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# LANGUAGE, LOGIC, AND CULTURE

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PROBLEMS of a sociology of knowledge arise when certain conceptions and findings of the cultural sciences are confronted by theories of knowing and methodology. Awareness of the social and economic factors operative in reflective processes have arisen within American sociology as peripheral notations on specific researches and as implicit in psychology when sociologically approached.<sup>1</sup> However, the relevant sociological materials, particularly as they bear on the nature of mind and language, are as yet unexploited by those interested in sociological theories of knowledge and in the cultural careers of ideas.

Sociologies of knowledge have found elaborate statement in other contexts,<sup>2</sup> but American social scientists have not assimilated or developed theories adequate to carry on historical reconstructions of thought from a cultural standpoint, nor have they attempted systematically to state the implications of such an attempt for methodology and theories of reflection.<sup>3</sup> Despite this lack of postulational framework and empirical hypotheses, assumed and unanalyzed 'answers' to certain theoretical questions are operative in the minds of many sociologists. It is the business of the theorist to articulate such assumptions as precise hypotheses and to examine them critically.

There are two viewpoints from which the social determination of mentality and ideas may be regarded. These are *historical* and *socio-psychological*. Without a formulation of mind which permits social determinants a role in reflection, assertions on the larger historical level carry less intellectual weight. A theory of mind is needed which conceives social factors as intrinsic to mentality. We may view the problems of a sociology of knowledge on a historical level; but we must also view our generic hypothesis on the socio-psychological level.

One chief defect of extant sociologies of knowledge is that they lack understanding and clear-cut formulations of the *terms* with which they would connect mind and other societal factors. This deficiency is, in turn, rooted in a failure to recognize the psychological problems arising from the acceptance of the generic hypothesis.

Sidney Hook has recently contended that it is not difficult to point out

<sup>1</sup> Cf. L. Wirth's preface to Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, xxi, New York, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> The German *Wissenssoziologie* and the French sociological theories of knowledge. For a reasonably adequate bibliography of the German materials, see Wirth-Shils' translation of Mannheim, *op. cit.*, 281 ff. For French, see reviews and monographs in *L'Année Sociologique*, vols. I-XII.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. however, H. Becker's brief, substantive presentations scattered through his and H. E. Barnes' *Social Thought from Lore to Science*, New York, 1938.

'historical relations' of "rationalism" with "conservatism;" "empiricism" with "liberalistic" political orientations.<sup>4</sup> It is not difficult to impute historical relations, but what exactly is a historical relation? Although doctrines, like other complexes in culture, have a sort of existence apart from any one or two biological organisms, we must admit that ultimately reflection (a process whereby beliefs come to be doubted, discarded, or reformulated) has its seat in a minded organism and is a symbolic performance by it. Perhaps any one individual does not seriously dent a given system of belief. Perhaps in the long historical trends of belief, the drift of thought is, as Lecky believed,<sup>5</sup> determined more by minute changes effected by hundreds of thinkers than by a dozen "great" ones. Nevertheless, we must ask for the *modus operandi* of these rejections, reformulations, and acceptances. The rounding out of a systematic sociological theory of knowledge involves our handling that question in socio-psychological categories. Granted that changes in culture influence trends in intellectual work and belief we must ask *how* such influences are exerted. That is a question to be answered by a social psychology, a psychology which studies the impact of social structures and objects, of class biases, and technological changes upon the mind of an organism.

Strictly speaking, the psychological is not "the personal." The individual is not the point of departure for contemporary social psychology; the "mental" is not understood apart from definitely social items. At present, the sociology of knowledge needs a more adequate psychological base than has been given it. Many sociologies of knowledge disregard psychological considerations as "irrelevant to a sociological setting" of intellectual patterns. The socio-psychological "aspect of the problem is either altogether disregarded or is disguised in terms which baffle empirical investigation."<sup>6</sup> We find this deficiency exhibited by Marxists. From psychological and epistemological standpoints, such general terms as are used by Marxists to relate 'ideas' and societal factors (e.g., "reflect," "mold," "determine," "penetrate") are not incisive; question-begging, they hide inadequate analysis. Marxists have not translated their connective terms into sound and unambiguous psychological categories.<sup>7</sup> Much criticism of their numerous

<sup>4</sup> *Social Frontier*, vol. VI, no. 32, Feb. 1938.

