

1. THE STRUCTURE OF BEHAVIOR AND THE CONTENT OF PERCEPTION: CONVERGING PERSPECTIVES

THE BASIC APPROACHES of Mead and Merleau-Ponty to the examination of meaning and human behavior may at first glance seem mutually exclusive. For Mead's pragmatic focus emphasizes the relation between organic activity and behavioral environment, while Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological focus stresses prereflective awareness as an intentionally unified field. Further, Mead, usually considered a social behaviorist or a behavioral psychologist, appropriates behaviorism in a positive way, redirecting it within a nonreductive, holistic context, whereas Merleau-Ponty's aim is to show how the scientific treatments of experience by physiology and experimental psychology, because of their reductionistic inadequacies, demand a rejection of behavioristic interpretations in favor of a phenomenological approach. It will become clear in the ensuing analysis, however, that the seeming contrast represents two different emphases operative within a common general context. The phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty incorporates the behavioral aspect emphasized by Mead. And Mead's position contains a phenomenological dimension, for there emerges within the context of behavior the very structure of the experiential intentional link upon which Merleau-Ponty focuses. The following discussion will first turn to Mead's approach.

The usual characterization of Mead as a behavioral psychologist or sociologist can be misleading in two directions. It can falsely bring to mind shades of reductionism. And it can just as falsely hide a phenomenological dimension to Mead's thought, a dimension not usually associated with behavioristic approaches of any type. Turning to the first issue, Mead's social behaviorism, in contrast to a Watsonian behaviorism, views behavior as explaining mind or consciousness without explaining it away. Mead does not reduce mental functions, mind, or consciousness to reductionist bodily behavior; rather he approaches these dimensions of human existence through a focus on objectively observable behavior, or behavior observed "from the outside." As Mead notes,

Watson apparently assumes that to deny the existence of mind or consciousness as a psychical stuff, substance, or entity is to deny its existence altogether and that a naturalistic or behavioristic account of it as such is out of the question. But, on the contrary, we may deny its existence as a psychical entity without denying its existence in some other sense at all; and if we then conceive it functionally, and as a natural¹ rather than a transcendental phenomenon, it becomes possible to deal with it in behavioristic terms.²

For Mead, behaviorism is a methodological, not an ontological, position.³ As he notes of behaviorism in a "wider sense," it "is simply an approach to the study of the experience of the individual from the point of view of his conduct, particularly, but not exclusively, the conduct as it is observable by others."⁴ In viewing behaviorism in terms of an observational methodology rather than a reductionist ontology, the nature of the behavior studied changes radically. It is no longer the behavior characterized through the illicit reifications of the contents of science, but a structure of behavior which is guided throughout by active selectivity.

Mead distinguishes the physical or physiochemical, the vital, and the mental in terms of three different levels of system. A physical or physiochemical system does not as such involve life; a biological system per se does not involve mind. Partaking in more than one of these systems gives rise to emergent properties. As Mead clarifies, "I have defined emergence as the presence of things in two or more different systems, in such a fashion that its presence in the later system changes its character in the earlier system or systems to which it belongs."⁵ The appropriation of the earlier

by the later system restructures the earlier. Far from being reducible to something earlier, the later has transformed the earlier, not just added on to it. The human, as belonging to more than one system, incorporates emergent qualities which vitiate all forms of reductionism.

Mead holds that the behavior which gives rise to mentality is rooted in the most rudimentary of biological activity. Even in the biological system as such, in the operation of lower animals, the animal endows the environment with characters, thus affecting it even as it affects the animal. There is an essential reciprocity between the organism and its environment. In the primitive biological adjustment, the stimulus serves as a stimulus in its role as answering the needs of the organism. The organism "chooses" the stimuli to which it will be sensitive and the character of the stimuli is partially determined by this choosing. Embedded in the very life process, then, is to be found a continual adjustment of organism and environment as a unified field. All living organisms, "from cells to humans," are in anticipatory interaction with an environment.⁶ From this context, Mead stresses that the life process is such that it must "confer its characters within its whole field of operation."⁷ There is a mutual determination of life and environment. Thus he approvingly quotes Dewey's criticism of the reflex arc in favor of a circuit:

Failing to see the unity of activity, no matter how much it may prate of unity, it still leaves us with sensation or peripheral stimulus; ideal or central process (the equivalent of attention); and motor response, or act, as three disconnected existences, having somehow to be adjusted to each other.⁸

The selective activity embodied in the life process contains the rudiments of intelligence, for "intelligence finds its simplest expression in the appropriateness of the responses of a living form to the environment in the carrying-out of its living process."⁹ Indeed, such intelligence is almost coextensive with life, for it belongs not only to animal forms but also to vegetable forms.¹⁰ And even rudimentary animal intelligence, as intelligence, embodies the pragmatic understanding of the nature of experience as experimental—as incorporating the rudimentary dynamics of experimental or scientific or instrumental method—for "if we look upon the conduct of the animal form as a continual meeting and solving of problems, we can find in this intelligence, even in its lowest

expression, an instance of what we call 'scientific method'... The animal is doing the same thing the scientist is doing."¹¹ Here also, it will be seen, are to be found the rudimentary origins of the phenomenological dimensions of experience as the experience of meaningful things within a world, for selective tendencies, as attitudes of response, enter into the very character of the world of human experience. The ensuing discussion will turn to this phenomenological dimension.

