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LESZEK KOCZANOWICZ

G. H. Mead and L. S. Vygotsky on Meaning and the Self

The similarities between G. H. Mead's and L. S. Vygotsky's theories are an interesting aspect of the history of social sciences (Glock 1986, Vari-Szilagi 1989). These scholars not only worked totally independently of each other, but also referred to different philosophical assumptions. G. H. Mead remained under the influence of pragmatism whereas for Vygotsky Marxism was the main source of inspiration. Nevertheless, they suggested identical or very similar solutions to many fundamental problems in the methodology of the social sciences. These affinities can be elucidated, I think, on the one hand, by relating their work to the heritage of rationalism and German absolute idealism, and, on the other, by examining their conviction that theoretical reflection must be developed in connection with the empirical sciences. Both of them had to take into account Watson's program of reformulating psychology, according to which psychology was supposed to become a fully objective experimental domain within the natural sciences. The aim of this science was to predict and control behavior. In these assumptions the founder of behaviorism implicitly rejected the principle prevalent since Descartes that consciousness is an original fact that does not call for an explication.

The advent of behaviorism thus revealed the existence of two different methodological options in the social sciences. The first, behaviorist, promised an eradication of a division into natural and social science that was supposed to provide greater cognitive effectiveness for the latter. In turn, the standpoint that assumed consciousness as a point of departure, which

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can be labeled a humanistic orientation, permitted a combination of the social sciences with the heritage of philosophy and humanities. Therefore, the social sciences had to face a dilemma: whether to become a "regular" science at the price of neglecting our cultural or humanistic heritage, or to remain within the humanities and give up the precision and clearness provided by the natural sciences.

The line of division was determined by the attitude to the question of the existence and methodological meaning of mind and consciousness. The behavioristic orientation treated the human as a being whose behavior is totally determined by stimuli, and thus rejected the possibility of human's conscious relation to reality. The humanistic orientation, in emphasizing the conscious character of human actions, located the human in part beyond nature, and consequently ascribed a specific status to the social sciences, basically different from that of natural sciences.

In order to avoid the above-mentioned dilemma, one would have to rethink the relationship between nature and culture. Mead and Vygotsky faced this dilemma and developed new solutions. Reconstructing their thinking, one can say that the following reasons affected the way their problems were defined and solved: First, since both tried to bridge the gap between *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geistwissenschaften*, they had to answer the "behavioristic challenge" by proving that such concepts of *Geistwissenschaften* as "mind" or "consciousness" could remain in the body of science, even if science is developed from the objective point of view. Second, similar to other scientists of that period, they were under the influence of Darwin's theory of evolution. Evolutionary psychology required them to prove that there is a continuity from animal to human behavior. It was Darwin who showed the similarities in the form of emotional behavior in animals and humans, although his book on the expressions of emotions explained only a limited number of aspects of mental life. Third, they regarded the ontological dualism that dominated European thought since Descartes to be the main obstacle in setting up a unified psychology in which one scheme of explanation of human behavior would be possible irrespective of complexity of behavior. Descartes, as is well known, separated thought from body, ascribing to each of them the ability to be independent substances. As a consequence, he had to deal with two kinds of nonrelated psychological phenomena, mental and physiological.

I have mentioned three relatively independent planes from which one can discuss the problem of the relationship between nature and culture in

Mead's and Vygotsky's concepts, but I view them as connected, with the methodological level being the most fundamental. As social scientists both Mead and Vygotsky faced methodological issues arising from this division in psychology. Coping with this problem, they referred to its philosophical fundamentals and expected that it was there that they would find the real solution.

Nevertheless, for both Mead and Vygotsky, ontological and epistemological consideration were crucial for solving methodological questions. "Meaning" for them was a central category, a unit in which a biologically determined action is integrated with a cultural one. Meaning is thus neither thought nor idea existing in mind. Instead, meaning is constituted in action and human interaction.

