

Symbolism and the Meaning of Movement

Introduction

It is generally assumed that language is symbolic. In this paper I shall consider the widely accepted theory that symbolism is also the explanation of the meaning of the various forms of human movement. It will be argued that implicit in such a theory are forms of dualism which reduce it to unintelligibility. Perhaps the most important of these is a seminal, underlying misunderstanding of the nature of the conceptualisation given with language, and its relationship with reality.

Eleanor Metheny's book, *Connotations of Movement in Sport and Dance* (1965) will be used as a stalking horse for three principal reasons: (1) because it is so thoroughly worked out; (2) because it so clearly manifests the three forms of dualism that are to be examined; and (3) because it is so well known among those in the field of human movement and physical education. Her later book (1968) will not be considered because in my view it is not so thoroughly worked out, and anyway reveals no change in her general position.

Symbolism

Metheny clearly assumes that there must be some single way of characterising the meaning of movement. Although this is a tempting notion, those engaged in the study of human movement should, perhaps, be more aware than most people of the varied character of the movements in the relevant activities, and therefore should be aware of the possibility of commensurably varied kinds of meaning. However, this assumption, together with a common misconception about linguistic meaning, lead her to propose the thesis that meaning is necessarily symbolic, and thus that a word or movement has meaning only by symbolising. She makes a clear statement of this general thesis by reference to linguistic meaning:

Speech . . . is the most obvious example of man's ability to express symbolic meanings in coherent and well-articulated terms. In speaking, he uses vocalized sounds to symbolize the connection he finds between a concept of an event and the event as such (1965: 81).

If taken literally this is difficult to understand. For it is unclear how the vocalised sounds are supposed to symbolise the *connection* between concept and event. I shall assume that this is just a slip, and that Metheny means that the sounds symbolise the concept of the event.

There is a common and unquestioned assumption that language is symbolic in that the words which comprise it have symbolic meanings, yet in fact the assumption is highly questionable. It may be plausible to suggest that the words like 'table', 'flower', and verbal phrases like 'Sir Winston Churchill' are endowed with meaning by standing for or symbolising something. But what does the word 'if' symbolise? What does 'and' stand for? What about 'then', 'or', 'as' and 'most'? One can readily think of many more examples

which would severely strain the theory. Even more plausible examples involve considerable difficulties. For instance, what, precisely, does the word 'table' symbolise? Is it this or that table, all tables, or any conceivable table? There is an oddity in maintaining that the word stands for any table since, for instance, it would have to stand for tables which have not yet even been made. Moreover, how is it that a group of letters 't a b l e' or the sound made by uttering the word 'table', can symbolise a physical object? There is no obvious similarity between them, so how does one symbolise the other? But there is another, more obviously fatal, objection which can be raised, for if the meaning of the words 'Sir Winston Churchill' were entirely dependent on their symbolising the man, Sir Winston Churchill, then, according to the theory, those words should now be meaningless, since Sir Winston Churchill is dead.

A more plausible version of the theory adopted by Metheny supposes that the words symbolise not the man himself but the idea or concept of the man, which can certainly survive the man's death. This version will be considered more carefully in a moment, but it incurs equally intractable difficulties. To put the point briefly, if the meaning of a verbal term were to depend upon an inner mental idea of concept, it would be incomprehensible. For instance, since, according to the theory, such ideas are inaccessibly private, it is obviously absurd to suggest that I could somehow examine the idea symbolised in your mind by the words 'Sir Winston Churchill' in order to discover whether it corresponded with the idea symbolised in my mind. Since this would apply equally to the meaning of every word used by everyone, no sense could be given to the notions of language, meaning, and communication. Indeed, its proponents are not even entitled to formulate the theory in these terms since according to their own thesis there would be no words but only incomprehensible sounds or marks. Thus, ironically, if the theory were correct it could not even be stated.