It is important to stress that the intent here is not to equate Mead's biological focus with his pragmatic focus as one strand, then to locate the phenomenological focus as a separate strand external to his pragmatism. Maurice Natanson continually finds conflicts and contradictions in Mead's thought because he sets up a sharp distinction between human action as biological and as constitutive, and views these as conflicting strands in Mead's thought: a pragmatic strand on the one hand, and a latent and inadequately developed phenomenological strand on the other.¹² Rather, the point is that Mead's pragmatic focus incorporates both dimensions—the biological and the phenomenological—in an inseparably intertwined unity. Behaviorism, as a methodological position, and as operating within the context of a new understanding of behavior, is not limited exclusively to conduct as it is observable by others. Mead's "behaviorism" is pervaded by a phenomenological dimension in which the dynamics of experience are grasped from within. The phenomenological dimension of Mead's approach is elusive because he tends to view his examination of behavior from the perspective of psychology. Even his characterizations of behaviorism from the psychological perspective, however, are indicative of his implicit phenomenological approach, for as will be seen in the following progression, the language of psychology which he brings tends to both hide and house such an approach.

Mead holds that his position does not ignore "the inner experience of the individual—the inner phase of that process or activity. On the contrary, it is particularly concerned with the rise of such experience within the process as a whole."¹³ Because of this focus on inner experience, Mead holds that introspection has a definite meaning even for behavioristic psychology. This meaning of introspection, however, is found in the fact that behavioristic science "looks within the experience of the individual for phenomena not dealt with in any other sciences—phenomena to which only the individual himself has experiential access."¹⁴ He holds that the

discussion of such so-called inner experience can be approached from the point of view of behaviorism if it is not too narrowly conceived, for he stresses that outwardly observable behavior finds expression within individuals, not in the sense of being in a subjective world, but in the sense of being within their organisms.¹⁵ Something of this behavior appears in what Mead terms "attitudes," the beginnings of acts. And "if we come back to such attitudes we find them giving rise to all sorts of responses."¹⁶ Or, as he further removes his position from that of introspection, "There are matters which are accessible only to the individual, but even these cannot be identified with consciousness as such because we find we are continually utilizing them as making up our world."¹⁷

Mead is in fact moving away from the concept of introspection toward the understanding of a field of consciousness in which a dynamic, active organism is intertwined with, and is partially constitutive of, the field. Consciousness as such refers to both the organism and its environment and cannot be located simply in either. The arguments for and against behaviorism have historically taken some form of the dualism-reductionism controversy, no matter how tenuous the link became. Mead's task is that of "restoring to nature the characters and qualities which a metaphysics of mind and a science of matter and motion had concurred in relegating to consciousness, and of finding such a place for mind in nature that nature could appear in experience."¹⁸ With the emergence of mind, the environment becomes informed with meanings. Mind is an emergent within the context of observable behavior and is operative within a process of common meanings. Lower animals do not operate in light of common meanings or significant symbols, and thus their behavior is not indicative of the presence of mentality. Mind is not reducible to behavior, but as an emergent within the context of behavior is functionally related to it. As an emergent within a field of ongoing behavior, mind is not reducible to brain, nor can it be a container for, or confined within, subjective experience. Mead's position thus undercuts the dualism-reductionism controversy and avoids both mechanism and vitalism in that it undercuts the subject-object, mind-matter distinctions in favor of a field of activity, understood in terms of "the act as such . . . the organism as active."¹⁹

The difference between the physicist and the biologist, according to Mead, lies in the goals that their sciences contemplate, in the realities they are seeking. And their procedures answer to their goals.²⁰ Science starts with the experienced difference be-

tween the inanimate, life, and mind. Such distinctions are rooted in common experience of the everyday world. The understanding of the inanimate in terms of scientific matter, as well as the reduction of biological activity to the activity of matter, does not reach something more real than, or corrective of, our everyday experience, but rather grasps abstract orderings dependent throughout on a scientific enterprise rooted in the everyday world. A comprehensive, adequate understanding of behavior from "without" ultimately must accommodate an interpretive description or a phenomenological examination of the experiential features of behavior and perception as these reveal themselves in the world of everyday experience. The awareness of the qualitatively unique sets of structural relations that hold for the inanimate, for lower forms of life, and for the human, is rooted in everyday lived experience, and it is to this phenomenologically grasped difference that biology and psychology must be true if they are to be adequate. Mead's entire biological and/or psychological approach presupposes and attempts to be true to the phenomenological dimensions of the perceived world. Within this general context, the discussion which follows will turn to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological focus on human behavior.