<sup>5</sup> *History of the Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe* (1919 edition), vol. I, 15-16; vol. II, 100-101.

<sup>6</sup> Hans Speier, "The Social Determination of Ideas," gives a brief indication of the need for handling the problems of a sociology of knowledge on a psychological level. *Social Research*, May 1938.

<sup>7</sup> K. Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 25, 84-85, and introduction to *Critique of Political Economy*. N. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirical Criticism*, p. 300. Engels, *Feuerbach*, pp. 73, 96, 117. Also, M. M. Bober, *Marx's Interpretation of History*, 298. More recently, see Pannecoeck's psychologically feeble attempt to relate "thought" and social factors in *Science and Society*, vol. I, Summer 1937, 445. For positive contributions of Marxism to the sociology of knowledge, cf. Mannheim, *op. cit.*, 51, 66-67, 69, 110, 112, 248, 278.

attempts at ideological analysis are grounded in the implicit assumption, on the part of both Marxists and their critics, of traditional, individualistic theories of mind. What is needed is a concept of mind which incorporates social processes as intrinsic to mental operations.

This lack of psychological formulation is by no means confined to Marxism. More sophisticated sociologies of knowledge contain the same deficiency. Mannheim, e.g., covers up his psychological inadequacy with a vague and unanalyzed "collective unconscious."<sup>8</sup> The psychological difficulties attendant upon such a conception are evidently not recognized.

Even if we grant that "thought" in some manner involves social processes, the thought is, nevertheless, a lingual performance of an individual thinker. We cannot "functionalize" reflection in social terms by postulating a "collective subject;"<sup>9</sup> nor can we avoid the fact that there is no "group mind" by conveniently using implicit conceptions of "collective subjects." We can socially functionalize a given thinker's production only when we have made explicit, and systematically applied, a sound hypothesis of the specific sociopsychologic mechanisms by which cultural determinants are operative. Without a thorough-going social theory of mind, there is real danger that research in the sociology of knowledge may become a set of mere historical enumerations and a calling of names. Only with such construction can we gain a clear and dynamic conception of the relations imputed between a thinker and his social context. Until we build a set of theoretically substantial hypotheses of socio-psychological nature, our research is likely to remain frustrated and our larger theoretical claims feeble. I wish to advance two such hypotheses.

The first is derived from the social statement of mind presented by G. H. Mead.<sup>10</sup> It is his concept of the "generalized other" which, with certain modification and extension, we may employ to show how societal processes enter as determinants into reflection.<sup>11</sup> The generalized other is the internalized audience with which the thinker converses: a focalized and abstracted organization of attitudes of those implicated in the social field of behavior and experience. The structure and contents of selected and subsequently selective social experiences imported into mind constitute the generalized other with which the thinker converses and which is socially limited and limiting.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, 28, 30-48.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. von Schelting's review of Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, *Amer. Sociol. Rev.*, Feb. 1936, 665.

<sup>10</sup> *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago, 1934. Also see bibliography of Mead's articles.

<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.*, 155 ff.

<sup>12</sup> My conception of the generalized other differs from Mead's in one respect crucial to its usage in the sociology of knowledge: I do not believe (as Mead does, *op. cit.*, 154) that the generalized other incorporates 'the whole society;' but rather that it stands for selected societal segments. Mead's statements regarding this point are, I believe, functions of an inadequate theory of society and of certain democratic persuasions. These are not, however, logically necessary to the general outline of his social theory of mind.

Thinking follows the pattern of conversation. It is a give and take. It is an interplay of meanings. The audience conditions the talker; the other conditions the thinker and the outcome of their interaction is a function of both interactants. From the standpoint of the thinker, the socialization of his thought is coincidental with its revision. The social and intellectual habits and character of the audience, as elements in this interaction, condition the statements of the thinker and the fixation of beliefs evolving from that interplay. Thought is not an interaction as between two impenetrable atoms; it is conversational and dynamic; i.e., the elements involved interpenetrate and modify the existence and status of one another. Imported into mind, this symbolic interplay constitutes the structure of mentality.

