



# Mind As Action

*James V. Wertsch*

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Contemporary social problems typically involve many complex, interrelated dimensions--psychological, cultural, and institutional, among others. But today, the social sciences have fragmented into isolated disciplines lacking a common language, and analyses of social problems have polarized into approaches that focus on an individual's mental functioning over social settings, or vice versa.

In *Mind as Action*, James V. Wertsch argues that current approaches to social issues have been blinded by the narrow confines of increasing specialization in the social sciences. In response to this conceptual blindness, he proposes a method of sociocultural analysis that connects the various perspectives of the social sciences in an integrated, nonreductive fashion. Wertsch maintains that we can use mediated action, which he defines as the irreducible tension between active agents and cultural tools, as a productive method of explicating the complicated relationships between human action and its manifold cultural, institutional, and historical contexts. Drawing on the ideas of Lev Vygotsky, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Kenneth Burke, as well as research from various fields, this book traces the implications of mediated action for a sociocultural analysis of the mind, as well as for some of today's most pressing social issues. Wertsch's investigation of forms of mediated action such as stereotypes and historical narratives provide valuable new insights into issues such as the mastery, appropriation, and resistance of culture. By providing an analytic unit that has the possibility of operating at the crossroads of various disciplines, *Mind as Action* will be important reading for academics, students, and researchers in psychology, linguistics, cognitive science, sociology, literary analysis, and philosophy.

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