Merleau-Ponty begins in *The Structure of Behavior*²¹ with the scientific treatments of behavior by physiology and experimental psychology in order to delve to their presupposed conditions and to derive an adequate grasp of behavior. In *The Structure of Behavior* he establishes the fact that these sciences distort behavior, that nature and consciousness reinterpreted can be understood in terms of one another instead of in opposition to one another, and that these scientific treatments of behavior demand a phenomenology of perception which, as such, can reawaken the experience of the world which, because it is overlooked in ordinary experience, needs to be rediscovered in reflection.²² Merleau-Ponty deliberately begins within such reductionistic accounts in order to lead from within them to their own foundation and to a new philosophical solution that does justice to the problems engendered by them. These inadequate scientific treatments of meaningful experience, however, are not to be confused with the holistic sense in which Mead speaks of the biological aspect of behavior that was considered above.

Thus, in the general context of Mead's and Merleau-Ponty's treatments of behavior, three distinct attitudes toward behavior itself are evinced: first, one which understands it within a reductionistic science; second, a reflective attitude which understands

behavior as observable by others and viewed from the outside, but not in any reductionistic sense; and third, an attitude that grasps behavior "first hand" in a reflection upon its pervasive and lived structure.²³ Merleau-Ponty, as Mead, opposes all reductionistic behaviorism from the start, upholding a holistic behaviorism which serves as a prolegomenon for a phenomenology of perception in its primary, foundational character. In addition, he explicitly expresses an openness to a holistic behaviorism in Mead's sense in stating that a return to the perceived world is not made in such a way as to "sacrifice objectivity to the interior life."²⁴ He accredits Gestalt psychology with showing that "structure, Gestalt, meaning are no less viable in objectively observable behavior than in the experiences of ourselves—provided, of course, that objectivity is not confused with what is measurable."²⁵ Here Merleau-Ponty preserves the possibility of the nonreductionist, biological approach in Mead's sense. Merleau-Ponty, however, devolves this holistic vision of the primordial level only after first entering the reductionistic sciences of behavior and showing their inadequacies to resolve the problems raised by their reductionism. After clarifying the distinctively human structure of behavior, he then opposes to the reductionistic view of those sciences a phenomenology of perception which they demand and which itself allows the possibility of Mead's approach. Thus, it can be affirmed that Merleau-Ponty's conclusions in *The Structure of Behavior* are quite compatible with Mead's view of the relation between organic activity and behavioral environment as a contemporary, nonreductionistic naturalism.

For Merleau-Ponty, "a truth of naturalism"²⁶ as a structure of behavior emerges as the result of phenomenology's attempt to deal with the relationship between nature and the human in nonreductionistic terms. In describing the structure at the root of human experience, he has evolved a unique position, both preserving the element of the empirical, naturalistic view as the natal bond between humans and nature on this basic human level of behavior, and, at once, preserving the constitutive aspect of experience prior to the level of conscious acts. This human level of structure, where the human body and nature are one, is a unique level, distinct from the lower physical and living levels. It is to Merleau-Ponty's engagement of the physiological and psychological sciences that the discussion will now briefly turn.

Entering the "natural attitude"²⁷ of the sciences of behavior and consciousness which assumes an ontology of reified scientific contents, Merleau-Ponty comes "to these questions by starting

'from below' and by an analysis of the notion of behavior." He takes up the term "behavior" because of its neutrality²⁸ with respect to both reductionistic empirical sciences of the mental and physical and to transcendental reflection with its pure consciousness, both of which he opposes. Merleau-Ponty thus begins with behavior, so understood, in order to introduce the consciousness-nature correlation as a structure, rather than as psychological reality or as a cause. Hence, the development in *The Structure of Behavior* involves the structure of behavior and the correlation between nature and consciousness in terms of structure or form in order to ensure a holism adequate to satisfy the demands of the sciences from within.

In opposition to all atomistic and decompositional approaches to behavior, Merleau-Ponty especially rejects the "constancy hypothesis"²⁹ according to which a one-to-one correlation obtains between stimulus and response, or "a point-by-point correspondence and constant connection between the stimulus and the elementary perception."³⁰ This hypothesis breaks down in the face of the evidence from the data of consciousness.³¹ For example, the intensity of a sound can lower its pitch; two objectively equal figures appear unequal with the addition of auxiliary lines; a colored area appears to be the same color over the whole of its surfaces even though the chromatic thresholds of the different parts of the retina ought to make it red in one place, orange in another, and colorless in certain cases.

