



1964

The Phenomenon of Language in the Thought of Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Rolland Francis Smith
Loyola University Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses



Part of the [Philosophy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Smith, Rolland Francis, "The Phenomenon of Language in the Thought of Maurice Merleau-Ponty" (1964). *Master's Theses*. 2038.

https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/2038

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](#).
Copyright © 1964 Rolland Francis Smith

THE PHENOMENON OF LANGUAGE IN THE THOUGHT
OF MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

by

Rolland F. Smith, S.J.

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of
the Requirements of the Degree of
Master of Arts

July

1964

LIFE

Rolland Francis Smith, S.J. was born May 23, 1938. He graduated from St. Ignatius High School, Cleveland, Ohio in June 1956. He entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus in August of that same year to pursue studies towards the Jesuit priesthood.

At West Baden College of Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois, he completed the requirements for the bachelor of arts degree which he received June 13, 1961.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION: PHILOSOPHY AND LANGUAGE	1
Chapter	
I. SITUATION LANGUAGE IN THE THOUGHT OF MERLEAU- PONTY	8
Philosophy and Phenomenology	
The Structure of Behavior	
Perception	
II. LANGUAGE AND HUMAN EXISTENCE	34
III. LANGUAGE AND THE SOCIAL WORLD	59
The Problem of Communication	
The Social World	
IV. LANGUAGE AND REALITY	85
The New <u>Cogito</u>	
The New Absolute	
Philosophy and Metaphysics	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	113

INTRODUCTION

PHILOSOPHY AND LANGUAGE

Is language merely one subject of philosophical speculation? Or is it the subject of philosophy? The Traditionalist complains: "The queen of the sciences has been unjustly dethroned in our times. No longer does she make pronouncements on reality. She is merely a handmaid to human language. Once she dwelt in the courts of Being, Soul, Nature, God. Now she is retained in the banter of the antechamber, uncertain of the court beyond. This is the modern involvement in mere language."

Then the Traditionalist is confronted with tradition. Philosophic thought at its origins was concerned with language. The search for wisdom has always been a search for the Word. Heraclitus heard the Logos break primordial silence. The Hebrews opened their ears and hearts to the Word of God. The Hindus listened to Aun, the sacred Word of words. The ancients realized that the discovery of the meaning of anything, of reality itself, was the pronouncement of its logos. Philosophy has always been the attempt to speak the ultimate Word with the original Word. When Socrates was peering into the essence of to dikaion, to on, episteme, to agathon, he was indulging himself in linguistic analysis. His dialectical method consisted

2

in determining how the word "dikaion" was being used by his contemporaries. When his conversationalist friends and drinking companions offered their definitions of the word, he would counter by offering a use that did not admit their definitions.

Is Aristotle's pursuit of the laws of thought in the Organon significantly different from Russell's pursuit of the perfect language? And Russell is the founder of contemporary British analysis. Both were beginning with the language they spoke; both were attempting to find the invariable structure of that language. And so the name "logic" was given to their work. Certainly the ancients implicitly recognized language to be the basic act of man when they defined him zoon logicon. The words mean not only "rational animal" but also "speaking animal" or "symbolic animal"--a definition recently resurrected by Ernst Cassirer, the philosopher of symbolic forms.

Passing from the ancients to the medievals, one finds language analysis once again. Scholasticism emerges from the stream of logic. From a concern with the use of words, vast metaphysical systems were developed. The questions about the universals, the most barbed questions of the era, were linguistic problems. It is not that these problems necessary arose from a misuse of words as the anti-metaphysicians claim today. But they were concerned with the use of concepts which were verba interiora. Moreover the medievals were concerned with the language act which was the dictio verbi or the propositio--the putting forth of words. Besides this, the scholastic mode of

procedure anticipated modern analysis in the use of distinctions, classifications, and structures of concepts.

The eighteenth and nineteenth century philosophers on the continent--perhaps Kant is the best example--began their systems with propositions. They devided them, classified them, argued back to the act which produced them, inquired into their conditions of possibility. And across the channel Berkely and Hume, the founders of British empiricism and the predecessors of British analysis, sought out the meanings of words and, like their analytic followers, declared many of these words meaningless.

And so the contemporary concern with language is not new. And yet it is quite new. For the age of Russell and Wittgenstein, of Cassirer and von Humboldt, of Heidegggar and Merleau-Ponty is not only involved in language and concerned with language, it is aware of its involvement and concern. Although philosophy at the time of Socrates and Abelard and Hume were in fact carrying on a sort of language analysis, only at present has philosophy become conscious of that fact. This self-consciousness raises philosophy to a new level. She still retains her concern with Being; but she attempts to re-discover it as it is already being attained in man's characteristic act of speech. The awareness of her own use of language as well as the development and relativity of language, has taught philosophy her limitations. It has taught her that there is a plurality of valid and unique symbolic systems of which she is only one.

Each of these is an approach to reality and a development of a new world. And yet philosophy retains her throne. She is queen of all the sciences. For she is the symbolic act of all these myriad symbolic acts. She enters all these symbolic worlds and captures the symbolic act which form those worlds. In herself she finds the unity of symbolic act and the unity of the world. She is speaking about reality in speaking about speaking. She is a process of discovering and uttering the Logos of all the logoi.

The contemporary interest in language takes two directions. The two directions can be discerned by contrasting the Wittgenstein of the Tractatus with the Wittgenstein of the Philosophical Investigations, or, in general, by contrasting British analysis, especially the more positivistic species, and the phenomenology of language of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. On the one hand, there is a concern with language as a finished system. Language is taken and examined as it is found. It is found already in being and separated from the process of its origin. Language analyzed in this way takes on an opaqueness and stability. One assumes that there lies a reality behind the words and that the structure of reality is the same as the structure of language (Russell). Or one admits that he cannot really know the reality behind words, but must totally involve himself with the use and meaning of objective words (Ayer).

The other approach to language and the language-world is through the language act as it is lived in the very process of

speech. In the act of expression one finds himself already in contact with the world through symbols. These symbols are not "pictures" hiding reality but, as it were, "frames" which allow the world to appear. Primary expression is totally given to objects in the world. Because of this a philosophy can be so prejudiced by objective thought that it forgets its own act of being totally given to objects in the world. It becomes involved in the spoken forgetting the act of speaking. Only by rediscovering this act, which is non-objectively given to her all the time, will philosophy break out of the prison that objective thought builds for herself. By pointing out the expressing act as it is lived, by affirming it in primary experience, philosophy overcomes the antinomies of objective thought between consciousness and nature, action and cognition, the world and the self. By approaching reality through the expressing act itself. This analysis provides a basic structure of act which allows for a development and relativity of acts and worlds and which also forms a unity in man and reality. It leads to an ethics and metaphysics as "objective thought" cannot do.

Here through the writings of Merleau-Ponty, the second path of language analysis will be explored. Conceivably the phenomenological philosophy of Merleau-Ponty might be approached in many ways. The critic might center his analysis upon Merleau-Ponty's psychology of the body or his aesthetics, his social philosophy or his philosophy of science. For Merleau-Ponty exercises great influence in all the sciences of man as man.

6

But by approaching all his work through his phenomenology of language, the actual core of his thought is reached. For man as man is a bodily-expression. Society is essentially a community of speakers. The arts and sciences are man's symbolic approaches to the world. Not only is the core of Merleau-Ponty's thought reached by examining his phenomenology of language; but in a real sense one achieves the core of all contemporary thought in its concern with and utterance of the Word.

The broad lines of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of language will be drawn in the following manner. In chapter one his language theory will be situated in the totality of his philosophy. It will be seen just why language is at the core of his thought and how it extends to all areas of his philosophy. Then this language theory will be treated dialectically in the spirit of Merleau-Ponty himself. In chapter two the language act will be found as revelative of human existence: To exist is to express to a world. Man is essentially a speaker. His body is originative of meaning. To understand him and what he speaks, one must grasp the act of expression as it is lived. The fundamental problem of this chapter is the unity of man. In chapter three the other pole, that of the world, will come into focus. The fundamental problem here concerns the multiplicity of acts and expressions. How is communication and a common world possible? Human existence could not be understood except as to-a-world (chapter two); the world could not be understood except in relation to human existence (chapter three). Now the

polarities are synthesized in the fourth chapter which endeavors to discover with Merleau-Ponty the basic structure of reality and the absolute.

This author believes that this manner of presentation is faithful not merely to the doctrine of Merleau-Ponty, but also to his spirit of incompleteness, openness, and inquiry. Merleau-Ponty was not a finished philosopher, but always in process. To be faithful to him it is important that his interpreter go beyond "secondary expression"--the mere repetition of doctrine. He must authentically incorporate this doctrine into his own process of search for and utterance of the Word.

CHAPTER I

SITUATING LANGUAGE IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MERLEAU-PONTY

Before speaking of any one area of interest in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, one should ask what is philosophy for Merleau-Ponty, what is its method, how in general does it proceed. Our area of special interest is language, mainly because of its central position in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. From the vantage point of language one can survey his whole thought. But first one must find his way through the totality to get to this center, as an explorer blazes his trail through unmarked lands to reach a hill upon which he can survey and organize the surrounding territory. So the action here is two-fold: Rebuild the totality or context of Merleau-Ponty's thought in its broadest lines to see how this thought culminates in the problem of language. Then from this viewpoint glance out into the totality. The first action is what is meant by "situating language in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty" and is the occupation of the present chapter. The second action will be taken up in subsequent chapters.

"Our end," writes Merleau-Ponty, "is to understand the relations of consciousness and of nature." These words are at

the very beginning of his Structure du Comportement¹ and near the end of the Phenomenologie de la Perception,² two books which should be read as part one and part two of one grand philosophical movement. Here Merleau-Ponty locates himself and his problem in history--in a dialectical tradition of idealism and realism where the explanation of reality is found in subjective consciousness or objective nature. His role is synthesis. For he wants to demonstrate that explanation somehow resides in both or, metaphorically, in the area between both. His philosophy, then, will be neither empiricism nor idealism, but an empiricism that takes into itself idealism, or an idealism that takes in empiricism. He will attempt a philosophy on a new level that does not deny the lower levels, but subsumes them and transforms them in the subsumption.³

But why should one be concerned about the relations of consciousness and nature? This pushes the question of philosophy further. Why, one might ask Merleau-Ponty, why philosophize at

¹Maurice Merleau-Ponty, La Structure du Comportement (2d ed.; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949), p. 1. Hereafter referred to as S.C.

²Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenologie de la Perception (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1945), p. 489. Hereafter referred to as P.P.

³Compare Hegel's aufgehoben. It is apparent that Merleau-Ponty read Hegel sympathetically, especially, as he himself notes, the Hegel of the Phenomenology of Spirit. He writes in his essay on Hegel in Sens et Non-Sens (Paris: Nagel, 1945), p. 125: "Hegel est à l'origine de tout ce qui fait de grand en philosophie depuis un siècle." As a dialectical movement towards freedom, Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is Hegelian in spirit. Even his central problem is stated in Hegelian or Marxist terms.

all? What is philosophy?

Philosophy and Phenomenology for Merleau-Ponty

Philosophy is essentially a search, Merleau-Ponty told his students in his inaugural lecture at the College de France. And this search discovers its own problems and poses them in a new way. It does not simply accept past problems and their solutions.⁴ The philosopher is attempting to get a hold of himself and of his world of things and fellow men.⁵ The philosopher, then, is undergoing a sort of auto-psychoanalytic process. For it is by a radical reflection and consequent thematization of one's relations with the world, with others, and with himself that one finds, accepts, and masters himself in union with the other.⁶ In other words, philosophy is the search to solve man's alienation from the world, from men, and from himself. It is a search for truth not in the abstract. The philosopher's very problems arise in function of the life in which he is engaged with his fellow-men and are worked out in that context, in communication.⁷ Again, he searches to get a hold over himself in relation with his fellow man and his world. Thus the end of philosophy is mastery over the situation, so to speak, or

⁴Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Eloge de la Philosophie (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1953), p. 9. See also Jean Ecole, "Rentrée au Collège de France avec M. Merleau-Ponty," Revue Thomiste, LIII, No. 1, 194.

⁵P.P., 180.

⁶P.P., 519.

⁷Merleau-Ponty, Eloge. . . , 48 and 85; Ecole, 194.

freedom. This is not an absolute, isolated freedom of consciousness, pour soi, separated from the world, but an engaged freedom or incarnate freedom in which the philosopher is both within (attached to) and above (detached from) the world--"both less a man and more than a man."⁸

How does this search to recover one's rapport with the world, to negate the negation of alienation, unfold? The philosopher's work is to "describe" the primordial data of consciousness, that is, its presence to the world and the world's presence to it "before" this presence was ruptured by the objectification and deanthropomorphism of science. One must discover or re-create the pre-scientific or pre-cognitive lived world. This activity will ground man's science and will give a meaning to all his activities in the world.⁹

This radical reflection upon and description of the primordial relations of man and world in order to find and give meaning to man's existence in the world is the definition of "phenomenology." Hence for Merleau-Ponty philosophy proceeds through phenomenology, or better, philosophy is phenomenology, and no more than that; this is quite sufficient.¹⁰ So the question what is philosophy for Merleau-Ponty converges upon the

⁸Merleau-Ponty, Elogé. . . , 86.

⁹P.P., ii-iii.

¹⁰Herbert Spiegelberg notes in The Phenomenological Movement (Vol, 2; the Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), p. 532 n. that when Fr. Danielou, at a discussion of one of Merleau-Ponty's lectures, introduced a distinction between phenomenological description and philosophical system, Merleau-Ponty protested: "I

question what is Merleau-Ponty's conception of phenomenology. He answers this operatively by what he does throughout his Phénoménologie de la Perception, and contentually by what he says in the all-important preface of that work.

A philosophy that studies phenomena is a phenomenology. By "phenomenon" Merleau-Ponty wants to express "the intimate relation between the objects and the subject and the presence of solid structure in both which distinguishes phenomena from mere appearances."¹¹ He cites the later Husserl to whom the idea of "Lebenswelt" or "lived-world" as so important. But here he does not hesitate to interpret Husserl in the light of his own insights. He insists upon the later, non-idealistic Husserl because for Merleau-Ponty the world is "already there" as an inalienable presence which precedes reflection or any analysis which one can make of it.¹² "The real must be described and not constructed or constituted."¹³ "The whole effort of phenomenology is to recover this naive contact with the world and to give it finally a philosophical status. It is a

have never thought that phenomenology was nothing but an introduction to philosophy, I believe that it is philosophy." The point is that by "describing" one is explaining. By the use of words one is both allowing phenomena to appear and is structuring (systematizing) phenomena. These can be looked at as two moments, but are really one and the same act. The result of phenomenological description is system, not a finished, static system, but a growing organic system. This will be treated more fully below.

¹¹S.C., 215.

¹²P.P., i, iv.

¹³P.P., iv.

philosophy intent upon being an exact science, but it is also the account of space, of time, and of the world as 'lived.'¹⁴

Phenomenological description is "above all a disavowal of science," he insists.¹⁵ By this he wants to return to the world before the scientific or common sense world. It is a return to "the things in themselves," as Husserl said, which for Merleau-Ponty means a return "to that world prior to knowledge and of which knowledge speaks."¹⁶ The radical reflection desired is a "reflection on the non-reflective."¹⁷ What must be indicated in this description is the lived-world. This means he wants to return, for example, to his love for a friend as it is in itself in his experience of actual loving, and not to a scientific or common sense account of love. Or again, knowing and the account of knowing are two different things. One "knows"

¹⁴P.P., i.

¹⁵P.P., ii. By this some have interpreted Merleau-Ponty as being anti-scientific (for example, Edward G. Ballard, "The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty," Studies in Hegel / Tulane Studies in Philosophy; New Orleans: Tulane University, 1960/, 182.). Nothing could be farther from the truth. Merleau-Ponty is simply asserting that the scientific, objective method is not sufficient when dealing with man who has subjective dimensions; he desires to go beyond the world of science to the foundational world. He is in constant touch with the sciences, especially the human sciences, and uses their data to corroborate his philosophic reasoning, although he wants to surpass science and thus ground it in a phenomenology. One man speaks of him: "There is no man more indebted to science, particularly is the form of psychology, and yet less inclined to surrender to it." (Ben-Ami Scharfstein, "Bergson and Merleau-Ponty: A Preliminary Comparison," Journal of Philosophy, LII, No. 14 /July 7, 1955/, 380.).

¹⁶P.P., iii.

¹⁷P.P., iv.

the acts and objects of knowing and loving in the very living out of these acts, even though he does not know them formally. It is this given or "lived" world to which the phenomenologist wants to return to see things as they are in themselves. He wants to return to the unified act or fact of subject and world in which epistemological language is called "perception" and which is ontologically termed "existence": the être-au-monde.