G. H. Mead gave the following definition of meaning:

> A gesture by one organism, the resultant of the social act in which the gesture is an early phase, and the response of another organism to the gesture, are relata in a triple or threefold relationship of gesture to first organism, of gesture to second organism, and of gesture to subsequent phases of the given social act; and this threefold relationship constitutes the matrix within which meaning arises or which develops into the field of meaning. (Mead 1959, p. 76)

In this way meaning is constituted by gesture and a subsequent social action. Each of these elements represents a different level of the process that constitutes meaning; therefore, I would like to consider them separately.

According to Mead, "gesture" is a notion that enables a transition from action to mind and therefore makes it possible to answer the challenge made by behaviorism. Gesture is action that is rooted in the biological endowment. However, it is due to gesture that social communication is achieved, which is a prerequisite of all social processes. In their simplest forms, gestures are biologically determined actions through which one organism influences another's behavior. Mead's favorite examples are dogs barking at each other and fencers or boxers during a fight. Both are instances of communication, conversation through gestures. Movements of one organism—the barking of a dog or a fencer's attack—evoke a complementary behavior by another organism—the second dog barks at the first, or an opponent assumes an appropriate attitude.

According to Mead there are types of social behavior of instinctual

character, for instance, sexual behavior, some aspects of parental behavior, and differentiated actions in insects' societies. The difference between these types of behavior and communicative actions, even the simplest ones of gestures, is the fact that in the former the other individual is treated merely as part of the environment, whereas the latter aims at a change of another individual's behavior, which carries him or her out of his or her environment. On a specifically human level communication is carried out by gestures that are meaningful, that is, through significant symbols. Gestures acquire meanings when an individual who performs them reacts in the same way as an individual to whom they are addressed. This enables both coordination of actions between individuals and the control of one's behavior (Mead 1959, p. 69).

For Vygotsky meaning is a basic unit of verbal thinking. Meanings of words combine thinking and speech, generalization and communication. A word constitutes an element of thinking because it refers to an entire set of objects and not to an individual thing. Speech is a means of communication; that is its original function (Vygotsky 1965, p. 120). According to Vygotsky this function cannot be separated from generalization. Expressing one's mental states always presupposes relating them to certain general categories. Meaning includes both communicative and cognitive functions of speech. The first can be fulfilled only because meaning is generalization. It creates a framework in which the process of communication can arise and evolve. From the same perspective Vygotsky examines the development of speech in a child, stressing the social character that a child has from the beginning. Further development causes a differentiation of various functions of social speech, and as a consequence there occurs a division into egocentric and communicative speech. The social character of egocentric speech consists in a transference of forms of social interactions into mental functions. Egocentric speech is external as regards its physiological nature, but internal due to its mental functions. Vygotsky assumes that speech development occurs according to the following scheme: social speech - egocentric speech - internal speech. Examinations of egocentric speech make it possible to investigate a process of transformation of the social and external into the individual and internal. The analysis of egocentric speech led Vygotsky to a description of internal speech. Internal speech is a totally different structure, incomparable with external speech, and this structural difference involves a considerable functional difference (Vygotsky 1965, pp. 19–20).

The transition of the external into the internal is a process of cre-

ating new mental qualities and not mere internalization. Such a treatment of internalization was described by Vygotsky's disciple Galperin: the transference onto the plane of consciousness is the transference of mind-formation and not a simple production of meaning (1966, p. 28). According to Galperin such an attitude differentiates the concept of internalization elaborated by Vygotsky from the French sociologists' concept of internalization and Piaget's psychological theory. The sociological concept treated the internalization as the incorporation of elements of social consciousness into an individual consciousness. Piaget regards internalization as an evolution of logical operation from the overt actions to the inner capacities.