The breakdown of this hypothesis begins even in its most primitive level of stimulus-response, at which level it is seen that variation in the reaction cannot be solely attributed to variations in the elementary properties of the stimuli. The elements of a complex stimulus do not account for or allow prediction of their effects. The way in which the organism "accepts" the stimulus in part determines its spatial distribution. The behavior which results is "caused" by the organism's own behavior, which conditions the way in which the stimulus is received, as well as by the applied stimulus. Thus is established a circular rather than a linear relation. The effort toward subsidiary hypotheses by advocates of the constancy hypothesis is an attempt to account for these facts without changing the nature of the theory. The breakdown and failure of the constancy hypothesis in reflex theory, Gestalt theory, and Pavlovian reflexology demands a change in favor of a nonreductionistic holism, with the introduction of the notion of structure or form as a means of understanding behavior in terms

other than mere causal processes of classical physics or any in-itself or element of a supposed totally independent real world. Thus the notion of structure or form as a "whole which has a meaning,"³² or as a totality which is more than the sum of its parts, is the best means of understanding behavior as a phenomenon in a nonreductionistic way.³³

It is not just the stimuli or the excitant, but also the organism that contributes to the constitution of the structure or form. Quoting Weizsacker, Merleau-Ponty affirms: "The properties of the object and the intentions of the subject . . . are not only intermingled; they also constitute a new whole."³⁴ Hence the structure is created by both the organism itself and the excitant or stimuli "according to the proper nature of its receptors, the thresholds of its nerve centers and the movements of the organs"³⁵ which chooses the stimuli to which it will be sensitive. Thus, an adequate stimulus cannot be defined in itself independently of the organism, since it is neither a physical reality nor a physico-chemical agent; "it is a certain form of excitation of which the physico-chemical agent is the occasion rather than the cause. . . . [T]he excitation itself is already a response, not an effect imported from outside the organism; it is the first act of its proper functioning."³⁶ Due to the need to take account of the whole, including the organism and the stimuli, variations of the response in the presence of analogous stimuli are related to the meaning of the situations in which they appear, and differing situations can evoke analogous reactions.

In dealing with excitations in the above manner, Merleau-Ponty delves below the usual prejudice favoring the level of derived objectivity emerging from one interpretation of the contents of science. He indicates instead that the "real parts of the stimulus are not necessarily the real parts of the situation,"³⁷ revealing the relation of meaning between the situation and response, so that, rather than a derived objective presence, it is *for* the organism, *for* recognition.³⁸ He thus has emphatically rejected the alternative interpretations of behavior as either a thing of the scientifically objectified physical world or as a pure consciousness as the condition of possibility of objectivity. The structure of behavior, involving the situation as a whole and its meaning, reveals the fundamental reciprocity between the organism and its environment that gives rise to things as phenomena of experience.³⁹

It is precisely because the world of physics, of life, and of spirit are understood in terms of structure, and because each of

these orders consists in a qualitatively unique set of structural relations, that it is impossible to collapse one into the other. Aided by the notion of structure or form, it can be concluded that "both mechanism and finalism" should be rejected and that the "physical," and "vital," and the "mental" are each to be conceived as a retaking and a "new" structuration of the preceding one.⁴⁰ Since human life is more integrated than that of the animal, humans can never be merely animal.⁴¹ "Mind is not a specific difference which would be added to vital or psychological being in order to constitute a man. Man is not a rational animal. The appearance of reason and mind does not leave a sphere of self-inclosed instincts in man."⁴² The emergence of higher orders eliminates the autonomy of the lower orders and "give[s] a new signification to the steps which constitute them."⁴³ This is what reveals the advent of human action and of human perception and shows that they are irreducible to lower forms of behavior.⁴⁴

For Merleau-Ponty the notion of structure or form is a means of understanding meaning in lived experience or phenomenal being in a way that overcomes the notion of the in-itself without reverting to an idealism or to a phenomenalism.⁴⁵ The sciences, even physics, do not demand philosophical realism. The world that is determined scientifically, whether by physical sciences, life sciences, or the human sciences, is a derived world. Matter, life, and mind, rather than merely three abstract scientific realities, are three orders or "planes of signification"⁴⁶ within the perceived world from which scientific significations emerge. Hence, it is clear that the world of the sciences is neither one of things-in-themselves nor a world of ideas the multiplicity of which is unified in the epistemological subject. Further, the source of these three orders is found neither in a world of things-in-themselves nor in a world of mere appearances, but in the perceived world. Thus it must be equally clear that for Merleau-Ponty, as well as Mead, the scientifically determined world, rather than being the correction or revision of the naively perceived world, is, on the contrary, founded and dependent upon it. Science begins with the difference between the physical, the vital, and the human, a difference found in naive experience. The attempt to understand behavior and meaningful experience in an objective way ultimately leads back to the naive experience used to characterize them, and demands a descriptive, reflective account.

For Mead and Merleau-Ponty alike, then, the character of meaningful experience is inseparable from the structure of human

behavior. And, for both Mead and Merleau-Ponty, any adequate articulation of the structure of human behavior must begin with, and elucidate the irreducible features of, its phenomenologically grasped dimensions.