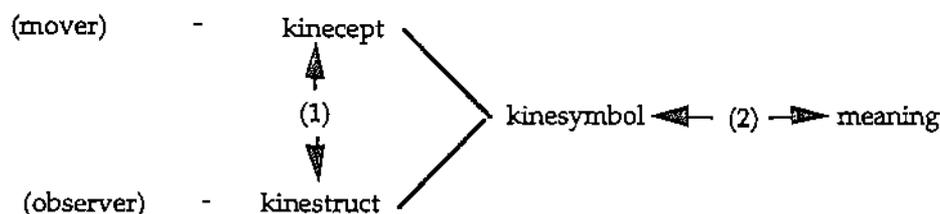
Metheny's preconception that the meaning of human movement must also be explicable in terms of symbolism is revealed in the following statement about sports competition: "Men attach great value to this seemingly futile effort. It would seem, therefore, that this behavioural form must symbolise some more significant conception of man's interaction with the universe of his existence" (1965: 29). The word 'must' used in this way is frequently significant, in that it suggests that a theory is being imposed inflexibly, albeit perhaps inadvertently, upon every relevant situation considered, with the result that possible counter-instances may be overlooked or misconstrued in order to fit the theory. One should be on one's guard against this tendency, to which we are all prone, for it is often difficult to recognise that one is so immersed in a theory that one is distorting features of a situation which ought instead to strike one as requiring a reconsideration of that theory. This is rather like being so incapable of questioning the accuracy of one's map that on finding a discrepancy one insists that it must be the landscape which is mistaken.

No doubt as a consequence of a similar inability seriously to question her assumption that meaning is necessarily symbolic, Metheny takes her view to extraordinary lengths. For example, she writes that modern Olympic games: "may well symbolise man's conception of himself as a consequential force within the grand design of the universe, as well as each man's conception of his own ability to perform those functions that identify him as a man among men" (1965: 42). It is difficult to make much sense of this, but as far as I am able to understand it, such a notion would apply equally to almost if not quite every other activity and achievement of human beings, such as playing the organ, hairdressing, renovating a bathroom, and baking potatoes.

The general misconception about symbolism is in an important respect similar to that of definitions. A is defined in terms of B; C symbolises D. In each case one entity or activity is explained by reference to another, and the explanation is regarded as fully successful only if the latter comprehensively characterises the former. But on reflection this strikes one as an oddly implausible notion in general, for if every entity or activity can be comprehensively characterised in terms of another, there must be an enormous amount of duplication in the universe. Wittgenstein (1953) aptly referred to this kind of misconception as the tendency to regard everything as a diminished version of itself.

Dualism 1: Inner Thought / Overt Behaviour

Let us now consider the precise formulation of Metheny's theory. If I understand her correctly, it can be expressed schematically in this way:



The kinecept is the inner thought or experience of the mover, and the kinestruct is the overt expression of it in observable movement. As Metheny puts it:

For the mover, the meaning of the movement is conceptualised in the kinesymbolic form of the kinecept. His overt movement is a kinesymbolic expression of that meaning in the form of a kinestruct The meanings the mover expresses and the meanings understood by the observer are probably never identical. Each person interprets symbolic forms within his own frame of reference (1965: 61).

There are two closely related problems of dualism implicit in this theory:

(1) the nature of the relationship held to subsist between the kinecept and the kinestruct, i.e. what could possibly justify the assertion that a

particular, or indeed any, inner thought or experience is being overtly expressed in a particular movement; and

(2) the nature of the relationship held to subsist between the kinesymbol and the meaning, i.e. what could possibly justify the assertion that the inner experience (kinecept) or overt movement (kinestruct) does symbolise a particular, or indeed any, meaning? In schematic formulation again:

Dualism 1: kinecept (inner thought or experience) (?) kinestruct (overt movement)

Dualism 2: kinesymbol (?) meaning

The question marks indicate the logical problem in each case, and 1 and 2 are, of course, the same as in the foregoing schema.

Mind/Body

It is clear from many statements she makes that Metheny assumes a general dualist theory of body and mind. For example, she says that a symbolic form formulates meaning, and goes on: "In its private form, as a thought, concept or idea, it is comprehended only by the person who is thinking it; in its public form, it is an expression of that thought or meaning" (1965: 72). What largely contributes to this fundamental misconception is a radically confused, if common, notion of meaning as a sort of inner mental idea or image which is formed by the experiences one undergoes. She says that she is aware of the difference between what she calls 'connotation' and 'meaning', but in fact she conflates them, with disastrous consequences. For example, she states that the meaning of a kinesymbol is a complex of connotations. It would be too much of a diversion to consider the question of the various meanings of 'meaning' in the detail it merits, but it is easy to show that Metheny has failed to notice an important distinction in her theory. Certainly there is a sense of the term which is used to ask a question such as "what does X mean to you?" But this sense is roughly equivalent to "What is the significance of X to you?" and is completely different from questions about the meaning of X. In the former sense there is an indefinitely wide range of answers to each such question. For example, in response to the question: "What does Rugby football mean to you?" there are various possible answers, such as: "An opportunity to work out of my system the frustrations of the week;" "An opportunity to escape from the wife for a few hours;" "The way Wales can humiliate England;" or even "Legalised hooliganism." But none of these answers has anything to do with the meaning, in the logical sense of the term 'Rugby football'. Metheny is confusing the associations of a word or movement with its meaning.

