The Essential Writings of Merleauedited by Pontu Alden L. Fisher

# The Essential Writings of Merleau-Ponty

edited by Alden L. Fisher

St. Louis University

## **CONTENTS**

Preface

Introduction

PART	I.	Philosophy and Phenomenology 15	
		In Praise of Philosophy 17 What is Phenomenology? 27	
PART	II	. Philosophy and the Sciences of Man	45

3. The Primacy of Perception and 47 Its Philosophical Consequences 4. The Philosopher and Sociology 64 5. Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis, Preface to Hesnard's L'Oeuvre de Freud 81

# PART III. Philosophical Anthropology

6. Man and Adversity

7. Freedom

8. The Relations of the Soul and the Body and the Problem of Perceptual Consciousness

PART IV. The Philosophy of Language 183
9. The Body as Expression and Speech 185 10. On the Phenomenology of Language 214
PART V. Philosophical Esthetics 231
11. Cézanne's Doubt 233 12. Eye and Mind 252
PART VI. History and Politics: Moral Dimensions 287
<ul><li>13. Concerning Marxism 289</li><li>14. The Crisis of the Understanding 318</li></ul>
PART VII. On the Problem of God and Religion 339
15. God and Philosophy 314 16. Christianity and Philosophy 345 17. Faith and Good Faith 353
PART VIII. Epilogue 365

18. An Unpublished Text by Maurice Merleau-Ponty: A Prospectus of His Work 367

### 4 Introduction

This note includes the minimal essential data concerning Merleau-Ponty's life and career. Further information would be very helpful; much in his works will not be fully clarified, for example, until we know who his teachers were, what books he used, and what figures in classical and contemporary philosophy were most influential in his formation. However, only a little was written about Merleau-Ponty the man while he was alive, for he led a quiet and discreet life, in marked contrast to his sometime friend and collaborator Jean-Paul Sartre.<sup>2</sup> Since he left few papers and no known autobiographical materials, the best remaining source of information would be interviews with his contemporaries. Until a major biographical work is undertaken, we shall have to be content with the above brief facts and the following incidental information.

Merleau-Ponty was reared as a Catholic; his mother was a devout woman, and one has the impression that Merleau-Ponty was equally so in his youth and early adult years. Sometime during the 1930's Merleau-Ponty became disaffected with the established Church and ceased to practice his faith. On one occasion—at the Rencontres internationales in Geneva, September, 1951—he even admitted that the label "atheist" could be applied to him. One had the impression, however, that he did so with reluctance and under considerable pressure of the moment.3 During his last years he refused to accept the designation and seemed rather an open and "waiting" agnostic. His final position with regard to religion is not known; what is clear is that some degree of reconciliation with the Church of his early years must have been realized prior to his sudden death from a coronary thrombosis in May of 1961, for a Catholic Mass was said at his funeral. Considering the attitude of the French hierarchy in matters of this kind, there can be little room for doubt.

According to the testimony of his own writings, Merleau-Ponty's childhood was happy, so happy that his adult years never quite provided as complete a sense of rich fulfillment. The death of his father while he was still very young must have affected him greatly, however, for he became extremely close to his mother and remained com-

<sup>3</sup> See the discussion of his paper "Man and Adversity" in *La Connaissance de l'homme au xx<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Neuchatel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1951), pp. 249–52.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> One of the richest documents available, which gives a feeling for Merleau-Ponty the man, is Sartre's account of their friendship and professional collaboration, written at the time of Merleau-Ponty's death: Jean-Paul Sartre, "Merleau-Ponty," in *Situations* (New York: George Braziller, 1965), pp. 227–326.

pletely devoted to her until her death only a few years prior to his own. He was happily married to a physician and psychiatrist, a woman of considerable prominence in her own right; they had one child, a

daughter.

Merleau-Ponty was a man of medium stature with a striking Gallic face filled with character. A well and neatly groomed man, he had neither the flamboyant nor the disheveled appearance affected by so many European intellectuals. Indeed, he had the external appearance of a successful French business executive, however quickly his eyes and speech dissipated such an impression. He was essentially timid and seemed happiest to live quietly with a few intimate friends rather than in the larger circle his eminence would easily have made possible. Nevertheless, he was a most impressive lecturer and a very effective teacher with an obvious interest in his students and in younger people generally. Extremely gentle and polite, he took the time and effort to put people at their ease; a good listener, he left the impression of being genuinely interested in his interlocutor.

These brief impressions will fill in the bare bones of Merleau-Ponty's "official" biography for students of his thought until more complete

accounts become available.

Merleau-Ponty's first major work, The Structure of Behavior, was completed in 1938 when he was only thirty years old (although it was not published until 1942). Seven years later, in 1945, his second and most important work, Phenomenology of Perception, was completed. When one realizes that these seven years included his military service. the German occupation, and his activities in the Resistance, the accomplishment of so long and sustained a work seems even more remarkable. Two collections of essays followed, one devoted to writings in the philosophy of politics and given the pregnant title of Humanism and Terror, the other a brilliant collection of essays on various general topics entitled Sense and Non-Sense, published in 1948. His next work was his powerful inaugural address on the occasion of his assuming the chair of philosophy at the Collège de France in 1952 and called In Praise of Philosophy, large parts of which are included in these selections.

Evidence now indicates that Merleau-Ponty was working on more than one major philosophical work during these years. One work was provisionally entitled Vérité et Existence, the other La Prose du monde. The former may have been part of the work that later was entitled La Visible et l'invisible, only partially complete at the time of Merleau-Ponty's death and published posthumously. Of La Prose du monde we have only one unfinished introductory section that was discovered recently and published as an article.4 Merleau-Ponty's complete disaffection for the French Communist party and his intellectual break with Jean-Paul Sartre were the occasion for a very polemical political work,

Les Aventures de la dialectique, published in 1955.

Only one other personal work was published during Merleau-Ponty's life—again a collection of essays, called Signs, that contains several important articles and many incidental pieces. This work was published in 1960, a year before his death. In 1955 and 1956 he edited an anthology called Les Philosophes célèbres. Many of his own contributions to this work are republished in Signs. Thus, most of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical articles were later published in one collection or another. A few of the major ones that remained uncollected in any French volume were gathered together by James Edie and published in English under the title of The Primacy of Perception. Some minor writings have still not been reprinted,5 but it is clear that all of Merleau-Ponty's principal writings are quite accessible to the student and scholar.

The great shock caused by Merleau-Ponty's death was not simply because one of the most important philosophers of our time had died. One also felt a deep and terrible loss because Merleau-Ponty was so young; as philosophers go, he had barely reached his prime. It is almost certain that, had he lived, his philosophical contribution would have grown well beyond its present size, impressive as that is.

This is not the place to evaluate in detail the background intellectual influences on Merleau-Ponty's thought and writings. As we have already indicated, a great deal of detective work has still to be done before these influences can become entirely clear. Nevertheless, it is evident from Merleau-Ponty's writings that these influences fall primarily into three categories: Husserl, Marx, and existentialism. With regard to the last, existentialism is both an influence and a result of Merleau-Ponty's work, for, while he was clearly influenced by such writers as Gabriel Marcel and especially Martin Heidegger and Sartre, it is equally clear that Merleau-Ponty was himself one of the leading

<sup>4</sup> Revue de métaphysique et de morale, Vol. 72 (1967), pp. 139-53.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Merleau-Ponty did a great deal of writing for newspapers in France, but so far these short essays have not been republished in more permanent form.

de France, Merleau-Ponty devoted a sustained and systematic analysis to Hegel alone among the moderns. As a matter of fact, since Hegel occupied Merleau-Ponty's time in the historical part of his lectures from about 1955 until the time of his death, it is perhaps true to say that Hegel's influence on him was growing. However, it was present from the very beginning, as evidenced by *The Structure of Behavior*.

At a time when the focus of much of contemporary philosophy was becoming more and more restricted—with first the positivists directing the interest of philosophers primarily to logic and science, and later the linguistic analysts focusing philosophy's attention primarily on ordinary linguistic usage as it appears either in everyday language or in various technical language uses-Merleau-Ponty represents a return to a more comprehensive philosophy in the classical tradition. For him philosophy must be a completely unrestricted reflection on the whole of human experience including, certainly, science and language but also man himself and all his activities, among them art, politics, society, and religion. At the same time that he resisted modern efforts to restrict the subject matter of philosophy, Merleau-Ponty carried out a sustained critique of the great rationalists, not because of any irrationalism or arbitrary restriction of reason on his part, but because of the rationalists' tendency to build closed systems. Merleau-Ponty is impatient with conceptual system building; for him, philosophy is the application of reason's full powers to the task of disengaging the structures of experience and making manifest all their hidden intelligibilities. Merleau-Ponty is skeptical of the possibility of reason's completing its work—reality is too rich to be fully captured by one mind and one set of categories-but philosophy's task is to exercise reason to its fullest possible capacity. No limits are set on the potentialities of reason except its own inner limitations and the limits of reality itself.

Having said this, it is also fair to say that, for Merleau-Ponty, reality never presents itself without some degree of ambiguity, and he is highly sensitive to this irrational side of things. His philosophy has in fact been called a philosophy of ambiguity. But, for him, recognizing the irrational is not the same as capitulating to it, and a main thrust of his philosophy is precisely to enlarge reason, to make reason adequate to and inclusive of the non-rational and the irrational. Philosophy's attention to the contingent, the vague, the dark underside of things is for Merleau-Ponty only a way to be more faithful to the task of reason itself, the task of unrestricted reflection.

act and live in my world, I am always actively perceiving and shaping that world. But much of the time I am not attending to either the acts of perception nor the ways in which these acts are shaping the world in which I live. Hence, the world which seems to me to be (and in a real sense, according to Merleau-Ponty, is) always already there is also in a sense the product of a long series of constitutive acts of perception. To demonstrate this point Merleau-Ponty makes rich use of the findings of psychology; for example, he points to the way in which a child perceives his world prelinguistically. He also shows how affectivity is both tied to and influences the quality of my perception at this lived level. Thus, in reflection, I am always obliged to try to recover what has been built up at the level of unreflective perception. One of philosophy's primary and ongoing tasks then becomes a reflection upon the structures of this lived world, reflection trying to recover the unreflected.

It is in this context that Merleau-Ponty develops his philosophy of the body. Of all the objects of perception, the human body is perhaps the most ambiguous. Following ideas similar to those of Marcel, but not using exactly the same language, Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between my body for me and my body for others. It is possible to view the body "objectively" like any other object or thing. In this perspective the body is a functional organism with objective processes taking place within it. This is the body which can be examined by the physician and treated by chemical means. But this is not precisely the same body as my body for me as lived from within.

Rather my body for me is seen to be the means by which I am situated in a world. It is also that by which I am able to perceive a world. Thus the body for me or the lived body is that by means of which I am part of the world and at the same time that by means of which I have a perspective on the world. The perspectival character of perceptual objects has as a counterpart the situated character of acts of perceiving because of their participating in the situated character of the body.

Thus the lived body is that ambiguous reality which is not identical with the subject—it is not the subject but rather the means by which the subject is a real subject in a real world—but neither is it the same as external objects, for no other object in our experience is lived from within. Each person's own body then is a kind of third term, participating in the character of subject and object but being identical with

# I. IN PRAISE OF PHILOSOPHY

The man who witnesses his own research, that is to say his own inner disorder, cannot feel himself to be the heir of the distinguished men whose names he sees on these walls. If, in addition, he is a philosopher, that is to say if he knows that he knows nothing, how could he believe himself justified in occupying this chair, and how could he even desire to do so? The answer to these questions is very simple. Since its foundation the Collège de France has been charged with the duty, not of giving to its hearers already-acquired truths, but the idea of free investigation. If, last winter, the Collège de France desired to maintain a chair of philosophy, it is because philosophical ignorance puts the crowning touch on the spirit of search to which it is devoted. If a philosopher solicits your votes, my dear colleagues, it is, you well know, in order to live the philosophical life more completely. And if you have elected him, it is to support this endeavor in his person. Although I feel unequal to the honor, I am nevertheless happy to undertake the task, since it is a great good fortune, as Stendhal said, for one "to have his passion as a profession." I have been touched at finding you so resolved, all other considerations aside, in desiring to maintain philosophy in your midst, and it is a pleasure to thank you for this today. . . .