From the above backdrop of the general behavioral and phenomenological dimensions of the positions of Mead and Merleau-Ponty, the following discussion will turn more specifically to Mead's understanding of "the act" as constitutive of the perceptual object, and then to Merleau-Ponty's own understanding of the role of activity. It will be seen that they each portray a field of ontologically "thick" or resisting objects whose manner of emergence undercuts the subject-object split and involves similar dimensions of human activity. Mead's understanding of the emergence of the field of objects in terms of the stages of the act will be seen to further deepen the implicit but pervasive phenomenological dimension to his pragmatism, while Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological account of the perceptual field in terms of the primacy of perception will be seen implicitly to contain elements of Mead's pragmatic understanding of the stages of the act. Thus each philosopher implicitly incorporates features of the other's position in a way that complements and enriches the understanding of both.

The perceptual object emerges within contours of what Mead calls "the act." Because of this, the content of perception is inseparably linked with activity, is partially constituted in action, and all forms of copy or representative theories of perception are repudiated. As he stresses, "The process of sensing is itself an activity."⁴⁷ Every act is an act of adjustment in which both the individual and its environment take on new characters or, with the emergence of minds, new meanings, and in which a durational spread of past, present, and future is incorporated. Mead distinguishes four stages or phases of the act in terms of the impulse or anticipatory attitude, perception (or distance perception), manipulation, and consummation. The perception of physical things already presupposes an ongoing act within which perception arises. The impulse toward some selective activity is the impetus for the entire act, for the selectivity of anticipatory attitudes determines the lines of further activity. And, the anticipated later process already aroused in the central nervous system controls the earlier. This constitutes "the teleological character of the act."⁴⁸

The uniqueness of human activity, which distinguishes it from other organisms and which gives rise to the distinctively human awareness of a world of perceived objects, is founded in two

interrelated conditions. First, between the impulse phase and the consummatory phase as the completion of the act and as the satisfaction of the demands of the first impulse phase, there lies, within human activity, the phase of perception and manipulation. In animal activity, contact experiences are not determined mainly by manipulation, but rather are immediately a part of the consummatory stage. What manipulation there may be functions directly and immediately to satisfy impulse demands. Thus, there is no opportunity for the emergence of things. By the time the consummatory stage of the act is reached, things must have already arisen in experience if they are to arise at all. As Mead succinctly states, "One eats things."⁴⁹ Secondly, the role of the human hand in manipulative activity freed from a direct link to impulse demand-fulfillment allows for a diversity of manipulative experiences as possible contact experiences. In the freeing of action from instinct and in the variety of manipulative experiences due to the function of the hand, there emerges the inhibition of action resulting from alternative and conflicting possible actions in passing from distance to contact experience. In contrast to most theories of perception, Mead claims that we are aware of a sensible object not primarily through visual experience but through contact experience. The manipulatory phase enters into and modifies the perceptual phase. The diversity of manipulative experiences due to the human hand is incorporated into perceptual awareness because of the inhibition of a process of movement in relation to a distant stimulus due to alternative possible completions of the act. Perception is thus a process of mediation within the act in which possible contact experience of the distance stimulation appears with that distant stimulation. In this way, "the percept is a collapsed act."⁵⁰

Mead's understanding of the distinction between distance experience and contact experience as phases of the act is crucial in understanding the nature of the perceptual object. Distance experience can be found in the action of any sense, even touch. Tactile experience provokes actions that relate to contact experience. Contact experience is not the bare contact with the surface of the organism. Rather, it involves resistance, an "inside content." We do not feel or see the inside by taking apart the object, for this only yields more surfaces. The contact experience is not merely pressure, hardness or roughness, etc., but primarily resistance. The object of perception is always a distant object which invites us to action. Even the object of contact experience, "is such only in so

far as it possesses an outline and position with reference to the whole environment which gives it the character of a distant object."⁵¹ Any experienced object is an integral part of an environment which is brought to bear in the perception of the object.

In the reference of distance experience to contact experience, there is an abstraction from passage and the emergence of structures irrelevant to passage. Perceptual objects are simultaneous with the perceiver. As Mead notes:

The theory of the subjectivity of secondary qualities exactly reverses the actual situation. The distance characters of stimuli are spatiotemporally away from the organism; but if the resistance of things, their inner matter, is to be dated simultaneously with the organism, this resistance must be excited in the organism, and thus wrench temporally distant stimuli characters out of the futurity.⁵²

That which is spatiotemporally distant becomes transformed into objects which are spatially but not temporally distant. For lower animal forms there is no perceptual world of physical things, there is no experience of simultaneity, "no 'now' by which a perceptual object can be dated with the organism. The entire action is ahead and places the colors and sounds in the constantly emerging future."⁵³ There is no connection of distance perception and contact perception in terms of a stable core.⁵⁴