It is in conversing with this internalized organization of collective attitudes that ideas are logically, i.e., implicitly, "tested." Here they meet recalcitrance and rejection, reformulation and acceptance. Reasoning, as C. S. Peirce has indicated,<sup>13</sup> involves deliberate approval of one's reasoning. One operates logically (applies standardized critiques) upon propositions and arguments (his own included) from the standpoint of a generalized other. It is from this socially constituted viewpoint that one approves or disapproves of given arguments as logical or illogical, valid or invalid.

No individual can be logical unless there be agreement among the members of his universe of discourse as to the validity of some general conception of good reasoning. Deliberate logical approval is based upon comparison of the argument approved with some common idea of how good argument should appear. The 'laws of logic' impose a restriction upon assertion and argument. They are the rules we must follow if we would socialize our thought.<sup>14</sup> They are not arrived at intuitively, nor are they *given*, "innate within the mind." They are not to be "taken as formulating generic characters of existences outside of inquiry or the traits of all possible being." Rather, the principles of logic are "the rules by means of which the meanings of our terms are explicated . . . the principles of logic are . . . conventional without being arbitrary . . . they are shaped and selected by the instrumental character of discourse, by the goals of inquiry and discourse."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Collected Papers of Charles Peirce*, vol. II, 108, Cambridge, Mass., 1934.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Piaget's experiments on children substantiate such a viewpoint. Cf. *Language and Thought of the Child*, New York, 1926; *Judgment and Reasoning in the Child*, New York, 1928. For Durkheim's view of the rise of logical categories from social forms, see his and Mauss' monograph in *L'Année Sociologique*, vol. VI, Paris, 1903, 1-72; also M. Granet's Durkheimian analysis of non-Aristotelian Chinese categories, in *Le Pensée Chinoise*. Paris, 1934.

<sup>15</sup> Ernest Nagel, "Some Theses in the Philosophy of Logic," *Phil. of Sci.*, Jan. 1938; 49-50. Nagel notes "a marked tendency" in pure logic towards the view "that the subject matter of logic is discourse." The linguistic view of logic I believe eminently sound, but with a growing recognition of the social and behavioral character of language, it needs to be set within a social context. From another angle, I should ask of Nagel that some order be found among these "shifts" in the "goals of inquiry and discourse" which shape and select the principles of logic. Such an attempt would require a sociological implementation. An attempt to isolate the social determinants of "goals of inquiry and discourse" would not only be in line with the program of

There is evidence that the so-called laws of proof may be merely the conventional abstract rules governing what are accepted as valid conversational extensions. What we call illogicality is similar to immorality in that both are deviations from norms. We know that such thought-ways change.<sup>16</sup> Arguments which in the discourse of one group or epoch are accepted as valid, in other times and conversations are not so received.<sup>17</sup> That which was long meditated upon is now brushed aside as illogical. Problems set by one logic are, with a change in interests, outgrown, not solved.<sup>18</sup> The rules of the game change with a shift in interests, and we must accept the dominant rules if we would make an impress upon the profile of thought. Our logical apparatus are formulated by the rebuffs and approvals received from the audiences of our thought. When we converse with ourselves in thought, a generalized other as the carrier of a socially derived logical apparatus restricts and governs the directions of that thought. Although not always the ultimate critique, logical rules serve as an ultimatum for most ideas. Often on this basis are selected out those ideas which will not be spoken, but forgotten; those that will not be experimentally applied, but discarded as incipient hypotheses. In general, conformity to current principles of logic is a necessary condition for the acceptance and diffusion of ideas. This is true because principles of logic are the abstracted statements of social rules derived from the dominant diffusion patterns of ideas. In attempting to implement the socialization of our interests and thought, we acquire and utilize a socially derived logical apparatus. Within the inner forum of reflection, the generalized other functions as a socially derived mechanism through which logical evaluation operates.