The philosopher is marked by the distinguishing trait that he possesses *inseparably* the taste for evidence and the feeling for ambiguity. When he limits himself to accepting ambiguity, it is called equivocation. But among the great it becomes a theme; it contributes to establish

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, trans. by John Wild and James M. Edie (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1963), pp. 3–5, 32–42, 58–64. Reprinted by permission.

lishing certitudes rather than menacing them. Therefore it is necessary to distinguish good and bad ambiguity. Even those who have desired to work out a completely positive philosophy have been philosophers only to the extent that, at the same time, they have refused the right to install themselves in absolute knowledge. They taught not this knowledge, but its becoming in us, not the absolute but, at most, our absolute relation to it, as Kierkegaard said. What makes a philosopher is the movement which leads back without ceasing from knowledge to ignorance, from ignorance to knowledge, and a kind of rest in this movement. . . . Thus it is the philosopher and he alone who is judge. Here we have come back to the self and to the tête-à-tête of the self with the true. Now we have said that there is no solitary truth. Are we therefore on a revolving wheel? We are, but it is not the wheel of the skeptics. It is true that in the last resort there is no judge, that I do not think according to the true alone, nor according to myself alone, nor according to the others alone, because each of the three has need of the other two and it would be a non-sense to sacrifice any one. A philosophical life always bases itself on these three cardinal points. The enigma of philosophy (and of expression) is that sometimes life is the same to oneself, to others, and to the true. These are the moments which justify it. The philosopher counts only on them. He will never accept to will himself against men, nor to will men against himself, nor against the true, nor the true against them. He wishes to be everywhere at once, at the risk of never being completely anywhere. His opposition is not aggressive; he knows that this often announces capitulation. But he understands the rights of others and of the outside too well to permit them any infringement. If, when he is engaged in external enterprises, the attempt is made to draw him beyond the point where his activity loses the meaning which inspired it, his rejection is all the more tranquil in that it is founded on the same motives as his acceptance. Hence the rebellious gentleness, the pensive engagement, the intangible presence which disquiet those who are with him. As Bergson said of Ravaisson in a tone so personal that one imagines him to be speaking of himself: "He gave no hold. . . . He was the kind of man who does not even offer sufficient resistance for one to flatter himself that he has ever seen him give way."

If we have recalled these words of Bergson, not all of which are in his books, it is because they make us feel that there is a tension in the relation of the philosopher with other persons or with life, and that this uneasiness is essential to philosophy. We have forgotten this a little. The modern philosopher is frequently a functionary, always a writer, and the freedom allowed him in his books admits an opposite view. What he says enters first of all into an academic world where the choices of life are deadened and the occasions for thought are cut off. Without books a certain speed of communication would be impossible, and there is nothing to say against them. But in the end they are only words expressed a bit more coherently. The philosophy placed in books has ceased to challenge men. What is unusual and almost insupportable in it is hidden in the respectable life of the great philosophical systems. In order to understand the total function of the philosopher, we must remember that even the philosophical writers whom we read [and of whom we are one] have never ceased to recognize as their patron a man who never wrote, who never taught, at least in any official chair, who talked with anyone he met on the street, and who had certain difficulties with public opinion and with the public

powers. We must remember Socrates.

The life and death of Socrates are the history of the difficult relations that the philosopher faces-when he is not protected by literary immunity-with the gods of the City, that is to say with other men, and with the fixed absolute whose image they extend to him. If the philosopher were a rebel, it would be less shocking. For in the last analysis each one of us knows for his own part that the world as it is, is unacceptable. We like to have this written down for the honor of humanity, though we may forget it when we return to our affairs. Hence rebellion is not displeasing. But with Socrates it is something different. He teaches that religion is true, and he offered sacrifices to the gods. He teaches that one ought to obey the City, and he obeys it from the very beginning to the end. He is reproached not so much for what he does as for his way of doing it, his motive. In the Apology there is a saying which explains it all, when Socrates says to his judges: Athenians, I believe as none of those who accuse me. Revealing words! He believes more than they, but also he believes in another way, and in a different sense. True religion for Socrates is a religion in which the gods are not in conflict, where the omens remain ambiguous-since, in the last analysis, says the Socrates of Xenophon, it is the gods, not the birds, who foresee the future—where the divine reveals itself, like than they do. The same philosophy obliges him to appear before the judges and also makes him different from them. The same freedom which brings him among them frees him from their prejudices. The very same principle makes him both universal and singular. There is a part of him by which he is the kinsman of them all. It is called reason and is invisible to them. For them, as Aristophanes says, it is cloudy, empty chattering. The commentators sometimes say it is all a misunderstanding. Socrates believes in religion and the City, in spirit and in truth. They believe in them to the letter. He and his judges are not on the same ground. If only he had been better understood, one would have seen clearly that he was neither seeking for new gods, nor neglecting the gods of Athens. He was only trying to give them

a sense; he was interpreting them.

The trouble is that this operation is not so innocent. It is in the world of the philosopher that one saves the gods and the laws by understanding them, and to make room on earth for the life of philosophy, it is precisely philosophers like Socrates who are required. Religion interpreted—this is for the others religion suppressed. And the charge of impiety—this is the point of view of the others towards him. He gives reasons for obeying the laws. But it is already too much to have reasons for obeying, since over against all reasons other reasons can be opposed, and then respect disappears. What one expects of him—this is exactly what he is not able to give—is assent to the thing itself, without restriction. He, on the contrary, comes before the judges, yes, but it is to explain to them what the City is. As if they did not know! As if they were not the City! He does not plead for himself. He pleads the cause of a city which would accept philosophy. He reverses the roles and says to them: it is not myself I am defending; it is you. In the last analysis the City is in him and they are the enemies of the laws. It is they who are being judged, and he who is judging them-an inevitable reversal in the philosopher, since he justifies what is outside by values which come from within.

What can one do if he neither pleads his cause nor challenges to combat? One can speak in such a way as to make freedom show itself in and through the various respects and considerations, and to unlock hate by a smile—a lesson for our philosophy which has lost both its smile and its sense of tragedy. This is what is called irony. The irony of Socrates is a distant but true relation with others. It expresses the fundamental fact that each of us is only himself inescapably, and never-

theless recognizes himself in the other. It is an attempt to open up both of us for freedom. As is true of tragedy, both the adversaries are justified, and true irony uses a double-meaning which is founded on these facts. There is therefore no self-conceit. It is irony on the self no less than on the others. As Hegel well says, it is naive. The story of Socrates is not to say less in order to win an advantage in showing great mental power, or in suggesting some esoteric knowledge. "Whenever I convince anyone of his ignorance," the *Apology* says with melancholy, "my listeners imagine that I know everything that he does not know." Socrates does not know any *more* than they know. He knows only that there is no absolute knowledge, and that it is by this absence that we

are open to the truth.

To this good irony Hegel opposes a romantic irony which is equivocal, tricky, and self-conceited. It relies on the power which we can use, if we wish, to give any kind of meaning to anything whatsoever. It levels things down; it plays with them and permits anything. The irony of Socrates is not this kind of madness. Or at least if there are traces of bad irony in it, it is Socrates himself who teaches us to correct Socrates. When he says: I make them dislike me and this is the proof that what I say is true, he is wrong on the basis of his own principles. All sound reasoning is offensive, but all that offends us is not true. At another time, when he says to his judges: I will not stop philosophizing even if I must die many times, he taunts them and tempts their cruelty. Sometimes it is clear that he yields to the giddiness of insolence and spitefulness, to self-magnification and the aristocratic spirit. He was left with no other resource than himself. As Hegel says again, he appeared "at the time of the decadence of the Athenian democracy; he drew away from the externally existent and retired into himself to seek there for the just and the good." But in the last analysis it was precisely this that he was self-prohibited from doing, since he thought that one cannot be just all alone and, indeed, that in being just all alone one ceases to be just. If it is truly the City that he is defending, it is not merely the City in him but that actual City existing around him. The five hundred men who gathered together to judge him were neither all important people nor all fools. Two hundred and twenty-one among them thought he was innocent, and a change of thirty votes would have saved Athens from the dishonor. It was also a question of those after Socrates who would run the same danger. He was perhaps free to bring down the anger of the fools

upon himself, to pardon them with a certain contempt, and then to pass beyond his life. But this would not absolve him in advance from the evil he might bring on others and would not enable him to pass beyond their lives. It was therefore necessary to give to the tribunal its chance of understanding. In so far as we live with others, no judgment we make on them is possible which leaves us out, and which places them at a distance. All is vain, or all is evil, as likewise all is well, which are hard to distinguish, do not come from philosophy.

It is possible to fear that our time also is rejecting the philosopher that dwells within it, and that once again philosophy will evaporate into nothing but clouds. For to philosophize is to seek, and this is to imply that there are things to see and to say. Well, today we no longer seek. We "return" to one or the other of our traditions and "defend" it. Our convictions are founded less on perceived values and truths than on the vices and errors of those we do not like. We love very few things, though we dislike many. Our thinking is a thought in retreat or in reply. Each of us is expiating for his youth. This decadence is in accord with the course of our history. Having passed a certain point of tension, ideas cease to develop and live. They fall to the level of justifications and pretexts, relics of the past, points of honor; and what one pompously calls the movement of ideas is reduced to the sum of our nostalgias, our grudges, our timidities, and our phobias. In this world, where negation and gloomy passion take the place of certitude, one does not seek above all to see, and, because it seeks to see, philosophy passes for impiety. It would be easy to show this in connection with two absolutes which are at the center of our discussions: God and history....

Let us show, in conclusion, that views like these justify philosophy

even in its weakness.

For it is useless to deny that philosophy limps. It dwells in history and in life, but it wishes to dwell at their center, at the point where they come into being with the birth of meaning. It is not content with what is already there. Since it is expression in act, it comes to itself only by ceasing to coincide with what is expressed, and by taking its distance in order to see its meaning. It is, in fact, the Utopia of possession at a distance. Hence it can be tragic, since it has its own contrary within itself. It is never a serious occupation. The serious man, if he exists, is the man of one thing only, to which he assents. But the most resolute philosophers always wish the contrary—to realize, but in destroying;

Ţ,

to suppress, but also to conserve. Always, they have an afterthought. The philosopher pays attention to the serious man—of action, of religion, or of passion—perhaps more acutely than anyone. But precisely in doing this, one feels that he is different. His own actions are acts of witness, like the "signifying acts" by which the companions of Julien Sorel at the seminary sought to prove their piety. Spinoza writes "ultimi barbarorum" on the tyrants' gate. Lagneau took legal action before the University authorities to rehabilitate an unfortunate candidate. Having done these things, each returns home, and remains there for years. The philosopher of action is perhaps the farthest removed from action, for to speak of action with depth and rigor is to say that one does not desire to act.

Machiavelli is the complete contrary of a machiavellian, since he describes the tricks of power and, as we say, "gives the whole show away." The seducer and the politician, who live in the dialectic and have a feeling or instinct for it, try their best to keep it hidden. It is the philosopher who explains that dialectically, under given conditions, an opponent becomes the equivalent of a traitor. This language is the precise opposite of what the powers say. The powers omit the premises and speak more succinctly. They simply say: here there are nothing but criminals. The manichees, who throw themselves into action, understand one another better than they understand the philosopher, for there is a certain complicity among them. Each one is the reason for the being of the other. But the philosopher is a stranger to this fraternal melée. Even if he had never betrayed any cause, one feels, in his very manner of being faithful, that he would be able to betray. He does not take sides like the others, and in his assent something massive and carnal is lacking. He is not altogether a real being.

This difference exists. But is it really between the philosopher and the man? It is rather the difference in man himself between that which understands and that which chooses, and every man, like the philosopher, is divided in this way. There is much that is artificial in the portrait of the man of action whom we oppose to the philosopher. This man of action is himself not all of one piece. Hate is a virtue from behind. To obey with one's eyes closed is the beginning of panic; and to choose against what one understands, the beginning of skepticism. One must be able to withdraw and gain distance in order to become truly engaged, which is, also, always an engagement in the truth. The same author who wrote one day that all action is manichean, having

become involved in action soon after, familiarly answered a journalist who reminded him of what he had said: "all action is manichean, but don't overdo it!"

No one is manichean before himself. It is an air that men of action have when seen from the outside, and which they rarely treasure in their memories. If the philosopher helps us to understand, henceforth, something of what a great man says in his own heart, he saves the truth of all, even for the man of action, who needs it, for no real statesman has ever seriously said that he was not interested in the truth. Later on, perhaps tomorrow, the man of action will rehabilitate the philosopher. As for those who are simply men, and not professionals in action, they are very far from classifying all others into the good and the evil, at least as long as they speak of what they have seen, and judge from close up. One finds them, when one looks, to be surprisingly sensitive to philosophical irony, as if it brought their silence and their reserve into the light, because here, for once, the word serves to open and release us.