Clearly one may form various associations with a word which are quite irrelevant to its meaning. For example, the word 'dentist' may be associated with an unpleasant sinking feeling, but 'dentist' does not mean 'unpleasant sinking feeling'. To cite another example, the ugly word 'aesthetician' puts me in mind of a practitioner of one of the more recondite branches of medicine --

paediatrician, obstetrician, and with pills to cure agonising philosophical problems about the arts. And my imagination ran riot when, as an undergraduate, I first encountered some of the more turgid terminological excrescences of academic philosophy, such as 'supererogation' and 'syncategorematic'. Yet obviously such bizarre imaginings have nothing whatsoever to do with the meanings of the terms. That is, connotation, association, or significance should be clearly distinguished from 'meaning' in the logical sense.

The inevitable subjective tendencies implicit in Metheny's conflation of connotation with logical meaning are clearly revealed in this quotation; "Similar kinestructs may have very different intellectual-emotional import as kinesymbols for different people, their meaning being related to all the reactions . . . that occurred within the context of many different situations" (1965: 96). One encounters all too frequently variations of this misconception, usually in the form of the assertion that the meaning of words is a purely personal, subjective matter. Sometimes, for instance, the notion is adduced in order to evade uncomfortable philosophical analysis. Someone says: "Well, that may be your meaning of the word, but it's not what it means to me." Humpty Dumpty, in *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, amply illustrates the absurdity of such a contention:

"There's glory for you!"

"I don't know what you mean by 'glory'," Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't -- till I tell you. I meant there's a nice knock-down argument for you."

"But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument'," Alice objected.

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less."

Certainly this is a different form of subjectivism. On the 'inner idea' theory *no* word can have an intelligible meaning, whereas it is possible to have an intelligible idiosyncratic meaning for *some* words while depending upon the general objectivity of language. But if the idiosyncratic thesis were generalised to apply to *every* word, then it would degenerate to the subjectivism of the 'inner idea' kind, since *no* word could be understood by anyone else. Indeed, as we have seen, the supposition that every word would have a purely subjective meaning, understandable only by the person using it, incurs the ironic consequence that the supposition itself could not be stated, as it would be incomprehensible. For, of course, it is necessary to *presuppose* an objective, generally understood meaning for the words which one employs even to explain idiosyncratic associations, connotations, or significance. The point is clearly exemplified by Humpty Dumpty who, despite his contemptuous insistence to the contrary, inevitably has to rely on

meanings which are *not* chosen in order to explain the abnormal case when he does choose.

Metheny makes a similar assumption about the meaning of dance: "Every man's analogies are his own, and no one can say 'what a dance really means'" (1965: 85). Such a notion is equally self-destructive and invalidates her whole enterprise, since it incurs the consequence that dance too would be entirely subjective and thus there could never be any grounds for attributing *any* meaning to it. Certainly no sense could be made of the supposition that it has symbolic meaning.

A precisely similar fundamental misconception about subjective meaning runs through Phenix (1964 *passim*). For example, he explains the meaning of dance movements as 'objectifications of inner experiences having *universal import*' [my italics]. But since they are, according to the theory itself, inaccessibly private, what possible justification could there be for supposing such inner experiences to have universal or any import, or even to exist? For a consequence of the theory would be that no sense could be given to the notion of any meaning in dance, since it would be impossible to discover whether it did objectify a particular or any inner experience. Metheny assumes that this problem can be overcome by appeal to the notion of inference, i.e. she supposes that we *infer* the thoughts or experiences of others by interpreting their overt physical behaviour. But such a supposition is unintelligible. The *grounds* for a legitimate inference could be given *only* by an observed regular correlation of the relevant events in the past. Yet clearly, in terms of this kind of theory, no sense could be given to the notion of having established a correlation between overt behaviour and inaccessibly private inner thoughts.