Social habits are not only overt and social actions which recur,—they leave residues, “apperceptive masses,” which conform to dominant and recurring activities and are built by them. In human communities, such dominant fields of behavior have implicates in terms of systems of value. The interest-evaluative implication of a social structure has been termed its ethos.<sup>19</sup> Dominant activities (e.g., occupations) determine and sustain modes of satisfaction, mark definitions of value preference; embodied in language, they make perception discriminatory. The stuff of ideas is not

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the sociology of knowledge but, if successful, would strengthen Nagel's thesis that the principles of logic are “conventional without being arbitrary.”

<sup>16</sup> Bogoslovsky in his *Technique of Controversy*, New York, 1928, has shown that, e.g., John Dewey's writings reveal grave logical fallacies if judged by the rules of classical logic. He attempts to delineate a new set of logical principles based on an analysis of Dewey's actual modes of thought. Bogoslovsky is tabulating new rules that have come into being. No logician can “make up” a system of logic. Like coins, they are genuine by virtue of their dominant currency.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Lecky, *op. cit.*, vol. II, 100-101, etc. Also Sumner's *Folkways*, 33, 174-175, 193-195, 225.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Dewey's article in *Creative Intelligence*, 3. New York, 1917.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. H. Speier's usage of ethos, *op. cit.*, 196.

merely sensory experiences, but meanings which have back of them collective habits.

When a system of social actions actually “breaks down” in “social conflict,” *some* thinkers call this a “social problem”, but not all “conflicts” of all groups are termed problematic by all thinkers. “Social problems” are not universally recognized as problematic, as occasions for thought: there is no “*the economic problem.*” The “direction” of organized social action which sustains specific values conditions what constitutes a problem. The value-interest implicates of a social structure are the guiding threads along which problems emerge. Problems are relative to an ethos.<sup>20</sup>

The thinker does not often play an immediate active role in large social strata or institutional frames, and hence, does not build through direct action a generic pattern of habit and value which would constitute a selective detector of “problems,” a background of mind. Nevertheless, there are two other modes by which he may come to be influenced by such residues. He may intentionally identify himself with an ethos<sup>21</sup> rooted in a structure of social habits, thus vicariously participating in and articulating a particular social segment’s interests; or, if his thought is appreciatively diffused, members of his audience will possess mental characteristics built by direct social action. It is often through such audiences that a thinker is culturally claimed, because, when his doctrine and his *further* thought gravitate toward a responsive audience it means that he has responded (whether he is at first aware of it or not) to “problems” defined by the activities and values of his audience. A reflective response to a social environment, assimilated by its members, is always related to the “needs” of that particular environment. Defined operationally (externally and behaviorially), that environment is the largely unreflective behavior patterns of a specific set of groups, e.g., a class, or a set of institutions. Viewed internally, as a func-

<sup>20</sup> Cf. T. Parson’s presentation of Max Weber’s notion of *Wertbeziehung*, (“relevance to value”), as a methodological concern, i.e., as an organizing principle within empirical research, *The Structure of Social Action*, 593, 601 ff., New York, 1938.

<sup>21</sup> This “special pleading” is the most usual “connection” imputed—often it is considered exhaustive. (E.g., S. Hook: *Marxist Quarterly*, vol. I, 454). Undoubtedly many social doctrines are definitively affected by their originator’s or publicist’s interest in intentionally aiding or hindering the perpetuation of a social movement or institution; but I would not confine the connection between thought and other cultural items to a thinker’s conscious “interest” or the conscious utilization of a doctrine as a “social forensic” by any professional talker. If this were the only connection to be ascertained, then our generic hypothesis would be seriously weakened. We should have to impute to the thinker the attributes of the “economic man,” i.e., knowing what are his social interests and thinking accordingly. Moreover, the connection stated merely in terms of “interest” begs the major question; it tells us nothing as to exactly *how* such “social interests” climb into thinking, and this is what we must explain. Without such an explanation, the imputation of interest connotes that the relationship occurs “rationally,” within the mind of the thinker, within his conscious intellectual and social intentions. If the sociology of knowledge is to be psychologically limited to this economic man theory of the thinker, we had all better reduce our expectations of it, both as theory and as an integrating viewpoint for cultural reconstructions of intellectual history.

tion or field of mind, we have contended for this environment's influence on thought, because such specific fields of social behavior develop and sustain organized sets of attitudes; when internalized, these constitute a thinker's generalized other which functions as that with and against which he carries on his internal conversation. It is by virtue of this essentially social structure of mind that sociological factors influence the fixation not only of the evaluative but also of the intellectual. On the one hand, the generalized other is an element involved in the functioning and conditioning of the outcome of the reflective processes; it is the seat of a logical apparatus; on the other hand, it is constituted by the organized attitudinal implicates of cultural forms, by institutional ethos, and by the behaviors of economic classes.