The limping of philosophy is its virtue. True irony is not an alibi; it is a task; and the very detachment of the philosopher assigns to him a certain kind of action among men. Because we live in one of those situations that Hegel called diplomatic, in which every initiative risks being changed in meaning, we sometimes believe that we are serving the cause of philosophy by isolating it from the problems of the day, and Descartes has recently been honored for not having taken sides between Galileo and the Holy Office. The philosopher, it is said, should not prefer one rival dogmatism to another. He should occupy himself with absolute being beyond both the object of the physicist and the imagination of the theologian. But this is to forget that, by refusing to speak, Descartes also refuses to vindicate and to bring into action the philosophical order in its proper place. By remaining silent, he does not transcend these twin errors. He leaves them at grips with one another; he encourages them, particularly the victor of the moment. To be silent is not the same as to say why one does not wish to choose. If Descartes had acted, he could not have failed to establish the relative right of Galileo against the Holy Office, even if this were finally to subordinate ontology to physics. Philosophy and absolute being are never above the rival errors that oppose each other at any given time. These are never errors in quite the same way, and philosophy, which is integral truth, is charged with saying what in them it is able to integrate. In order that one day there might be a state of the world in which free thought would be possible, of scientism as well as of imagination, it did not suffice to bypass these two errors in silence. It was essential to speak against, and in this case to speak against the imagination. In the case of Galileo, the thought of physics carried the interests of truth. The philosophical absolute does not have any permanent seat. It is never elsewhere; it must be defended in each event. Alain said to his students: "Truth is momentary for us men who have a short view. It belongs to a situation, to an instant; it is necessary to see it, to say it, to do it at this very moment, not before nor after in ridiculous maxims; not for many times, for there are no many times." The difference here is not between the man and the philosopher. Both of them think the truth in the event. They are both opposed to the important one who thinks by principles, and against the roué who lives without truth.

At the conclusion of a reflection which at first isolates him, the philosopher, in order to experience more fully the ties of truth which bind him to the world and history, finds neither the depth of himself nor absolute knowledge, but a renewed image of the world and of himself placed within it among others. His dialectic, or his ambiguity, is only a way of putting into words what every man knows well-the value of those moments when his life renews itself and continues on, when he gets hold of himself again, and understands himself by passing beyond, when his private world becomes the common world. These mysteries are in each one of us as in him. What does he say of the relation between the soul and the body, except what is known by all men who make their souls and bodies, their good and their evil, go together in one piece? What does he teach of death, except that it is hidden in life, as the body in the soul, and that it is this understanding, as Montaigne said, which brings "a peasant and whole peoples to die, just as surely as philosophers?" The philosopher is the man who wakes up and speaks. And man contains silently within himself the paradoxes of philosophy, because to be completely a man, it is necessary to be a little more and a little less than man.

# 2. WHAT IS PHENOMENOLOGY?

What is phenomenology? It may seem strange that this question has still to be asked half a century after the first works of Husserl. The fact remains that it has by no means been answered. Phenomenology is the study of essences; and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essences: the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness, for example. But phenomenology is also a philosophy which puts essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their 'facticity'. It is transcendental philosophy which places in abeyance the assertions arising out of the natural attitude, the better to understand them; but it is also a philosophy for which the world is always 'already there' before reflection begins -as an inalienable presence; and all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status. It is the search for a philosophy which shall be a 'rigorous science', but it also offers an account of space, time and the world as we 'live' them. It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide. Yet Husserl in his last works mentions a 'genetic phenomenology',1 and

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Preface," *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (New York: The Humanities Press, 1962), pp. vii-xvi. Reprinted by permission.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Méditations cartésiennes, pp. 120 ff.

28

even a 'constructive phenomenology'.<sup>2</sup> One may try to do away with these contradictions by making a distinction between Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenologies; yet the whole of Sein und Zeit springs from an indication given by Husserl and amounts to no more than an explicit account of the 'natürlicher Weltbegriff' or the 'Lebenswelt' which Husserl, towards the end of his life, identified as the central theme of phenomenology, with the result that the contradiction reappears in Husserl's own philosophy. The reader pressed for time will be inclined to give up the idea of covering a doctrine which says everything, and will wonder whether a philosophy which cannot define its scope deserves all the discussion which has gone on around it, and whether he is not faced rather by a myth or a fashion.

Even if this were the case, there would still be a need to understand the prestige of the myth and the origin of the fashion, and the opinion of the responsible philosopher must be that phenomenology can be practised and identified as a manner or style of thinking, that it existed as a movement before arriving at complete awareness of itself as a philosophy. It has been long on the way, and its adherents have discovered it in every quarter, certainly in Hegel and Kierkegaard, but equally in Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. A purely linguistic examination of the texts in question would yield no proof; we find in texts only what we put into them, and if ever any kind of history has suggested the interpretations which should be put on it, it is the history of philosophy. We shall find in ourselves, and nowhere else, the unity and true meaning of phenomenology. It is less a question of counting up quotations than of determining and expressing in concrete form this phenomenology for ourselves which has given a number of presentday readers the impression, on reading Husserl or Heidegger, not so much of encountering a new philosophy as of recognizing what they had been waiting for. Phenomenology is accessible only through a phenomenological method. Let us, therefore, try systematically to bring together the celebrated phenomenological themes as they have grown spontaneously together in life. Perhaps we shall then understand why phenomenology has for so long remained at an initial stage, as a problem to be solved and a hope to be realized.

It is a matter of describing, not of explaining or analysing. Husserl's first directive to phenomenology, in its early stages, to be a 'descriptive

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See the unpublished 6th Méditation cartésienne, edited by Eugen Fink, to which G. Berger has kindly referred us.

psychology', or to return to the 'things themselves', is from the start a rejection of science. I am not the outcome or the meeting-point of numerous causal agencies which determine my bodily or psychoof numerous causal agencies which determine my bodily or psychological make-up. I cannot conceive myself as nothing but a bit of the world, a mere object of biological, psychological or sociological investigation. I cannot shut myself up within the realm of science. All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. The whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced, and if we want to subject science itself to rigorous scrutiny and arrive at a precise assessment of its meaning and scope, we must begin by reawakening the basic experience of the world of which science is the second-order expression. Science has not and never will have, by its nature, the same significance qua form of being as the world which we perceive, for the simple reason that it is a rationale or explanation of that world. I am, not a 'living creature' nor even a 'man', nor again even 'a consciousness' endowed with all the characteristics which zoology, social anatomy or inductive psychology recognize in these various products of the natural or historical process—I am the absolute source, my existence does not stem from my antecedents, from my physical and social environment; instead it moves out towards them and sustains them, for I alone bring into being for myself (and therefore into being in the only sense that the word can have for me) the tradition which I elect to carry on, or the horizon whose distance from me would be abolished—since that distance is not one of its properties—if I were not there to scan it with my gaze. Scientific points of view, according to which my existence is a moment of the world's, are always both naïve and at the same time dishonest, because they take for granted, without explicitly mentioning it, the other point of view, namely that of consciousness, through which from the outset a world forms itself round me and begins to exist for me. To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always *speaks*, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the country-side in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is

This move is absolutely distinct from the idealist return to con-

planted in an impregnable subjectivity, as yet untouched by being and time. But this is very ingenuous, or at least it is an incomplete form of reflection which loses sight of its own beginning. When I begin to reflect my reflection bears upon an unreflective experience; moreover my reflection cannot be unaware of itself as an event, and so it appears to itself in the light of a truly creative act, of a changed structure of consciousness, and yet it has to recognize, as having priority over its own operations, the world which is given to the subject, because the subject is given to himself. The real has to be described, not constructed or formed. Which means that I cannot put perception into the same category as the syntheses represented by judgements, acts or predications. My field of perception is constantly filled with a play of colours, noises and fleeting tactile sensations which I cannot relate precisely to the context of my clearly perceived world, yet which I nevertheless immediately 'place' in the world, without ever confusing them with my daydreams. Equally constantly I weave dreams round things. I imagine people and things whose presence is not incompatible with the context, yet who are not in fact involved in not incompatible with the context, yet who are not in fact involved in it: they are ahead of reality, in the realm of the imaginary. If the reality of my perception were based solely on the intrinsic coherence of 'representations', it ought to be for ever hesitant and, being wrapped up in my conjectures on probabilities, I ought to be ceaselessly taking apart misleading syntheses, and reinstating in reality stray phenomena which I had excluded in the first place. But this does not happen. The real is a closely woven fabric. It does not await our judgement before incorporating the most surprising phenomena, or before rejecting the most plausible figments of our imagination. Perception is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, a deliberate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all erate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out, and is presupposed by them. The world is not an object such that I have in my possession the law of its making; it is the natural setting of, and field for, all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions. Truth does not 'inhabit' only 'the inner man',4 or more accurately, there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself. When I return to myself from an excursion into the realm of dogmatic common sense or of science, I find, not a source of intrinsic truth, but a subject destined to be in the world.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> In te redi; in interiore homine habitat veritas (Saint Augustine).

All of which reveals the true meaning of the famous phenomenological reduction. There is probably no question over which Husserl has spent more time—or to which he has more often returned, since the 'problematic of reduction' occupies an important place in his unpublished work. For a long time, and even in recent texts, the reduction is presented as the return to a transcendental consciousness before which the world is spread out and completely transparent, quickened through and through by a series of apperceptions which it is the philosopher's task to reconstitute on the basis of their outcome. Thus my sensation of redness is perceived as the manifestation of a certain redness experienced, this in turn as the manifestation of a red surface, which is the manifestation of a piece of red cardboard, and this finally is the manifestation or outline of a red thing, namely this book. We are to understand, then, that it is the apprehension of a certain hylè, as indicating a phenomenon of a higher degree, the Sinngebung, or active meaning-giving operation which may be said to define consciousness, so that the world is nothing but 'world-asmeaning', and the phenomenological reduction is idealistic, in the sense that there is here a transcendental idealism which treats the world as an indivisible unity of value shared by Peter and Paul, in which their perspectives blend. 'Peter's consciousness' and 'Paul's consciousness' are in communication, the perception of the world 'by Peter' is not Peter's doing any more than its perception 'by Paul' is Paul's doing; in each case it is the doing of pre-personal forms of consciousness, whose communication raises no problem, since it is demanded by the very definition of consciousness, meaning or truth. In so far as I am a consciousness, that is, in so far as something has meaning for me, I am neither here nor there, neither Peter nor Paul; I am in no way distinguishable from an 'other' consciousness, since we are immediately in touch with the world and since the world is, by definition, unique, being the system in which all truths cohere. A logically consistent transcendental idealism rids the world of its opacity and its transcendence. The world is precisely that thing of which we form a representation, not as men or as empirical subjects, but in so far as we are all one light and participate in the One without destroying its unity. Analytical reflection knows nothing of the problem of other minds, or of that of the world, because it insists that with the first glimmer of consciousness there appears in me theoretically the power of reaching some universal truth, and that the other

person, being equally without thisness, location or body, the Alter and the Ego are one and the same in the true world which is the unifier of minds. There is no difficulty in understanding how I can conceive the Other, because the I and consequently the Other are not conceived as part of the woven stuff of phenomena; they have validity rather than existence. There is nothing hidden behind these faces and gestures, no domain to which I have no access, merely a little shadow which owes its very existence to the light. For Husserl, on the contrary, it is well known that there is a problem of other people, and the *alter ego* is a paradox. If the other is truly for himself alone, beyond his being for me, and if we are for each other and not both for God, we must necessarily have some appearance for each other. He must and I must have an outer appearance, and there must be, besides the perspective of the For Oneself—my view of myself and the other's of himself—a perspective of For Others—my view of others and theirs of me. Of course, these two perspectives, in each one of us, cannot be simply juxtaposed, for in that case it is not I that the other would see, nor he that I should see. I must be the exterior that I present to others, and the body of the other must be the other himself. This paradox and the dialectic of the Ego and the Alter are possible only provided that the Ego and the Alter Ego are defined by their situation and are not freed from all inherence; that is, provided that philosophy does not culminate in a return to the self, and that I discover by reflection not only my presence to myself, but also the possibility of an 'outside spectator'; that is, again, provided that at the very moment when I experience my existence—at the ulti-mate extremity of reflection—I fall short of the ultimate density which would place me outside time, and that I discover within myself a kind of internal weakness standing in the way of my being totally individualized: a weakness which exposes me to the gaze of others as a man among men or at least as a consciousness among consciousnesses. Hitherto the Cogito depreciated the perception of others, teaching me as it did that the I is accessible only to itself, since it defined me as the thought which I have of myself, and which clearly I am alone in having, at least in this ultimate sense. For the 'other' to be more than an empty word, it is necessary that my existence should never be reduced to my bare awareness of existing, but that it should take in also the awareness that *one* may have of it, and thus include my incarnation in some nature and the possibility, at least, of

a historical situation. The Cogito must reveal me in a situation, and it is on this condition alone that transcendental subjectivity can, as Husserl puts it,5 be an intersubjectivity. As a meditating Ego, I can clearly distinguish from myself the world and things, since I certainly do not exist in the way in which things exist. I must even set aside from myself my body understood as a thing among things, as a collection of physico-chemical processes. But even if the cogitatio, which I thus discover, is without location in objective time and space, it is not without place in the phenomenological world. The world, which I distinguished from myself as the totality of things or of processes linked by causal relationships, I rediscover 'in me' as the permanent horizon of all my cogitationes and as a dimension in relation to which I am constantly situating myself. The true Cogito does not define the subject's existence in terms of the thought he has of existing, and furthermore does not convert the indubitability of the world into the indubitability of thought about the world, nor finally does it replace the world itself by the world as meaning. On the contrary it recognizes my thought itself as an inalienable fact, and does away with any kind of idealism in revealing me as 'being-in-the-world'.