It is interesting to compare the concepts of sign and meaning in Mead and Vygotsky with those of behaviorism. Watson denies that his theory does not contain the notion of meaning and says that incorporation of this notion into the behaviorist theory would be possible only on condition that it is reformulated according to his theory. Meaning can be defined, for example, as a way of reacting to a certain object (1961, p. 249). The attitude of the founder of behaviorism can be described as a consistent application of naturalistic strategy in the social sciences. Thus these sciences fulfill criteria that are valid for the natural sciences, which, in turn, should facilitate their cognitive effectiveness. This naturalistic strategy has resulted in a concept of meaning that is limited to a relation between two objects. Applying the scheme 'stimulus - reaction' it is hardly possible to treat meaning as something different than a spatio-temporal relationship. Irrespective of philosophical and methodological pronouncements, a human, according to the behavioristic concept, is viewed as a biological being. Hence, culture is treated in the same way as biological environment, as a source of stimuli or a source of reinforcement. This scheme permits the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the social sciences. However, this application was performed at the price of rejecting the problems and categories of the traditional humanities.

If we analyze Vygotsky's and Mead's concepts in this context, it becomes evident that their aim was to associate behavioristic objectivism with certain notion from *Geistwissenschaften*. Let us consider from this point of view the above-mentioned concepts.

For Mead the following scheme is of crucial importance: gestures - significant symbols - meanings. In this scheme particular elements are built on one another in the sense that simpler elements become aspects of more complex forms. However, it is not clear whether these internal links are of

only genetic character or whether each act of communication is a synthesis of biological and cultural elements. In solving this problem, one may find it useful to analyze Mead's theory of action with regard to the fact that both gestures and significant symbols are certain forms of actions, communicative actions. The act can be described in purely biological categories in four stages: impulse, perception, manipulation, and consummation. In becoming social, the act changes in two respects: First, its internal structure undergoes a change; the stage of manipulation comes to dominate. This manipulation is related to the use of implements and hand-eye coordination for the construction of the world. Second, individual acts become elements of social acts, in which the need to relate the whole act to an individual act disappears. The act is attributed to a social group in a twofold sense: patterns of acts are social and they become objectified in the habits of a group. Social acts distributed among individuals are integrated in virtue of social objects, which are the same for all individuals involved, and in virtue of the mechanisms of communication that enable an ordering of the social act. Thus, transferred to a social level, the biological act becomes the basis for the construction of reality.

In this whole system of activity biological mechanisms have meanings as a general pattern of an act that undergoes far-reaching modifications, an act whose elements can be built up of entirely different structures. Of biological character are impulses, which are a basis for motivation. If we are to relate interdependencies to the problem of sign creation, then we may say that also of biological character would be patterns of reacting to objects. These patterns undergo remarkable changes at the moment they become elements of the social processes. Objects one reacts to are created in the process of social interaction. Mead calls the world in which the act is going on "the world that is there." It is the world composed of objects that achieve validity because they can become a basis for a successful act (1981, pp. 240–47). One finds it tempting to interpret Mead's concept of "the world that is there" as a certain version of phenomenology. There are striking similarities between Husserl's central category of "*Lebenswelt*" and Mead's concept. In both cases we deal with a world that precedes all scientific reflection, although in itself it is not a subject of this reflection. However, in Mead this world is of special character; it consists in part of those elements of scientific theories that have become elements of things. Therefore, the world can evolve and assume newer and newer forms in the course of scientific progress. It is also a world of action and not of consciousness. The aforementioned differences between Husserl's and Mead's con-

cepts shed light on the role of nature in the philosophy of the latter. Relevance to nature is limited only to action as a biological fact. It is only in this sense that we can talk of Mead's naturalism. Gestures in themselves, not being a true language, provide a pattern for communication that in a modified form can be detected in significant symbols and meanings.[1]