When confronted with a system of thought, or the reasoned assertions of a thinker, our sociological perspective toward knowledge attempts to "locate" a set of determinants within contemporaneous fields of societal values. We try to locate the thinker with reference to his assimilated portion of culture, to delineate the cultural influences in his thought and the influences (if any) of his thought upon cultural changes.

In an attempt to outline approaches to this problem, we now take another angle of departure from which we cast a hypothesis and a methodology. We might conceive the following set of remarks as a formulation of another socio-psychological "mechanism" connecting thinking with societal patterns. We construct it from a conjunction of the social dimensions of language with the fundamental role of language in thought. By approaching the interrelatedness of sociality and reflection, our perspective enables us to view as a "unit" matters which have traditionally been handled on three levels of theory. Between them are two "gaps" which we "fill." First, we consider the nature of language and meaning in terms of social behaviors. Second, we consider the nature of reflection in terms of meaning and language.

From a concept of language as an "expression of antecedent ideas," the psychologists have gravitated toward a functional conception of language as a mediator of human behaviors. From the isolated grammatical and philological, field ethnologists have moved to the social-behavioral setting of linguistic materials.<sup>22</sup> Given additional cogency by their convergence, both these movements proceed toward the notion that the meanings of symbols are defined and redefined by socially coordinated actions. The function of words is the mediation of social behaviors, and their meanings are dependent upon this social and behavioral function. Semantical changes are surrogates and foci of cultural conflicts and groupal behaviors. Because

<sup>22</sup> For an excellent summary of these movements' literature, see E. Esper's article "Language" in *Handbook for Social Psychology*, ed. Carl Murchison. Worcester, Mass. 1934. See his comments on Grace DeLaguna and B. Malinowski.

language functions in the organization and control of behavior patterns, these patterns are determinants of the meanings in a language. Words carry meanings by virtue of dominant interpretations placed upon them by social behaviors. Interpretations or meanings spring from the habitual modes of behavior which pivot upon symbols. Such social patterns of behavior constitute the meanings of the symbols. Nonlinguistic behaviors are guided or manipulated by linguistic materials, and language is the ubiquitous string in the web of patterned human behavior.

We can view language functionally as a system of social control. A symbol, a recurrent language form, gains its status as a symbol, an event with meaning, because it produces a similar response from both the utterer and the hearer.<sup>23</sup> Communication must set up common modes of response in order to be communication; the meaning of language is the common social behavior evoked by it. Symbols are the "directing pivots" of social behaviors. They are also the indispensable condition of human mentality. The meanings of words are formed and sustained by the interactions of human collectivities, and thought is the manipulation of such meanings. Mind is the interplay of the organism with social situations mediated by symbols. The patterns of social behavior with their "cultural drifts," values, and political orientations extend a control over thought by means of language. It is only by utilizing the symbols common to his group that a thinker can think and communicate. Language, socially built and maintained, embodies implicit exhortations and social evaluations.<sup>24</sup> By acquiring the categories of a language, we acquire the structured "ways" of a group, and along with the language, the value-implicates of those "ways." Our behavior and perception, our logic and thought, come within the control ambit of a system of language. Along with language, we acquire a set of social norms and values. A vocabulary is not merely a string of words; immanent within it are societal textures—institutional and political coordinates. Back of a vocabulary lie sets of collective action.

No thinker utilizes the total vocabulary afforded by his societal context nor is he limited to it. We acquire the systematic vocabularies of intellectual traditions built by other thinkers from diverse cultures. We build an intellectual orientation by gathering for ourselves a dictionary of interrelated terms. As we "grow" intellectually, we selectively build new linguistic habits. Like other habits, linguistic or conceptual ones are built on previous resi-

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Mead, *op. cit.*, sec. II.