It is because we are through and through compounded of relationships with the world that for us the only way to become aware of the fact is to suspend the resultant activity, to refuse it our complicity (to look at it ohne mitzumachen, as Husserl often says), or yet again, to put it 'out of play'. Not because we reject the certainties of common sense and a natural attitude to things—they are, on the contrary, the constant theme of philosophy-but because, being the presupposed basis of any thought, they are taken for granted, and go unnoticed, and because in order to arouse them and bring them to view, we have to suspend for a moment our recognition of them. The best formulation of the reduction is probably that given by Eugen Fink, Husserl's assistant, when he spoke of 'wonder' in the face of the world.6 Reflection does not withdraw from the world towards the unity of consciousness as the world's basis; it steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our

<sup>6</sup> Die phänomenologische Philosophie Edmund Husserls in der gegenwärtigen Kritik, pp. 331 and ff.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie, III (unpublished).

notice; it alone is consciousness of the world because it reveals that world as strange and paradoxical. Husserl's transcendental is not Kant's and Husserl accuses Kant's philosophy of being 'worldly', because it makes use of our relation to the world, which is the motive force of the transcendental deduction, and makes the world immanent in the subject, instead of being filled with wonder at it and conceiving the subject as a process of transcendence towards the world. All the misunderstandings with his interpreters, with the existentialist 'dissidents' and finally with himself, have arisen from the fact that in order to see the world and grasp it as paradoxical, we must break with our familiar acceptance of it and, also, from the fact that from this break we can learn nothing but the unmotivated upsurge of the world. The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction. This is why Husserl is constantly re-examining the possibility of the reduction. If we were absolute mind, the reduction would present no problem. But since, on the contrary, we are in the world, since indeed our reflections are carried out in the temporal flux on to which we are trying to seize (since they sich einströmen, as Husserl says), there is no thought which embraces all our thought. The philosopher, as the unpublished works declare, is a perpetual beginner, which means that he takes for granted nothing that men, learned or otherwise, believe they know. It means also that philosophy itself must not take itself for granted, in so far as it may have managed to say something true; that it is an ever-renewed experiment in making its own beginning; that it consists wholly in the description of this beginning, and finally, that radical reflection amounts to a consciousness of its own dependence on an unreflective life which is its initial situation, unchanging, given once and for all. Far from being, as has been thought, a procedure of idealistic philosophy, phenomenological reduction belongs to existential philosophy: Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world' appears only against the background of the phenomenological reduction.

A misunderstanding of a similar kind confuses the notion of the 'essences' in Husserl. Every reduction, says Husserl, as well as being transcendental is necessarily eidetic. That means that we cannot subject our perception of the world to philosophical scrutiny without ceasing to be identified with that act of positing the world, with that interest in it which delimits us, without drawing back from our commitment which is itself thus made to appear as a spectacle, without

passing from the fact of our existence to its nature, from the Dasein to the Wesen. But it is clear that the essence is here not the end, but a means, that our effective involvement in the world is precisely what has to be understood and made amenable to conceptualization, for it is what polarizes all our conceptual particularizations. The need to proceed by way of essences does not mean that philosophy takes them as its object, but, on the contrary, that our existence is too tightly held in the world to be able to know itself as such at the moment of its involvement, and that it requires the field of ideality in order to become acquainted with and to prevail over its facticity. The Vienna Circle, as is well known, lays it down categorically that we can enter into relations only with meanings. For example, 'consciousness' is not for the Vienna Circle identifiable with what we are. It is a complex meaning which has developed late in time, which should be handled with care, and only after the many meanings which have contributed, throughout the word's semantic development, to the formation of its present one have been made explicit. Logical positivism of this kind is the antithesis of Husserl's thought. Whatever the subtle changes of meaning which have ultimately brought us, as a linguistic acquisition, the word and concept of consciousness, we enjoy direct access to what it designates. For we have the experience of ourselves, of that consciousness which we are, and it is on the basis of this experience that all linguistic connotations are assessed, and precisely through it that language comes to have any meaning at all for us. 'It is that as yet dumb experience . . . which we are concerned to lead to the pure expression of its own meaning'.7 Husserl's essences are destined to bring back all the living relationships of experience, as the fisherman's net draws up from the depths of the ocean quivering fish and seaweed. Jean Wahl is therefore wrong in saying that 'Husserl separates essences from existence'.8 The separated essences are those of language. It is the office of language to cause essences to exist in a state of separation which is in fact merely apparent, since through language they still rest upon the ante-predicative life of consciousness. In the silence of primary consciousness can be seen appearing not only what words mean, but also what things mean: the core of primary meaning round which the acts of naming and expression take shape.

Seeking the essence of consciousness will therefore not consist in de-

<sup>7</sup> Méditations cartésiennes, p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> Réalisme, dialectique et mystère, l'Arbalète, Autumn, 1942, unpaginated.

veloping the Worthedeutung of consciousness and escaping from existence into the universe of things said; it will consist in rediscovering my actual presence to myself, the fact of my consciousness which is in the last resort what the word and the concept of consciousness mean. Looking for the world's essence is not looking for what it is as an idea once it has been reduced to a theme of discourse; it is looking for what it is as a fact for us, before any thematization. Sensationalism 'reduces' the world by noticing that after all we never experience any thing but states of ourselves. Transcendental idealism too 'reduces' the world since, in so far as it guarantees the world, it does so by regarding it as thought or consciousness of the world, and as the mere correlative of our knowledge, with the result that it becomes immanent in consciousness and the 'aseity' of things is thereby done away with. The eidetic reduction is, on the other hand, the determination to bring the world to light as it is before any falling back on ourselves has occurred, it is the ambition to make reflection emulate the unreflective life of consciousness. I aim at and perceive a world. If I said, as do the sensationalists, that we have here only 'states of consciousness', and if I tried to distinguish my perceptions from my dreams with the aid of 'criteria', I should overlook the phenomenon of the world. For if I am able to talk about 'dreams' and 'reality', to bother my head about the distinction between imaginary and real, and cast doubt upon the 'real', it is because this distinction is already made by me before any analysis; it is because I have an experience of the real as of the imaginary, and the problem then becomes one not of asking how critical thought can provide for itself secondary equivalents of this distinction, but of making explicit our primordial knowledge of the 'real', of describing our perception of the world as that upon which our idea of truth is forever based. We must not, therefore, wonder whether we really perceive a world, we must instead say: the world is what we perceive. In more general terms we must not wonder whether our self-evident truths are real truths, or whether, through some perversity inherent in our minds, that which is self-evident for us might not be illusory in relation to some truth in itself. For in so far as we talk about illusion, it is because we have identified illusions, and done so solely in the light of some perception which at the same time gave assurance of its own truth. It follows that doubt, or the fear of being mistaken, testifies as soon as it arises to our power of unmasking error, and that it could never finally tear us away from

truth. We are in the realm of truth and it is 'the experience of truth' which is self-evident.9 To seek the essence of perception is to declare that perception is, not presumed true, but defined as access to truth. So, if I now wanted, according to idealistic principles, to base this de facto self-evident truth, this irresistible belief, on some absolute self-evident truth, that is, on the absolute clarity which my thoughts have for me; if I tried to find in myself a creative thought which bodied forth the framework of the world or illumined it through and through, I should once more prove unfaithful to my experience of the world, and should be looking for what makes that experience possible instead of looking for what it is. The self-evidence of perception is not adequate thought or apodeictic self-evidence. 10 The world is not what I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world, I have no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible. 'There is a world', or rather: 'There is the world'; I can never completely account for this ever-reiterated assertion in my life. This facticity of the world is what constitutes the Weltlichkeit der Welt, what causes the world to be the world; just as the facticity of the cogito is not an imperfection in itself, but rather what assures me of my existence. The eidetic method is the method of a phenomenological positivism which bases the possible on the real.

We can now consider the notion of intentionality, too often cited as the main discovery of phenomenology, whereas it is understandable only through the reduction. 'All consciousness is consciousness of something'; there is nothing new in that. Kant showed, in the Refutation of Idealism, that inner perception is impossible without outer perception, that the world, as a collection of connected phenomena, is anticipated in the consciousness of my unity, and is the means whereby I come into being as a consciousness. What distinguishes intentionality from the Kantian relation to a possible object is that the unity of the world, before being posited by knowledge in a specific act of identification, is 'lived' as ready-made or already there. Kant himself shows in the Critique of Judgement that there exists a unity of the imagination and the understanding and a unity of subjects before the object, and that, in experiencing the beautiful, for example, I am

10 There is no apodeictic self-evidence, the Formale und transzendentale Logik

(p. 142) says in effect.

<sup>9</sup> Das Erlebnis der Wahrheit (Logische Untersuchungen, Prolegomena zur reinen Logik) p. 190.

he is. Reflection even on a doctrine will be complete only if it succeeds in linking up with the doctrine's history and the extraneous explanations of it, and in putting back the causes and meaning of the doctrine in an existential structure. There is, as Husserl says, a 'genesis of meaning' (Sinngenesis),11 which alone, in the last resort, teaches us what the doctrine 'means'. Like understanding, criticism must be pursued at all levels, and naturally, it will be insufficient, for the refutation of a doctrine, to relate it to some accidental event in the author's life: its significance goes beyond, and there is no pure accident in existence or in coexistence, since both absorb random events and transmute them into the rational.

Finally, as it is indivisible in the present, history is equally so in its sequences. Considered in the light of its fundamental dimensions, all periods of history appear as manifestations of a single existence, or as episodes in a single drama-without our knowing whether it has an ending. Because we are in the world, we are condemned to meaning, and we cannot do or say anything without its acquiring a name in

history.

Probably the chief gain from phenomenology is to have united extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism in its notion of the world or of rationality. Rationality is precisely measured by the experiences in which it is disclosed. To say that there exists rationality is to say that perspectives blend, perceptions confirm each other, a meaning emerges. But it should not be set in a realm apart, transposed into absolute Spirit, or into a world in the realist sense. The phenomenological world is not pure being, but the sense which is revealed where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people's intersect and engage each other like gears. It is thus inseparable from subjectivity and intersubjectivity, which find their unity when I either take up my past experiences in those of the present, or other people's in my own. For the first time the philosopher's thinking is sufficiently conscious not to anticipate itself and endow its own results with reified form in the world. The philosopher tries to conceive the world, others and himself and their interrelations. But the meditating Ego, the 'impartial spectator' (uninteressierter Zuschauer)12 do not rediscover an already given rationality, they 'establish' them-

<sup>11</sup> The usual term in the unpublished writings. The idea is already to be found in the Formale und transzendentale Logik, pp. 184 and ff. 12 6th Méditation cartésienne (unpublished).

selves',13 and establish it, by an act of initiative which has no guarantee in being, its justification resting entirely on the effective power which it confers on us for taking our own history upon ourselves.

The phenomenological world is not the bringing to explicit expression of a pre-existing being, but the laying down of being. Philosophy is not the reflection of a pre-existing truth, but, like art, the act of bringing truth into being. One may well ask how this creation is possible, and if it does not recapture in things a pre-existing Reason. The answer is that the only pre-existent Logos is the world itself, and that the philosophy which brings it into visible existence does not begin by being possible; it is actual or real like the world of which it is a part, and no explanatory hypothesis is clearer than the act whereby we take up this unfinished world in an effort to complete and conceive it. Rationality is not a problem. There is behind it no unknown quantity which has to be determined by deduction, or, beginning with it, demonstrated inductively. We witness every minute the miracle of related experiences, and yet nobody knows better than we do how this miracle is worked, for we are ourselves this network of relationships. The world and reason are not problematical. We may say, if we wish, that they are mysterious, but their mystery defines them: there can be no question of dispelling it by some 'solution', it is on the hither side of all solutions. True philosophy consists in re-learning to look at the world, and in this sense a historical account can give meaning to the world quite as 'deeply' as a philosophical treatise. We take our fate in our hands, we become responsible for our history through reflection, but equally by a decision on which we stake our life, and in both cases what is involved is a violent act which is validated by being performed.

Phenomenology, as a disclosure of the world, rests on itself, or rather provides its own foundation. All knowledge is sustained by a 'ground' of postulates and finally by our communication with the world as primary embodiment of rationality. Philosophy, as radical reflection, dispenses in principle with this resource. As, however, it too is in history, it too exploits the world and constituted reason. It must therefore put to itself the question which it puts to all branches of knowledge, and so duplicate itself infinitely, being, as Husserl says,

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14 &#</sup>x27;Rückbeziehung der Phänomenologie auf sich selbst,' say the unpublished writings.

a dialogue or infinite meditation, and, in so far as it remains faithful to its intention, never knowing where it is going. The unfinished nature of phenomenology and the inchoative atmosphere which has surrounded it are not to be taken as a sign of failure, they were inevitable because phenomenology's task was to reveal the mystery of the world and of reason.<sup>15</sup> If phenomenology was a movement before becoming a doctrine or a philosophical system, this was attributable neither to accident, nor to fraudulent intent. It is as painstaking as the works of Balzac, Proust, Valéry or Cézanne-by reason of the same kind of attentiveness and wonder, the same demand for awareness, the same will to seize the meaning of the world or of history as that meaning comes into being. In this way it merges into the general effort of modern thought.