Vygotsky's basic assumption is that higher mental functions are determined by facts external to an organism's consciousness. It is the sign that mediates psychological processes. Introducing a sign between a stimulus and a reaction changes the relationship between them. It incorporates cultural and social interactions into mind. Culture does not work in void; a sign enters as an external link between biologically determined stimuli and reactions. Vygotsky clearly states this: culture does not create anything; it only modifies elements given by nature and accommodates them to human purposes (1978, p. 46). Elementary functions are a basis for the creation of mental processes, but they cannot by themselves be changed into higher psychological processes. Prior to the emergence of higher mental processes, there is biological endowment and a social and cultural use of the sign. The social and the biological are totally separated in human phylogenesis. This thesis, obviously related to Vygotsky's perspective, brought about much controversy. However, it is strictly connected with Vygotsky's considerations of the methodological problems of psychology. If mind, or at least its higher level functions, cannot be derived from elementary ones, and if these more complex mental processes should be explained in terms of causality, then there emerges a need to apply a double scheme of determination. Nevertheless, this double scheme does not mean that mind is part of the intersection of nature and culture. Vygotsky strongly emphasizes the fact that both levels of development, which are separated in phylogenesis, are interwoven in ontogenesis, and that in the development of a child these lines are recapitulated, but not identically.

The mechanism of gesture makes it possible to integrate different psychological processes into a whole. For instance, the pointing gesture arises from the seizing gesture: An infant fails to seize an object and this movement is interpreted by adults as a gesture of pointing. This relation between an infant and an object is mediated by an adult. This example well illustrates the functioning of a double model of the determination of behavior. The first phase is purely biological; it is a failure of realization of the instinctual action of seizing. The second phase is of a cultural and social character. The seizing gesture is interpreted as a pointing in a specific social environment. At this moment there appears what Vygotsky labels an

interweaving of the two lines of development. The biological acquires a cultural interpretation that, in turn, releases social actions. However, the biologically determined reactions are a foundation for the social in mind. In Vygotsky's conception there is no simple link between biology and culture. This makes a reductionists interpretation of his psychological concepts impossible. Yet, one could justify inquiring about the biological anchoring of mind. Ultimately every gesture can be ascribed a cultural interpretation; it is an interpretation that releases an action in a social environment, and not a biologically determined character of a gesture. According to Vygotsky the third phase is a synthesis of both previous elements. It is noteworthy that as long as the elements prior to these structures are external to mind, the new quality that emerges is internal. A pointing gesture of which a child is conscious, and which allows the child to communicate with his or her environment, is the synthesis of all three phases. A pointing gesture not only is significant for communication, but also makes it possible to control one's own mental processes.

The above-mentioned considerations enable Vygotsky and Mead to formulate their own theories of the self. As I have said, meaning is conceived by each as a characteristic of action or of interaction among people and not as a relation of words to things. In acting, a subject reacts to senses and meanings and not to physical characteristic of objects. Entering the world of culture-determined meanings, a subject undergoes a change and becomes separated from things and capable of treating itself as an object; that is, it becomes a self. This scheme will now be discussed by means of a relatively simple example: the significance of play to the formation of a child's self. Play and the game are central to Mead's and Vygotsky's conceptions, for they constitute incipient forms of social interaction, methods of interpretation of the world, as well as the initial experience of the self. The child's actions are no more of a biological character, they acquire social meanings, and in this connection their internal structure and function undergo a change.

In analyzing play and the game, Mead emphasizes that both these forms of activity enable formation of the self as a result of taking on a role of the other. In play one assumes roles of concrete individuals, real or imaginary persons. While being himself or herself, a child at the same time becomes someone else. It is typical of play that there appears relative concreteness of situation, which makes Mead draw analogies with the animal world. Such an analogy, however, is limited since an animal is not able to assume roles of

the other in a way that a child does. In play a child is able to provide stimuli that are supposed to cause an expected reaction.