For Husserl the phenomenological reduction was a further development of Descartes' methodic doubt in that it "bracketed" the world; in this way it gave rise to idealism. For Merleau-Ponty the reduction, by negating our habitual relations with the world constituted by the classical prejudices of idealism or realism, permits the discovery of the life-world in all its "facticity."¹⁸ The eidetic reduction for Husserl means the passing from the fact of our existence (Dasein) to the essence of our existence (Wesen). But the reduction for Merleau-Ponty is only a means to catch the facts of existence before they are formulated linguistically. Essences, as separated, are those of language. It is the function of language to isolate essences. But the primordial meanings of words arise from the experience we have of ourselves. Essences, as isolated, are only apparent since they repose on the antepredicative life of consciousness. "In the silence of the original consciousness there appear not only the meaning of words but also the meaning of things, that core of primary meaning (signification) around which are

¹⁸p.p., v-vii. Cf. Spiegelberg, II, 534.

organized the acts of naming and expression."¹⁹ To search the essence of consciousness, for example, is to recover that effective presence of self to oneself, the fact of consciousness which is what the word and concept of consciousness ultimately mean.²⁰ Likewise seeking the essence of the world is to seek what it is in fact for us prior to all formulation. "The world is not what I think, but that which I live."²¹

And so intentionality is discovered as the basic structure of consciousness, not only in so far as different human acts are always directed toward an object, but in so far as the operative intentionality (intentionalité opérante) underlies our whole relation with the world of persons and things. It establishes the natural and ante-predicative unity of the world and our life.²² Consciousness which is "consciousness of" is not to be looked upon only as inhering in each act, but as the subject or spirit in and to a world. This means that there is not really (that is, purely) a subject or spirit or consciousness at all, but an existent--an être-au-monde.

The notion of phenomenology, like the notions to which phenomenology attends, is admittedly ambiguous. These are notions that cannot be defined by one or two stock phrases. They must be "worked back upon" by a number of statements and by a whole context which points to the fact to be grasped. It is only

¹⁹p.p., x.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹p.p., xii.

²²p.p., xiii.

by entering the totality and going through the motions that the point to be understood is "indicated." By considering some of the misunderstandings and objections to the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, the essence of that phenomenology will stand out more clearly and one will have grasped, at least inchoatively, what philosophy is for Merleau-Ponty.

One problem turns about Merleau-Ponty's notion of experience. Is he after all an empiricist? For does he not find the ultimate criterion in experience? Is not "perception" the basic act to be analyzed, as it was for Berkeley? Is not philosophy itself a "description of phenomena"? Phrases of Merleau-Ponty taken out of context seem to confirm this objection: "Genuine philosophy is re-learning to see the world." "The world is that which I perceive." "The real must be described not constructed or constituted. That means I cannot assimilate perception into syntheses which are of the order of judgment, of acts, or of predication."²³ Words take their meaning within the whole context or system, not just from a one to one correspondence with isolated impressions. And so it is with Merleau-Ponty's words: "experience" by which he does not merely mean "sense-experience"; "perception" which is not equivalent to, say, Hume's "perception"; "phenomenon" which is not a mere appearance in the mode of Kant or Hume. Experience and perception is for Merleau-Ponty a "knowledge" before knowledge; it is a "presence"; it is consciousness and its data. And, again, this is not an isolated

consciousness, but a presence to self in its presence to the other.²⁴

The world as "lived" is not merely the sensed world. It is the world with which I am in contact before, so to speak, any imposition of categories. The body through which I attain and live my world is not the body I look at and organize scientifically or according to common sense. My body is the body I live and am before such organization. Hence the "lived world" is not the world of common sense, the ordinary world, the world of "ordinary language."²⁵ It is the pre-predicative, "silent" world from which these other symbolic worlds arise.

²⁴The relation of Merleau-Ponty's notion of experience with that of John Dewey has often been noted (cf. Spiegelberg, 524). Here "experience is an all-embracing notion from which and within which and to which reflection takes place. A man's experience includes his whole history as well as his here and now perceptions. Even his reflection upon experience is a part of experience; hence reflection and experience should not be considered as two isolable levels of knowledge. When the philosopher attempts to indicate what belongs to experience, he breaks it up; he must constantly insist that, while these things are present in experience, experience itself is an undifferentiated whole. Therefore, when one states that the real is in experience "prior" to reflection, he might be called an "empiricist"; but this is far different from the empiricism of Hume. Here experience is life or the totality of human activity. Dewey writes that experience is "'double-barrelled' in that it recognizes in its primary integrity no distinction between act and material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalyzed totality." (Experience and Nature /New York: Dover, 1958/, 8.).

²⁵Cf. John Wild, "Is there a World of Ordinary Language?" The Philosophical Review, LXVII (October, 1958), 460-476. He says that phenomenology aspires to describe the world of ordinary language, that is, the world expressed by one's everyday French or English, which common sense world is the foundation for the world of science. This does not quite seem to be Merleau-Ponty's intention. He wishes to find his basis in man's act of presence to all these worlds. It is this presence or act or intentionality

It is at this point that the weightiest assault upon the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty is launched. How can one have cognition (as philosophy is) of the pre-cognitive?²⁶ Merleau-Ponty has said, "My reflection is a reflection on the

which constitutes the primordial world from which even the world of ordinary language springs. He says: "Truth does not merely reside in the 'inner man.' Rather there is no inner man. For man is to the world and it is in the world that he knows himself. When I turn upon myself from the dogmatism of common sense or the dogmatism of science I find not the home of inner truth, but a subject committed to the world." (P.P., v. Italics mine.) Merleau-Ponty's primordial world is not exactly the world of ordinary language.

H.L. Dreyfus and S. J. Todes ("The Three Worlds of Merleau-Ponty," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, XXII, No. 4 /June, 1962/, 559-565) try to reconcile Wild saying that Merleau-Ponty seeks "an accurate description of the concrete phenomena of the Lebenswelt as they are experienced and expressed in ordinary language" and Kullman and Taylor who said that Merleau-Ponty attempts the "discovery and exploration of the world not such as everyday and scientific discourse describe it but of the 'pre-objective world' which it presupposes." They do this by finding three worlds in the doctrine of Merleau-Ponty: the originative and pre-objective world of the fundierende ("intentionalite operante"), the more stable Lebenswelt, and the stable and idealized world of science. Wild confuses the first two in one; Kullman and Taylor confuse the latter two. This analysis of Dreyfus and Todes has much to commend itself, especially the view of the Lebenswelt as a synthesis of the pre-objective and the scientific (totally objective) worlds. However, it seems that one can still speak accurately of two worlds in Merleau-Ponty, the pre-objective and the objective, in so far as one views the world as originative or being objectified, just as one might view language from the viewpoint of the speaking-act or from the viewpoint of that-which-is-spoken. In this sense, Merleau-Ponty would speak of the presence of the pre-objective world in all types of symbolic worlds. And it is this which grounds his distinction between parole and langue which will be taken up later.

²⁶See Michael Kullman and Charles Taylor, "The Pre-objective World," The Review of Metaphysics, XII, No. 1 (September, 1958), 108-132. Also, Edward G. Ballard, "On Cognition of the Pre-Cognitive," Philosophical Quarterly, July, 1961).

non-reflective (irréflechi).” How can one in the act of knowing “return to that world prior to knowledge”? Language--Merleau-Ponty would agree with Benjamin Whorf--involves categories. How can the phenomenologist describe in linguistic terms the pre-predicative existing before any imposition of categories, the “pre-logical act by which the subject comes to be at home in his world”? Does not this whole attempt to describe this foggy realm bespeak of poetry or even myth?

In this respect it is important to understand what Merleau-Ponty means by the world “before” reflection, the pre-cognitive, etc. This, it seems, is to be understood as a logical priority rather than a temporal priority, except when speaking of the temporal priority with regards to philosophic reflection. There is no time when a man is totally and only in the lived-world. Either it must be said that there is no lived-world, no consciousness, no subjectivity if man is not thematizing or symbolizing or “in-tending” an object. Later it will be shown that man's relation to his world is by means of “symbolic forms.” But the basis for this thematization through symbolization is the act of presence viewed bare and simple. And in this sense one is always perceiving, always in the lived-world and moving out from perception and the lived-world, when he is in the world of science, common sense, art, or any other symbolic interpretations of the world. So, the lived-world and the symbolic-world, perception and predication should not be looked upon as two separable levels. These are mutually inclusive. The symbolic world is found only in the context of

the lived-world and, conversely, perception is located only in the context of communication or symbolization.

But, again, what is this irr flech  and how can it be validly described in reflective terms? Here is where the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty is very disappointing to many of a mathematical mentality for whom symbols and rules must be given one definition and all the following steps must be logically "put on paper." But while philosophy is scientific, it need not take the physical sciences or mathematics for its model. In fact the object of philosophy, the irr flech  or primary presence, excludes this approach. One must "work back" on the reality. Words are not used with an absolute or static or isolated meaning, but have the function of point out or indicating the presence of the unnameable reality found in primary experience. Hence metaphor is useful. Moreover, there is the process of negation. Given the fact of being in this particular system of symbols and attempting to work back within this symbolic system to its basis, one proceeds by negating aspects and limitation of this system. Thus the whole notion of the "non-reflective," (irr flech ). This is, after all, the meaning of the reduction; a process of negative judgments to work back on "things in themselves" in primary experience. And if this use of metaphor and negation partakes of the characteristics of "myth" or "poetry," this need not be so disconcerting. For the philosopher is not merely trying to build a conceptual system; he is trying to express primary experience which is inexpressible

in concepts. And so he comes to express himself in negations, exhortations, and extended metaphors; for truth can be comprehended only in its "esthetic" and variable whole.²⁷ While the verification of many of Merleau-Ponty's statements is to be found by having recourse to the whole from which they take meaning, still the verification of phenomenology as a whole is in phenomenology itself.²⁸ The philosopher must be constantly returning to primary experience the farther he gets away from that experience. In this sense it is true to say that "the philosopher is a perpetual beginner."²⁹ For the philosopher must be "engaged" in the world, at the same time he is above the world, finding and giving it meaning. Hence action and speculation must converge, just as "poetry" and science converge, in philosophy. The philosopher can go only so far in indicating the facts by negation and metaphor. In the end philosophy must halt, having been led to a sort of "astonishment before the world."³⁰ For philosophy is a process of self-liberation which

²⁷Cf. Dewey (Experience and Nature, 6): "This empirical method I shall call the denotative method. That philosophy is a mode of reflection, often of a subtle and penetrating sort, goes without saying. The charge that is brought against the non-empirical method of philosophizing is not that it depends upon theorizing, but that it fails to use refined, secondary products as a path pointing and leading back to something in primary experience." Dewey's conception of philosophy is also the act of "indicating" or "denoting" the reality in primary experience. The concepts or "secondary products" are not to be taken as "real" in and of themselves, but as referring back to the primary experience of the reader "before" reflection. Thus the real is in experience; and a statement attains the real or is "true," when it can be verified in experience.

²⁸p.p., xvi.

²⁹p.p., ix.

³⁰p.p., viii.

has led a man to transcend his world at the same time as he is engaged in it, by allowing him to "learn again to see things well." In this "it is true to say that [philosophy] realizes itself only in destroying itself as a separated philosophy. For here it is necessary to fall silent. For only the hero lives out to the utmost his relation to men and the world; and no one else need speak in his name."³¹

Structure of Behavior

Again, the problem is the problem of getting a hold of oneself and one's world. The question is what are the "relations between consciousness and nature." This is the question concerning the relations between man and his environment--a question of behavior. To answer this question Merleau-Ponty in his Structure du Comportement goes to science and its data for help, and especially to the science of psychology.

He begins with an analysis of the behaviorist school which he partially accepts, but finally rejects as inadequate in the light of modern Gestalt psychology (which also must be carried a bit farther to prove adequate). Behaviorism considers behavior as a collection of atomistic reactions causally produced by stimuli equally atomistic. What such a conception does is reduce behavior to a mosaic of individual reflex-facts whose origin can be traced and explained term by term in each of the corresponding elements of the stimulus process. To each

collection of physical causes responds a collection of reactions. Such a conception has already been surpassed by the works of Kohler and Goldstein. These Gestaltists appeal to the notion of form or totality irreducible to its elements. This is the holistic conception which finds the organism a dynamic whole which does not act piece-meal but as a whole. Behavior, in this conception, should be viewed as the whole organism coming to terms with its environment.

The surpassing of behaviorism is to be found in the assault upon the reflex theory for lower types of behavior and upon the conditioned-reflex theory for higher types of behavior. This assault is to be made through scientifically controlled experimentation, as Kohler and Goldstein have done. One example of the difficulties of the behaviorist-mechanistic approach is the theory of localizations where it is urged that specific behavioral functions can be determined to a specific locus of the organism.³² But the facts do not allow this analysis into isolable elements. "More and more one notices that the different nerve regions correspond, not to certain real parts of behavior-- to certain words or to a certain reflex defined by its stimulus, but to certain types or levels of activity."³³ Following Goldstein, Merleau-Ponty synthesizes the data according to tested principles one of which is that a cerebral lesion, even a

³²S.C. 66-67.

³³S.C. 19.

localized one, "is able to determine disturbances of structure which involve the whole of behavior; and analogously disturbances of structure are able to be provoked by lesions situated in different areas of the skin."³⁴ For example, an aphasiac cannot be influenced to pronounce a certain isolated word, but can pronounce this word in a sentence. It is not that one part of one's behavior is eliminated or changed by a lesion, but one's behavior as a whole.³⁵ The point to be grasped by the analysis of localizations is that localization of a performance is not simply an excitation in a certain place; it is a dynamic process occurring in the entire nervous system and the entire organism; it has a definite form or Gestalt for each performance. Behavior is a Gestalt; it is the process of the organism as a whole coming to terms with its environment.

Now Merleau-Ponty attempts to discover and formulate the types of behavior-forms. He describes three forms of behavior which he feels are irreducible to each other. The first form, characteristic of the level of lower organisms, he calls syncretic. This form keeps the animal imprisoned in his natural conditions. The animal will react only if, correctly or not, it discovers in the conditions set up an allusion to the natural situation.³⁶ Here the animal cannot "abstract" a structure of the situation which can be reproduced from a different matter.

³⁴S.C. 66.

³⁵S.C. 73.

³⁶A. DeWaelens, Une Philosophie de L'Ambiguité (Louvain, 1951), p. 27.

Stimulus and response are tied so closely to the situation that any change in the stimulus will prevent the response. The animal is so perfectly adapted that it cannot solve any problem of adaptation. It cannot behave analogically, it cannot find in different circumstances a similar structure--similar not in the elements of the structure, but in the relations of elements.³⁷

These properties are possessed by "removable" behavioral forms characteristic of the higher animals. Here the animal exhibits behavioral patterns relatively independent of the circumstances. What distinguishes this type of behavior from the first is the apperception of signals. "As soon as signals are seen to appear in the history of behavior which are not determined by the instinctive settings of space, it can be presumed that they are based upon structures relatively independent of the materials in which they are realized."³⁸ A given situation becomes a sign of a situational-type. And the determining factor of behavior is no longer the identical stimulus, but its Gestalt in relation to the total situation. This ability to perceive signals does not mean the animal can abstract from its material situation, from its here-and-now. It cannot represent fictitious situations, but treats all situations as real.

What an animal cannot do is use signs in order to represent something fictitious or imaginary. Signs indicate things to the animal as the bell indicated food to Pavlov's dog. But a man can represent absent things, can use signs that take the

³⁷S.C. 115.

³⁸De Waelens, 29.

place of things, can abstract the here and now by representation, can shift his frame of reference at his own initiative. Human behavior differs from animal behavior in that it is symbolic. Hence, the third type of forms described by Merleau-Ponty are called "symbolic" forms.

The apes described by Kohler quickly learned to pile up boxes in order to reach an objective placed out of reach. But in countless attempts they did not succeed in building a systematic and stable edifice; for they could not comprehend situations which would be symbols of instability for men. For while animals sense their own equilibrium, their own stability and instability, they cannot make visual stimuli represent interoceptive stimuli.³⁹ A man, on the other hand, perceives symbolically; though only one side of a coin is perceived, it stands for the other side, the whole coin as well. When a man walks around and within his house, though he sees only one facade of it at a time, this represents the totality to him so that all other facades are present to him and united in this thing he calls "house."⁴⁰ It is this symbolic character of behavior that defines man, setting him above the beast and grounding the possibility of the various forms of symbolic activity. Man is a symbol-using animal.

After this analysis of the forms of behavior,

³⁹Cf. P.P. 81-86.

⁴⁰Cf. Spiegelberg, 543. This thought is certainly consonant with Max Scheler whom Merleau-Ponty had read sympathetically. Cf. Man's Place in Nature, translated by Hans Meyerhoff (Boston, 1961), p. XXX and p. 40.

Merleau-Ponty proceeds to distinguish and relate different orders of nature. He indicates three: the physical, the biological or vital, and the human. Each of the orders is a new integration of the preceding; it does not require new substantial principles, but merely a restructuring of behavior. One moves from the level of nature which is characterized by an equilibrium of external factors to a new integration in the order of life. Here is found a holistic-dynamic equilibrium in the organism that is further subsumed in the level of spirit (esprit) in which the equilibrium of forms becomes dependent on man's intention as expressed in the cultural world. The basis of this spiritual realm is freedom where the organism can detach itself from the conditions of the psychophysical organism (self-consciousness) and from the total immersion in the environment (ability to objectify through symbolization).⁴¹

From here Merleau-Ponty applies his findings to his original problem the relation of consciousness to nature, as classically conceived in the problem of body and soul. He opts for a position between idealism and empiricism subsuming them both. And while he points the way to a holistic conception of man, the total answer to his original problem can be solved only upon an analysis of the human act "between" man and his world, unifying man and the world. This is perception. It is by means of a systematic phenomenology of perception, which will allow the activity of man in his world to come to light,

that the answer to his question is to be found.