<sup>15</sup> We are indebted for this last expression to G. Gusdorf, who may well have used it in another sense.

formality which we take for granted. Hence we may speak disparagingly of our looks and still not want to change our face for another. No idiosyncrasy can, seemingly, be attached to the insuperable generality of consciousness, nor can any limit be set to this immeasurable power of escape. In order to be determined (in the two senses of that word) by an external factor, it is necessary that I should be a thing. Neither my freedom nor my universality can admit of any eclipse. It is inconceivable that I should be free in certain of my actions and determined in others: how should we understand a dormant freedom that gave full scope to determinism? And if it is assumed that it is snuffed out when it is not in action, how could it be rekindled? If per impossible I had once succeeded in making myself into a thing, how should I subsequently reconvert myself to consciousness? Once I am free, I am not to be counted among things, and I must then be uninterruptedly free. Once my actions cease to be mine, I shall never recover them, and if I lose my hold on the world, it will never be restored to me. It is equally inconceivable that my liberty should be attenuated; one cannot be to some extent free, and if, as is often said, motives incline me in a certain direction, one of two things happens: either they are strong enough to force me to act, in which case there is no freedom, or else they are not strong enough, and then freedom is complete, and as great in the worst torments as in the peace of one's home. We ought, therefore, to reject not only the idea of causality, but also that of motivation.2 The alleged motive does not burden my decision; on the contrary my decision lends the motive its force. Everything that I 'am' in virtue of nature or history-hunchbacked, handsome or Jewish-I never am completely for myself, as we have just explained: and I may well be these things for other people, nevertheless I remain free to posit another person as a consciousness whose views strike through to my very being, or on the other hand merely as an object. It is also true that this option is itself a form of constraint: if I am ugly, I have the choice between being an object of disapproval or disapproving of others. I am left free to be a masochist or a sadist, but not free to ignore others. But this dilemma, which is given as part of the human lot, is not one for me as pure consciousness: it is still I who cause the other to be for me, and who cause us both to be as members of mankind. Moreover, even if existence as a human being were imposed upon me, the manner alone being left to my choice, and considering this choice itself and ignoring the small

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See J. P. Sartre, L'Être et le Néant, pp. 508 and ff.

number of forms it might take, it would still be a free choice. If it is said that my temperament inclines me particularly to either sadism or masochism, it is still merely a manner of speaking, for my temperament exists only for the second order knowledge that I gain about myself when I see myself as others see me, and in so far as I recognize it, confer value upon it, and in that sense, choose it. What misleads us on this, is that we often look for freedom in the voluntary deliberation which examines one motive after another and seems to opt for the weightiest or most convincing. In reality the deliberation follows the decision, and it is my secret decision which brings the motives to light, for it would be difficult to conceive what the force of a motive might be in the absence of a decision which it confirms or to which it runs counter. When I have abandoned a project, the motives which I thought held me to it suddenly lose their force and collapse. In order to resuscitate them, an effort is required on my part to reopen time and set me back to the moment preceding the making of the decision. Even while I am deliberating, already I find it an effort to suspend time's flow, and to keep open a situation which I feel is closed by a decision which is already there and which I am holding off. That is why it so often happens that after giving up a plan I experience a feeling of relief: 'After all, I wasn't so very particular'; the debate was purely a matter of form, and the deliberation a mere parody, for I had decided against from the start.

We often see the weakness of the will brought forward as an argument against freedom. And indeed, although I can will myself to adopt a course of conduct and act the part of a warrior or a seducer, it is not within my power to be a warrior or seducer with ease and in a way that 'comes naturally'; really to be one, that is. But neither should we seek freedom in the act of will, which is, in its very meaning, something short of an act. We have recourse to an act of will only in order to go against our true decision, and, as it were, for the purpose of proving our powerlessness. If we had really and truly made the conduct of the warrior or the seducer our own, then we should be one or the other. Even what are called obstacles to freedom are in reality deployed by it. An unclimbable rock face, a large or small, vertical or slanting rock, are things which have no meaning for anyone who is not intending to surmount them, for a subject whose projects do not carve out such determinate forms from the uniform mass of the in itself and cause an orientated world to arise—a significance in things. There is,

then, ultimately nothing that can set limits to freedom, except those limits that freedom itself has set in the form of its various initiatives, so that the subject has simply the external world that he gives himself. Since it is the latter who, on coming into being, brings to light significance and value in things, and since no thing can impinge upon it except through acquiring, thanks to it, significance and value, there is no action of things on the subject, but merely a signification (in the active sense), a centrifugal *Sinngebung*. The choice would seem to lie between scientism's conception of causality, which is incompatible with the consciousness which we have of ourselves, and the assertion of an absolute freedom divorced from the outside. It is impossible to decide beyond which point things cease to be  $\frac{\partial \phi}{\partial \eta} \mu \nu v$ . Either they all lie within

our power, or none does.

The result, however, of this first reflection on freedom would appear to be to rule it out altogether. If indeed it is the case that our freedom is the same in all our actions, and even in our passions, if it is not to be measured in terms of our conduct, and if the slave displays freedom as much by living in fear as by breaking his chains, then it cannot be held that there is such a thing as free action, freedom being anterior to all actions. In any case it will not be possible to declare: 'Here freedom makes its appearance', since free action, in order to be discernible, has to stand out against a background of life from which it is entirely, or almost entirely, absent. We may say in this case that it is everywhere, but equally nowhere. In the name of freedom we reject the idea of acquisition, since freedom has become a primordial acquisition and, as it were, our state of nature. Since we do not have to provide it, it is the gift granted to us of having no gift, it is the nature of consciousness which consists in having no nature, and in no case can it find external expression or a place in our life. The idea of action, therefore, disappears: nothing can pass from us to the world, since we are nothing that can be specified, and since the non-being which constitutes us could not possibly find its way into the world's plenum. There are merely intentions immediately followed by their effects, and we are very near to the Kantian idea of an intention which is tantamount to the act, which Scheler countered with the argument that the cripple who would like to be able to save a drowning man and the good swimmer who actually saves him do not have the same experience of autonomy. The very idea of choice vanishes, for to choose is to choose something in which freedom sees, at least for a moment, a symbol of

itself. There is free choice only if freedom comes into play in its decision, and posits the situation chosen as a situation of freedom. A freedom which has no need to be exercised because it is already acquired could not commit itself in this way: it knows that the following instant will find it, come what may, just as free and just as indeterminate. The very notion of freedom demands that our decision should plunge into the future, that something should have been done by it, that the subsequent instant should benefit from its predecessor and, though not necessitated, should be at least required by it. If freedom is doing, it is necessary that what it does should not be immediately undone by a new freedom. Each instant, therefore, must not be a closed world; one instant must be able to commit its successors and, a decision once taken and action once begun, I must have something acquired at my disposal, I must benefit from my impetus, I must be inclined to carry on, and there must be a bent or prosperity of the mind. It was Descartes who held that conservation demands a power as great as does creation; a view which implies a realistic notion of the instant. It is true that the instant is not a philosopher's fiction. It is the point at which one project is brought to fruition and another begun3—the point at which my gaze is transferred from one end to another, it is the Augen-Blick. But this break in time cannot occur unless each of the two spans is of a piece. Consciousness, it is said, is, though not atomized into instants, at least haunted by the spectre of the instant which it is obliged continually to exorcise by a free act. We shall soon see that we have indeed always the power to interrupt, but it implies in any case a power to begin, for there would be no severance unless freedom had taken up its abode somewhere and were preparing to move it. Unless there are cycles of behaviour, open situations requiring a certain completion and capable of constituting a background to either a confirmatory or transformatory decision, we never experience freedom. The choice of an intelligible character is excluded, not only because there is no time anterior to time, but because choice presupposes a prior commitment and because the idea of an initial choice involves a contradiction. If freedom is to have room4 in which to move, if it is to be describable as freedom, there must be something to hold it away from its objectives, it must have a field, which means that there must be for it special possibilities, or

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> J. P. Sartre, L'Être et le Néant, p. 544.

<sup>4 &#</sup>x27;avoir du champ'; in this sentence there is a play on the word 'champ'=field (Translator's note).

realities which tend to cling to being. As J. P. Sartre himself observes, dreaming is incompatible with freedom because, in the realm of imagination, we have no sooner taken a certain significance as our goal than we already believe that we have intuitively brought it into being, in short, because there is no obstacle and nothing to do.5 It is established that freedom is not to be confused with those abstract decisions of will at grips with motives or passions, for the classical conception of deliberation is relevant only to a freedom 'in bad faith' which secretly harbours antagonistic motives without being prepared to act on them, and so itself manufactures the alleged proofs of its impotence. We can see, beneath these noisy debates and these fruitless efforts to 'construct' us, the tacit decisions whereby we have marked out round ourselves the field of possibility, and it is true that nothing is done as long as we cling to these fixed points, and everything is easy as soon as we have weighed anchor. This is why our freedom is not to be sought in spurious discussion on the conflict between a style of life which we have no wish to reappraise and circumstances suggestive of another: the real choice is that between our whole character and our manner of being in the world. But either this total choice is never mentioned, since it is the silent upsurge of our being in the world, in which case it is not clear in what sense it could be said to be ours, since this freedom glides over itself and is the equivalent of a fate-or else our choice of ourselves is a genuine choice, a conversion involving our whole existence. In this case, however, there is presupposed a previous acquisition which the choice sets out to modify and it founds a new tradition: this leads us to ask whether the perpetual severance in terms of which we initially defend freedom is not simply the negative aspect of our universal commitment to a world, and whether our indifference to each determinate thing does not express merely our involvement in all; whether the ready-made freedom from which we started is not reducible to a power of initiative which cannot be transformed into doing without taking up the world as posited in some shape or form, and whether, in short, concrete and actual freedom is not to be found in this exchange. It is true that nothing has significance and value for anyone but me and through anyone but me, but this proposition remains indeterminate and is still indistinguishable from the Kantian idea of a consciousness which 'finds in things only what it has put into them', and from the idealist refutation of realism, as long as we fail to make

? Paulus

<sup>5</sup> J. P. Sartre, L'Être et le Néant, p. 562.

clear how we understand significance and the self. By defining ourselves as a universal power of *Sinn-Gebung*, we have reverted to the method of the 'thing without which' and to the analytical reflection of the traditional type, which seeks the conditions of possibility without concerning itself with the conditions of reality. We must therefore resume the analysis of the *Sinngebung* and show how it can be both centrifugal and centripetal, since it has been established that there is no freedom without a field.

When I say that this rock is unclimbable, it is certain that this attribute, like that of being big or little, straight and oblique, and indeed like all attributes in general, can be conferred upon it only by the project of climbing it, and by a human presence. It is, therefore, freedom which brings into being the obstacles to freedom, so that the latter can be set over against it as its bounds. However, it is clear that, one and the same project being given, one rock will appear as an obstacle, and another, being more negotiable, as a means. My freedom, then, does not so contrive it that this way there is an obstacle, and that way a way through, it arranges for there to be obstacles and ways through in general; it does not draw the particular outline of this world, but merely lays down its general structures. It may be objected that there is no difference; if my freedom conditions the structure of the 'there is', that of the 'here' and the 'there', it is present wherever these structures arise. We cannot distinguish the quality of 'obstacle' from the obstacle itself, and relate one to freedom and the other to the world in itself which, without freedom, would be merely an amorphous and unnameable mass. It is not, therefore, outside myself that I am able to find a limit to my freedom. But should I not find it in myself? We must indeed distinguish between my express intentions, for example the plan I now make to climb those mountains, and general intentions which evaluate the potentialities of my environment. Whether or not I have decided to climb them, these mountains appear high to me, because they exceed my body's power to take them in its stride, and, even if I have just read Micromégas, I cannot so contrive it that they are small for me. Underlying myself as a thinking subject, who am able to take my place at will on Sirius or on the earth's surface, there is, therefore, as it were a natural self which does not budge from its terrestrial situation and which constantly adumbrates absolute valuations. What is more, my projects as a thinking being are clearly modelled on the latter; if I elect to see things from the point of view of Sirius, it is