<sup>24</sup> K. Burke puts it thus: "Speech takes its shape from the fact that it is used by people acting together. It is an adjunct of action—and thus naturally contains the elements of exhortation and threat which stimulate action and give it direction. It thus tends naturally towards the use of implicit moral weightings: the names for things and operations smuggle in connotations of good and bad—a noun tends to carry with it a kind of invisible adjective, and a verb an invisible adverb." *Permanence and Change*, 243–244. Cf. also Marcel Granet, *op. cit.*, for discussion of the heavy value-dimension in Chinese vocabularies and syntax.

dues. Prior linguistic and conceptual accomplishments are conditions for the acquisition of new habits of thought, new meanings. Thinking is the selection and manipulation of available symbolic material.

We may "locate" a thinker among political and social coordinates by ascertaining what words his functioning vocabulary contains and what nuances of meaning and value they embody. In studying vocabularies, we detect implicit evaluations and the collective patterns behind them,— "cues" for social behavior. A thinker's social and political "rationale" is exhibited in his choice and use of words. Vocabularies socially canalize thought.

We must recognize the priority of a system of meanings to a thinker. Thinking influences language very little, but thought, as Malinowski has indicated, "having to borrow from (social) action its tool, is largely influenced thereby."<sup>25</sup> No thinker can assign arbitrary meanings to his terms and be understood. Meaning is antecedently *given*; it is a collective "creation." In manipulating a set of socially given symbols, thought is itself manipulated. Symbols are impersonal and imperative determinants of thought because they manifest collective purposes and evaluations. New nuances of meaning which a thinker may give to words are, of course, socially significant in themselves;<sup>26</sup> but such 'new' meanings must in their definition draw upon the meanings and organization of collectively established words in order that they may be understood, and they are conditioned thereby; and so is the acceptance and/or rejection of them by others.

Here, again, the thinker is "circumscribed" by his audience, because, in order to communicate, to be understood, he must "give" symbols such meanings that they call out the same responses in his audience as they do in himself. The process of "externalizing" his thought in language is thus, by virtue of the commonality essential to meaning, under the control of the audience. Socialization is accompanied by revision of meaning. Seldom do identical interpretations obtain. Writings get reinterpreted as they are diffused across audiences with different nuances of meanings. We call the tendency to telescope (by variations of interpretation) the meaning of concepts into a given set of social habits, ethnocentricism of meaning.<sup>27</sup> Functionally, i.e., as far as communication obtains, the reader is a factor determining what the thinker writes.

A symbol has a different meaning when interpreted by persons actualizing different cultures or strata within a culture. In facing problems incident to a translation from Chinese to English, I. A. Richards got "the impression

<sup>25</sup> "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages," *op. cit.*, 498.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Karl Mannheim, *op. cit.*, 74.

<sup>27</sup> E.g., approached with this "lead" in mind, the "diffusion pattern" of the Bible exhibits one reason for its continuance: its language is capable of being "strained" (reinterpreted) through the purposes and orientations implicitly contained in the languages of a great variety of cultural segments and milieux.

that an unwritten and unelucidatable *tradition* accompanies and directs their interpretation,” and that “this tradition is *by no means uniform*.”<sup>28</sup> We hold that this *tradition* which is *by no means uniform* is the linguistic reflex of the socially controlled behaviors from which a scholar is derived, which he “lives” (behaviorally and/or vicariously), or which constitutes the audience of his thought, or all three. These “esoteric determinants of meaning” are the “logical interpretants,”<sup>29</sup> residues derived from the meaningful behavior of such constellations.

A block in social actions, e.g., a class conflict, carries a reflex back into our communicative medium and hence into our thought. We then talk past one another. We interpret the “same” symbol differently. Because the coordinated social actions sustaining the meaning of a given symbol have broken down, the symbol does not call out the same response in members of one group that it does in another, and there is no genuine communication.

Richards detects in the Chinese thinking of Mencius’ period a strong *dependence of conception upon social purpose*. Mencius’ thought on man was governed by a social purpose, the “enforcement of a schema of conduct.” The concepts which he utilized were good servants of the accepted moral and social order. The success of Richards’ study leads us to consider tenable the hypothesis that *conceptions* and distinctions, including those of our philosophic and social science jargon, are such as to “hide” factors from us in the interests of social purposes woven through various cultural patterns.