Though the relation between distant and contact experience in the constitution of the physical object may at first seem to be the relation between the hand and the eye, there is more involved. In order to constitute the physical object as a center of resistance the individual must also make use of the ability to take the role of the other as developed in social interrelations.⁵⁵ The individual's act must call out an activity in objects that is similar in character to its own. "The necessary condition of this physical but cooperative 'other' getting into experience, so that the inside of things, their efficacy and force, is an actual part of the world, is that the individual in a premonitory fashion should take the attitude of acting as the physical thing will act, in getting the proper adjustment for his own ultimate response."⁵⁶ The ability of anticipatory role taking, developed in social interrelations, is applied in the emergence of nonsocial objects. Indeed, all objects are originally social objects. The physical object as inanimate is that kind of social object which can become depersonalized, leaving only the

resistance, which is the stuff not only of inanimate physical objects, but the stuff of all perceptual things, including ourselves and others as objects of perception.⁵⁷

In perceiving the object, the organism bestows upon it the active occupation of space which belongs to itself, thus giving the object an inside content which is irreducible to surfaces revealed to the eye or the hand. The organism identifies the resistance of the thing with its own active effort; it takes the role of the "other." In this identification, the hand again plays a crucial function. "What is essential to this social relation . . . is that the individual, in preparing to grasp the distant object, himself takes the attitude of resisting his own effort in grasping, and that the attained preparation of the manipulation is the result of this cooperation or conversation of attitudes. . . . I am prepared to seize this object, and then in the role of the thing I resist this grasp."⁵⁸ Further, since resistance belongs to the organism and its manipulatory area, "the 'what' of the object expresses a whole of which both environment and organism are essential parts."⁵⁹ The perception of organism and object as distinct emerges from a unified field of active resistance which undercuts the subject-object distinction. As Mead notes, "Each surface, that of the hand and that of the stone, is given as immediately as the other, and the resistance of the one is given as immediately as that of the other. . . . Out of the experience arise the physical thing and the organism. Neither is prior."⁶⁰ Organism and environment, behavior and perceived object, are unified in the holistic field of the "collapsed act." As Mead summarizes, "The act, then, must be antecedent to the appearance of things and of the organism as objects. It is illegitimate to place this original act within the organic individual as an object."⁶¹

Mead holds that the mechanism for such a field of resistance arises out of the action of different parts of the body against one another, primarily out of the hands.⁶² Yet he stresses that there is a critical difference between the pressure of hand against hand and stone against hand, for in the former there is the sense of effort in each hand.⁶³ Once the self has emerged, it would seem that this forms the basis for the recognition of one's body as that which is both sensing and sensed. Further, the very constitution of the physical object through role taking, and the derivative nature of physical objects from social objects, explains why Mead can hold that inanimate objects can form parts of the social "other" in so far as an individual responds to those objects in social fashion.⁶⁴

The ability to take the role of the other further allows humans to take many different perceptual viewpoints simultaneously and in this way reach a universal grasp of the object. The constitution of the physical object as embodying not only resistance but also a unified multiplicity of perspectives is possible only through the ability for role taking, an ability which arises in the context of social behavior and which gives rise to selfhood. The focus on social behavior and role taking in the development of selfhood will be postponed until chapter 4. But in light of this interrelation, it would seem that the distinction between instrumental action and communicative action can, within Mead's philosophy, be only a difference in emphasis rather than a difference in kind. The clarification of this point, however, involves the clarification of the term "instrumental," for it is too often taken exclusively as the active use of knowledge to change society or the environment; it is too often wrongly associated with the technological.

At a more fundamental level, operative throughout Mead's philosophy, "instrumental" indicates the manner in which one knows the world through the structures of the meanings one has created by one's responses to the environment. Here the focus on the instrumental is not a focus on what one should do with knowledge, but on what knowledge is, on human purposive activity as built into the very structure of meaningful awareness. In this appropriation, however, the instrumental or purposively guided transformational element between humans and their environment is incorporated in the very heart of the internal structure of meaning. Indeed, the "instrumental nature of the manipulatory experience,"⁶⁵ which is permeated by the impulse stage of anticipatory selectivity, is crucial in bringing the act to a pause in which it does not go through to its consummation at once, and the characteristics of the manipulative phase permeate and mediate the distance perception, thus giving rise to objects of perception. Purposive, instrumental activity, then, is incorporated within the very structure of meanings in general, and its character, as incorporated within these meanings, permeates and unifies them.