It is crucial to understand the nature of this objection, and therefore just how radically it undermines the very common kind of theory under consideration. The point can be brought out in this way. In the quotation given above, Metheny wrote: "The meanings the mover expresses and the meanings understood by the observer are *probably* [my italics] never identical. Each person interprets symbolic forms within his own frame of reference" (1965: 61). This reveals how completely she fails to understand the character of the problem. For it is a *logical* problem, and thus to pose it in terms of probability is incoherent. To formulate the difficulty in that way is to conceive of it on the model of an *empirical* difficulty, i.e. as if it could possibly be overcome to some extent by great effort or ingenuity. This is precisely the fundamental confusion inherent in the way in which some phenomenologists conceive of the difficulty of attempting to communicate private, subjective experience. They also seem to think that it requires a great effort of concentration, sensitivity, and verbal facility in order to capture and convey, at least to some extent, the elusive character of subjective, inner experience. But to suppose the difficulty to be of that kind is as misconceived

as it would be to suppose that great effort and ingenuity would be required to construct a four-sided triangle.

So, to formulate the point in terms of Metheny's theory, nothing could possibly count as the expression of a kinecept in the overt form of a kinestruct.

Although this kind of theory is a form of dualism, it should be noticed that it allows no place at all for any kind of objectivity. All meaning would have to be entirely private and subjective. The meaning to be expressed is supposed to be a subjective experience or thought. But equally, the overt behaviour or sound has to be interpreted within the observer's subjective 'frame of reference'. So, although it is difficult to find a coherent way of formulating the point, the dualism amounts to two forms of subjectivism. The person expressing, and the person interpreting, are each incarcerated in a totally private world of which no one else could possibly know anything.

What makes such theories of subjective meaning and experience so dangerously plausible is that their inevitable and illicit trading on a whole background of *objective* and publicly understood language is overlooked, even by their proponents. This inevitable reliance on objectivity is most apparent, perhaps, from the point I have made already that without it the subjectivists could not even intelligibly propose their thesis. Further clear indications of this surreptitious, if inadvertent, dependence upon the objectivity supposedly excluded by their own thesis are provided by Metheny's assertion that the meanings of mover and observer are "probably" never identical, and Phenix's illegitimate appeal to the "universal import" of inner experiences. To assume that a term or movement expresses "universal import" is to help himself to the objective meaning to which he is not entitled by the terms of his own theory. That is, the fundamental confusion of any such subjective theory is that it inevitably has to rely implicitly on precisely the objectivity of meaning which it is explicitly trying to deny. It tries to saw off the branch on which it is sitting.

In order to bring out the point in another way I shall freely adapt an example given by Wittgenstein (1953: 293). Suppose that each of a group of people has a box with something in it which is called a 'fronwappa'. No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a fronwappa is *only* by looking at *his own* fronwappa. It would obviously be possible for everyone to have something quite different in his box. Indeed it might even be constantly changing. The thing in the box clearly can have no place in the language at all; not even as a *something*, for a box might even be empty, i.e. 'a fronwappa' might mean 'an empty space'. Thus one can 'divide through' by the thing in the box; it cancels out, whatever it is.

I hope this discussion will reveal the incoherence of the notion of subjective meaning, often manifested, for example, in phenomenological

writing. Such subjective assumptions are only too prevalent in the literature on human movement, and perhaps especially on dance.

Perhaps it should be mentioned that I have not explicitly raised an even more damaging objection, although it is implicit in much that I have said, namely that no sense at all can be given to the notion of purely private, subjective meaning, even for the person *himself*. There are powerful arguments which show that the notion of meaning, even in one's own case, necessarily depends upon a public objective language, with implicit rules, and therefore that the supposition of a private language, with purely subjective meaning, is incoherent. To pursue those arguments would take us into deep waters, but that is unnecessary since enough has been said to refute the suggestion that subjective meaning could be comprehensible.