Different traditions of thinking have different distinctions in their vocabularies, and these differences are related to differences in other spheres of their respective cultural setting. The distinctions in Chinese thinking are quite different from those in Western thought. The Chinese, for example, did not set the subject over against the object, and hence had no “problem of knowledge.” Nor did Chinese thought of this period separate psychology and physics into two separate studies. Richards suggests:

The problems which for any one tradition are obtrusive—especially the more insoluble of them, and thus, it may seem, the more “important”—may often have arisen as a result of accident—grammatical or social. (*Op. cit.*, 3-5)

The manner in which “lack” of distinctions in a language limits thought and the formulation of problems is aptly illustrated by Richards’ analysis of the Chinese word for “aged.” There is no distinction for age in the chronological sense and in the sense of an ethical pattern toward those who are old. Consequently, Mencius cannot separate in his thinking a man’s age and the reverence that is due him because of it. Here is a direct connection

<sup>28</sup> *Mencius on the Mind*, 33. New York, 1932.

<sup>29</sup> The incipient theory of meaning found in C. S. Peirce is compatible with the sociological slant on meaning. I find in his work an added support for a belief in an intrinsic, controlling relation of social habits to reflection through meaning. For Peirce, “the ultimate meaning (logical interpretant) of a concept is a habit change.” (*Collected Papers*, vol.V, paragraph 476.) Habits are, of course, socially acquired and transmitted.

of a mos, embodied in language, with a limitation of thinking. Thinkers of Mencius' period do not "discuss or treat as open to discussion the rightness of paying respect to age as age."<sup>30</sup> Their language would not allow a definition of the problem. The employment of one word for both chronological age and the honorable pattern of behavior toward old persons reflects and preserves the unquestioned appropriateness of the reverential conduct better than any separate terms could. Agreement with the mos or institution was evoked by the very mentioning of the symbol around which it was organized and which defined it in behavior. Chinese thinking on this head is thus seen to operate within an unquestioned limit set by the language itself.

What if this mos, reverence to old age, were to change radically? What if shortage of young men for warriors in a long series of wars force the group to shift its respect to "young warrior" roles? What would then happen to the old concept now carrying dual meaning? It would become ambiguous and eventually, split. Newly sanctioned social habits force new meanings and changes in old meanings. A distinction would be drawn which was not existent in Mencius' thinking. Problems would result from the competing meanings where before an unquestioned belief had reigned. Thus is reflection related in terms of meanings to areas of conflicts and drifts within social orders.<sup>31</sup>

It is a necessary consequence of any unaccustomed perspective that matters traditionally viewed disjunctively be considered conjunctively. I have presented certain coordinates for a sociological approach to reflection and knowledge, viewing conjointly sociality and mind, language and social habit, the noetic and the cultural. Such contexts may be said to operate as determinants in mentation in the sense that given social textures present certain various and limited materials for assimilation; or, in the sense that thinkers programmatically identify themselves with an order of interests. I have analyzed the matter more deeply (1) by instituting the socio-psychological problem of the *modus operandi* of such determinations, and (2) by advancing and partially elaborating as hypotheses two connective mechanisms. It should be apparent that these formulations also provide research leads equipping attempts at concrete reconstructions of intellectual patterns from a cultural standpoint.

<sup>30</sup> I. A. Richards, *op. cit.*, 55-56.

<sup>31</sup> I am indebted to C. E. Ayres for indicating the similar instance involved in the rise of the concept "capital." Since Aristotle, it was agreed that money is obviously sterile. Hence, for "money" and "wealth," the substitution of the equivocal "capital" as a *factor in production*. The "capitalist fallacy" may be regarded as a continuation of the "mercantilist fallacy" which pivoted around the fluid concept "wealth." It is significant that "capital" emerged in the period and milieu in which bookkeeping underwent its great development. The ambivalence of "capital" represents in a business culture a confusion of bookkeeping entries with things, machines. As in Mencius' period, no one debated the differences between *pecuniary* and *physical* capital. I am not implying that the classicists' dual usage was deliberately cultivated as special pleading.