It was seen above that inanimate objects are derivative from social objects, since their constitution involves the social context of role taking ability which gives rise to selfhood. From the perspective of the present discussion, however, the full development of social objects and social interaction can be seen to be dependent upon the instrumental. For perception of resisting objects and one's organism arise together from an undifferentiated field, and, as in-

dicated above, social objects are also resisting objects. As Mead states, social individuals or selves exist in their "efforts and tensions in social conduct. . . . They have besides these characters those of physical beings."⁶⁶ And, though it will be seen that awareness of meanings emerges only through the beginnings of communicative action, such action, involving as it does the resistance and efforts of organisms, is permeated with the instrumental activity that gives rise to the insides of objects as centers of resistance. Instrumental activity is thus pervasive for all meaningful experience, and communicative intent is permeated with the instrumental nature of meaningful awareness, while the instrumental nature of meaningful awareness is inherently social. For Mead, self, others, and things arise together in experience,⁶⁷ and instrumental and communicative action are inseparably intertwined in the structure of behavior which gives rise to them. Jürgen Habermas, espousing the popular distinction between these, separates communicative action and instrumental action in analyses that draw from Mead, and attempts to strengthen this position by noting the distinction between types of sentences that do and do not require communicative intent.⁶⁸ According to the present understanding of Mead, however, any sentence or any meaningful word incorporates both dimensions of activity by the very nature of the internal action-structure of meaning.

The purposive, instrumental character that pervades and unifies human awareness is precisely its binding intentional character as well. The teleological character of the act discussed above in relation to the impulse stage is at once the foundation for the intentional character and the instrumental character of human activity. All human activity, even at its most rudimentary level, is selective, creative activity guided by direction and noetically transformative of its environment. As such, it is instrumental or experimental, exemplifying the dynamics of scientific method. But, precisely as such, it is also intentional. The significance of the structure of human behavior developed above is that the dispositions, habits, or tendencies it incorporates are immediately experienced and pervade the very tone and structure of immediately grasped content. Thus, Mead's focus on behavior, far from excluding a descriptive analysis of lived or everyday experience, points directly toward such an endeavor. There is an inseparable relationship between the human biological organism bound to a natural environment, and the human agent who through meanings constitutes a perceived world.

There are two dimensions of the act as it develops in Mead's philosophy, for there is a twofold philosophical sense of "purposive activity" running throughout Mead's position, one biological, the other phenomenological, both of which undercut the level of the biological in terms of the contents of scientific analysis. The act, in its biological dimension, is understood as a process of adjustment of the organism to the conditions of the environment. In this sense Mead speaks of the adequacy of meanings in terms of the ongoing conduct of the biological organism immersed in a natural world.⁶⁹ The act, in its phenomenological dimension, is partially constitutive of its field of awareness and involves an intentional mind-object relationship as a field of meanings that can be phenomenologically studied from within. In this second sense Mead speaks of the adequacy of meanings in terms of the appearance of what is meant.⁷⁰

From the context of organism-environment interaction, there emerge irreducible meanings which allow objects to come to conscious awareness. Such meanings are irreducible to physical causal conditions or to psychological acts and processes; yet they emerge from the biological, when the 'biological' is properly understood, for the content of human perception is inseparable from the structure of human behavior within its natural setting. The inseparable relationship between the human biological organism bound to a natural environment and the human agent whose noetic creativity is partially constitutive of the object of awareness, is concisely delineated in Mead's assertion that "when we reduce a thing to parts we have destroyed the thing that was there. . . . We refer to these differences as the meanings these things have in their relationship to the organism."⁷¹ The focus on biological organism does not lead to causal analyses of human awareness and human knowledge in opposition to an irreducible field of meanings, but to a structure of behavior which, as purposive, instrumental, or experimental provides the activity out of which consciousness of a field of meanings emerges.

Mead concludes that his general analysis of the constitution of the physical object in terms of the act both accords with developed perceptual awareness⁷² and does not require that we move from experience to a reality which lies outside an actual or possible perception.⁷³ These claims, indicative at once of both the biological and phenomenological dimensions of Mead's pragmatism, would indeed be, for Mead, the best evidence for the strength of his analysis, for any adequate articulation of the structure of human

behavior must begin with, and elucidate the irreducible aspects of, the phenomenologically grasped features of experience. In light of the above analysis, the following discussion will show how Mead's phases of the act are implicitly entailed within Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological account of perceptual behavior, leading naturally to a field of perception similar in its features to those characterized by Mead.

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, precisely as containing the thesis of "the primacy of perception," and not exclusive of the biological and behavioral dimensions emphasized by Mead, shows that perception emerges within an operative level of vital intentionality as an anticipatory orientation of the lived body.⁷⁴ Indeed, for Merleau-Ponty, human perception is inextricably linked to human action⁷⁵ which, as anticipatory in its receptivity of things perceived in the world, has the capacity "of orienting oneself in relation to the possible, to the mediate,"⁷⁶ thus distinguishing humans from animals in their limitation to their immediate milieu. The general aspects of human behavior brought together in this corporeally unified, vital intentionality are action, perception, and affectivity, each intertwined with the others, each reciprocally related to the others, and each revealing its aspects of original intentionality as essential features of existence. For Merleau-Ponty, then, the content of perception emerges within this basic and pervasive activity beneath the intentionality that posits objects and is constituted in action broadly considered. Thus all empiricist and intellectualist theories of perception are rendered false. It is within this context that Mead's four phases of the act are embryonically entailed. For Merleau-Ponty, perception, in its structure and process or passage and with its operative intentionality, contains an anticipatory attitude toward possible distance perception, a practical synthesis involving the pragma, a certain implicitly recognized manipulative aspect, and fulfillment or consummation. These can be explicated from his pervasive thesis of the primacy of perception at a level of operation or action below the split between subject and object as such.

