

## *Preface*

For several decades my work has centered around two problems: the development of a general theory of signs and the development of a general theory of value. *Signs, Language, and Behavior* was the product of the first concern, and *Varieties of Human Value* was a product of the second. Both problems were approached in terms of the theory of action or behavior developed in its essentials by George H. Mead.

The present study is an attempt to bring together these two lines of development. It was begun in 1956–1957 during a year's stay at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences.

That there are close relations between the terms 'signification' and 'significance' is evident. In many languages there is a term like the English term 'meaning' which has two poles: that which something signifies and the value or significance of what is signified. Thus if we ask what is the meaning of life, we may be asking a question about the signification of the term 'life', or asking a question about the value or significance of living—or both. The fact that such terms as 'meaning' are so widespread in many languages (with the polarity mentioned) suggests that there is a basic relation between what we shall distinguish as *signification* and *significance*. The nature of signification and significance, as well as their relations within human behavior, is the subject matter of this book.

I shall in the nature of the case draw heavily upon my earlier work in these areas. A knowledge of this work is, however, not

required by the reader. The book also contains some relatively important changes in my former views, and considerable material not previously presented. The book thus gives me a chance to rethink my ideas in these areas, and to present a more integrated formulation of the relations of signification and significance within human behavior.

Many years of work have been motivated by the conviction that a new and important outlook on the nature of man is emerging, and that this outlook will be clarified greatly as we come to understand better the ways in which signs and values function in human life.

This book is not technical enough or comprehensive enough to give much aid to the professional philosopher or to solve in detail the specific problems of value of the behavioral scientists. It is a framework for viewing these matters. I hope that it will be relevant to those interested in the relations of signs, values, and behavior.

I am grateful for help in the preparation of this book given by a succession of graduate research assistants: Dr. Denis O'Donovan, Mr. Frank N. Sciadini, Mr. Fred R. Berger, Mr. Daniel J. Hamilton, and Mr. B. Wayne Shirbroun. Mrs. Evelyn Weight was responsible for the final typing of the work.

The book owes much to the students in my seminars at the University of Florida during the last five years. I thank Professor George R. Bartlett and the University of Florida for making available the time needed to do this work.

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