Perception

This systematic phenomenology of perception is the effort of Merleau-Ponty's second major work, the Phénoménologie de la Perception. The phenomenology of perception has a central place in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty simply because of the primacy of perception itself. By "primacy" he does not mean its prerogative or exclusive right to settle problems or ambiguities nor does he mean its temporal priority. He means that perception, as the basic act between man and the world, constituting in a sense both man and the world, is the ground for all knowledge, for reality itself. He also means that the study of perception is the basis or foundational study for all the symbolic activities of man, and specifically that of science.

Merleau-Ponty begins his Phénoménologie in a dialectical fashion--rejecting the "classical prejudices" of empiricism and idealism. Both have their base in what he calls the "prejudice of the world" which assumes a pure sensation and a pre-given objective world consisting of meaningless sense data which associate passively or are put together by attention or judgment to form the world. This "prejudice" or false assumption arises from a mechanistic view of a one-to-one correspondence of stimuli with sensations. Again Merleau-Ponty employs the findings of the Gestaltists to exorcise this illusion. He finds that perceptions are not dependent on external stimuli as causes,

but on a holistic context of figure-ground consisting in the acting-reacting of the whole organism in its whole environment. From this context perceptions already have a meaning (sens by which he means a form or Gestalt or even an essence). Moreover they are open and ambiguous, not like a group of pellets stuck together.

Having rejected the traditional counter-positions, Merleau-Ponty is ready to walk the narrow way between, which unites and founds the truth of both empiricism and idealism. His aim is to grasp the pre-reflective act of perception found between and constitutive of man and his world "before," or in the very context of, reflecting and thematizing the worlds of science, of art, etc. But since he hopes to grasp this perception as it is in itself before reflection and word-using, he is forced to use metaphor and negation to indicate the reality beyond the words he is using. He attempts to grasp this act as a unified whole by first looking at it from the side of man in the analysis of the perceiving-perceived body, secondly on the side of the world as perceived, thirdly by synthesizing the two sides in the être-au-monde, existence or presence, which is the unified whole found between and founding the two sides.

The first part deals with man as body viewed as man's characteristic access to the world. Again Merleau-Ponty rejects mechanistic physiology simply because it does not account for the experience of the body, an experience brought to light by a consideration of pathological experiences. By this Merleau-Ponty hopes to show that man's experience of his body is

determined by his mode of existence, that he has a bodily existence which underlies all his experience. The last chapter of this first part sums up and completes his findings. It is a consideration of the body as expression; that is, as an openness or intention to the world. "We have come to recognize the body as a unity distinct from that of a scientific object. We have just discovered even in its 'sexual function' an intentionality and a power of signification. In searching to describe the phenomenon of the word (la parole) and the explicit act of signification; we will have the opportunity to pass definitively beyond the classic dichotomy of subject and object."⁴² In other words, Merleau-Ponty sees in the phenomenology of expression or signification or la parole the answer to the primary problem he set for himself at the beginning of the Structure du Comportement: the alienation of man and world, la conscience et la nature.

In the second part, Merleau-Ponty explores the perceived world. This is not merely a construct of passively received sensations, but that in which man is engaged. Hence space is related to the mode of bodily existence: even things are related in their constancy to the constancy present to a person in his body. The thing opens up into a "natural world" which is the horizon or background of things. But a new dimension is discovered in the human or cultural world which is the constant context even of man's perception of things. And so in the last

⁴²P.P. 414.

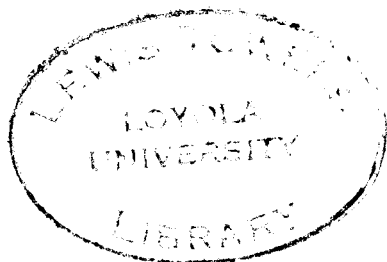
chapter of this section, Merleau-Ponty analyzes "the Other and the human world"; for he finds in the act of communication with other persons a basis for a presence to the world. This is why an isolated, solipsistic philosophy is impossible. "Even the thought-which aims for a universality and severs the philosopher from his nation, his friends, his biases, his empirical being, in a world, from his world and which appears to leave him absolutely alone--even this is really activity, speaking, and consequently dialogue."⁴³ In his reflective retreat from the world, the philosopher cannot help but to involve others "because in the obscurity of the world he has learned forever to treat them as consortes and because all his knowledge is built upon that datum of belief."⁴⁴

The last section of the Phénoménologie de la Perception in a sense leaves the perception of the body and of the world to search out its metaphysical principle or the condition of its possibility. This he finds by replacing the Cartesian cogito with the new cogito: the être-au-monde, being present-to-and-within-the-world. There the world and consciousness are mutually dependent and are constitutive of and constituted by a tertium quid, existence; it is third only in that it includes the other two in synthesis. This section is to the preceding what Part Two in Heidegger's Being and Time is to Part One. First, man and world were investigated on the horizontal, spatial plane; secondly, in the vertical, temporal dimension. For one

sees that it is by man's communication out to the world that he progresses up in time so that temporality as well as spatiality constitutes the engaged subject; the être-au-monde. It is this which grounds his freedom. For though he is always in a context (always au-monde), still by always coming to terms with his world, by thematizing it, he gets a hold of his present context and thus moves beyond it into the future. Merleau-Ponty writes near the end of his last chapter: "I have received with my existence a certain manner of existing, a style. All my actions and all my thoughts are in keeping with this structure. And even philosophic thought itself is but a way of making explicit one's hold on the world, and what he is. And nevertheless I am free, not in spite of, or this side of these motivations, but by means of them. For this signifying life, this certain signification of nature and of history which I am, does not limit my access to the world. On the contrary it is my means of communicating with it."⁴⁵

The preceding does not pretend to be an adequate expose or even summary of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. It was meant to point out the central position of the symbolic act or the act of expression in his philosophy. So in the Structure du Comportement it was observed that man is distinguished from the rest of nature in that his behavior is symbolic. And in analyzing further the relations of man and world under the formality of perception, first man was seen as a body open to

the world in the act of expression (la parole); secondly the world was found as being meaningful already because of its relation to the expressing subject; and thirdly it was discovered that in this act of communicating is constituted man's progressive self-liberation whereby he achieves his manhood. It is no wonder, then, that Merleau-Ponty after the publication of the Phénoménologie de la Perception was primarily concerned with a phenomenology of language. It flows naturally from his work to sum up and continue that work. It is this central act of man to his world under the formality of expression or speaking (la parole), as it is found in the central chapter of the Phénoménologie de la Perception and in a key essay of the later Merleau-Ponty, that the subsequent chapters of this paper will treat.



CHAPTER II

LANGUAGE AND HUMAN EXISTENCE

The approach to a subject determines its analysis and final conclusions. It is true for Merleau-Ponty's language theory; Merleau-Ponty, following the lead of Saussure, opts for a "holistic" approach. He attempts to catch the total language act before an analysis into parts. This way the linguist does not find language as a collection of isolable meaning-packets. On the contrary, he finds that the meaning of each word is constituted only within the total language context. Moreover, the holistic linguist attempts to catch the two aspects of language termed by Saussure the "langue" and the "parole."¹ The langue is the social aspect of language; the parole is the individual aspect. Saussure demonstrates how these two aspects interact. It is only through individuals, each in a different circumstance, each speaking in a somewhat unique fashion (parole), that a common language (langue) develops. The dictionary freezes language in its social aspect giving the impression that words are fixed forever. But the dictionary constantly demands revision because of the originality of individual speakers. They are progressively investing old words with new meanings; they are forever creating new words.

¹Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Signes (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), pp. 107-108.

Merleau-Ponty adopts the terminology and conception of Saussure but invests it with an even wider significance. The langue or social aspect of language Merleau-Ponty calls "language as object of thought."² It is language as put out apart from the speaker. It is formalized or thematized. It is out there for all men, so to speak. The parole, on the other hand, is language in the process of being spoken, as it is originating from individual speakers. It is "language as my own."³ The langue is language as having been spoken; the parole is language as being spoken. The langue is the words existing in themselves apart from the speaker; the parole is the individual speaking act formulizing itself. The langue is the word (le mot) as uttered, in a total formalized language system; the parole is the word (le mot) which is breaking the silence, emerging out of nothingness, creating a world.⁴ These are two aspects of language (langage) for which an adequate science of language must account.

Both empiricist and intellectualist psychology are inadequate in their explanations of the language phenomenon because

²Ibid., p. 107.

³Ibid., "Pouvons-nous simplement juxtaposer les deux perspectives sur le langage que nous venons de distinguer, --le langage comme objet de pensée et le langage comme mien? C'est ce que faisait par exemple Saussure, quand il distinguait une linguistique synchronique de la parole et une linguistique diachronique de la langue. . ."

⁴In the Phénoménologie de la perception Merleau-Ponty uses a slightly different terminology to distinguish the two aspects of language. He speaks of the parole parlante and the parole parlée: the word in the act of speaking and the word as spoken. This terminology stresses the subject-object aspects of language. The langue/parole terminology stresses the personal-communal aspects of language. P. P., p. 229.

they have neglected the parole in favor of the langue. Both are so engrossed in object-language that they neglect the subjective speaking act which is originative of object-language. An examination of these faulty theories will help outline the adequate conception of language.

Empiricist thought considers language to be no more than the actual existence of verbal images.⁵ Language consists of traces left by words spoken and heard. Speech is a circuit of external phenomena. There is no speaker, but only a flow of words whose meaning is given with stimuli. Speech is not a human action; Man speaks as a light becomes incandescent. The word itself has no meaning; it is merely the response to individual stimuli whence comes all meaning. In empiricist thought man's act of expressing has no importance. The emphasis is placed upon his reception of ideas or sensible stimuli. Words are responses to such stimuli. They are meaningful only if they can be individually connected with these stimuli.

An intellectualist psychologist, such as Kurt Goldstein, can refute the empiricist on his own ground-experimentally. Under the light that comes from a scientific analysis of aphasia, the empiricist thesis disintegrates. Aphasia, usually caused by a cerebral lesion in the frontal lobe of the cortex, is the incapacity to name objects. This incapacity is not due to a disturbance of recognition since patients unable to name, say, an umbrella may describe its use. Nor is it due to a loss of words

since the patient unable to name the umbrella put before him may use its name in a sentence such as "I have two umbrellas at home."⁶

"What the patient has lost and what the normal person possesses is not a certain stock of words but a certain way of using them."⁷

The word is present to the patient when a concrete purpose must be fulfilled. But it cannot be evoked if there is no vital or emotional bearing. From the total behavior of the patient the function of meaning is clarified. He is found to be acting in the world in a purely practical, non-speculative way. For example, he is found unable to group different colored ribbons under a color category, though he may group them according to some unasked for attribute. There is revealed here an attitude which differs from that of the normal person. And this attitude is a function of speech which conditions it. What the aphasiac has lost and what the normal person retains is the ability to abstract or categorize. The patient has lost the "categorical attitude" and retains only the "concrete attitude." A person is in the abstract or categorical attitude when he thinks about things and when his reaction is determined, not by the demands of the given object, but by the demands of the category which it represents for him. In the concrete attitude a person manipulates objects more than he thinks about them; and his reactions are determined by the individual

⁶P.P., 204-205. Cf. Goldstein, Kurt, "The Nature of Language," In Language: An Enquiry into Its Meaning and Function edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen, New York: Harper (1957), 18-34.

⁷P.P., 204. "Ce que le malade a perdu, ce que le normal possède, ce n'est pas un certain stock de mots, c'est une certaine manière d'en user."

claims of the given object.⁸ While the normal person acts with both these attitudes, the child has not yet acquired the abstract attitude and the aphasiac has lost it.

In the abstract attitude, language plays its primary role. Through words experiences are categorized and a world is formed. "For to name a thing is to tear oneself away from its individual and unique characteristics, to see it as a representative of an essence or a category; and the fact that the patient cannot identify the color sample is a sign, not that he has lost the verbal image or the words "red" or "blue," but that he has lost the general ability to subsume a sense-datum under a category, that he has lapsed back from the categorical to the concrete attitude."⁹ And this, of course, is the antithesis of the verbal-image theory of the empiricist. For words are not mere responses to external sense stimuli whence come all meaning. They are the means of detaching oneself from sense-experience. They are the means of organizing the world.

In so far as the aphasiac has lost the power to name objects, he has lost the power to symbolize. He is no longer able to form a world. He loses creativity, initiative, and the

⁸Goldstein, 22.

⁹P.P., 205. "Car nommer un objet, c'est arracher à ce qu'il a d'individu et d'unique pour voir en lui le représentant d'une essence ou d'une catégorie, et si le malade ne peut pas nommer les échantillons, ce n'est pas qu'il ait perdu l'image verbale du mot rouge ou du mot bleu, c'est qu'il a perdu le pouvoir générale de subsumer un donné sensible sous une catégorie, c'est qu'il est retombé de l'attitude catégoriale l'attitude concrète."

capacity for voluntary decision.¹⁰ He is deprived of symbolic behavior. He is deprived of the essential characteristic of man.

Though such data disprove the empiricist theory, they may lead to a faulty intellectualist interpretation. Both the empiricist and the intellectualist interpretations are faulty in so far as they regard words exclusively in an objectivistic manner. They consequently affirm that the word has no meaning. Both are surpassed in the counter-affirmation that the word has a meaning.¹¹ Empiricists say that the word has no concept but is a response to stimuli whence comes meaning. Intellectualism likewise affirms that the word has no meaning but is merely the external sign of internal recognition which could take place without it and to which it makes no contribution. Though there is meaning attached to the word, it is not of the word; the word is merely the sign of a pre-existing meaning or "inner-word."¹²

Against both of these theories, Merleau-Ponty affirms that the word has a meaning. "If speech presupposed thought

¹⁰Goldstein, 28.

¹¹p.p., 206. "On dépasse donc aussi bien l'intellectualisme que l'empirisme par cette simple remarque que le mot a un sens." By "have" here Merleau-Ponty does not mean that meaning is something merely added to the word--this is what he wants to refute--, but that meaning constitutes the word or is a projection of the word. Cf. P.P. note, p. 203. "Nous préférons tenir compte de l'usage qui donne au terme d'être le sens faible de l'existence comme chose ou de la predication (la table est out est grande) et designe par le d'avoir le rapport du sujet au terme dans lequel il se projette (j'ai une idée, j' ai envie, j'ai peur)."

¹²p.p., 205-206.

through a cognitive intention or a representation, then we could not understand why thought tends to the expression as towards its completion."¹³ Nor could we understand why even the most familiar thing appears indeterminate so long as we have not recalled its name, nor why the thinker is somewhat ignorant of his own thoughts until he has formulated them--a fact exemplified by so many writers who begin a book not knowing exactly where they will be led. Merleau-Ponty is denying that thought and speech are two distinct levels of activity so that one begins to function at the completion of the other. He is affirming that thinking is speaking, knowing is uttering symbols. "The naming of objects does not come after their recognition (reconnaissance); it is that very recognition."¹⁴ One does not first have a concept under which he subsumes the object and which is then linked to a certain word by frequent association. But the word bears the meaning; and by imposing it on the object one becomes conscious of reaching that object. That is why a child does not know a thing until it is named, why the mythic consciousness feels it controls objects through their names, why the religious

¹³p.p., 206. "Si la parole presupposait la pensée, si parler c'était d'abord se joindre à l'objet par une intention de connaissance ou par une représentation, on ne comprendrait pas pourquoi la pensée tend vers l'expression comme vers son achèvement, pourquoi l'objet le plus familier nous paraît indéterminé tant que nous n'en avons pas retrouvé le nom, pourquoi le sujet pensant lui-même est dans une sorte d'ignorance de ses pensées tant qu'il ne les a pas formulées pour soi ou même dites et écrites, comme le montre l'exemple de tant d'écrivains qui commencent un livre sans savoir au juste ce qu'ils y mettront."

¹⁴p.p., 207. "La dénomination des objets ne vient pas après la reconnaissance, elle est la reconnaissance même."

consciousness believes that God creates through his Word and gives man dominion over things by letting him name them. "Thus speech, in the speaker, does not translate ready-made thought, but accomplishes it."¹⁵ To speak words is to allow things to appear; to form a language is to give a form to the world. Meaning comes to the world in the very act of speaking; it is the words themselves that bear that meaning.

Here Merleau-Ponty adds a note. He wants it clear that, when he is talking about speech bearing its own meaning, he is talking about "authentic speech" which formulates for the first time.¹⁶ This speech is exemplified in the child uttering his first word, in the lover revealing his unique feelings, and in the author or philosopher who reawakens primordial experience which is anterior to traditions and verbal formulations. It is this speech that is identical with thought, not secondary expression, speech about speech, which largely constitutes our everyday, ordinary language. Authentic expression creates and bears its own meanings. Unlike secondary expression, it must suffer the woes of childbirth as it haltingly and painfully bears new meanings out of present language and experience.

To verify the fact that authentic speech bears its own meaning, it is necessary to return to the phenomenon of speech.

¹⁵Ibid. "Ainsi, la parole, chez celui qui parle, ne traduit pas une pensée déjà faire, mais l'accomplit."

¹⁶P.P., 207. note (2); 208, note (1). "Il y a lieu, bien entendu, de distinguer une parole authentique, qui formule pour la première fois, et une expression seconde, une parole sur des paroles, qui fait l'ordinaire du langage empirique. Seule la première est identique à la pensée."