case that my objective position in the production process is sufficient to awaken class consciousness. There was exploitation long before there were revolutionaries. Nor is it always in periods of economic difficulty that the working class movement makes headway. Revolt is, then, not the outcome of objective conditions, but it is rather the decision taken by the worker to will revolution that makes a proletarian of him. The evaluation of the present operates through one's free project for the future. From which we might conclude that history by itself has no significance, but only that conferred upon it by our will. Yet here again we are slipping into the method of 'the indispensable condition failing which . . .': in opposition to objective thought, which includes the subject in its deterministic system; we are setting idealist reflection which makes determinism dependent upon the constituting activity of the subject. Now, we have already seen that objective thought and analytical reflection are two aspects of the same mistake, two ways of overlooking the phenomena. Objective thought derives class consciousness from the objective condition of the proletariat. Idealist reflection reduces the proletarian condition to the awareness of it, which the proletarian arrives at. The former traces class-consciousness to the class defined in terms of objective characteristics, the latter on the other hand reduces 'being a workman' to the consciousness of being one. In each case we are in the realm of abstraction, because we remain torn between the in itself and the for itself. If we approach the question afresh with the idea of discovering, not the causes of the act of becoming aware, for there is no cause which can act from outside upon a consciousness—nor the conditions of its possibility, for we need to know the conditions which actually produce it—but class-consciousness itself, if, in short, we apply a genuinely existential method, what do we find? I am not conscious of being working class or middle class simply because, as a matter of fact, I sell my labour or, equally as a matter of fact, because my interests are bound up with capitalism, nor do I become one or the other on the day on which I elect to view history in the light of the class struggle: what happens is that 'I exist as working class' or 'I exist as middle class' in the first place, and it is this mode of dealing with the world and society which provides both the motives for my revolutionary or conservative projects and my explicit judgements of the type: 'I am working class' or 'I am middle class', without its being possible to deduce the former from the latter. or vice versa. What makes me a proletarian is not the economic system

advantage of events by conferring upon them a meaning which they did not have. Now if it is true that history is powerless to complete anything independently of consciousnesses which assume it and thereby decide its course, and if consequently it can never be detached from us to play the part of an alien force using us for its own ends, then precisely because it is always history lived through we cannot withhold from it at least a fragmentary meaning. Something is being prepared which will perhaps come to nothing but which may, for the moment, conform to the adumbrations of the present. Nothing can so order it that, in the France of 1799, a military power 'above classes' should not appear as a natural product of the ebb of revolution, and that the rôle of military dictator should not here be 'a part that has to be played'. It is Bonaparte's project, known to us through its realization, which causes us to pass such a judgement. But before Bonaparte, Dumouriez, Custine and others had envisaged it, and this common tendency has to be accounted for. What is known as the significance of events is not an idea which produces them, or the fortuitous result of their occurring together. It is the concrete project of a future which is elaborated within social co-existence and in the One9 before any personal decision is made. At the point of revolutionary history to which class dynamics had carried it by 1799, when neither the Revolution could be carried forward nor the clock put back, the situation was such that, all due reservations as to individual freedom having been made, each individual, through the functional and generalized existence which makes a historical subject of him, tended to fall back upon what had been acquired. It would have been a historical mistake at that stage to suggest to them either a resumption of the methods of revolutionary government or a reversion to the social conditions of 1789, not because there is a truth of history independent of our projects and evaluations, which are always free, but because there is an average and statistical significance of these projects. Which means that we confer upon history its significance, but not without its putting that significance forward itself. The Sinngebung is not merely centrifugal, which is why the subject of history is not the individual. There is an exchange between generalized and individual existence, each receiving and giving something. There is a moment at which the significance which was foreshadowed in the One, and which was merely a precarious possibility threatened by the contingency of history, is taken up by an 9 In the sense of Das Man, the impersonal pronoun (Translator's note).

and action only by depriving the implicit of all phenomenal value, and at every instant arraying the world before us in perfect transparency, that is, by destroying the world's 'worldliness'. Consciousness holds itself responsible for everything, and takes everything upon itself, but it has nothing of its own and makes its life in the world. We are led to conceive freedom as a choice continually remade as long as we do not bring in the notion of a generalized or natural time. We have seen that there is no natural time, if we understand thereby a time of things without subjectivity. There is, however, at least a generalized time, and this is what the common notion of time envisages. It is the perpetual reiteration of the sequence of past, present and future. It is, as it were, a constant disappointment and failure. This is what is expressed by saying that it is continuous: the present which it brings to us is never a present for good, since it is already over when it appears, and the future has, in it, only the appearance of a goal towards which we make our way, since it quickly comes into the present, whereupon we turn towards a fresh future. This time is the time of our bodily functions, which like it, are cyclic, and it is also that of nature with which we coexist. It offers us only the adumbration and the abstract form of a commitment, since it continually erodes itself and undoes that which it has just done. As long as we place in opposition, with no mediator, the For Itself and the In Itself, and fail to perceive, between ourselves and the world, this natural foreshadowing of a subjectivity, this prepersonal time which rests upon itself, acts are needed to sustain the upsurge of time, and everything becomes equally a matter of choice, the respiratory reflex no less than the moral decision, conservation no less than creation. As far as we are concerned, consciousness attributes this power of universal constitution to itself only if it ignores the event which upholds it and is the occasion of its birth. A consciousness for which the world 'can be taken for granted', which finds it 'already constituted' and present even in consciousness itself, does not absolutely choose either its being or its manner of being.

What then is freedom? To be born is both to be born of the world and to be born into the world. The world is already constituted, but also never completely constituted; in the first case we are acted upon, in the second we are open to an infinite number of possibilities. But this analysis is still abstract, for we exist in both ways at once. There is, therefore, never determinism and never absolute choice, I am never a thing and never bare consciousness. In fact, even our own pieces of

initiative, even the situations which we have chosen, bear us on, once they have been entered upon by virtue of a state rather than an act. The generality of the 'rôle' and of the situation comes to the aid of decision, and in this exchange between the situation and the person who takes it up, it is impossible to determine precisely the 'share contributed by the situation' and the 'share contributed by freedom'. Let us suppose that a man is tortured to make him talk. If he refuses to give the names and addresses which it is desired to extract from him, this does not arise from a solitary and unsupported decision: the man still feels himself to be with his comrades, and, being still involved in the common struggle, he is as it were incapable of talking. Or else, for months or years, he has, in his mind, faced this test and staked his whole life upon it. Or finally, he wants to prove, by coming through it, what he has always thought and said about freedom. These motives do not cancel out freedom, but at least ensure that it does not go unbuttressed in being. What withstands pain is not, in short, a bare consciousness, but the prisoner with his comrades or with those he loves and under whose gaze he lives; or else the awareness of his proudly willed solitude, which again is a certain mode of the Mit-Sein. And probably the individual in his prison daily reawakens these phantoms, which give back to him the strength he gave to them. But conversely, in so far as he has committed himself to this action, formed a bond with his comrades or adopted this morality, it is because the historical situation, the comrades, the world around him seemed to him to expect that conduct from him. The analysis could be pursued endlessly in this way. We choose our world and the world chooses us. What is certain, in any case, is that we can at no time set aside within ourselves a redoubt to which being does not find its way through, without seeing this freedom, immediately and by the very fact of being a living experience, take on the appearance of being and become a motive and a buttress. Taken concretely, freedom is always a meeting of the inner and the outer-even the prehuman and prehistoric freedom with which we began-and it shrinks without ever disappearing altogether in direct proportion to the lessening of the tolerance allowed by the bodily and institutional data of our lives. There is, as Husserl says, on the one hand a 'field of freedom' and on the other a 'conditioned freedom';10 not that freedom is absolute within the limits of this field and non-existent outside it (like the perceptual field, this one

<sup>10</sup> Fink, Vergegenwärtigung und Bild, p. 285.

but only by a series of unobtrusive deflections which necessitate first of all following its course—not by any absolute creation. All explanations of my conduct in terms of my past, my temperament and my environment are therefore true, provided that they be regarded not as separable contributions, but as moments of my total being, the significance of which I am entitled to make explicit in various ways, without its ever being possible to say whether I confer their meaning upon them or receive it from them. I am a psychological and historical structure, and have received, with existence, a manner of existing, a style. All my actions and thoughts stand in a relationship to this structure, and even a philosopher's thought is merely a way of making explicit his hold on the world, and what he is. The fact remains that I am free, not in spite of, or on the hither side of, these motivations, but by means of them. For this significant life, this certain significance of nature and history which I am, does not limit my access to the world, but on the contrary is my means of entering into communication with it. It is by being unrestrictedly and unreservedly what I am at present that I have a chance of moving forward; it is by living my time that I am able to understand other times, by plunging into the present and the world, by taking on deliberately what I am fortuitously, by willing what I will and doing what I do, that I can go further. I can pass freedom by, only if I try to get over my natural and social situation by refusing, in the first place, to take it up, instead of using it as a way into the natural and human world. Nothing determines me from outside, not because nothing acts upon me, but, on the contrary, because I am from the start outside myself and open to the world. We are true through and through, and have with us, by the mere fact of belonging to the world, and not merely being in the world in the way that things are, all that we need to transcend ourselves. We need have no fear that our choices or actions restrict our liberty, since choice and action alone cut us loose from our anchorage. Just as reflection borrows its wish for absolute sufficiency from the perception which causes a thing to appear, and as in this way idealism tacitly uses that 'primary opinion' which it would like to destroy as opinion, so freedom flounders in the contradictions of commitment, and fails to realize that, without the roots which it thrusts into the world, it would not be freedom at all. Shall I make this promise? Shall I risk my life for so little? Shall I give up my liberty in order to save liberty? There is no theoretical reply to these questions. But there are these

things which stand, irrefutable, there is before you this person whom you love, there are these men whose existence around you is that of slaves, and your freedom cannot be willed without leaving behind its singular relevance, and without willing freedom for all. Whether it is a question of things or of historical situations, philosophy has no function other than to teach us once more to see them clearly, and it is true to say that it comes into being by destroying itself as separate philosophy. But what is here required is silence, for only the hero lives out his relation to men and the world. 'Your son is caught in the fire; you are the one who will save him. . . . If there is an obstacle, you would be ready to give your shoulder provided only that you can charge down that obstacle. Your abode is your act itself. Your act is you. . . . You give yourself in exchange. . . . Your significance shows itself, effulgent. It is your duty, your hatred, your love, your steadfastness, your ingenuity. . . . Man is but a network of relationships, and these alone matter to him.'11

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> A. de Saint-Exupéry, Pilote de Guerre, pp. 171 and 174.

appears indeterminate as long as we have not recalled its name, why the thinking subject himself is in a kind of ignorance of his thoughts so long as he has not formulated them for himself, or even spoken and written them, as is shown by the example of so many writers who begin a book without knowing exactly what they are going to put into it. A thought limited to existing for itself, independently of the constraints of speech and communication, would no sooner appear than it would sink into the unconscious, which means that it would not exist even for itself. To Kant's celebrated question, we can reply that it is indeed part of the experience of thinking, in the sense that we present our thought to ourselves through internal or external speech. It does indeed move forward with the instant and, as it were, in flashes, but we are then left to lay hands on it, and it is through expression that we make it our own. The denomination of objects does not follow upon recognition; it is itself recognition. When I fix my eyes on an object in the half-light, and say: 'It is a brush', there is not in my mind the concept of a brush, under which I subsume the object, and which moreover is linked by frequent association with the word 'brush', but the word bears the meaning, and, by imposing it on the object, I am conscious of reaching that object. As has often been said,4 for the child the thing is not known until it is named, the name is the essence of the thing and resides in it on the same footing as its colour and its form. For pre-scientific thinking, naming an object is causing it to exist or changing it: God creates beings by naming them and magic operates upon them by speaking of them. These 'mistakes' would be unexplainable if speech rested on the concept, for the latter ought always to know itself as distinct from the former, and to know the former as an external accompaniment. If it is pointed out in reply that the child learns to know objects through the designations of language, that thus, given in the first place as linguistic entities, objects receive only secondarily their natural existence, and that finally the actual existence of a linguistic community accounts for childish beliefs, this explanation leaves the problem untouched, since, if the child can know himself as a member of a linguistic community before knowing himself as thinking about some Nature, it is conditional upon the subject's being able to overlook himself as universal thought and apprehend himself as speech, and on the fact that the word, far from being the mere sign of objects and meanings, inhabits things and is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> E.g. Piaget, La Représentation du Monde chez l'Enfant, pp. 60 and ff.