This primacy of perception means that for Merleau-Ponty perception is irreducible in that it must be accounted for holistically as vital intentionality bringing to life a world of meanings within interactive experience rather than explained via reductionistic accounts. With this thesis Merleau-Ponty attempts to deal with the perceiving mind, reestablishing its roots in its body and in its world at the human level of behavior.⁷⁷ The perceived object

as "present and living"⁷⁸ is the origin of objectivity and, as such, is not decomposable into a collection of sensations because "in it the whole is prior to its parts."⁷⁹ This whole is not an ideal whole, but rather occurs in an intentional "perceptual experience which gives us the passage from one moment to the next, which thus realizes the unity of time"⁸⁰ and involves a "practical synthesis."⁸¹ Merleau-Ponty states this thesis as follows: "that the experience of perception is our presence at the moment when things . . . are constituted for us; that perception is a nascent *Logos*; that it teaches us, outside all dogmatism, the true condition of objectivity itself, that it summons us to the task of knowledge and action."⁸²

This task of action which pervades the primacy of perception leads to Mead's first phase of the act, for the impulse toward selective activity as the impetus for the whole act has its counterpart in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in the anticipatory dimension of perceptual experience mentioned above. This experience, as the attuned behavior aimed or directed toward a thing within an oriented focus, is already as such selective. Merleau-Ponty thus can be seen to interpret the anticipatory and sensory aspects of the structure of meaning to emerge within the context of prereflective, vital intentionality. It is not difficult to draw out the implication of this deepened sense of the structure of meaning and behavior.⁸³

Although his context and style are different, Merleau-Ponty's treatment of distance in lived existence underlying scientific objectification converges with Mead's treatment of distance perception and of contact experience in the manipulatory stage of the act. For as with Mead's account, the perceptual stage in Merleau-Ponty's treatment can be seen to entail, within the very sense of vital intentionality, that process of mediation in which the possible contact experience appears with distance experience in the initial intentional projection. In Merleau-Ponty's account, perceived things can be seen to lead from what distant stimulation gives in terms of possibilities of fulfillment to what contact experience yields in terms of actual fulfillment.⁸⁴

Further, a quasi-manipulative aspect is included within perceptual awareness, which is revealed first as "I can" rather than as "I think," manifesting motility (action) as basic intentionality. This practical synthesis and these phases of perception, entailed within the structure of behavior, are, as Merleau-Ponty constantly affirms against intellectualism, prior to that achieved by the understanding as such, so that the significance or structure of the thing perceived is not first and foremost a meaning for the under-

standing, but, rather, is a meaning in relation to this basic level of behavior. Emphasizing the practical, not as something to be done in the narrow sense, but, rather, as constitutive of human existence, Merleau-Ponty states: "We experience a perception and its horizon 'in action' (*pratiquement*) rather than by 'posing' them or explicitly 'knowing' them."⁸⁵ And again:

In the action of the hand which is raised towards an object is contained a reference to the object, not as an object represented, but as that highly specific thing towards which we project ourselves, near which we are, in anticipation, and which we haunt. Consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body. A movement is learned when the body has understood, that is, when it has incorporated it into the 'world', and to move one's body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call, which is made upon it independently of any representation.⁸⁶

Hence, for Merleau-Ponty as for Mead, perceptual objects as simultaneous with the perceiver are constituted in action. When an object is seen at a distance, it is said to be already held, or still held. The object (e.g., the lamp) grasped at a distance is simultaneous with the perceiver, i.e., "distance is between simultaneous objects, and . . . this simultaneity is contained in the very meaning of perception."⁸⁷ The transitional-synthesis on this level is a synthesis not of disparate perspectives, but rather, one which brings about the passage from one perspective to the other, retaining, without mediation, a hold on one while anticipating others. Thus, distance cannot be understood by comparing various contents presented in an already constituted space, but, rather, in terms of this direct possession, and in terms of "*being in the distance* which links up with being where it appears."⁸⁸

Though Merleau-Ponty's position, as represented above, includes action, it might at first seem that his emphasis on sight and vision contradicts Mead's emphasis on contact experience over that of sight. Merleau-Ponty's account of the inclusiveness of the perceptual object, however, actually confirms Mead's emphasis. For when Merleau-Ponty refers to the visual experience of an object, as for instance, seeing the lamp, he intends to include more than the detached or distant object seen. Rather, he aims explicitly to include the full ramifications of meaning structure, including