It is necessary to criticize the ordinary description of speech which allows only for external relations between thought and speech. Then it will be discovered that thought in the speaker is not a representation. The orator does not think before speaking nor even while speaking. His speech is his thought. The words themselves are meanings. The listener need not constantly connect them with pre-established thoughts or recollections. Moreover the speaker does not have to anticipate or visualize a word before he uses it; just as he does not need to visualize his body before he uses it. And reaching back for a word is similar to reaching back to touch a part of my body.¹⁷

This last example gives a clue into the nature of speech. In fact it is no mere example. For speaking is a bodily act and expression. Indeed it was the analysis of the body as lived that led Merleau-Ponty to consider speech in the first place. Speech brings meaning into being and carries its meaning along with itself as a bodily gesture bears its own meaning. My bodily gesture of anger does not make me think of anger in the sense that I must associate my state of being with the gesture. It is my anger externalized. The sexual act and expression, analyzed earlier in the Phénoménologie de la perception, is not a mere sign of love or a bodily state as smoke is a sign of fire. The meaning is incarnated in the expression itself. Likewise the linguistic gesture delineates its own meaning. One does not have the thought, then afterwards express it by a word. What

leads to the illusion that thought is prior to speech is the experience of thought already constituted and expressed which one silently recalls to himself.¹⁸ But this "silence" is really teaming with words and this inner life is an inner language. One can speak of "pure" thought in the sense of an "intention" to speak, the point from which the flow of words spring forth. But these moments cannot be separated. The act of speaking and the words spoken can be distinguished. And the act of speaking considered apart from the words spoken is the "silent" act called understanding or insight. But in fact the act and its product cannot be separated. To understand is to speak words.

In so far as Merleau-Ponty affirms that verbal language is a bodily gesture, he is consciously refuting the view that words follow upon gestures as artificial signs follow upon natural signs. He refutes this view by demonstrating that the meaningful gestures considered most "natural" and "basic," such as the smile or stamping the foot in anger, change from culture to culture. There are no gestures or signs given with a human "nature." The body uses gestures (or acts meaningfully) in a certain context. And within this context of things and other people, signs of emotion and thought are both given to and created by a person. Nor does this mean that gestures are

¹⁸P.P., 213. "Ce qui nous trompe la-dessus, ce qui nous fait croire à une pensée qui existerait pour soi avant l'expression, ce sont les pensées déjà constituées et déjà exprimées que nous pouvons rappeler à nous silencieusement et par lesquelles nous donnons l'illusion d'une vie intérieure. Mais en réalité ce silence prétendu est bruisant de paroles, cette vie intérieure est un langage intérieur."

totally artificial. For the person is thrown into a context which conditions him. The theory of the logical positivist is unacceptable when he asserts that verbal signs are artificial and can be reduced to gestures which are natural signs of emotional expressions. There are no natural signs in man to which the artificial signs can be reduced. This would be true only if the anatomical organization of our body produced a correspondence between specific gestures and given "conscious states." But love or anger is expressed differently by a Japanese and an Occidental. In fact the difference of behavior corresponds to a difference in the emotions themselves. The Japanese smiles in anger; the Westener stamps his foot. "It is not enough for two conscious subjects to have the same organs and nervous system for the same emotions to produce the same signs. What is important is how they use their bodies, the simultaneous patterning of body and world in emotion."¹⁹ Both body and world undergo a patterning in the symbolic expression. Since neither are static, the world does not dictate to the body what sign (natural) it must use; nor does the body artificially pattern his environment by his sign. The artificial-natural distinction must be surpassed. This is true for a smile and it is true for a word. "It is no more natural, and no less conventional, to shout in anger or to

¹⁹P.P., 220. "Il ne suffit pas que deux sujets conscients aient les mêmes organes et le même système nerveux pour que les mêmes émotions se donnent chez tous deux les mêmes signes. Ce qui importe c'est la manière dont ils font usage de leur corps, c'est la mise en forme simultanée de leur corps et de leur monde dans l'émotion."

kiss in love than to call a table a 'table.'"²⁰ Verbal speech is merely one particular case of human behavior in which there is a simultaneous patterning of bodily states and environmental institutions. Nevertheless it is a privileged case because it provides the opportunity to include itself in its symbolizations. One can speak about speech as one cannot paint about painting. Speech, especially philosophic speech, provides the wherewithal for catching hold of all specific modes of human behavior including itself.

Up to this point the communicative aspect of language has been neglected. Merleau-Ponty treats this aspect throughout his essay. For to speak is to speak to someone. A fuller treatment of the problem of communication will be taken up in the next chapter. The communal situation is mentioned here so far as it reveals human existence.

If to speak a language is to pattern a world, nevertheless this not done in any solipsistic way. For language has a social aspect (langue) which is formed by the inter-action of individuals speaking together (parole). The world, therefore, takes shape among speakers. In one sense it is given to a person at birth; for he is born into a certain culture of a certain language. And, while plunged into this context, he, by his own activity, aids in the formation and development of that culture and language. We might speak of the one American

²⁰P.P., 220. "Il n'est pas plus naturel ou pas moins conventionnel de crier dans la colere ou d'embrasser dans l'amour que d'appeler table une table."

language as it is contained in Webster's Sixth International Dictionary. But George's American language is different from Harry's. And when they communicate each has a style which is unique and incommunicable. Though human existence is to express, there is no one absolute human existence. Each existence is personal and unique. And each existence is intimately connected with the existence of the other.

At this point a summary may help unify the above points selected from Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. Merleau-Ponty begins with the widest possible context of organic behavior. He discovers it to be the organism coming to terms with its environment, not piecemeal, but through the formation of behavioral and perceptual forms of Gestalten. Now within this wide concept of behavior, he distinguishes out human behavior. What is characteristic of the behavior of the human organism is that it exercises a certain initiative and creativity in the formation of the behavioral and perceptual forms. Man is able to objectify and consciously develop these forms. Such a form, creatively controlled and objectified, is a symbol. Therefore human behavior is distinguished by its symbolic character. Nevertheless this behavior is organic or bodily. It is an organism coming to terms with or in dialogue with the environment in this unique, symbolic fashion. Through this act the world is formed--the environment symbolically present. By this act man is constituted a man. For this is the behavior that defines man: To exist, to be and act human, is to express, symbolize, utter the word. This bodily act constitutes corporal intentionality or the body's

essential givenness to the world. It is existence. An organism becomes a human body in expression. It is presence. In this act the world becomes present to man and man is present to the world. Both man and world become into being through this act of positing the symbol. This act is not a secondary act of man. It does not follow a more basic act of thinking or conceiving. The act of positing the symbol and symbolically forming a world constitutes man's knowledge or perception of the world. But here again contrary to intellectualism it must be insisted that these symbolic patterns are not the product of the individual mind (Kant). They are progressively developed through the inter-action of many speakers and the world.

Merleau-Ponty has moved in upon corporal intentionality or the body as a dynamism to the world. Now he focuses upon the bodily act of expression in the language act. He finds it a unity of two components. These two components are evident in the word "expression" which means the word-expressed or the expressing-act or both. This ambiguity founds the distinction between the langue, the product, and parole, the act. Both are needed to explain language; one cannot be without the other. For the langue is found at the intersection of many paroles: The common world is formed in the context of many individual speaking-acts in communication.

The language theory advanced by Merleau-Ponty best fits the data provided by the study of aphasia. Aphasics, by losing the power to speak creatively, have lost the power to orientate themselves towards the world. They are not able to objectify or

control the things of the world. In a sense, they have no world, but, rather, complex sense experiences of an individual singular character which can be reacted to differently but which are not connected with each other is a systematic unit.²¹ These patients are sick; they have lost the essential human characteristic. An analysis of them proves that the speaking-act is a mode of human existence. As soon as man uses language to establish a living relation with himself or with his fellows, language is no longer an instrument, no longer a means; it is a manifestation, a revelation of intimate being and of the psychic link which unites us to the world and our fellow men."²² And Goldstein, after his analysis of aphasia, writes: "Language is an expression of man's very nature and his basic capacity. It is an expression of his symbolic power."²³

In this chapter the language act was inspected more from the side of body than from the side of world; the parole was stressed over the langue. The common world and the problem of communication is the subject of the next chapter.

APPENDIX: Three Dichotomies

In his analysis of the language-act, Merleau-Ponty has

²¹Goldstein, 28.

²²p.p., 229. Merleau-Ponty is quoting Goldstein. "Dès que l'homme se sert du langage pour établir une relation vivante avec lui-même ou avec ses semblables, le langage n'est plus un instrument, n'est plus un moyen, il est une manifestation, une révélation de l'être intime et du lien psychique qui nous unit au monde et à nos semblables." Italics are Merleau-Ponty's.

²³Goldstein, 40.

offered his readers a philosophy of man and a philosophy of knowledge. Moreover, it seems to this writer that Merleau-Ponty is resolving three classic dichotomies by his theory. In a brief but rather systematic presentation of the resolution of these dichotomies, his philosophy of man and knowledge will be further revealed. The three dichotomies are sense-perception and intellection, subject and object, and action and cognition.

By affirming perception to be bodily expression, Merleau-Ponty surpasses and synthesizes the antitheses of sensation and intellection.

The empiricist stresses the sensory aspect of knowledge. He claims that the known is made up of a collection of the basic sense units. Pure sensation is the experience of an undifferentiated impact or an instantaneous atom of feeling. But this theory corresponds to nothing in experience. No area of pure impressions can be found. Gestalt psychology is insistent upon this point. It indicates the figure-ground context of all sensation. One senses a whole upon a background which enters into the delineation of that whole. The "elementary" perception is already charged with meaning. "When Gestalt theory informs us that a figure on a background is the simplest sense-datum available to us, we reply that this is not a contingent characteristic of factual perception, which leaves us free, in an ideal analysis, to bring in the notion of impressions. It is the very definition of the phenomenon of perception, that without which a phenomenon

cannot be said to be a perception at all.²⁴ When one leaves the traditional theories to re-examine the fact of perception, he finds no isolable elements of sensation; "pure sensation" is a fantasy. One senses objects or configurations, not atomic impressions. To see is to encounter colors; to hear is to encounter sounds. And in order to understand sensation, is it not enough to have seen the color red and to have heard middle C? "But red or green are not sensations, but sense-data; and quality is not an element of consciousness but a property of the object."²⁵ The theory that we perceive pure qualities which set limits to pure sensations is not based on the testimony of consciousness but on a widely held prejudice. "We think we know perfectly well what 'seeing,' 'hearing,' 'feeling,' are, because perception has long provided us with objects which are colored or emit sounds. When we try to analyze it, we transpose these objects into consciousness. We commit what psychologists call 'the experience error,' which means that we we know to be things in themselves we immediately take as being in our consciousness of them."²⁶ By making perception out of things perceived and by making qualities elements of consciousness, we find isolable, unintelligible, and uncommunicable atoms of sensation. But against this theory is urged a re-examination of

²⁴P.P., 10.

²⁵P.P., 10.

²⁶P.P., 11.

the fact of perception. Here is not found a pure sensation apart from some delineation of objects. Rather our involvement in the world is re-discovered. "We are involved in the world and we do not succeed in extricating ourselves from it in order to achieve consciousness of the world. If we did we should see that all consciousness is consciousness of something."²⁷ This is not to say that the "something" for consciousness is completely determined, delineated, and identified in perception. There is an ambiguity in our everyday contact with objects in the world.

But despite this ambiguity there is already a "meaning" in the most basic sensation no matter how ambiguous this meaning is. It has a place in the world, a shape, an orientation, and a relation to the perceiver.

While the empiricist begins with the isolated blocks of sensation, the intellectualist stresses the understanding in the acts of attention and judgment. He asserts that, since in attention one experiences the elucidation of the object, the perceived object must already contain the intelligible structure which it reveals. "If consciousness finds a geometric circle in the circular form of a plate, it is because it had already put the circle there. For it gave possession of the knowledge brought by attention. It is enough for it to come to itself again in the sense in which a man is said to come to himself

²⁷P.P., 11. "Nous sommes pris dans le monde et nous n'arrivons pas à nous en détacher pour passer à la conscience du monde. Si nous le faisons, nous verrions que la qualité n'est jamais éprouvée immédiatement et que toute conscience est conscience de quelque chose."

again after fainting."²⁸ The mind has a definite structure which imposes itself upon the object encountered to make it intelligible. One need only notice in the object the structure which has already been received by its confrontation with mind.

But in a consciousness which eternally possesses the intelligible structure of all its objects, attention remains an ineffectual power; it has no work to perform. The work has all been done by the initial confrontation. "How could an object, distinguished by its presence, call forth an act of attention, since consciousness includes all objects?"²⁹

Consciousness for the empiricist is too poor; for the intellectualist it is too rich. Both have the idea in common that attention creates nothing, since a world of impressions or a universe of determining thought are equally independent of the action of the mind.³⁰ Psychology affirms against both that perception is a development of categories. Perceptory forms are developed in time as the organism attempts to adapt itself to the world and the world to itself. They are not the ready-made products of mind forced upon matter. Nor are they caused by the world in an impressionable, wax-tablet mind. They are evolved through the inter-action of organism and environment.

When intellectualism appeals to judgment, it does so as a second act. Judgment follows upon a sensation which is a little different than the empiricist's "sensation." Judgment is

²⁸p.p., 35.

³⁰p.p., 36-37.

²⁹p.p., 36.

introduced to provide what is lacking in sensation to make perception possible.³¹ Both empiricists and intellectualists err in so far as they take the objective world as their object of analysis when this comes first neither in time nor in virtue of its meaning. Both are incapable of expressing the peculiar way in which perceptual consciousness constitutes its object. Phenomenology, on the other hand, attempts to catch the act of primary perception, which is the act of objectifying, before it has been objectified. It does not begin in the world already made or structured, but in the act through which the world is structured. From this vantage point, the world while becoming and being meaningful is not absolutely categorized. It is not clear cut; it is ambiguous because of the ambiguity of the perceptive act itself.

Phenomenology synthesizes empiricism and idealism by withdrawing to a new basis--the basic act of perception where the world is not prior to mind nor is mind prior to world. This is the basis upon which both mind and world rest and take meaning. This act lies between mind and world, so to speak, constituting them both. Perception is a bodily act in which the human organism is present to its world through the gradual formation of structures. Perception is not without meaning (pure sensation) since it takes place only through these forms. These forms are not static or absolute since they are constantly being developed. They are not caused by a fixed brute nature; nor are they

arbitrarily forced upon the world by a constituting consciousness. They are worked out "between" the world and the organism. In man these forms are symbolic. Words, paintings, and religious ritual are instances of the human organism symbolically patterning his world. And it is through these patterns and categories that he perceives.

As sensation and intellection are synthesized in the symbolic act of perception, empiricism and intellectualism are synthesized in phenomenology.

Here too are found all the conditions to surpass the traditional subject-object dichotomy. The object, en soi, and the subject, pour soi, are synthesized in existence.³² For the materialist and the idealist there is no middle ground between the for-itself and the in-itself. Both find a pure consciousness confronting brute matter. The materialist asserts the priority of matter: Mind has evolved from matter and is causally determined by matter. The idealist asserts the priority of mind which has eternally structured matter by its initial confrontation. Mind contains matter; material things are elements of consciousness. The phenomenological notion of existence surpasses the notion of pure consciousness and brute matter. Existence is the objectifying and subjectifying act of man. This is the basic act of the human organism in which a world is being

³²Merleau-Ponty's relationship with Jean Paul Sartre could be the subject of another chapter. For in many respects Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is a response to Sartre's. We merely mention here that Merleau-Ponty is vigorously reacting against the dualistic ensoi/pour soi metaphysics of Sartre and his notion of absolute freedom.

formed and the organism becomes conscious of itself at the same time. In objectifying, a subject appears to himself as a subject. In this one act both subject and object become; they are inseparable but distinct. Because Goldstein's patients had lost the power to objectify, they were totally immersed in their environment. There was no distinction for them between subject and object.³³ The idealist's primacy of consciousness and the materialist's primacy of nature give way to the primacy of existence, the être-au-monde.

Another way of demonstrating the fact of the être-au-monde is by indicating a dual priority and a dual determination. Perception, it has been noted, is neither the product of consciousness nor the product of nature. It is the product of both as the human organism comes to terms with his world. A polarity is discovered. The act can be seen travelling in one direction, nature to mind, or in another, mind to nature. But it should be remembered that this is an ambiguous act. It is, as it were, an act travelling two directions at the same time. As such it gives being to and is the ground of its polarities. And since existence is the act that constitutes man, he is neither consciousness, pour soi, or object, en soi. He is a synthesis of the two.

The third classical dichotomy Merleau-Ponty surpasses is that between the practical and the speculative, doing and knowing, praxis and theoria. It seems at the outset that

³³Goldstein, 36.

Merleau-Ponty aligns himself with the philosophies of praxis. He begins in a context of organic behavior as it is defined by biology and psychology. He condemns the epistemological philosophies of empiricism and intellectualism. He affirms the primacy of existence over essence, of the lived-world over the cognitive-world. He insists upon the necessity to leave the categories of reflection and re-discover the pre-cognitive, pre-reflective être-au-monde.

On the other hand, it seems that Merleau-Ponty is primarily interested in epistemology. His subject is perception. He places himself within the empiricist-intellectualist controversy. He demonstrates that man's basic behavior is symbolic and therefore cognitive. He calls his lived-experience a kind of knowledge.