Of a more abstract character is the next stage—that of a game. In this stage a child has to assume the attitudes of all of the participants in the game. Thus a concrete situation disappears and instead there emerges certain abstract totality, which Mead called the "generalized other." The attitude of the generalized other is one of an entire community. Formation of such an attitude is possible because of the rules that organize the game. Depersonalized, those rules enable, and in a sense force, one to assume the attitudes of all persons engaged in pursuing a given social activity. Owing to this, one can relate to oneself as a subject of activity, and thus can achieve a self. Summing up these considerations, Mead writes:

> Children take a great interest in rules. They make rules on the spot in order to help themselves out of difficulties. Part of the enjoyment of the game is to get these rules. Now, the rules are the set of responses which a particular attitude calls out. These responses are all in yourself as well. There you get an organized set of such responses as that to which I have referred, which is something more elaborate than the roles found in play. Here there is just set of responses that follow on each other indefinitely. At such a stage we speak of a child as not yet having a fully developed self. The child responds in a fairly intelligent fashion to the immediate stimuli that come to him, but they are not organized. He does not organize his life as we would like to have him do, namely, as a whole. There is just a set of responses of the type of play. The child reacts to a certain stimulus, and the reaction is in himself that is called out in other, but he is not a whole self. In his game he has to have an organization of these roles; otherwise he cannot play the game. The game represents the passage in the life of the child from taking the role of others in play to the organized part that is essential to self-consciousness in the full sense of the term. (1959, p. 152)

Vygotsky's point of departure in the analysis of a child's play resides in conflict between the emotional and the cognitive sphere. On the one hand, a child reveals a tendency toward the instantaneous satisfaction of needs, while on the other, a child is capable of a cognitive transfer of characteristics of one thing to another. These processes give rise to a child's ability to create an imagined situation. Cognitively, meanings have to a high degree a concrete referent.

> It is well known that in a child's play certain objects very easily symbolize other ones, substitute for them, become their signs. It is worth noting the importance of similarity between a toy and an object the toy symbolizes, but even more important is when the child treats the toy in functional terms, and by means of it performs imagined gestures. To my mind this is clue to child's play. A child's own movement, its gesture turns out to be that which makes a given object function, which communicates sense to a child. (cited in Elkonin 1976, 96)

In this way, as Elkonin comments, play is conceived as a complex system of speech by means of gestures, which endow particular toys with meaning. Thus, meaning is a characteristic of gestures and not of objects. A child uses symbols, but they are not voluntary or fully abstract. An object that substitutes for another object has to have properties that enable it to serve such a function. In turn, these properties are relativized to gestures. We can say, then, that play is a complex structure whose elements are constituted by emotions aimed at immediate satisfaction, cognitive processes that allow the creation of an imagined situation, physical properties of objects that enable them to adopt to the structure of gestures, the gestures themselves or actions performed on objects, and the implicit existing of the world of adults (which functions not only as model of an imagined situation, but also as a reference point for a child's actions and experiences).

This complex structure comprises certain contradictions that cause change within it. There is a contradiction between an abstract meaning and its concrete realization, and between the imagined situation—which is a sphere of relative freedom—and the rules the child has to obey in play. Play develops from an imagined situation to one with rules, and from meanings pertaining to objects to more and more advanced (abstract) ones. At the level of play, the above-mentioned conflicts cannot be solved because even in the most advanced play there are not really abstract concepts or actions based on rules since those would contradict the essence of play. From the perspective of the development of personality, Vygotsky emphasizes the development of will and the evolution of a notion of "self": personality develops as one reaches the stage of play with rules; obedience to rules makes it possible to view oneself as an object and to become isolated from the immediate situation. In cognitive terms this process is analogical to emancipation of meaning from the pressure of concrete situations. Together with the development of play, there takes place a subordination of perceiving things and actions to senses and meanings of words. Meaning

emerges in the course of action; for such a process to take place, however, meaning has to exist in the advanced form, that of a symbol. Only in this way can one understand the contradiction between meaning pertaining to gestures and an abstract concept.