One further point should be made in order to avoid a common misunderstanding. It should not be thought that these arguments against subjective meaning imply that thought or experience is impossible unless it be expressed in an observable way. But if the somewhat misleading picture of inner and outer be retained, it is less conducive to error to regard the direction of travel as the opposite to that supposed by subjectivists. For meaning, whether of thoughts, feelings, or movements can be identified only by publicly recognisable criteria. However, this is not to deny, for instance, that someone could have feelings if he were to grow up alone from infancy on a desert island. Although he would have no language he could certainly have feelings. But he would be incapable of knowing what feelings they were, or even that they were feelings. He would simply feel something. When one has learned to identify a feeling by reference to external behaviour then it can be recognised when it recurs, and, of course, it is not necessary to express it overtly in order to do so.

Dualism 2: Meaning / Medium of Expression

We can now turn to the second form of dualism implicit in Metheny's theory. It is so closely connected with the former that the two are not altogether distinguishable, both in her writing and in the popular misconception about meaning in general. Nevertheless, it is possible to conceive of meaning as logically independent of an observable medium of expression without necessarily regarding it as private and subjective.

Metheny clearly conceives of the movement and its meaning as two distinct entities. On one hand there is the physical movement (kinecept or kinestruct), and on the other hand the meaning of which it is a symbol. She regards meaning as some sort of metaphysical entity which she calls "feeling about life," which can be made articulate through an observable medium of expression (1965: 82). But such a supposition is incoherent, since nothing could possibly count as the coinciding or correlation of the two entities. That is, no sense could be made of the suggestion that a particular kinecept or kinestruct is a kinesymbol of a particular -- or any -- meaning. To put the

point another way, since, on Metheny's theory, the meaning entity is supposed to exist prior to and independently of its expression in an objective, observable physical form, the notion that anything could be known of its nature or even of whether it exists at all is unintelligible.

To employ the terminology of symbolism carries a clear implication of dualism, namely the symbol and that which is symbolised. As we have seen, Metheny explicitly accepts that implication with respect to language, in that she clearly regards concepts as independent 'thought' entities, which are translated into words so that they can be communicated to other people. This is a common misconception. The notion is that one first has the idea and then, as it were, casts about for a medium in which to express it. Yet, on the supposition that the idea of thought is logically distinct from the medium in which it is expressed, it would be impossible ever to know that a physical medium, such as language or dance, expressed a particular or *any* idea or thought. The point can be brought out most clearly with respect to the problem of form and content in the arts. For no sense can be given to the notion of the purpose of, or what is expressed in, a work of art apart from the work of art itself. That is, there is a *logical* relation between meaning and medium of expression, hence no sense could be made of the supposition that the *same* meaning could be expressed in a different work of art.

Metheny, in common with many people, seems to regard it as intelligible to suggest that one could think without any medium of expression. On such a view it would make sense to suppose an owl to be capable of profound philosophical thought even though it so happens that he has not yet learned the language in which to express it. Yet, however wise owls may be in fable, such a supposition is incoherent, since without the requisite ability to use language nothing could *count* as having the ability for profound philosophical thought. It would be similarly incoherent to suggest that someone could have a choreographic idea if he did not have the requisite understanding of the art of dance. It is radically misconceived to regard thought or meaning as quite independent of any medium of physical expression.

I hope I shall not be misunderstood as denying that movements can be symbolic. Obviously they can. What I am denying is first, that movements are always and necessarily symbolic, and it is this which uniquely endows them with meaning; and second, that an objectively observable physical medium of expression can intelligibly be supposed to symbolise what is not in principle answerable to sense-perception.

Dualism 3: Language / Reality

The principal reason for this critical analysis of Eleanor Metheny's theory of meaning and of the common misconceptions it exemplifies is to show that clarity on these issues is a necessary precondition for the proposal of any coherent thesis about the various meanings of human behaviour. To

consider the most important of these misconceptions, which is probably the source of the others, takes us to the most fundamental question of philosophy, namely the relation of language or conceptualisation to reality. Again, it is impossible to consider this issue in the depth it merits, but enough can be said to expose the misconception in question, and to outline a coherent account.

Metheny has already been quoted as stating that words and movements symbolise the connection between the concept of an event and the event as such. This sentence reveals precisely the fundamental misconception about the conceptualisation given with language to which I advert. Metheny says that language and symbolic movement "conceptualise" reality. This reflects the common conception of language, or the use of linguistic terms, as a supervenient activity which stands for or provides a picture of the real world of facts, physical objects, and things actually happening. For instance, the sentence "A book is on the table" is believed to symbolise the fact, in the world of reality, that the physical object we call 'a book' is on the physical object we call 'the table'. Thus, it is thought, in order to understand reality man has to conceptualise it in symbols.