There is ambiguity because Merleau-Ponty has placed himself at the point where praxis and theoria meet, where existence is the act of perception, where bodily intentionality is bodily expression. In his analysis of the body, he found that the body is not something that is put into act. Of its nature it is active. To be what it is, it is expressing itself to a world. This act of bodily expression is fundamental to all specific acts of work, of love, of speech. Symbolic behavior is the bodily expression that sets things apart from the self and the self from them. Human behavior (praxis) is the act of presence (theoria) to self and to things. In this way even work and love and speech are cognitive activities; they are modes of

being present to the world and of organizing it. The different "behaviors" of man such as science, art, religion, common sense and their corresponding worlds can be understood only in terms of this founding behavior (intentionalité operante et corporelle) which is the basic structure of the human organism. In the next chapter we shall see how this is so.

CHAPTER III

LANGUAGE AND THE SOCIAL WORLD

Chapter two witnessed the phenomenology of speech accuse and convict the traditional prejudices of empiricism and intellectualism. Against empiricism it was proved that speech does not consist in verbal images corresponding to stimuli from the outside world. Psychology has demonstrated that the organism is active in its organization of the world through the formation of categories. Language presupposes a specific attitude on the part of the organism. Against intellectualism it was proved that words are not merely the carriers or shells of pre-established meaning; if this were so, speech would not be necessary to thought. To overcome these traditional prejudices it was necessary for phenomenology to catch language in the act. It does not begin with words having-been-uttered or with the world already formed. It re-presents the act of speaking as it is lived. Phenomenology re-presents the body as expressing itself to the world through a gesture. My body and the consciousness I have of it (without thematizing it) is immediately significative of a certain landscape around me.¹ My parole is pregnant with the

¹p.p., 216-217. "C'est par mon corps que je comprends autrui, comme c'est par mon corps que je perçois des 'choses.' Le sens du geste ainsi 'compris' n'est pas derrière lui, il se confond avec la structure du monde que le geste dessine et que je reprends à mon compte. . . ."

signification surrounding it. It is my style of singing the world. It includes my voice, my inflection, the text leading up and away from it. Expressing is not a mere matter of writing down ideas that might be lost. It is bringing into existence; it is opening a new field in experience. It mediates my mute intention and my words so that my words surprise me and even tell me my thoughts.²

Words do not contain meanings, they have meanings. The meanings of words are like the Kantian limiting concepts. They are the convergence of many acts of expression.³ When the author sits down to write his book, he is not sure where he will be led. He has, however, the directions of past acts of expression which are beginning to converge. These converge and the convergence is grasped in expression, the unified book. This is why expression is never complete. It is always leading beyond itself. It demands integration into another speaking act. Language is not static, a once and for all utterance. It is a continual process of converging upon meaning.

The phenomenology of speech demonstrated that thoughts do not exist before expression. They are constituted in the expressive act. The expressive act is not a second operation of the

²Signes, 111. "Il y a une signification 'langagière' du langage qui accomplit la médiation entre mon intention encore muette et les mots, de telle sorte que mes paroles me surprennent moi-même et m'enseignent ma pensée."

³Signes, 112. "Les significations de la parole sont toujours des idées au sens kantien, les pôles d'un certain nombre d'actes d'expression convergents qui aimantent le discours sans être proprement donnés pour leur compte."

with a different intention. There are many ways of singing the world: the Japanese way, the American way, the Hopi Indian way. Who is to say which is the way? And in what language will he say it? For each unique expressive act there is another world. An individual lives in many worlds, but never two at once. There are not only Japanese and Indian worlds; there are the worlds of art, science, of religion, of common sense, of philosophy. There is my world as opposed to your world. And since language originates in the personal parole, no language is totally translatable.⁶ One cannot be reduced to the others. There is no one universal perfect language, as logical positivism assumed but failed to find. Each language is another "language game"; the individual makes up the rules as he goes.⁷

Merleau-Ponty has, therefore, confronted his reader with the fact of the incommunicability of language. It is due to the personal character of language. He has uncovered the facts of cultural and linguistic relativity. "It is not enough for two conscious subjects to have the same organs and nervous systems

⁶P.P., 218. "La prédominance des voyelles dans une langue, des consonnes dans une autre, les systèmes de construction et de syntaxe ne représenteraient pas autant de conventions arbitraires pour exprimer la même pensée, mais plusieurs manières pour le corps humain de célébrer le monde et finalement de la vivre. De la viendrait que le sens plein d'une langue n'est jamais traduisible dans une autre. Nous pouvons parler plusieurs langues, mais l'une d'elle reste toujours celle dans la quelle nous vivons.

⁷One could easily unite the language philosophy of Merleau-Ponty with that of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Cf. Wittgenstein's theory of language-games in Philosophical Investigations, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, New York: Macmillan (1953), #65 et passim.

for the same emotions to produce in both the same signs. What is important is how they use their bodies, the simultaneous patterning of body and world. . . Feelings and personal conduct are invented like words. Even those which, like paternity, seem to belong to the human make-up are in reality institutions."⁸ It is impossible to superimpose on man a lower layer of behavior which one chooses to call 'natural,' followed by a manufactured cultural or spiritual world. . . Behavior creates meanings which are transcendent in relation to the anatomical apparatus, and yet immanent to the behavior as such, since it communicates itself and is understood. It is impossible to draw up an inventory of this irrational power which creates meanings and conveys them. Speech is merely one particular case of it."⁹

By these words Merleau-Ponty assents to Melville Herskovitz's principle of cultural relativity and to Benjamin Whorf's principle of linguistic relativity. Herskovitz

⁸P.P., 220. "Il ne suffit pas que deux sujets conscients aient les mêmes organes et le même système nerveux pour que les mêmes émotions se donnent chez tous deux les mêmes signes. Ce qui importe c'est la manière dont ils font usage de leur corps, c'est la mise en forme simultanée de leur corps et de leur monde dans l'émotion. . . Les sentiments de les conduites passionnelles sont inventés comme les mots. Même ceux qui, comme la paternité, paraissent inscrits dans le corps humain sont en réalité des institutions."

⁹P.P., 220-221. "Il est impossible de superposer chez l'homme une première couche de comportements que l'on appellerait 'naturels' et un monde culturel out spirituel fabrique. . . Les comportements créent des significations qui sont transcendantes à l'égard du dispositif anatomique, et pourtant immanents au comportement comme tel puisqu'il s'enseigne et se comprend. On ne peut pas faire l'économie de cette puissance irrationnelle qui crée des significations et qui les communique. La parole n'en est qu'un cas particulier."

demonstrates that moral judgments and language differ from culture to culture. The evaluation of human activity is relative to time and place. It is impossible for anthropologists and moralists to evaluate and classify the values of different cultures. For such evaluations "stand or fall with the acceptance of the premises from which they derive."¹⁰ Cultural relativism must be employed as a method and a philosophy to approach values in culture. Its principle is: "Judgments are based on experience, and experience is interpreted by each individual in terms of his own enculturation."¹¹ Such a principle combats ethnocentrism which puts one's own way of life above all others. To neutralize his own ethnocentrism and assure a measure of objectivity for his science, the anthropologist must enter into the different cultures and evaluate them from within according to their own standards.

Cultural relativism is obviously a corollary to linguistic relativism. In fact Herskovitz cites Ernst Cassirer who holds that reality can only be attained through symbolism or language and is therefor defined and redefined by the "ever-varied symbolism of the innumerable languages of mankind."¹² Benjamin Whorf is one of the chief exponents of linguistic relativity. He rejects the intellectualist belief that the cognitive processes

¹⁰Melville J. Herskovitz, Cultural Anthropology, New York (1955), 348.

¹¹Ibid., p. 351.

¹²Ibid.

of all men possess a common logical structure operating independently of communication. Rather, linguistic patterns determine what the individual perceives and thinks in the world. Perception is not the same for all individuals. Men through their varied and unique expressive activities are forming varied and unique worlds. What is being perceived depends on what is being expressed. And this depends on the personal act of expression.¹³

Whorf compares American Indian language with Indo-European language to make some startling discoveries. In the Indo-European languages substantives, adjectives, and verbs are basic grammatical units. This scheme of a persisting entity under changing properties undergoing active and passive behavior is fundamental to the Indo-European way of thinking. The universe becomes structure according to the Aristotelian categories of substance and accident, matter and form. These structures lead to a physics of matter and force, mass and energy. But American Indians whose language is not made up of subjects and adjectives structure the world differently. "A Hopi, Chinese or Eskimo Einstein might discover via his grammatical habits wholly different mathematical conceptualizations with which to apperceive reality."¹⁴ Whorf goes so far as to say that "Newtonian space, time and matter are not intuitions. They are receipts from culture and language."¹⁵

¹³Cf. Ludwig von Bertalanffy, "An Essay on the Relativity of Categories," Philosophy of Science XXII (1955), pp. 243-263.

¹⁴Ibid., 246.

¹⁵Ibid., 245.

Benjamin Whorf and Melville Herskovitz have been subpoenaed in order to provide linguistic and anthropological evidence to Merleau-Ponty's judgment against the natural sign theory. They also underline the problem arising out of that judgment. If there are no standard, immutable categories of the mind prior to linguistic activity and if, on the other hand, "nature" does not dictate an absolute verbal and perceptory response, where is the standard for communication. Upon what basis does a symbolic system rest.

Merleau-Ponty assures us that this basis is not another symbolic system common to all symbolic systems.¹⁶ The turn of the century witnessed the search for such a "perfect language" in England among the logical atomists and on the continent in the Vienna Circle. Many model systems of logic were discovered. Each was valid and consistent. Each formalism rested on a number of axioms composed of undefined terms; each developed according to an undefined rule. To justify the axioms and rules it is necessary to make them theorems of another system which in turn rests upon axioms and undefined rules. A search to formally justify all postulates and thus establish a perfect

¹⁶Signes, 112. Il y a donc toujours du sous-entendu dans l'expression, --ou plutôt la notion de sous-entendu est à rejeter: elle n'a un sens que si nous prenons pour modèle et pour absolu de l'expression une langue (d'ordinaire la nôtre) qui, en fait, comme toutes les autres, ne peut jamais nous conduire 'comme par la main' jusqu'à la signification, jusqu'aux choses mêmes. Ne disons donc pas que toute expression est imparfaite parce qu'elle sous-entend, disons que toute expression est parfaite dans la mesure où elle est comprise sans équivoque et admettons comme fait fondamental de l'expression un dépassement du signifiant par le signifié que c'est la vertu même du signifiant de rendre possible."

language involves one in an infinite series. This, of course, conforms to Godels proof: The justification of a system does not rest in its formalism or object-language; one must have recourse to the meta-language. The point Godel makes in his distinction between object-language and meta-language is the same Merleau-Ponty makes in his langue-parole distinction. The langue which is the objective symbolic system can be understood only within the non-verbalized context of the speaking act in a situation.

It is time to clarify the problem of communication. The question is not "Is communication possible?" It is "How is communication possible?" If there are many languages and many symbolic worlds, on what basis does communication rest? Merleau-Ponty never questioned the fact of communication. But how does it take place? Although Herskovitz and Whorf pointed out many different symbolic systems and worlds, still they were able to enter them and communicate in them; otherwise they could not tell their readers about these worlds. Merleau-Ponty states that a language is not totally translatable. Still one can speak several languages. He can enter into the world a different language expresses and make it his own. Given the relativity of language, how can this be?

It must be remembered that Merleau-Ponty not only rejected natural signs. He rejected artificial signs as well. Although a response is not dictated to an organism from outside causes in nature, still organic patterning, including the linguistic patterns, are not completely arbitrary. Not all

determination comes from the individual person. The person is found and formed in a particular context. He does not create a language; he is born into one. Though he can exercise a certain personal creativity in the development of that language, still he is limited in that he begins with certain given language patterns and must deal with certain patterns in others. There is a tension between personal creativity and the context of tradition; one cannot be without the other. It is only within a context of a language system with its roots in the past that an individual is able to develop and change that system. The development takes place through the individual speaking to the other. In communication he is adapting his hearer to his own perceptory patterns and adapting himself to the patterns of the other speakers.

To understand the incommunicability of language one must begin with the fact of communication. Communication implies communion. To understand the langue of another person I must live his parole. Therefore, the basis for communication is not in the formalism of a language (langue), but in the speaking-act (parole) inter-acting with other speaking-acts. Merleau-Ponty inquires into the conditions of possibility of this inter-action in his examination of the "social world."

The Social World

"I am thrown into a nature," immersed in a world of objects.¹⁷ I cannot think away the world without also thinking

¹⁷P.P., 398.

away myself. I am an intention to objects. While I perceive, even though I do not have knowledge of the organic conditions of my perception, I am aware of drawing together dispersed "consciousnesses": sight, hearing, touch, and their fields are anterior to and other than my personal life. "The natural object is the track left by this generalized existence. And every object will be firstly and in some respect a natural object made up of colors, tactile and auditory qualities is so far as it is destined to enter my life."¹⁸ But I do not find myself living only in the midst of water, and earth, and fire, I find myself also linked with roads, villages, streets, churches, tools, a bell, a pipe. I am surrounded by cultural objects. Each is linked to the human action which it serves.¹⁹ These cultural objects are things encountered through my sensory and perceptory patterns. Yet they are things that point to subjects. In these cultural objects I feel the presence of others. Someone made the pipe and used it for smoking. And it is only through the perception of the human act and another person that the perception of a cultural world could be verified,²⁰ But how can such an act be grasped? Is it deduced from these cultural objects using the principle of analogy? The body of another is the cultural object par excellence on which all other cultural objects depend. Do I encounter it as a thing among things until I realize my own body and argue to the existence of another within that body? But then the body remains an object for me.

¹⁸P.P., 399.

¹⁹P.P., 400.

²⁰P.P., 400.

And I am lost in the solipsism of empiricist and intellectualist thought. Perhaps I can in some way live the other's body as I live my own. He uses his body to express an intention, a thought, a project. "But how can an object in space become the eloquent relic of an existence? . . . How, conversely, can an intention, a thought, a project detach themselves from the personal subject and become visible outside him in the shape of his body and in the environment which he builds for himself?" These are the philosophical problems raised by the realization of the cultural world. Rephrased, the question is: How can a corporal intentionality, the body as expression, meet and communicate with another and so enter his world?

The existence of other people is a stumbling block for objectivistic thought, empiricist and intellectualist. For objectivistic thought begins with the world as totally objective. The body is the object biology talks about. "The body of another, like my own, is not inhabited (for objective thought), but is an object standing for the consciousness which thinks or constitutes it."²¹ There are only two modes of being: being-in-itself which is the object arrayed in space and being-for-itself which is consciousness. Another person would stand before me as an in-itself and yet seem to exist for-himself. This involves me in a contradictory operation. I have to distinguish him from myself and so place him in the world of objects; and yet I have to think of him as a consciousness to which I have

²¹p.p., 401.

access merely because that is my own being. Therefore, strictly speaking, there is no place for other people or for a plurality of consciousness in objectivistic thought. In so far as I constitute the world, I cannot conceive another consciousness. For this other consciousness would have to be constituting the world and I would not be the constituting agent. Even if I succeeded in thinking of the consciousness as constituting the world, it would be I who would be constituting it as such; and once more I should be the sole constituting agent.²²

But Merleau-Ponty has already accused and convicted objectivistic thought. The evidence he used was an experience of the body and world which does not conform with the empiricist and the intellectualist theories. Body and world are no longer objects co-ordinated by the functional relationships that physics establishes. The body is not of the objective world but is a movement to the world. "At the same time as the body withdraws from the objective world and forms between the pure subject and the object a third genus of being, the subject loses its purity and its transparency."²³ There is no pure subject or absolutely separated object. The misconception of a pure subject was not due to experience but to the abstractive, objectivistic attitude of the scientific mind which is so given to the world of objective relation that it neglects its own not so objective relation to that world.

One must distinguish his own body and the body of his

²²P.P., 402.

²³P.P., 402.

friend from the objective body discussed in physiology class. One does not experience consciousness as being something distinct from his body. It is his body in so far as it is being lived. With these clarified notions of consciousness and body, the contradictions arising out of objectivistic thought vanish. When I turn to perception, passing from direct perception to thinking about perception, I re-enact it and find it work in my organs of perception a thought older than myself of which those organs are merely a trace."²⁴ That is, there is a primary experience of self in my very action of dealing with objects in the world. In like manner I understand the existence of another person. I re-enact his existence to understand him. This is not analogy. The other consciousness would be deduced only if the emotional expressions of the other are compared with mine and if precise correlations are recognized my physical behavior and "psychic events." But the perception of others is anterior to, and is the condition of, such objective observations. The observations do not constitute the perception. Just as live my own existence and then account for it in philosophy; so I first live another's existence before I give any philosophical account. I live with another his pattern of behavior and perception; in this way I have lived, not deduced, knowledge of his existence. If I take the finger of a fifteen month old baby between my teeth and pretend to bite it, the child opens his mouth. Though he has never seen his mouth or

teeth, he knows them from the inside as an apparatus to bite with. And my jaw is immediately for the baby capable of the same intentions. He perceives my intention as his own body. "Between my consciousness and my body as I experience it, between the phenomenal body of mine and that of another as I see it from the outside, there exists an internal relation which causes the other to appear as the completion of the system."²⁵ If I am totally a subject then I cannot grasp the other as one. But since I am neither pure subject nor object, my body is never totally an object for the other nor his for me.