the vehicle of meanings. Thus speech, in the speaker, does not translate ready-made thought, but accomplishes it.5 A fortiori must it be recognized that the listener receives thought from speech itself. At first sight, it might appear that speech heard can bring him nothing: it is he who gives to words and sentences their meaning, and the very combination of words and sentences is not an alien import, since it would not be understood if it did not encounter in the listener the ability spontaneously to effect it. Here, as everywhere, it seems at first sight true that consciousness can find in its experience only what it has itself put there. Thus the experience of communication would appear to be an illusion. A consciousness constructs—for x—that linguistic mechanism which will provide another consciousness with the chance of having the same thoughts, but nothing really passes between them. Yet, the problem being how, to all appearances, consciousness learns something, the solution cannot consist in saying that it knows everything in advance. The fact is that we have the power to understand over and above what we may have spontaneously thought. People can speak to us only a language which we already understand, each word of a difficult text awakens in us thoughts which were ours beforehand, but these meanings sometimes combine to form new thought which recasts them all, and we are transported to the heart of the matter, we find the source. Here there is nothing comparable to the solution of a problem, where we discover an unknown quantity through its relationship with known ones. For the problem can be solved only if it is determinate, that is, if the cross-checking of the data provides the unknown quantity with one or more definite values. In understanding others, the problem is always indeterminate<sup>6</sup> because only the solution will bring the data retrospectively to light as convergent, only the central theme of a philosophy, once understood, endows the philosopher's writings with the value of adequate signs. There is, then, a taking up of others' thought through speech, a re-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> There is, of course, every reason to distinguish between an authentic speech, which formulates for the first time, and second-order expression, speech about speech, which makes up the general run of empirical language. Only the first is identical with thought.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Again, what we say here applies only to first-hand speech—that of the child uttering its first word, of the lover revealing his feelings, of the 'first man who spoke', or of the writer and philosopher who reawaken primordial experience anterior to all traditions.

flection in others, an ability to think according to others7 which enriches our own thoughts. Here the meaning of words must be finally induced by the words themselves, or more exactly, their conceptual meaning must be formed by a kind of deduction from a gestural meaning, which is immanent in speech. And as, in a foreign country, I begin to understand the meaning of words through their place in a context of action, and by taking part in a communal life-in the same way an as yet imperfectly understood piece of philosophical writing discloses to me at least a certain 'style'-either a Spinozist, criticist or phenomenological one—which is the first draft of its meaning. I begin to understand a philosophy by feeling my way into its existential manner, by reproducing the tone and accent of the philosopher. In fact, every language conveys its own teaching and carries its meaning into the listener's mind. A school of music or painting which is at first not understood, eventually, by its own action, creates its own public, if it really says something; that is, it does so by secreting its own meaning. In the case of prose or poetry, the power of the spoken word is less obvious, because we have the illusion of already possessing within ourselves, in the shape of the common property meaning of words, what is required for the understanding of any text whatsoever. The obvious fact is, however, that the colours of the palette or the crude sounds of instruments, as presented to us in natural perception, are insufficient to provide the musical sense of music, or the pictorial sense of a painting. But, in fact, it is less the case that the sense of a literary work is provided by the common property meaning of words, than that it contributes to changing that accepted meaning. There is thus, either in the man who listens or reads, or in the one who speaks or writes, a thought in speech the existence of which is unsuspected by intellectualism.

To realize this, we must turn back to the phenomenon of speech and reconsider ordinary descriptions which immobilize thought and speech, and make anything other than external relations between them inconceivable. We must recognize first of all that thought, in the speaking subject, is not a representation, that is, that it does not expressly posit objects or relations. The orator does not think before speaking, nor even while speaking; his speech is his thought. In the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Nachdenken, nachvollziehen of Husserl, Ursprung der Geometrie, pp. 212 and ff.

These considerations enable us to restore to the act of speaking its true physiognomy. In the first place speech is not the 'sign' of thought, if by this we understand a phenomenon which heralds another as smoke betrays fire. Speech and thought would admit of this external relation only if they were both thematically given, whereas in fact they are intervolved, the sense being held within the word, and the word being the external existence of the sense. Nor can we concede, as is commonly done, that speech is a mere means of fixation, nor vet that it is the envelope and clothing of thought. Why should it be easier to recall words or phrases than thoughts, if the alleged verbal images need to be reconstructed on every occasion? And why should thought seek to duplicate itself or clothe itself in a succession of utterances, if the latter do not carry and contain within themselves their own meaning? Words cannot be 'strongholds of thought', nor can thought seek expression, unless words are in themselves a comprehensible text, and unless speech possesses a power of significance entirely its own. The word and speech must somehow cease to be a way of designating things or thoughts, and become the presence of that thought in the phenomenal world, and, moreover, not its clothing but its token or its body. There must be, as psychologists say, a 'linguistic concept' (Sprachbegriff)<sup>10</sup> or a word concept (Wortbegriff), a 'central inner experience, specifically verbal, thanks to which the sound, heard, uttered, read or written, becomes a linguistic fact'. 11 Certain patients can read a text, 'putting expression into it', without, however, understanding it. This is because the spoken or written words carry a top coating of meaning which sticks to them and which presents the thought as a style, an affective value, a piece of existential mimicry, rather than as a conceptual statement. We find here, beneath the conceptual meaning of the words, an existential meaning which is not only rendered by them, but which inhabits them, and is inseparable from them. The greatest service done by expression is not to commit to writing ideas which might be lost. A writer hardly ever re-reads his own works, and great works leave in us at a first reading all that we shall ever subsequently get out of them. The process of expression, when it is successful, does not merely leave for the reader and the writer himself a kind of reminder, it brings the meaning into existence as a thing at the very heart of the text, it brings it to life in an organism of words,

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Cassirer, Philosophie der symbolischen Formen, III, p. 383.
 <sup>11</sup> Goldstein, L'Analyse de l'aphasie et l'essence du langage, p. 459.

gesture contains its. This is what makes communication possible. In order that I may understand the words of another person, it is clear that his vocabulary and syntax must be 'already known' to me. But that does not mean that words do their work by arousing in me 'representations' associated with them, and which in aggregate eventually reproduce in me the original 'representation' of the speaker. What I communicate with primarily is not 'representations' or thought, but a speaking subject, with a certain style of being and with the 'world' at which he directs his aim. Just as the sense-giving intention which has set in motion the other person's speech is not an explicit thought, but a certain lack which is asking to be made good, so my taking up of this intention is not a process of thinking on my part, but a synchronizing change of my own existence, a transformation of my being. We live in a world where speech is an institution. For all these many commonplace utterances, we possess within ourselves ready-made meanings. They arouse in us only second order thoughts; these in turn are translated into other words which demand from us no real effort of expression and will demand from our hearers no effort of comprehension. Thus language and the understanding of language apparently raise no problems. The linguistic and intersubjective world no longer surprises us, we no longer distinguish it from the world itself, and it is within a world already spoken and speaking that we think. We become unaware of the contingent element in expression and communication, whether it be in the child learning to speak, or in the writer saying and thinking something for the first time, in short, in all who transform a certain kind of silence into speech, It is, however, quite clear that constituted speech, as it operates in daily life, assumes that the decisive step of expression has been taken. Our view of man will remain superficial so long as we fail to go back to that origin, so long as we fail to find, beneath the chatter of words, the primordial silence, and as long as we do not describe the action which breaks this silence. The spoken word is a gesture, and its meaning, a world.

Modern psychology14 has demonstrated that the spectator does not look within himself into his personal experience for the meaning of the gestures which he is witnessing. Faced with an angry or threatening gesture, I have no need, in order to understand it, to recall the feelings which I myself experienced when I used these gestures on my own account. I am not well able to visualize, in my mind's eve, the <sup>14</sup> For example, M. Scheler, Nature et Formes de la Sympathie, pp. 347 and ff.

existence of the fireplace as the flat projection and collective significance of all these perspectives. On the contrary I perceive the thing in its own self-evident completeness and this is what gives me the assurance that, in the course of perceptual experience, I shall be presented with an indefinite set of concordant views. The identity of the thing through perceptual experience is only another aspect of the identity of one's own body throughout exploratory movements; thus they are the same in kind as each other. Like the body image, the fireplace is a system of equivalents not founded on the recognition of some law, but on the experience of a bodily presence. I become involved in things with my body, they co-exist with me as an incarnate subject, and this life among things has nothing in common with the elaboration of scientifically conceived objects. In the same way, I do not understand the gestures of others by some act of intellectual interpretation; communication between consciousness is not based on the common meaning of their respective experiences, for it is equally the basis of that meaning. The act by which I lend myself to the spectacle must be recognized as irreducible to anything else. I join it in a kind of blind recognition which precedes the intellectual working out and clarification of the meaning. Successive generations 'understand' and perform sexual gestures, such as the caress, before the philosopher<sup>15</sup> makes its intellectual significance clear, which is that we lock within itself a passive body, enwrap it in a pleasurable lethargy, thus imposing a temporary respite upon the continual drive which projects it into things and towards others. It is through my body that I understand other people, just as it is through my body that I perceive 'things'. The meaning of a gesture thus 'understood' is not behind it, it is intermingled with the structure of the world outlined by the gesture, and which I take up on my own account. It is arrayed all over the gesture itself-as, in perceptual experience, the significance of the fireplace does not lie beyond the perceptible spectacle, namely the fireplace itself as my eyes and movements discover it in the world.

The linguistic gesture, like all the rest, delineates its own meaning. This idea seems surprising at first, yet one is forced to accept it if one wishes to understand the origin of language, always an insistent problem, although psychologists and linguistics both question its validity in the name of positive knowledge. It seems in the first place impossible to concede to either words or gestures an immanent meaning,

<sup>15</sup> Here J. P. Sartre, L'Être et le Néant, pp. 453 and ff.

are so many ways of 'singing' the world, and that their function is to represent things not, as the naïve onomatopoeic theory had it, by reason of an objective resemblance, but because they extract, and literally express, their emotional essence. If it were possible, in any vocabulary, to disregard what is attributable to the mechanical laws of phonetics, to the influences of other languages, the rationalization of grammarians, and assimilatory processes, we should probably discover in the original form of each language a somewhat restricted system of expression, but such as would make it not entirely arbitrary, if we designate night by the word 'nuit', to use 'lumière' for light. The predominance of vowels in one language, or of consonants in another, and constructional and syntactical systems, do not represent so many arbitrary conventions for the expression of one and the same idea, but several ways for the human body to sing the world's praises and in the last resort to live it. Hence the full meaning of a language is never translatable into another. We may speak several languages, but one of them always remains the one in which we live. In order completely to assimilate a language, it would be necessary to make the world which it expresses one's own, and one never does belong to two worlds at once.16 If there is such a thing as universal thought, it is achieved by taking up the effort towards expression and communication in one single language, and accepting all its ambiguities, all the suggestions and overtones of meaning of which a linguistic tradition is made up, and which are the exact measure of its power of expression. A conventional algorism-which moreover is meaningful only in relation to language-will never express anything but nature without man. Strictly speaking, therefore, there are no conventional signs, standing as the simple notation of a thought pure and clear in itself, there are only

16 'In my case, the effort for these years to live in the dress of Arabs, and to imitate their mental foundation, quitted me of my English self, and let me look at the West and its conventions with new eyes: they destroyed it all for me. At the same time I could not sincerely take on the Arab skin: it was an affectation only. Easily was a man made an infidel, but hardly might he be converted to another faith. I had dropped one form and not taken on the other, and was become like Mohammed's coffin in our legend. . . . Such detachment came at times to a man exhausted by prolonged physical effort and isolation. His body plodded on mechanically, while his reasonable mind left him, and from without looked down critically on him, wondering what that futile lumber did and why. Sometimes these selves would converse in the void; and then madness was very near, as I believe it would be near the man who could see things through the veils at once of two customs, two educations, two environments.' T. E. Lawrence, The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, Jonathan Cape, pp. 31-2.

procedures; they do not express the essential relationship between language and thought, but the pathological or accidental relationship of language and thought both cut off from their living significance. Indeed, many patients are able to repeat the names of the colours without being any more capable of classifying them. In cases of amnesic aphasia, 'it cannot, therefore, be the lack of the word taken in itself which makes categorial behaviour difficult or impossible. Words must have lost something which normally belongs to them and which fits them for use in relation to categorial behaviour.'30 What have they lost? Their notional significance? Must we say that the concept has been withdrawn from them, thus making thought the cause of language? But clearly, when the word loses its meaning, it is modified down to its sensible aspect, it is emptied.31 The patient suffering from amnesia, to whom a colour name is given, and who is asked to choose a corresponding sample, repeats the name as if he expected something to come of it. But the name is now useless to him, it tells him nothing more, it is alien and absurd, as are for us names which we go on repeating for too long a time. 32 Patients for whom words have lost their meaning sometimes retain in the highest degree the ability to associate ideas.33 The name, therefore, has not become separted from former 'associations', it has suffered deterioration, like some inanimate body. The link between the word and its living meaning is not an external link of association, the meaning inhabits the word, and language is not an external accompaniment to intellectual processes'.34 We are therefore led to recognize a gestural or existential significance in speech, as we have already said. Language certainly has an inner content, but this is not self-subsistent and self-conscious thought. What then does language express, if it does not express thoughts? It presents or rather it is the subject's taking up of a position in the world of his meanings. The term 'world' here is not a manner of speaking: it means that the 'mental' or cultural life borrows its structures from natural life and that the thinking subject must have its basis in the subject incarnate.