This third form of dualism, then, is clearly illustrated in Metheny's distinction between the concept of an event and the event as such. The supposition is that men perceive the real world out there, and form concepts of it in language which mirror and allow them to comprehend the actual events and objects. Thus the two terms of the dualism are on the one hand, language and conceptualisation, and on the other hand, the real world.

The major problem for such a notion is that it implies that all men are inescapably trapped behind what has been aptly called the veil of perception. Concepts are supposed to be necessary in order for men to be able to understand the reality which they perceive, but in that case what justification could there be for supposing there to be a real world, if by that is meant a world which is independent of conception? The point is that no sense can be attached to the notion of a concept-free apprehension of reality. Some philosophers have thought, and it is tempting for the layman to think, that it is intelligible to ask the question: "What sort of structure ought language to have to mirror reality?" Such a question implies that language could somehow be checked against reality to see whether it provides an accurate picture. But this notion is incoherent, since reality has to be *understood* in order that the supposed check with language can take place. Yet this understanding of reality *itself* can be achieved only *by means of* the conceptualisation given with language. Thus it is a fundamental confusion to regard language or conceptualisation, and reality, as two distinct phenomena.

To put the point another way, it is a consequence of this dualist picture that all men are behind the veil of concepts which gives understanding to perception. It is senseless to suggest the possibility of having a look at what is

on the other side of the veil, since that perception would obviously have to be conceptualised too. In short, to understand this supposedly real world in order to check the verisimilitude of concepts would require one's having unconceptualised concepts. Small wonder that Wittgenstein (1953, *passim*) remarked that in philosophy one sometimes reaches the point of feeling constrained to emit inarticulate grunts. Thus, to put the point in terms of this misconceived picture, if there were such a real world, outside the possibility of conceptualisation, then it obviously could be of no possible interest or relevance to us, since its character and existence could not be known. Again, it should be recognised that the impossibility is a logical, not a quasi-empirical one. For it is not that however hard we try we are unable to reach this supposedly real, unconceptualised world, but that nothing could possibly count as reaching it. Thus a paradoxical consequence of this general picture of language and reality is that the supposed world of reality would be unreal since it would be impossible even to discover whether it is there. Consequently there could be no difference between human conception of events and the events themselves, and human conception would simply be *equivalent* to reality and truth.

The foregoing argument should be sufficient to expose the misconception inherent in this common picture of the nature of language, or of the relation between language and the world. However, there is a danger that the rejection of such a notion may give rise to an opposite but equally subjective misconception. It is often difficult to deny a thesis without providing a thesis which, while opposed to the former, remains on the same logical level, and thus shares some of its most fundamental misconceptions. Thus in denying that a sunset can be heard, one may still give the wrong impression, namely that somehow human auditory powers are not as acute as they might be, or that this is something which cannot be *achieved*. In fact, of course, one wants to move out of this level of explanation altogether by showing that the whole notion of hearing or being unable to hear sunsets makes no sense. Similarly, to deny the intelligibility of one side of this dualist picture, namely the supposition of an unconceptualised world of reality, may give the impression that what one means is that only the other side, namely human conceptualisation, is left. And this would imply that the world is what we believe it is; that it is created according to how we decide to form our concepts in language. This is an equally objectionable form of subjectivism, for it carries the consequence that there could be no distinction between belief and truth, since what men believed to be true would actually determine what was true.

What is required is a completely different way of looking at the situation, which will avoid the misleading implications inherent in both the affirmation and the denial of this dualist supposition (italics added). The crucial point to recognise is that no sense can be given to the notion that language itself could be true or false. Objectivity is *given* by language, thus although beliefs expressed *within* language can be true or false, it is

unintelligible to suppose that *concepts* can be true or false since they are the *standards* of truth or falsity. Perhaps the point can be made clear by means of an example.