In so far as I have sensory functions and in so far as I am surrounded by a perceptory field, I am already in communication with others. As soon as my gaze falls upon a living body acting, the objects surrounding it take on a new significance. These objects are what this other pattern of behavior, as well as my own, is about to make of them. Already the other body has ceased to be a part of the world and has become a view of the world. Another person is manipulating my objects. I know this is so because this living body has the same structure as mine. "I experience my own body as the power of adopting certain forms of behavior and a certain world, and I am given to myself merely as a certain hold upon the world. Now it is precisely my body which perceives the other's body and discovers in it a miraculous prolongation of my own intention, a familiar way of dealing with the world."²⁶ This other life is open. It relates itself to

external objects by diverting them from their immediate significance. It makes tools of them. It projects itself into the environment in the shape of cultural objects. The child is born into such an environment. He finds the cultural objects, appropriates them, and learns to use them as others do "because the body image ensures the immediate correspondence of what he sees done and what he himself does."²⁷

Language is a cultural object that plays a crucial role in the perception of others. "In the experience of dialogue, there is constituted between the other and myself a common ground. My thought and his are interwoven into a single fabric. . . We have here a dual being, where the other is for me no longer a mere bit of behavior in my transcendental field, nor I in his; we are collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity."²⁸ I have my own thoughts; he has his. Yet his objections bring out thoughts that I had no idea I possessed. I anticipate his thought because I am caught up in the directions of his thought. All the while I am not thinking about him, but about what is being said. Yet I am experiencing him, living out his act, undergoing his patterns of perception and behavior.

The child has no problem of other people. He is totally immersed in the activities of others until he is able to develop unique activities of his own. About the age of twelve, however, he reaches the age of reason, the level of judgment and the cogito. He discovers himself and others reflectively. The

²⁷P.P., 407.

²⁸Ibid.

problem of the other arises with this knowledge. He begins to see the other as a possible danger to his own position and viewpoint.

The problem of the other is not only the result of objective thought. It can precede objective thought. For, though I can live the experience of the other to some extent, it is always a limited communion. I suffer with Paul the loss of his wife; but I have not lost my wife. I can put on the patterns of another person's thought; but these never quite fit. I feel uncomfortable in his patterns. This causes me to object and to modify his thought; at the same time I am developing my own thought. He listens to me, puts on my patterns, finds them somewhat uncomfortable. And the dialogue continues. But the dialogue demands a certain willingness to co-exist. Each speaker must be willing to listen. Each must experience the reciprocity.

However, in the dialogue I am aware of myself and my unique viewpoint. I assert myself absolutely. I become the sole criterion of truth. I transcend others. For every situation and every other person must be experienced by me in order to exist in my eyes. So the problem of the other is the problem of solipsism.

And yet other people are a fact for me. I am present not merely with a problem of solipsism, but with the absurdity of a multiple solipsism. Solitude and communication are not two horns of a dilemma but two moments of one phenomenon. My experience must in some way present me with other people, else I

should have no occasion to speak of solitude and could not pronounce other people inaccessible. But how can I who perceive and who ipso facto assert myself as universal subject perceive another who immediately deprives me of this universality. The phenomenon at the root of my subjectivity and my transcendence consists in my being given to myself. I am given; I find myself already involved in a physico-social world. I am given to myself which means that the situation is never hidden from me. I am not just another object in a container. My subjectivity depends on my thrownness in the world of things and others. I can close my eyes to my world. I can, Cartesian-wise, question every perception. But even in this I am orientated to things and to others. "I can evolve a solipsist philosophy; but in doing so I assume the existence of a community of men endowed with speech, and I address myself to it."²⁹ Men are so surrounded by communication that even the refusal to communicate is a form of it. When one objectifies the other to deny him by the stare (Sartre), he affirms both himself and the other in the act. The transcendence of the other person when I assert my own subjectivity against his comes about only in an immanence where I enter into his world and perception. "Solipsism would be strictly true only of someone who managed to be tacitly aware of his existence without being or doing anything; which is impossible since

²⁹P.P., 414. "Je peux contraindre une philosophie solipsiste, mais, en le faisant, je suppose une communauté d'hommes parlants et je m'adresse à elle."

existence is being in and of the world."³⁰

The social world is re-discovered, therefore, not as a sum of objects, but as a permanent field or dimension of existence. The relationship to the social world is deeper than any express perception; it is existence itself. Objective thought may neglect this fundamental principle; but it cannot help but to live it. The social world is the context of all existence. It is already there before one comes to know or judge it. The problem of communication is resolved in the phenomenological realization of the self as an orientation to the world, possible only because it is a co-orientation to things with others. This triadic relation to others, to self, and to things constitutes the self. The basis of communication is the lived relation of self to another self. Each self is experienced unique. Yet each is experienced as being structurally the same: each is a unique être-au-monde.

Summary

This is both a summary and an amplification of what has come before. It is hoped that the implications of the basis and principle of communication will be made explicit.

The importance of language has been outlined. The language act is revelative of human existence. Human existence

³⁰p.p., 414. "Le solipsisme ne serait rigoureusement vrai que de quelqu'un qui réussirait à constater tacitement son existence sans être rien et sans rien faire, ce qui est bien impossible, puisque exister c'est être au monde. Dans sa retraite reflexive, le philosophe ne peut manquer d'entraîner les autres, parce que, dans l'obscurité du monde, il a appris pour toujours à les traiter comme consortes et que toute sa science est bâtie sur cette donnée de l'opinion."

is bodily expression to a world. The world is reached through symbolic activity. To understand human existence and the world which it informs, it is necessary to grasp expression, not as object, but as act. The act of expression is primary. The expressed can be understood only by viewing it within the act being spoken by the speaking-act. In this way the parole was stressed; the langue takes its meaning as it originates in the parole. This philosophy of language overcomes the traditional prejudices of objective thought which, neglecting its own parole, begins and ends in the langue.

The basic ambiguity of the speaking-act came to light. Speaking is the act of objectifying or tending to objects in the world; it is also constitutive of the subject. Grasping the ambiguous nature of the speaking-act led to the rejection of the natural-artificial sign theory of objective thought. There is a dual determination. Man has a freedom and creativity over the formation of his symbolic worlds. And yet he is in a situation and cannot be arbitrary in his expression. He does not entirely make himself. He is given to himself.

The individuality and ambiguity of the parole opens the problem of communication. There are as many symbolic worlds as there are symbolic acts. Each world is irreducible to the other. There are the intranslatable worlds of the Japanese and the Hopi Indian, of science and art and religion and philosophy, of you and of me. The philosopher desires the unity of these worlds, he seeks a common world. For communication between

worlds is a fact. The Hopi Indian world cannot be translated into American; but the American can enter that world and appreciate its difference. The basis for this communication is in the constant, yet open, structure of the symbolic act. This is what remains the same. This is what unites all men and all worlds. Nevertheless, how does communication take place? How is one expressive act in contact with another expressive act? How does one, so to speak, get inside another's parole so as to appreciate his langue? This is what Merleau-Ponty describes in his analysis of the social world.

A child is not an original being. He is not the first in a series. He is not born out of silence into silence. He is conceived in the clearest and loveliest of human expressions. He is born into a world that is singing and laughing and calling his name. He is born into a culture that has developed, as his body has developed, out of the past. He is immersed in the expressions of that culture which have come from the past and which he is asked to develop in the future. He is present. Presence is the emergence from the past and the orientation to the future. It is where past and future meet. Presence is also the emergence from the back and the orientation to the forward. It is where the in-there and the out-there meet. His contact with culture and with the world comes from his contact with the people among whom he is thrown.

Max Scheler has said that one knows the other before he

knows himself.³¹ Actually there is one triadic relation to self, to the other, and to things which makes up human corporal consciousness; none of these relations can be thought apart from the others. Yet in a sense Scheler is right. The child is first orientated to things in the world by living through the perceptual and behavioral patterns of his mother and his other teachers. Before he has developed his own unique act of expression, he must live through the expression of another. The child is uncoordinated in behavior and perception. His world has few objects. He perceives few colors but learns to see more as they are pointed out to him. More and more objects fill his world as they are named by a word or gesture. Until he can name them, categorize them, and separate them out for himself, he has no control over them. He learns the abstract attitude gradually by being in contact with that attitude in his teachers. He puts on their schemata, their orientation to the world. Gradually, as his environment becomes a world for him under the schemata he has adopted from his teachers, he becomes conscious of himself as a unique act. With this consciousness, he is able to somewhat creatively orientate himself to his world. But he is not pure freedom. His schemata have been pre-reflectively formed by his parents. He has these schemata to work with for good or for evil. He must use them to transcend them. This is why Freud insists on the importance of infancy in the formation of the

³¹Cf. Max Scheler, Mans Place in Nature, translated and with an introduction by Hans Meyerhoff, Boston: Beacon Press (1961), xviii.

unconscious (pre-reflective). A person is given to the objective world only by living out with others their givenness to the world; and it is only in his givenness to the world that he is given to himself. Communication and the social world are the first facts.

The person lives out another's givenness to the world by wearing his behavioral and perceptual forms. These are the symbolic Gestalten by which the human organism comes to terms with the world.³² Man can re-work these forms to get a better grip on matter. When he is charting out his philosophy or selecting the colors and lines of his painting, he is consciously working his forms. To a large extent these forms are determined by past forms and by the matter at hand; so much so that he feels inspired. He wonders whence his words and style and composition come. He is an instrument of the Muse. And yet he is an artisan laboring over matter. He becomes a master of tools and techniques. He invents new shapes, new words, new colors. By his new word or shape he points out a reality that has never appeared up to now. In a sense he created it; in another sense it forced itself upon him. He offers it to others. He was offering it to them in the very act of creation.

What do others do when they hear his words or observe his painting? Do they passively wait for these forms to impress themselves on their blank tablets? They do not understand the word which has been uttered unless they speak it. The listener

³²Cf. chapter one where man's symbolic behavior was outlined.

is not merely coming in contact with words. He is initiated into a movement, a spirit, a viewpoint. As the orator speaks; the listener speaks the words along with him. He waves his arms, frowns, uses his body with the orator. Both are thinking about what is being said. But the saying of the words involves a use of the body of which the orator is immediately aware. He is living out his experience of expressing. The listener goes through the motions of the orator; he subjects himself to his style and his way of gesturing. He speaks the words the orator speaks. In this way men in dialogue are present to each other as unique speaking-acts no matter what they are talking about. Likewise the beholder of an art piece cannot appreciate it unless he repeats the creative process by which it has come into being.³³ In this way an expressive-act is in union with an expressive-act, not just concrete symbols. An existence communes with an existence. In the same way that I am bodily present to myself in expressing myself to the world, a presence which is called lived or primordial or pre-reflective, I am present to the other. For I live out with him his expressive act.

The common or objective world evolves within a context of many individual speakers. A symbolic system is developed by many. And symbolic systems are the means by which men are orientated to the world. As symbolic system meets symbolic system and is unified in the individual, a common world of many symbolic worlds is formed. "Objectivity" is what is agreed upon

³³Cf. Ernest Cassirer, An Essay on Man, Yale (1944),

by many. The social world, as background, is unformalized. By nature it is prior to the objective world; it is ground. Individuality is not in conflict with the social world, but demands it. Only in community does the child become a person. Only in communication does he become conscious of himself as a unique speaking-act. He preserves and betters his personality by speaking in community, by opening himself to others, by "intending" their worlds. For this speaking and openness and intentionality constitutes his very person.

To return to the question of the chapter: what is the basis of communication? What constitutes the unity of the many symbolic worlds? What allows an individual to enter the world of another? It is not language-having-been-uttered if this is considered by itself in the manner of objective thought. For the objective symbolic systems are irreducible to each other. The basis sought is the parole. But is not the parole unique? Since there are no two paroles alike, how can the parole be the basis of communication? While all speaking-acts are different and so incommunicable to a large extent, all are alike in that they are speaking-acts. Merleau-Ponty has uncovered an absolute. All men are alike, for each is an être-au-monde. In Heidegger's terms: the "categories" (determined by our language system) are not absolute, but the "existentialia" are. If man be man, he is bodily expression to a world. It is to this similarity of structure that allows a person to put on the categories of another and speak with him his expressive act.

This is the common meta-language that grounds the object-languages. There is a constancy in the objective world in so far as the pre-objective social world grounds it with its own constancy.

In the être-au-monde Merleau-Ponty appears to have reached an absolute. It is paradoxically an ambiguous absolute. For it is the evolving act of expression. It is the synthesis of the subjective and the objective. It originates expressions which tend to their own surpassing. Even the philosophic expression which names this absolute is subject to re-formulation within a whole new system. Nevertheless an absolute is uncovered which founds all objective expression. These expressions become absolute, not as formulations, but as expressions of the same expressive act. Such a discovery seems to lead to a metaphysics which posits an absolute Mind to explain the absoluteness of the act. But this last idea is alien to the thought of Merleau-Ponty. For him philosophy is phenomenology and no more. Since the world is basically ambiguous, there is no place for an Absolute Being or an Absolute Thought. Does his phenomenology in fact lead the philosopher past the phenomenal world into the realm of the absolute? Or should one acquiesce in the ambiguous? These are the questions of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

LANGUAGE AND REALITY

Traditionally philosophy has been defined as the search for ultimate reality or the discovery of the unity in multiplicity, the necessity in contingency, the absolute of the relativity within which men are immersed. Where this absolute, necessity, and unity is found is the question that divides the philosophers. Merleau-Ponty offers the world a new absolute: the être-au-monde or corporal intentionality. He uncovers this basic apriori after denying the intellectualist apriori categories: Although men change in both the speculative and the moral orders, there is a basis for this change; there is a constant axis of evolution. This "absolute" founds a metaphysics and an ethics. However, because Merleau-Ponty is convinced of the fundamental ambiguity of life despite this basic fact of existence or because of it, he aligns himself to no party that champions an absolute thought or an absolute being. Thus he finds himself in the paradoxical situation offering the world a new and more adequate absolute and rejecting it at the same time. For he declared that the basis for the community of knowledge could not be found in individual formulations but in the speaking-act. But he formulated this. Is it to be surpassed by a new formulation? Does not the formulation have an absolute character in some way? Surely the

philosopher utters a proposition absolutely at a certain time and place. What grounds the absoluteness in the act of expression and in the formulation itself? Or must the philosopher rid himself once and for all of a pathological concern with the absolute: These questions confront the apprentice of Merleau-Ponty after he has re-created his master's works. He will raise the questions in the context of these works. And he will be in a position to go beyond his master--as a good apprentice must--in his search for the truth. Accordingly, Merleau-Ponty's "absolute" or apriori which he calls the "new cogito" will be allowed to reveal itself side by side with his rejection of the Absolute. Perhaps in this way the master will be overtaken because he was followed. His phenomenology will be transcended by the apprentice who engaged himself in it.

The "New Cogito"

Merleau-Ponty's theory of the "new cogito" is an attempt to surpass once and for all the Cartesian cogito and the dualistic metaphysics implied therein. He begins by criticizing the old cogito.

In the process of radical reflection the philosopher finds himself thinking about the cogito. Sensible objects are pressing upon him. Totally immersed in the objects, consciousness takes flight from itself and is unaware of itself. This is the experience that realism tries to account for. The truth of Cartesian intellectualism lies in the return of things and ideas to the self who is always there in union with the things.

In the self there is an experience of transcendent things. But if I experience them as transcendent, then I experience them as to-be-known and so as not-known. The Socratean dilemma is posed: Somehow I must possess the things I seek to know; otherwise I would not know what I was seeking nor when I had stumbled upon it. The experience of the existence of an unknown in the self is possible only because I already possessed the nature of the thing I encounter. Thought, therefore, must be defined as that strange power of being ahead of itself; it seeks to know what it already knows. Thought must have put into things what it consequently finds in them. A sensible perception is not a fact in the person which he notices. All thought of something is self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is the very being of mind in action. It cannot be brought about by anything whatsoever; it is a causa sui. Thinking contains a thought of itself and of the thing it attains. These thoughts must already be; they are anterior to time. Before time one finds a "spiritual act which grasps at a distance and impresses into itself everything which it aims, an 'I think' which is by itself and without any adjunct an 'I am'"¹ This doctrine leads to the notion of the timelessness of mind. "Accordingly, eternity, understood as the power to embrace and anticipate temporal developments in a single intention, becomes the very definition of subjectivity."²

Some strange paradoxes follow this doctrine. If the

¹P.P., 426.

²P.P., 426.

cogito reveals a manner of existing that owes nothing to time, then there is no meaning in the notion of receptivity of mind. It can receive nothing; for it has everything and constitutes everything. If the mind thinks of itself as receiving, it is not really thinking of itself; for it is the mind itself which thinks of itself thus affected. Since it is mind that puts itself in time and in the world, it is not there. The self-positing is an illusion. Also there could be no other selves. "If the sole experience of the subject is the one which I gain by coinciding with it, if the mind by definition eludes the outside spectator and can be recognized only from within, my cogito is necessarily unique and cannot be 'shared' in by others."³ Such a consciousness, totally transcendent and unique, cause of itself and of all other things, coincides with God.

At this point Merleau-Ponty affirms the need "to find a middle course between eternity and the atomism of empiricism, in order to resume the interpretation of the cogito and of time."⁴ For previous analysis has already shown that our relations with things cannot be eternal ones and that our consciousness of self is not the mere recording of psychic events. Before objectively thinking about perception and the world perceived, we live our perception and the world. Perception is inseparable

³p.p., 427. "Si la seule experience du sujet est celle que j'obtiens en coincidant avec lui, si l'esprit par definition se derobe au "spectateur étranger" et ne peut être reconnu qu' intérieurement, mon Cogito est par principe unique, il n'est pas "Participable" par un autre."

