satisfaction of winning (psychological enhancement). “War games” played in peace time are practice sessions, but war itself is a game, as the application of the theory of games to offensive military strategy in world war II effectively demonstrated. The theory itself grew out of the mathematical interpretation of economic behavior in the well known work by Von Neumann and Morgenstern², but it has been developed since then by a host of others.

If epistemology is the theory of how knowledge is possible and ontology is the theory of what there is, then game theory is a suitable analogy to the philosophical predicament of the individual who is obliged to employ the perspective of his culture to play for his own continued existence by means of whatever strategy he can personally devise in order to conquer his opponents, which are the forces opposed to him in the world in which he lives.

¹ My thanks are due to Professor James K. Feibleman for many valuable suggestions.
In order to suggest the possibility of applying game theory to epistemology it will be necessary first to recognize that the conditions of knowledge under which the experience of the individual takes place are always mediated by an ontology, that is to say, by a system of metaphysical ideas.

Classical epistemology suffered from a serious shortcoming in this respect. For it has dealt for the most part with deliberate and conscious experience only, when the fact is that experience is a much wider category and embraces all sorts of impressions and sensations which occur subliminally and which can be coordinated only by means of a theory of being. Classical epistemology has not taken into account the degree to which it is involved with metaphysics. Every theory of knowledge assumes some theory of reality; every act of experience is conditioned by the anticipation of an encounter with something.

Few philosophers have attempted to make up for the shortcoming. Only Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* suggested the framework of a theory of the beliefs about being in terms of which knowings could occur. Though his efforts were crude and inadequate, and in the end will not do, they do suggest the direction in which inquiry should proceed.

Every pioneer whose discoveries are of sufficient magnitude has to his credit two accomplishments. In making his own contribution he is often responsible for uncovering a field of investigation, so that even after his own work has been left behind his mark remains on the discovery of the field. Others who come later and whose own contributions show a radical departure from his own will still owe much to him.

That is the situation with respect to Kant's proposal. The subjective-relativistic character of his contribution leaves the investigator into the nature of reality no choice but to repudiate it. There is little comfort in a theory which tells us that, by definition, what we want to know that is non-trivial – about ourselves as well as about the world – is inherently unknowable. But at the same time all subsequent investigators must remain in his debt for pointing out that experience can take place only under the conditions which make experience itself possible even though he did not describe those conditions in terms of a system of metaphysics which transcend experience.