There is a standard metre in Paris which determines what it is to be a metre. That is, it is solely by reference to this standard, ultimately, that the notion of a metre derives its sense. If there were a doubt about the accuracy of a metric rule it could, in theory, be checked against this standard metre. But no sense could be made of the notion of checking the accuracy of the standard itself. Similarly, the concepts implicit in language are the standards by which truth or falsity is determined, hence they determine the possible constitution of reality. Consequently, if there were two different societies, with different languages and conceptual schemes, no sense could be made of the notion of asking which was the correct, or more accurate one. Such a question would be rather like asking whether the rules of chess were more accurate than the rules of tennis. The movement of a chess-piece may or may not be in accordance with the rules, and the belief that it is legitimate may be either true or false, but no sense could be made of asking whether the rules themselves were true or false. Such a question is as incoherent as asking whether laws are legal.

It should not be thought, however, that this rules out the possibility of criticism or modification of concepts. Although, as we have seen, it is unintelligible to suppose that a concept can be compared with reality, in an external sense, it could certainly be criticised internally. That is, in terms of the language itself a concept may be shown to be internally inconsistent, or to be incompatible with importantly related concepts, and thus to require revision.

How are we to explain meaning in movement then? It is again illuminating to consider the analogue with linguistic meaning. There is a common misconception that word-meanings are the basic building bricks from which the whole structure of the meaning of language is erected. Yet, roughly, the situation is precisely the converse of that. The meaning of a word is given by the various sentences in which it is used, and those sentences derive their meaning from the whole activity of language of which they form an interdependent part. The same is true of the meanings of movements. Meaning requires a context. For example, the meaning of a particular action cannot be explained by a narrow concentration upon the physical movement in isolation. The meaning is given by the context of the action, or complex of actions, of which it can be observed to form a part. Precisely the same physical movement may have quite different meanings, i.e. it might be different actions, in different contexts. Although in practice one may be obvious, there may be various frames of reference from which the movement can be considered, such as the functional, scientific, aesthetic and moral. For example, a bowler's action in cricket could be considered

respectively, for its effectiveness in dismissing batsmen; as graceful; from a biomechanical point of view, or as unfairly intimidating.

The range of possibilities of human movement provides a unique variety of experiences, but not because movement is a unique symbol of meaning, or a symbol of unique meaning, or a unique symbol of unique meaning. It is because the feelings which can be experienced while moving cannot be experienced in other ways. This raises another problem for Metheny's supposition of symbolic meaning. For even if it were intelligible, an embarrassing consequence of her own theory is that it contradicts one of her principal aims in proposing it, namely to show that the meaning in movement is unique. If the meaning of a movement were symbolic, in Metheny's sense, that would imply two separate entities, (a) the symbol, (b) what is symbolised—in which case it would be logically possible to use a different symbol for what is symbolised. Thus, so far from movement's having a unique meaning, it would be possible for other physical phenomena to have the same meaning by symbolising the same thing. Consequently, in Metheny's terms, a kinestruct or kinecept could not be a unique kinesymbol. On the contrary, a painting could symbolise what the movement symbolises, or, in her terms, could "conceptualise reality" in the same way.

I submit, then, that the elaborate paraphernalia of symbolic theory obscures rather than clarifies the issue of meaning in movement. We can perceive the meaning of the movement, what sort of movement it is, because we subsume it under a concept which is determined, with some degree of tolerance, by the whole set of circumstances in which it occurs. This is why the meaning and feeling of a movement in a dance are quite different from the meaning and feeling of the same movement, from a purely physical point of view, as part of a service action in tennis. Thus, with certain minor exceptions, and excluding the symbolism which is possible in dance, human movement does not *symbolise* reality, it *is* reality. The experiences it provides are unique, they are not merely vicarious reflections of real life experiences, through the medium of symbolism.

It is unfortunate that a misconceived polarity has arisen about movement and experience. As a crude characterisation, the movement-educationist concentrates on the experience, and regards the observable, quantifiable aspects of movement as relatively unimportant. On the other hand those of scientific inclination are perfectly happy about the perceivable, quantifiable physical movement, but sometimes then to be suspicious of talk of the inner experience because it is not observable.

In fact neither aspect, alone, is sufficient. To deny the inner experience is to deny the agent, without whom there could *be* no movement. Yet, to deny the observable criteria is equally to deny the experience, since without the criteria the experience could not be identified.

So that perception of human movement is necessary in order to *identify* the meaning of the experience. But without the experience there would be no human movement to perceive.

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