The above-mentioned examples will have made it possible to establish a relationship between meanings and the formation and functioning of the self. Acquisition of meaning parallels the emergence of a child's self since both these processes are only aspects of one single activity consisting in a child's entering more and more complex social interactions. These interactions are in turn determined by a social reality that provides models for situations appearing in play. Mead argues that the emergence of meaning results from the mutual adaptation and action of individuals, whereas in Vygotsky the main mechanism consists in a conflict between an abstract concept carried by a word and its concrete realization in the process of communication. According to Mead a social process enables the creation of meanings:

> The social process in a sense constitutes the objects to which it [organism—L. K.] responds, or to which it is an adjustment. That is to say, objects are constituted in terms of meanings within the social process of experience and behavior through the mutual adjustment to one another of the responses or actions of the various individual organisms involved in that process, an adjustment made possible by means of communication which takes the form of conversation of gestures in the earlier evolutionary stages of that process, and of language in its later stages. (Mead 1959, p. 77)

This process, and the adaptation occurring in conversation, are primary in relation to objects to which an organism reacts. Objectively existing meanings will come into being in the experience of an individual, thus creating the basis for the self. Transition from meaning to consciousness is possible owing to the mechanism of "taking a role of the other." An individual relates to his or her own activity in the same way as to other people's activity, or, in other words, an individual is able to provide stimuli to his or her own behavior. At this moment a division into the subject and object of behavior disappears and an individual is both. However, for this unity to exist a social process and mutual relations among people are necessary. Hence we finally arrive at three-part scheme: meaning as objective relations among organisms; assuming the attitude of the other, that is,

viewing oneself from an external position (the self); and, eventually, incorporating realized meanings (meaningful symbols) into the action (mind).

For Vygotsky, the confrontation of the full meaning of a word (concept) with actual child's abilities are a basic mechanism of development. An objective situation—which sets and is a framework for the rules of interaction—can be identified to a high degree with meaning since it works through imposing sense in particular behaviors. Objectivity of existence and examination of mind is justified by the fact that cultural structures are at the same time internal and external to the subject. The cultural structures react to biological structures of an organism, transforming them in such a way that a totality can achieve a level determined by the most "developed" cultural structure (i.e., the scientific concepts). It is speech that is an instrument enabling realization of this task. Both thinking and interactions are supposed to take place at the preverbal level, but then one does not trigger mechanism of development leading to abstract thinking and thus to creation of the self. The cognitive meaning of interactions and preverbal actions, though not devoid of an implicit conceptual content, do not comprise the contradictions that are given in the meaning of a word. Word represents, on the one hand, a concept, while on the other, it can be an instrument of action and cooperation at the level that is possible at a particular stage in the development of mental structures. Thus, there emerges a conflict between a concept and its empirical realization. For Vygotsky this conflict is a basis for a development of concepts and by the same token for the development of mental structures; eventually it leads to the emergence of self-awareness and separation of an individual as the self. Vygotsky's theory interpreted in such a way can be located within the interactional scheme; yet with a reservation that interactions are preceded by cognitive structures that exist in people's minds as completed schemes of interpretation and that also objectively exist as social situations determining directions in acting.

Objectivity for Vygotsky has a foundation in culture, and it is to culture, rather than to empirical procedures, that his theory is related. However, Vygotsky was not satisfied with the final form of his theory, perhaps because of a lack of a transitional stage between action and thinking, between human's empirical existence and the ways of development of human's cognitive structures. The unfinished monograph on emotions proves his dissatisfaction. Emotions, if they would have been incorporated in the theory, would have helped to prove Vygotsky's standpoint and could have

served as a missing link between thinking and action. That Spinoza's philosophy became a historical model for Vygotsky proves that he attempted to extend his rationalistic attitude rather than to revise it. In Spinoza's philosophy, the unity of the symptoms of mental life results from his assumptions of the structure of reality. Similarly, for Vygotsky, rational, hierarchic, and conceptual nature of the world legitimizes the assumed model of mind.

In order to legitimize his concept of the functioning of mind, Mead had to accept metaphysical assumptions. As a basic unit of action, the act is a model for structure and functioning of the world. Action not only is a model of the structure of reality, but also, depending on the level on which it takes place, serves specific functions as a basic structure of every process. Mind and self appear, as an effect of overlapping the characteristics of a social process and the general characteristics of action itself, prior to society. From the mutual connections of individuals' actions, Mead gradually derives basic psychological categories, such as mind, thinking, or consciousness. Mead claims that for the description of the human mind a single language is sufficient—the language of action.[2] However, if we analyze his concepts in detail, it becomes clear that the structure and functions of action, at least at the social level, are subjected to cultural factors.