⁴p.p., 428.

from the consciousness it has of reaching the thing itself. Any contention that the perception is indubitable, whereas the thing perceived is not, must be ruled out. If the perceived turns out to be an illusion, then it must be admitted that there was no true perception. If the perceived is open to doubt, so is the perception. This fact forces a choice: either one has no certainty regarding things themselves--and this means there is no certainty in regards his perception; or else one grasps his thought with certainty; and this involves a simultaneous assumption of the existence of the thing towards which it is projected. If Descartes is absolutely certain about the constituting power of consciousness, he must at the same time be absolutely sure of the world being constituted. It would be contradictory to assert that mind constituted the world and that mind can grasp no more than the outline of that world, essences or forms, as opposed to existences. Consciousness is transcendence through and through. It is not passive but active transcendence. The consciousness of seeing is no passive recognition of a psychic event having taken place, an event which leaves a doubt about the reality of the thing seen. Vision is an operation to an object. It is achieved and fulfilled in the thing seen. What is found by the cogito is "the deep movement of transcendence which is my very being, the simultaneous contact with my own being and with the being of the world."⁵ This means that in the very activity of my

⁵P.P., 432. "Ce que je decouvre et reconnais par le Cogito, ce n'est pas l'immanence psychologique, l'inherence de tous les phénomènes à des 'états de conscience privés', le

body in and to the world there is the simultaneous presence of self and world in dialogue. This presence is the new cogito. It is not a second act. It is the act of perception itself in union with itself-in-union-with-the-world.

This self-presence does not exclude error or illusion. Experience proves illusion possible on some occasions. But then is it not possible on all occasions? If the subject is an existence, a process which transcends himself, it seems he is condemned to illusion. By rejecting the absolute consciousness of Descartes, has Merleau-Ponty opted for endless doubt? "This objection brings us to the crucial point. It is true neither that my existence is in full possession of itself, nor that it is entirely estranged from itself because it is an act or a doing, and an act by definition is the violent passing from what I have to what I am to have, and from what I am to what I intend to be."⁶ Both scepticism and dogmatism are untenable. I am fundamentally an act which has a certain transparency, a certain contact with my own being and that of the world, in the act of perception itself. But I am not fully transparent nor is my world complete. The dialogue between myself and my world asserts

contact aveugle de la sensation avec elle-même, . . . , c'est le mouvement profond de transcendance qui est mon être même, le contact simultané avec mon être et avec l'être du monde."

⁶P.P., 438. "L'objection nous fait arriver au point essentiel. Il n'est pas vrai que mon existence se possède et pas davantage vrai qu'elle soit étrangère à elle-même, parce qu'elle est un acte ou un faire, et qu'un acte, par définition, est le passage violent de ce que j'ai à ce que je vise, de ce que je suis à ce que j'ai l'intention d'être."

the reality of both, but the reality of both in transition. My act of yesterday is surpassed by my act today which tends to its own undoing in my act tomorrow. And yet in each act is a commitment and engagement which is the condition of possibility of that act. My acts of love, of hate, of doubt itself are not mere thoughts about loving, hating, and doubting. In the act lies the certainty; it does not lie in the thoughts about them. These thoughts are always open to doubt, but the acting-about-things is not. To prove the certainty of doubting, one has to throw himself in the act. If he tries to verify the reality of my doubting, he finds himself in an infinite series. For he has to question the thought he has about doubting and the thought about that thought. But the certainty derives from doubt itself as an act, not from the thoughts. Likewise the certainty of the world precedes any objective knowledge of its properties. To know is to know that one knows. There is not a second knowing founding a primary knowing. There is but one act testifying to itself. But what it testifies to itself here and now, it extends beyond itself into the future. In this way I am open to both truth and illusion about myself. "There are acts by which I collect myself together in order to surpass myself. The cogito is the recognition of this fundamental fact."⁷ In the new cogito the "I am" and the "I think" are

⁷P.P., 439. "Savoir, c'est bien, comme on l'a dit, savoir qu'on sait, non que cette seconde puissance du savoir fonde le savoir lui-même, mais au contraire parce qu'il la fonde. Je ne puis reconstruire la chose, et pourtant il y a des choses perçues, de même je ne puis jamais coïncider avec ma vie que se

identical. Not that my existence is brought down to the consciousness I have of it, but conversely, the "I think" is re-integrated into the transcending process of the "I am," consciousness into existence.

Although there is no "self-coincidence" in acts of love and willing, at least in acts of "pure thought" this seems to be true. Certainly the mind's assent to mathematical essences is set for all time. But, on the contrary, Merleau-Ponty points out that the mathematical essence of a triangle, for example, is not borrowed from an eternal realm of ideas nor from an immutable structure of the intellect. It has been worked out in dialogue with the world of perception. It is a product of man's creative activity as he comes to terms with the world.

In as much as the body moves itself and is inseparable from a view of the world, it is the condition of possibility not only of the geometric synthesis but of all expressive acts and all acquired views that constitute the cultural world.

"Spontaneous thought" does not mean thought that coincides with itself, but thought that surpasses itself. Speech is precisely the act by which thought eternalizes itself as truth. Speech is not mere clothing for thought or a translation into arbitrary symbols of a meaning already clear to itself. Speech is thought completing itself. Though it is true that communication

fuit, et pourtant il y a des perceptions intérieures. La même raison me rend capable d'illusions et de vérité à l'égard de moi-même: c'est à savoir qu'il y a des actes dans lesquels je me rassemble pour me dépasser. Le Cogito est la reconnaissance de ce fait fondamental."

presupposes a system of correspondences such as the dictionary provides, it goes beyond these. The word takes meaning in a sentence in a context. After it has been used in various contexts the word gradually accumulates a meaning which is impossible to establish absolutely. The speaker must be able to outrun what he previously thought and to find more in his words than he put in them before. For speech is the embodiment of an intention which is never terminated but constantly leads beyond itself. "Speech is, therefore, that paradoxical operation through which, by using words of a given sense and of already available meanings, we try to follow upon an intention which necessarily surpasses, modifies, and lastly fixes the meanings of words which translate it."⁸ In the speaker the utterance does not illustrate thought already constituted. Therefore thought is always an illusion in so far as it stops a process that does not stop; it acquires a moment that is already past. There are two types of thinking. There is the miserly thinking that keeps playing with its past acquisitions. It gives the impression that thought is eternal and that immutable essences are passed down from age to age. Secondly, there is the thinking that is struggling to establish itself. It succeeds only by wrenching out of established language some new usage. This latter is the fundamental fact. The "idea" is always linked

⁸P.P., 445-446. "La parole est donc cette operation paradoxale où nous tentons de rejoindre, au moyen de mots dont le sens est donné, et de significations déjà disponibles, une intention qui par principe va au delà et modifie, fixe elle-même en dernière analyse le sens des mots par lesquels elle se traduit."

with never ending acts of expression. Therefore it is never "pure" or "eternal." In speech thought seems to detach itself from its material instruments and acquires an eternal value. It seems that triangles will always have angles the sum of two right angles even if all men forget geometry. Scientific utterance is a cultural entity which claims to translate a truth of brute, unchanging nature. But modern criticism has shown the constructive element in scientific concept. "'Real,' that is, perceived, triangles do not necessarily have for all eternity angles whose sum equals that of two right angles if it is true that the space we live in is no less amenable to non-Euclidean than to Euclidean geometry."⁹ Expression is creative and the expressed is inseparable from it. No analysis can make language clear or put it out like an object. The act of speaking is clear only for the person speaking or co-speaking. We obscure it by talking about it or by breaking it down into its components. One cannot conclude from this that language born in obscurity yet capable of clarity is the embodiment of an infinite thought. "Language transcends us and yet we speak. If we are led to conclude from this that there exists a transcendent thought which our words spell out, we are supposing that an attempt at expression is brought to completion after saying that it can never be so, and invoking an absolute thought, when we have just shown that any such thought is beyond

⁹P.P., 448.

our conception."¹⁰ The phenomenology of language demonstrates that speech is not constituted by some absolute power, it is always involved in the temporal. Expression is not substituting a system of stable signs for unchangeable thoughts which are little by little coming to light. By using words already used, the new intention originates out of the past and is orientated to the future. What is thought to be non-temporal is a symbolization that has carried forward the past and has committed itself to the future; it is temporal by nature. "The non-temporal is the acquired."¹¹

The analysis of time offers the primary example of the "non-temporal." The present always arises out of the past and somehow includes the past, and at the same time it surpasses the past. A Van Gogh painting has its place for the beholder even after he has left it; it has entered into the very formation of his personality. If he saw a Van Gogh once, it is always true that he saw a Van Gogh once. If X was so once, it is always true that X was so once. Each moment of time is eternal, if one isolates moments from the flow of time. Eternity applies to the here and now: X is so (here and now) and will always be

¹⁰p.p., 449. "Le langage nous transcende et cependant nous parlons. Si nous concluons de la qu'il y a une pensée transcendante que nos paroles épellent, nous supposons achevé un essai d'expression dont nous venons de dire qu'il ne l'est jamais, nous invoquons une pensée absolue au moment où nous venons de montrer qu'elle est pour nous inconcevable."

¹¹p.p., 450. "Ce qu'on appelle l'intemporel dans la pensée, c'est ce qui, pour avoir ainsi repris le passé et engagé l'avenir, est presomptivement de tous les temps et n'est donc nullement transcendant au temps. L'intemporel, c'est l'acquis."

so (as far as that "here and now") is concerned. But saying this moves the speaker to a new here-and-now and a new expression. And so the alleged transparency of Euclidean geometry is one day revealed as operative for a certain moment in the history of the human mind. It is the very same thing to say that the present foreshadows eternity as that eternity is the sublimation of the present. Our experience of the eternal and absolute is in fact the experience of time and process. We are experiencing the present making claims to the future, the truth of today tending to the truth of tomorrow.

In what lies the so-called self-evidence of truth then? In the utterance of a proposition the speaker has evidences and postulates which arise out of his very situation in time and place. They are present, but unformalized. His proposition has a foundation. It is self-evident in that it rests on silent evidences. The formalism is founded by a meta-language. But the proposition is not absolutely self-evident. For its evidences and postulates are not formally justified. One can formulate and question them. They become the object of a new utterance based upon evidences and postulates arising from a new situation in time and place. Absolute self-evidence would imply a formulated truth resting on formally and totally justified evidences and on nothing else. It would mean that the act of expression and the expressed were the same thing. There would be no background situation within which the act of expression arose. Everything would be contained in the expressed. But

man is not in such a state of expression; and he is incapable of reaching such a state. To have arrived at a situationless state through a process leading from one situation to another is impossible. To have become the absolute is contradictory. Since my past situation is always with me and is the condition of possibility of my movement to the future, I can never separate myself from my past. The past will always provide the unformalized, unquestioned grounds of my present expressions. Therefore, self-evident truths are never indubitable. It is of the essence of certainty to be established with reservations. I can always formalize and question the postulates of these truths; and in doing so I rise to a new level of truth. "Once launched and committed to a certain order of thoughts, Euclidean space, for example, or the conditions governing the existence of a certain society, I find evident truths; but these are not unchallengeable since perhaps this space and this society are not the only ones possible."¹² In sum, Merleau-Ponty is restoring to the cogito a "temporal thickness."¹³ The cogito is never at an absolute viewpoint where it is totally transparent to itself. It is always a movement in time where even the thought of itself goes beyond itself.

¹²P.P., 454. "Une fois entré dans le jeu, engagé dans un certain ordre de pensées, soit par exemple l'espace euclidien ou les conditions d'existence de telle société, je trouve des évidences, mais ce ne sont pas des évidences sans appel, puisque peut-être cet espace ou cette société ne sont pas les seuls possibles."

¹³P.P., 456. "En somme nous rendons au Cogito une épaisseur temporelle."

The illusion of the absolute is due to the fact that in expression the expressing fades out before the expressed. Expression sums up a situation and a movement of thought. But the situation and the movement is ignored in favor of the objective things attained by that movement. The cogito of Descartes is something expressed. As expressed it acquires the character of eternity. Descartes ignores the tacit cogito which is the act of expression itself. "Behind the spoken cogito, the one which is converted into discourse and into essential truth, there lies a tacit cogito, myself experienced by myself."¹⁴ This is existence; and though silent and unobjectified, it must be finding expression for itself if it is to be. It is not a thought of self, a concept, a verbum, an object of thinking. It is self present to self in its very presence to the world and other selves. It was this silent cogito that Descartes was seeking in his Meditations. But in expressing it he located it in the world of the expressed. He objectified it, eternalized it, and so destroyed it. This led to the illusion of Absolute

¹⁴P.P., 462. "Par delà le cogito parle, celui qui est converti en enonce et en verité d'essence, il y a bien un cogito tacite, un épreuve de moi par moi. Mais cette subjectivité indeclinable n'a sur elle-même et sur le monde qu'une prise glissante. Elle ne constitue pas le monde, elle le devine autour d'elle comme un champ qu'elle ne s'est pas donné; elle ne constitue pas le mot, elle parle comme on chante parce qu'on est joyeux; elle ne constitue pas le sens du mot, il jaillit pour elle dans son commerce avec le monde et avec les autres hommes qui l'habitent, il se trouve à l'intersection de plusieurs comportements, il est, même une fois 'acquis', aussi précis et aussi peu définissable que le sens d'un geste. Le Cogito tacite, la présence de soi à soi, étant l'existence même, est antérieur à toute philosophie. . . ."

Thought. But there is no Absolute Thought. "Absolute Thought is no clearer to me than my own finite mind, since it is through the latter that I conceive the former. We are in the world; that is, things take shape, an immense individual is affirmed. Each existence understands itself and understands others. One need only to recognize these phenomena which ground all our certainties. The belief in an Absolute Mind or in a world-in-itself detached from us is but a rationalization of this primordial faith."¹⁵

"The New Absolute"

It is only because the apprentice has entered wholeheartedly into the thought of his master that he is able to go somewhat beyond him. Merleau-Ponty's apprentice has observed his master replace the Cartesian cogito with the "new cogito" which is existence or the ambiguous act of man in and to the world. He has with his master rejected the rationalist Absolute Mind and Thought. But he wishes to find in his master's thought grounds for a "new absolute" that will explain the search for the absolute which he experiences in himself and which will found an ethics and a philosophy of being. To do this he must re-see his

¹⁵p.p., 468. "La Pensée absolue n'est pas plus claire pour moi que mon esprit fini, puisque c'est par lui que je la pense. Nous sommes au monde, c'est-à-dire: des choses se dessinent, un immense individu s'affirme, chaque existence se comprend et comprend les autres. Il n'y a qu'à reconnaître ces phénomènes qui fondent toutes nos certitudes. La croyance en un esprit absolu ou en un monde en soi détache de nous n'est qu'une rationalisation de cette foi primordiale."

master's evidence for the rejection of the old absolute. He must understand where the absolute is not.

The absolute is not in formulations. It is not in the langue or in the parole parlee; it is not objective language, though it is precisely this aspect of language which encourages the illusion of the absolute. Because the dogmatist uses certain words here and now with a determinate meaning that can be located in a dictionary, he feels that these words were always the same and will always be the same whether there are any speakers on earth or not: A "triangle" is always a triangle with certain properties. The dogmatist neglects the bodily-act-in-a-situation from which the word and meaning originates. He does not see that the word acquires a meaning from its use in a number of contexts and the meaning is impossible to pin down absolutely.¹⁶ Modern science finally brings these facts to light. The new science is a transposition of the world-view; it is a new way of dealing in the world. Newton has given up his chair to Einstein and Planck. It is not that the science of Newton is wrong. It was adequate for a certain age. It is adequate for this age in so far as it leads to the present developments in science. Without Galileo and Newton there would have been no Einstein and Planck to surpass them. Moreover, cultural anthropology has

¹⁶P.P., 445. "Il est vrai que la communication presuppose un système de correspondances tel que celui qui est donné par le dictionnaire, mais elle va au delà, et c'est la phrase qui donne son sens à chaque mot, c'est pour avoir été employé dans différents contextes que le mot peu à peu se charge d'un sens qu'il n'est pas possible de fixer absolument."

demonstrated the originality of peoples in the formation of their diverse moral and speculative systems. It has demonstrated the intimate relation of language and world-view and the fact that languages differ as organisms differ: each is another integration. The common language and the common world is being worked out by many peoples in communication. It is not set for all times, even though in the here-and-now speaking act it seems to be. The objective world is forever developing holistically like a huge organism where part is intimately connected with part and a change in a part effects a change in the totality. Both dogmatism and scepticism must be rejected and synthesized. There are no uttered propositions which are set for all times and which can be transferred from age to age like marbles of thought. Truth is a total system growing organically. On the other hand, the utterance partakes in the absolute in that it is proposed for the future. The present world-view contains the past, not as a bag contains marbles, but as a body contains molecules. The utterance is not totally arbitrary or relative. It is conditioned by the situation out of which it arises, a situation largely formed by past utterances. It is another movement in a direction towards a future re-statement. There are no immutable essences or meanings or words for they are conditioned by, even as they condition, their situation. Still they are uttered for all times: the modern can to an extent enter into the situation of the ancient and utter his proposition with his meaning. Only in this sense can a proposition have eternal meaning. So dogma

must be continually re-formulated. Laws must be constantly re-written in a whole new system. A philosophy must be re-discovered and re-stated. The re-statement is not merely saying the same thing in a new way. It is a whole new saying.

