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The Paradigm Shift in Mead and Durkheim: From Purposive Activity to Communicative Action

In the Marxist reception of Weber's theory of rationalization, from Lukacs to Adorno, the rationalization of society was always thought of as a reification of *consciousness*. As I have argued in Volume 1, the paradoxes to which this conceptual strategy leads show that rationalization cannot be dealt with adequately within the conceptual frame of the philosophy of consciousness. In Volume 2 I will take up the problematic of reification once again and reformulate it in terms of, on the one hand, communicative action and, on the other, the formation of subsystems via steering media. Before doing so I shall develop these basic concepts in the context of the history of social theory. Whereas the problematic of rationalization/reification lies along a "German" line of social-theoretical thought running from Marx through Weber to Lukacs and Critical Theory, the paradigm shift from purposive activity to communicative action was prepared by George Herbert Mead and Emile Durkheim. Mead (1863–1931) and Durkheim (1858–1917) belong, like Weber (1864–1920), to the generation of the founding fathers of modern sociology. Both developed basic concepts in which Weber's theory of rationalization may be taken up again and freed from the aporias of the philosophy of consciousness: Mead with his communication-theoretic foundation of sociology, Durkheim with a theory of social solidarity connecting social integration, to system integration.

The ideas of reconciliation and freedom, which Adorno—who in the final analysis remained under the spell of Hegelian thought—merely circled around in a negative-dialectical fashion, stand in need of explication. They can in fact be developed by means of the concept of commu-

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nicative rationality, toward which their use by Adorno points in any case. For this purpose we can draw upon a theory of action that, like Mead's, is concerned to project an ideal communication community. This utopia serves to reconstruct an undamaged intersubjectivity that allows both for unconstrained mutual understanding among individuals and for the identities of individuals who come to an unconstrained understanding with themselves. The limits of a communication-theoretic approach of this sort are evident. The reproduction of society as a whole can surely not be adequately explained in terms of the conditions of communicative rationality, though we can explain the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld of a social group in this way, if we approach the matter from an internal perspective.

In what follows, I will (1) examine how Mead develops the basic conceptual framework of normatively regulated and linguistically mediated interaction; he arrives at this point by way of a logical genesis, starting from interaction mediated by gestures and controlled by instincts, and passing through the stage of symbolically mediated interaction in signal languages. (2) In the transition from symbolically mediated to normatively guided interaction, there is a gap in the phylogenetic line of development which can be filled in with Durkheim's assumptions concerning the sacred foundations of morality, the ritually preserved fund of social solidarity. (3) Taking as our guideline the idea of a "linguistification" [*Ver-sprachlichung*] of this ritually secured, basic normative agreement, we can arrive at the concept of a rationalized lifeworld with differentiated symbolic structures. This concept takes us beyond the conceptual limitations of the Weberian theory of action, which is tailored to purposive activity and purposive rationality.