If we are to take into consideration Mead's cosmological ideas according to which the principle of emergence is the basic one, Mead's naturalism comes to seem only apparent. It is possible that his concept is extremely anthropocentric in the sense that it views the world from the perspective of the emergence of mind. Mead frequently speaks of Kant's conception as the one in which mind imposes order upon the world. Probably Mead's concept could be described in the following way: Mind imposes rules of the world's evolution.

In closing I intend to emphasize similarities that occur in Vygotsky's and Mead's works. However, I am not as interested in concentrating on peculiarities to be found in the history of ideas as I am in explicating the problem that was central to the works of both philosophers. I refer here to the problem of the status of the social sciences in relation to the natural sciences and the humanities. This problem was considered particularly acute by both theorists. Both of them faced the problem of introducing a paradigm that could attribute the relationship of the natural sciences. They were, however, not willing to reject the heritage of humanities as a consequence of recognizing psychology as a natural science.

The meaning of their concepts for the social sciences are as follows: in their works the problem of the relationship between the natural and social sciences was posed in pure form; they considered all philosophical and methodological issues related to it and offered solutions that are still valid.

Their common inspiration helps explain the similarities between their two approaches. Both Mead and Vygotsky built their concepts on the clash of empirical material and metaphysical premises taken from German philosophy, although it should be mentioned that these metaphysical appeals to German transcendentalism are instances of organizing and transforming the empirical results of particular sciences.

The solution to the methodological problem is viewed by them from the perspective of recovering a lost unity of nature and culture. This line of thinking has been present in European thought at least since the Renaissance. However, in the German philosophy referred to by these authors, it is Schelling's ideas that may have the greatest importance. Schelling presented the concept of the division into nature and culture as a necessary stage in the development of thinking. This duality, justified in Descartes's philosophy, enabled the study of nature as an object, and as a consequence it became a basis for the success of mechanistic physics. Schelling claimed that it was time to return to the unity of nature and culture. Nevertheless, he referred to those philosophical concepts that ran counter to the dominance of mechanistic thinking (e.g., those of Spinoza, Leibniz, and medieval mystics). Mead and Vygotsky are also situated within this mode of thinking. Language, understood as a system of significant symbols or concepts, is that which unifies culture and nature as a transcendental condition of their unity. The introduction of the category of communicative acts allows the introduction of these assumptions into the sphere of empirical facts. On the one hand, language expresses the objectification of consciousness; it is a means of communication and the basis for the self-regulation of behavior. Behavior is not merely a system of movements, but a system of acts organized by culture. Such a perspective, on the other hand, allows a genetic derivation of mind from actions, and the mental becomes a necessary condition of every action. Thus there disappears the dualism of prebehavioristic psychology and behavioristic naturalism. The achievement of this goal requires an acceptance of strong philosophical assumptions in which one claims that nature is constituted in social interaction. Again referring to Schelling, we can repeat: "*Der Geist, indem er überhaupt Objecte anschaut, nur sich selbst anschaut*" (1856–1861, I366).

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NOTES

1. Mead ascribes a special role to the vocal gestures: "We are, especially through the use of the vocal gestures, continually arousing in ourselves those responses which we call out in other persons into our own conduct. The critical importance of language in the development of human experience lies in the fact that the stimulus is one that can react upon the speaking individual as it reacts upon the other" (*Mind, Self and Society*, p. 69).

2. "Mind, which is a process within which this analysis and its indications take place, lies in a field of conduct between a specific individual and the environment, in which the individual is able, through the generalized attitude he assumes, to make use of symbolic gestures, i.e., terms which are significant to all individuals including himself" (Mead, "A Behavioristic Account," p. 247).

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