The analysis of the act of expression demonstrated how expression tends to overcome itself. Once an expression is put out apart from the speaker, it is a thing in the world and can be questioned. The proposition rests on silent evidences which can be made new propositions. The process is infinite. In the process the common language develops and the boundaries of the context of communication are pushed back. Man, the speaking-act, is always in the process of becoming more and more transparent; but he will never achieve absolute transparency. If he did the process would stop. There would be no more speaking. There would be no more man. For man is not a mind using, but limited by, his body. He is a living body giving meaning and direction to a world. His pre-reflective body, his tacit cogito, will always be the background upon which the expressed can appear. Man is thought away when evolution and process are thought away. But while this affirmation overcomes dogmatism, it does not give force to scepticism. For each utterance is a commitment to the world and to the process of giving meaning to the world. Though the statement is questionable, the act of expressing as it is lived is not questionable. It is the fact before all facts. Even the act of doubting involves a commitment to the thing being doubted and to the act

of doubting. It is in the act of expressing as act that scepticism and complete relativity are overcome. There is no lived scepticism, as Hume himself so graciously admitted.¹⁷

The "new absolute" is the ambiguous act of expression itself. The invariability is not in the "what" man speaks, but in the "that" man speaks; not in the what he knows, but in his manner of knowing; not in the verbal cogito, but in the tacit cogito. The invariability is not to be found in the thing itself of the empiricist. Nor is it found in the mental structures of the intellectualist. Neither consciousness nor nature, neither mind nor matter, neither structure nor content will suffice. The new absolute is in the synthesis of these polarities in existence.¹⁸ There is no invariable human nature. For a nature is a content of thought, an expressed; as such as it is always subject to change. But man will always be an existence or a bodily expression to the world. And though the act of expression

¹⁷P.P., 438. "On ne sort de la perpetual doubt, on ne parvient à la 'sincérité' qu'en prévenant ces scrupules et se jetant les yeux fermés dans le 'faire'. Ainsi ce n'est parce que je pense être que je suis certain d'exister, mais au contraire la certitude que j'ai des mes pensées dérive de leur existence effective. . . 'Je doute': il n'y a pas d'autre manière de faire cesser tout doute à l'égard de cette proposition que de douter effectivement, de s'engager dans l'expérience du doute et de faire être ainsi ce doute comme certitude de douter. Douter c'est toujours douter de quelque chose, même si l'on 'doute de tout.'"

¹⁸cf. Jean Hyppolite, "Existence et dialectique dans la philosophie de Merleau-Ponty," Les Temps Modernes, 184-185 (1961), 229. "Cette tension vivante (d'un monde sauvage et d'un esprit sauvage) est le seul savoir absolu de l'existence que nous transit entier, puisqu'il n'y a pas d'autre monde auquel nous referer. . . ."

will always be becoming a new act, it will always be an act of expression. The new absolute is found in the very tension and evolution of existence.¹⁹

In the nineteenth century, long after the Copernican Revolution physicists were seeking the absolute in space and time. They were seeking it in the wrong place. They postulated a fixed body or a fixed ether to which everything else moved relatively. For they reasoned, space and time are not intelligible if there is no absolute. Yet ether was disproved and no fixed bodies could be discovered. Then Einstein made space and time intelligible, not by finding an absolute space and time, but by proving the relativity of space-time in his theory of relativity expressed by the formula $S = \sqrt{x^2 + y^2 + z^2 - c^2t^2}$. Also in the nineteenth century, philosophers were attempting to find the absolute in Being. They were seeking it in the wrong place. They postulated a fixed nature which impressed the mind in a fixed way, or they postulated a fixed mind that structured matter in a fixed way. But the brute unchanging nature and the necessary mind were disproven by the facts of cultural and linguistic relativity. Then Merleau-Ponty made mind and matter intelligible by affirming their relativity in his theory of

¹⁹Signes, 228. "L'irrélatif, désormais, ce n'est pas la nature en soi, ni le système des saisies de la conscience absolue, et pas davantage l'homme, mais cette 'téléologie' dont parle Husserl, --qui s'écrit et se pense entre guillemets, --jointure et membrure de l'être qui s'accomplit à travers l'homme." This text and others prove that it is not reading into Merleau-Ponty to discover grounds for a "new absolute" in the structure and tension of corporal expression.

existence expressed by the formula "être-au-monde." As Kant once proclaimed the Copernican Revolution in philosophy, Merleau-Ponty can claim the philosophic relativity theory. By their formulas Einstein and Merleau-Ponty are denying any invariability except the invariability which is the formula itself. Though all the components of the formula change, the formula itself is a constant. Though space and time, matter and mind are variables, the relations between them are not. It is this invariable relation that makes them intelligible. The absolute has been found on a new level.

It must be added that the formula as a formula is subject to change. Merleau-Ponty's new absolute is not the formalized, but the act of formalizing. But once this has been said, it has been formalized and is subject to change. Paradoxically the absolute is always being attained and never being attained. It is always present. The tacit cogito underlies all expressions. But it is never grasped. For this would mean its verbalization; and then it would no longer be the tacit cogito.²⁰

What does this mean for philosophy? Although Merleau-Ponty absolutely affirms the être-au-monde, he does not mean that with him philosophy has come to a halt. Philosophy as an

²⁰P.P., 453. "Habemus ideam verum, nous tenons une vérité, cette épreuve de la vérité ne serait savoir absolu que si nous pouvions en thématiser tous les motifs, c'est-à-dire si nous cessons d'être situés. La possession effective de l'idée vraie ne nous donne donc aucun droit d'affirmer un lieu intelligible de pensée adéquate et de productivité absolue, elle fonde seulement une 'téléologie' de la conscience qui, avec ce premier instrument, en forgera de plus parfaits, avec ceux-ci de plus parfaits, et ainsi sans fin.

expression-expressed is subject to change. Merleau-Ponty's absolute affirmation of this new philosophic principle consists in offering it to the future. It is still his way of "singing the world." His expression is ultimately linked to himself. He does not ask his reader to take it whole, as it is in itself, so to speak. His reader must formulate his own philosophy in dialogue with Merleau-Ponty. Even so, Merleau-Ponty has attempted to reach for himself an "absolute," a primordial fact, in the etre-au-monde, the basic structure of man's involvement in the world. Philosophy is a never ending search to work back upon the tacit cogito. It is a speaking about speaking. Its subject always eludes philosophy because philosophy is a process to formalize the unformalizable, of speaking about what is naturally silent.²¹

Merleau-Ponty has said that man should give up his search for the absolute. But he means the old absolute. For he was searching for the new absolute in the very saying of these words. Man will give up his search for the absolute and for greater transparency only by ceasing to speak. Philosophy is a never-ending attempt to reach and a constant attainment of the absolute view-point. The absolute is always there exerting its influence as end to be attained. It is the last word.

Man's basic nature as symbolic act, his silent cogito, is present in every affirmation as an invariable structure of his involvement in the world. It is this which gives the

²¹Eloge de la philosophie, 9.

affirmation a participation in the absolute. The word-having-been-uttered will change. But it remains a moment in the speaking process which is a direction towards the absolute viewpoint or the last affirmation. The "is" absolutely affirmed in the existential proposition "X is Y" does not mean that the proposition is simply good for all times. It is good for the present which is an orientation to the future. The proposition will develop; and so will the act. But the act is absolute because it is an intention of the Absolute. Man is always trying to get in the last Word.

Eternity reveals itself in temporality. A proposition is "good for all times" if it is a moment in the process to the last proposition. Speaking a word is absolute if it furthers the drive to speak the Word. The unity of man and being cannot be grasped if one insists upon cutting into isolable moments the axes of evolution; at each moment he will find another new speaking act and another symbolic world. But speaking-act and its world are one when grasped as temporality itself-an infinite process of speaking the last Word.

But if this is an infinite process, is it true to say that the ultimate Word is never spoken? Can there be an ultimate Word? A man should give up his search for the absolute, it could be said with Merleau-Ponty, in the sense that a man should not hope to arrive at the point when he has spoken the last Word once and for all. This would separate man from his temporality and from himself. It is impossible to become the

absolute speaking act if this means succeeding in having spoken the last Word.²² But it is possible to become the absolute speaking act in that man is always in the process of speaking the last Word. What is this Word? One does not strictly know until he has spoken it. But though man does not know it strictly speaking, the Word reveals itself in man's very intention to it. It reveals itself as an ambiguity because the intention is ambiguous. It reveals itself as coming after man: it is the end-product of his process of speaking that does not end. It reveals itself before man in that it grounds the process and gives it meaning: if the Word has not already been spoken, the speaking process is directionless, meaningless, and non-existent. It reveals itself to be the identity of Absolute Speaking-Act and the Absolute Spoken-Word. It is complete transparency.

The Speaking-Word is an ambiguous notion because man is essentially caught up in ambiguity. He is a tension in four directions. He is related to the past out of which he emerges and to the future to which he is orientated. He intends the world and in this way is turned into himself: the more he gives himself to the world in expression, the more he becomes transparent to himself and the more he rises from the past to be orientated to the future. The Absolute stands behind and in the process as Ground giving meaning to the process. The

²²P.P., 431. "Les actes du Je sont d'une telle nature qu'ils se dépassent eux-mêmes et qu'il n'y a pas d'intimité de la conscience. La conscience est de part en part transcendance, non pas transcendance subie,--nous avons dit qu'une telle transcendance serait l'arrêt de la conscience,--mais transcendance active."

Absolute stands in front of the process and End being accomplished by the process. The Absolute is the meeting-point of Speaker and Spoken. It is immanent. Becoming in the very process of speaking. It is transcendent Being outside the process, founding and ending it.²³

Can such a contradictory notion be affirmed? This is similar to the question: can scepticism be refuted? The answer is "no" if the questioner refers to the words expressed. Words can always be questioned and doubted. And so scepticism is the answer? But, again, the very act of expressing involves a commitment to the world. This commitment is man's given situation in the world and his active engagement to the world. The absolute as it is lived is indubitable; though, as it is formulated, it is deniable. Man can ultimately deny the new and true cogito and the new and true absolute only by ceasing to speak and cutting himself off from his world. A philosopher may deny the absolute in his parole parlee; but in his parole parlante he affirms it unceasingly. For he keeps searching; he keeps himself open to change and the reformulation of his philosophy. He participates in the communal movement to speak the word. The primordial faith involved in this movement may be said to lead to the "rationalization of the Absolute." It also leads to its realization. For in the act as it is lived, not

²³The Absolute is immanent in that it is the Ground of Being; it is the infinite Speaking-Act of which my speaking-act is a moment. The Absolute is transcendent in so far as my speaking act is always tending beyond itself; the Speaking-Act is accomplishing itself. Paul Tillich's notion of Transcendental Ground of Being can be invoked here.

as it is expressed, the Absolute is revealed as Ground and objective.

In sum, the Absolute is found in the act of expressing in so far as it is an invariable structure of man's bodily involvement in the world. Because philosophy is the expression of this invariability it is constantly changing. It is an act of expression which is constantly tending beyond itself. It is also a process of self-awareness in which the absolute comes more and more to light. The absolute will never be ultimately formulated by man because it is essentially unformulateable: it is the tacit cogito. The organic development of philosophy then is towards the Absolute Viewpoint or the ultimate Word which is the foundation and end of the tacit cogito. The Absolute is never finally reached; the Word is never fully spoken by man. But he "knows" it in his intention to it. His temporality reveals the eternal. His speaking reveals the Word. The progress in thought and the movement to the Absolute demands a commitment and a faith which belongs to the philosophic speaking act. Man must accept and glory in his tension and ambiguity. For he will never arrive at the state where he finds himself the Absolute Word Speaking Itself. Only this primordial faith and acceptance will insure the progress of man and his world.

Phenomenology and Metaphysics

It is clear that Merleau-Ponty has been engaging in meta-physics.²⁴ He has transcended the phenomena by his reflection upon them. He has offered the community of philosophers a theory of ultimate reality and a unification of all worlds in the basic structure of the etre-au-monde. The etre-au-monde by its own reflection upon itself transcends itself and discovers the principles of ultimate being. These are not two acts or two different levels, one phenomenological, the other metaphysical. The very engagement in phenomenology is a transcendence of phenomena. When the philosopher speaks about speaking, his act rises above itself as it attempts to get hold of itself.

Philosophy is phenomenology. Phenomenology involves a metaphysics. What does this mean? Language, Merleau-Ponty protested, is not a collection of verbal responses excited by external stimuli; one does not have the sense experience and then verbalize it. The use of symbols allows phenomena to appear at the same time it structures the phenomena. Philosophy uses its highly refined set of symbols to reveal original phenomena as well as to form a system. It is both phenomenology and metaphysics. By using words Merleau-Ponty was attempting to work back upon the pre-reflective bodily act of expression. His

²⁴We return to a problem posed in the first chapter: Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and philosophical system or the relation of phenomenology to metaphysics.

philosophy is a systematic theory of the etre-au-monde. And it is an organic, open system which will not stop growing because it will not reach the point where it has spoken the last Word.

Philosophy, therefore, is the search to speak the last Word. It is also the infinite process of speaking the last Word. By its own speaking it is working back upon the speaking-act. At the same time it is forever pushing forward towards the ultimate Speaking-Act. This "foreverness" is frustrating for those who lack a faith in and an acceptance of their own process and temporality. They do not rejoice in their ambiguity nor commit themselves to an ambiguous world; they wish to release the tension and die.

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy unifies all speaking acts and all symbolic worlds in its account of the invariable structure of the speaking act and spoken world as it is lived. His thought envelops a plan for an encounter with analytic philosophy and all philosophies in their concern with language and the language-act. The philosopher can claim immortality because his philosophy has synthesized tradition and has offered itself to the future. It is a moment in the continual speaking of the last Word.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES

- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. Elogé de la philosophie. Paris: Gallimard, 1953.
- _____. Phénoménologie de la perception. Paris: Gallimard, 1945.
- _____. Sens et non-sens. Paris: Nagel, 1945.
- _____. Signes. Paris: Gallimard, 1960
- _____. La structure du comportement. 2nd ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949.

II. SECONDARY SOURCES

A. BOOKS

- Anshen, Ruth Nanda (ed.). Language: An Enquiry into its Meaning and Function. New York: Harper, 1957.
- Cassirer, Ernst. An Essay on Man. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944.
- De Waelhens, Alphonse. Une philosophie de l'ambiguïté: L'existentialisme de Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1951.
- Dewey, John. Experience and Nature. New York: Dover, 1958.
- Dondeyne, Albert. Contemporary European Thought and Christian Faith. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1958.
- Herskovitz, Melville J. Cultural Anthropology. New York, 1955.
- Luijpen, W. Existential Phenomenology. Pittsburgh; Duquesne University Press, 1960.

Scheler, Max. Man's Place in Nature. Translated and with an Introduction by Hans Meyerhoff. Boston: Beacon Press, 1961.

Spiegelberg, Herbert. The Phenomenological Movement: An Historical Introduction. Vol. 2. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Philosophical Investigations. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan, 1953.

B. ARTICLES

Ballard, Edward G. "The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty," Studies in Hegel. Tulane Studies in Philosophy. New Orleans: Tulane University Press, 1960, 165-187.

_____. "On Cognition of the Pre-Cognitive," Philosophical Quarterly, (July, 1961).

Bayer, Raymond. "Merleau-Ponty's Existentialism," The University of Buffalo Studies, 1953, 95-104.

Bouet, Michel M. "Le problème de l'interiorité objective dans la psychologie phénoménologique de M. Merleau-Ponty," Etudes philosophiques, 1948, 297-312.

Dreyfus, H. L. and Todes, S. J. "The Three Worlds of Merleau-Ponty," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, XXII (June, 1962), 559-565.

Ecole, Jean. "Rentrée au Collège de France avec M. Merleau-Ponty," Revue Thomiste, LIII (1953), 193-196.

Kullman, Michael, and Taylor, Charles. "The Pre-objective World," Review of Metaphysics, XII (September, 1958), 108-132.

Lacan, Jacques. "Maurice Merleau-Ponty," Les Temps Modernes, 184-185 (1961), 245-254.

Lefort, Claude. "L'idée d'être brut' et d' 'esprit sauvage,'" Les Temps Modernes, 184-185 (1961), 255-286.

Pontalis, J. B. "Note sur le problème de l'inconscient chez Merleau-Ponty," Les Temps Modernes, 184-185 (1961), 287-303.

Sartre, Jean Paul. "Merleau-Ponty vivant," Les Temps Modernes, 184-185 (1961), 304-376.

- Scharfstein, Ben-Ami. "Bergson and Merleau-Ponty: A Preliminary Comparison," Journal of Philosophy, LII (July 7, 1955), 380-386.
- Waelhens, Alphonse de. "Situation de Merleau-Ponty," Les Temps Modernes, 184-185 (1961), 377-398.
- Wahl, Jean. "Cette pensée...", Les Temps Modernes, 184-185 (1961), 399-436.
- Wild, John. "Is there a World of Ordinary Language?" The Philosophical Review, LXVII (October, 1958), 460-476.

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Rolland F. Smith, S.J. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

June 1, 1965
Date

Michael Montague
Signature of Adviser