30 Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Gelb and Goldstein, Über Farbennamenamnesie, p. 158.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>33</sup> One sees them faced with a given sample (red), recalling some object of the same colour (strawberry), and from there rediscovering the name of the colour (red strawberry, red). *Ibid*., p. 177.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*., p. 158.

univocal relationships which, in their structure as in their function, are susceptible to a total explication. Posited in this way as an object before thought, language could not possibly play any other role in respect to thought than that of an accompaniment, substitute, memorandum, or secondary means of communication.

In more recent writings, on the other hand, language appears as an original way of intending certain objects, as thought's body (Formale und transzendentale Logik2), or even as the operation through which thoughts that without it would remain private phenomena acquire intersubjective value and, ultimately, ideal existence (Ursprung der Geometrie<sup>3</sup>). According to this conception, philosophical thinking which reflects upon language would be its beneficiary, enveloped and situated in it. Pos ("Phénoménologie et linguistique," Revue Internationale de philosophie, 1939) defines the phenomenology of language not as an attempt to fit existing languages into the framework of an eidetic of all possible languages (that is, to objectify them before a universal and timeless constituting consciousness), but as a return to the speaking subject, to my contact with the language I am speaking. The scientist and the observer see language in the past. They consider the long history of a language, with all the random factors and all the shifts of meaning that have finally made it what it is today. It becomes incomprehensible that a language which is the result of so many accidents can signify anything whatsoever unequivocally. Taking language as a fait accompli—as the residue of past acts of signification

<sup>2</sup> "Diese aber (sc.: die Meinung) liegt nicht äusserlich neben den Worten; sondern redend vollziehen wir fortlaufend ein inneres, sich mit den Worten verschmelzendes, sie gleichsam beseelendes Meinen. Der Erfolg dieser Beseelung ist dass die Worte und die ganzen Reden in sich eine Meinung gleichsam ver-

leiblichen und verleiblicht in sich als Sinn tragen." (p. 20).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> "Objektives Dasein 'in der Welt' das als solches zugänglich ist für jedermann kann aber die geistige Objektivität des Sinngebildes letzlich nur haben vermöge der doppelschichtigen Wiederholungen und vornehmlich der sinnlich verkörpernden. In der sinnlichen Verkörperung geschiet die 'Lokalisation' und 'Temporalisation' von Solchem das seinen Seinssinn nach nicht-lokal und nichttemporal ist . . . Wir fragen nun: . . . Wie macht die sprachliche Verleiblichung aus dem bloss innersubjektiven Gebilde, dem Gedanke, das objektive, das etwa als geometrischer Begriff oder Satz in der Tat für jedermann und in aller Zukunft verständlich da ist? Auf das Problem des Ursprunges der Sprache in ihrer idealen und durch Ausserung und Dokumentierung begründeten Existenz in der realen Welt wollen wir hier nicht eingehen, obschon wir uns bewusst sind, dass eine radikale Aufklärung der Seinsart der 'idealen Sinngebilde' hier ihren tiefsten Problemgrund haben muss." (Revue Internationale de philosophie, 1939, p. 210).

of his life and work. Here we are beyond causes and effects; both come together in the simultaneity of an eternal Cézanne who is at the same time the formula of what he wanted to be and what he wanted to do. There is a rapport between Cézanne's schizoid temperament and his work because the work reveals a metaphysical sense of the disease: a way of seeing the world reduced to the totality of frozen appearances, with all expressive values suspended. Thus the illness ceases to be an absurd fact and a fate and becomes a general possibility of human existence. It becomes so when this existence bravely faces one of its paradoxes, the phenomenon of expression. In this sense to be schizoid and to be Cézanne come to the same thing. It is therefore impossible to separate creative liberty from that behavior, as far as possible from deliberate, already evident in Cézanne's first gestures as a child and in the way he reacted to things. The meaning Cézanne gave to objects and faces in his paintings presented itself to him in the world as it appeared to him. Cézanne simply released this meaning: it was the objects and the faces themselves as he saw them which demanded to be painted, and Cézanne simply expressed what they wanted to say. How, then, can any freedom be involved? True, the conditions of existence can only affect consciousness by way of a detour through the raisons d'être and the justifications consciousness offers to itself. We can only see what we are by looking ahead of ourselves, through the lens of our aims, and so our life always has the form of a project or of a choice and therefore seems spontaneous. But to say that we are from the start our way of aiming at a particular future would be to say that our project has already stopped with our first ways of being, that the choice has already been made for us with our first breath. If we experience no external constraints, it is because we are our whole exterior. That eternal Cézanne whom we first saw emerge and who then brought upon the human Cézanne the events and influences which seemed exterior to him, and who planned all that happened to him—that attitude toward men and toward the world which was not chosen through deliberation—free as it is from external causes, is it free in respect to itself? Is the choice not pushed back beyond life, and can a choice exist where there is as yet no clearly articulated field of possibilities, only one probability and, as it were, only one temptation? If I am a certain project from birth, the given and the created are indistinguishable in me, and it is therefore impossible to name a single gesture which is

merely hereditary or innate, a single gesture which is not spontaneous-but also impossible to name a single gesture which is absolutely new in regard to that way of being in the world which, from the very beginning, is myself. There is no difference between saying that our life is completely constructed and that it is completely given. If there is a true liberty, it can only come about in the course of our life by our going beyond our original situation and yet not ceasing to be the same: this is the problem. Two things are certain about freedom: that we are never determined and yet that we never change, since, looking back on what we were, we can always find hints of what we have become. It is up to us to understand both these things simultaneously, as well as the way freedom dawns in us without breaking our bonds with the world.

Such bonds are always there, even and above all when we refuse to admit they exist. Inspired by the paintings of Da Vinci, Valéry described a monster of pure freedom, without mistresses, creditors, anecdotes, or adventures. No dream intervenes between himself and the things themselves; nothing taken for granted supports his certainties; and he does not read his fate in any favorite image, such as Pascal's abyss. Instead of struggling against the monsters he has understood what makes them tick, has disarmed them by his attention, and has reduced them to the state of known things. "Nothing could be more free, that is, less human, than his judgments on love and death. He hints at them in a few fragments from his notebooks: 'In the full force of its passion,' he says more or less explicitly, 'love is something so ugly that the human race would die out (la natura si perderebbe) if lovers could see what they were doing.' This contempt is brought out in various sketches, since the leisurely examination of certain things is, after all, the height of scorn. Thus, he now and again draws anatomical unions, frightful cross-sections of love's very act."2 He has complete mastery of his means, he does what he wants, going at will from knowledge to life with a superior elegance. Everything he did was done knowingly, and the artistic process, like the act of breathing or living, does not go beyond his knowledge. He has discovered the "central attitude," on the basis of which it is equally possible to know, to act, and to create

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> "Introduction à la méthode de Léonard de Vinci," Variété, p. 185. [English translation by Thomas McGreevy, Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci (London, 1929).]

works in preparation aim to show how communication with others, and thought, take up and go beyond the realm of perception which initiated us to the truth.

The perceiving mind is an incarnated mind. I have tried, first of all, to re-establish the roots of the mind in its body and in its world, going against doctrines which treat perception as a simple result of the action of external things on our body as well as against those which insist on the autonomy of consciousness. These philosophies commonly forgetin favor of a pure exteriority or of a pure interiority—the insertion of the mind in corporeality, the ambiguous relation which we entertain with our body and, correlatively, with perceived things. When one attempts, as I have in The Structure of Behavior, to trace out, on the basis of modern psychology and physiology, the relationships which obtain between the perceiving organism and its milieu one clearly finds that they are not those of an automatic machine which needs an outside agent to set off its pre-established mechanisms. And it is equally clear that one does not account for the facts by superimposing a pure, contemplative consciousness on a thing like body. In the conditions of life-if not in the laboratory-the organism is less sensitive to certain isolated physical and chemical agents than to the constellation which they form and to the whole situation which they define. Behaviors reveal a sort of prospective activity in the organism, as if it were oriented toward the meaning of certain elementary situations, as if it entertained familiar relations with them, as if there were an "a priori of the organism," privileged conducts and laws of internal equilibrium which predisposed the organism to certain relations with its milieu. At this level there is no question yet of a real self-awareness or of intentional activity. Moreover, the organism's prospective capability is exercised only within defined limits and depends on precise, local conditions.

The functioning of the central nervous system presents us with similar paradoxes. In its modern forms, the theory of cerebral localizations has profoundly changed the relation of function to substrate. It no longer assigns, for instance, a pre-established mechanism to each perceptual behavior. "Coordinating centers" are no longer considered as storehouses of "cerebral traces," and their functioning is qualitatively different from one case to another, depending on the chromatic nuance to be evoked and the perceptual structure to be realized. Finally, this

functioning reflects all the subtlety and all the variety of perceptual relationships.

The perceiving organism seems to show us a Cartesian mixture of the soul with the body. Higher-order behaviors give a new meaning to the life of the organism, but the mind here disposes of only a limited freedom; it needs simpler activities in order to stabilize itself in durable institutions and to realize itself truly as mind. Perceptual behavior emerges from these relations to a situation and to an environment which are not the workings of a pure, knowing subject.

In my work on the *Phenomenology of Perception* we are no longer present at the emergence of perceptual behaviors; rather we install ourselves in them in order to pursue the analysis of this exceptional relation between the subject and its body and its world. For contemporary psychology and psychopathology the body is no longer merely an object in the world, under the purview of a separated spirit. It is on the side of the subject; it is our point of view on the world, the place where the spirit takes on a certain physical and historical situation. As Descartes once said profoundly, the soul is not merely in the body like a pilot in his ship; it is wholly intermingled with the body. The body, in turn, is wholly animated, and all its functions contribute to the perception of objects—an activity long considered by philosophy to be pure knowledge.

We grasp external space through our bodily situation. A "corporeal or postural schema" gives us at every moment a global, practical, and implicit notion of the relation between our body and things, of our hold on them. A system of possible movements, or "motor projects," radiates from us to our environment. Our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space. It applies itself to space like a hand to an instrument, and when we wish to move about we do not move the body as we move an object. We transport it without instruments as if by magic, since it is ours and because through it we have direct access to space. For us the body is much more than an instrument or a means; it is our expression in the world, the visible form of our intentions. Even our most secret affective movements, those most deeply tied to the humoral infrastructure, help to shape our perception of things.

Now if perception is thus the common act of all our motor and affective functions, no less than the sensory, we must rediscover the structure of the perceived world through a process similar to that of an

archaeologist. For the structure of the perceived world is buried under the sedimentations of later knowledge. Digging down to the perceived world, we see that sensory qualities are not opaque, indivisible "givens," which are simply exhibited to a remote consciousness-a favorite idea of classical philosophy. We see too that colors (each surrounded by an affective atmosphere which psychologists have been able to study and define) are themselves different modalities of our co-existence with the world. We also find that spatial forms or distances are not so much relations between different points in objective space as they are relations between these points and a central perspective—our body. In short, these relations are different ways for external stimuli to test, to solicit, and to vary our grasp on the world, our horizontal and vertical anchorage in a place and in a here-and-now. We find that perceived things, unlike geometrical objects, are not bounded entities whose laws of construction we possess a priori, but that they are open, inexhaustible systems which we recognize through a certain style of development, although we are never able, in principle, to explore them entirely, and even though they never give us more than profiles and perspectival views of themselves. Finally, we find that the perceived world, in its turn, is not a pure object of thought without fissures or lacunae; it is, rather, like a universal style shared in by all perceptual beings. While the world no doubt co-ordinates these perceptual beings, we can never presume that its work is finished. Our world, as Malebranche said, is an "unfinished task."

If we now wish to characterize a subject capable of this perceptual experience, it obviously will not be a self-transparent thought, absolutely present to itself without the interference of its body and its history. The perceiving subject is not this absolute thinker; rather, it functions according to a natal pact between our body and the world, between ourselves and our body. Given a perpetually new natural and historical situation to control, the perceiving subject undergoes a continued birth; at each instant it is something new. Every incarnate subject is like an open notebook in which we do not yet know what will be written. Or it is like a new language; we do not know what works it will accomplish but only that, once it has appeared, it cannot fail to say little or much, to have a history and a meaning. The very productivity or freedom of human life, far from denying our situation, utilizes it and turns it into a means of expression.

This remark brings us to a series of further studies which I have

undertaken since 1945 and which will definitively fix the philosophical significance of my earlier works while they, in turn, determine the route and the method of these later studies.

I found in the experience of the perceived world a new type of relation between the mind and truth. The evidence of the perceived thing lies in its concrete aspect, in the very texture of its qualities, and in the equivalence among all its sensible properties-which caused Cézanne to say that one should be able to paint even odors. Before our undivided existence the world is true; it exists. The unity, the articulations of both are intermingled. We experience in it a truth which shows through and envelops us rather than being held and circumscribed by our mind.

Now if we consider, above the perceived world, the field of knowledge properly so called-i.e., the field in which the mind seeks to possess the truth, to define its objects itself, and thus to attain to a universal wisdom, not tied to the particularities of our situation-we must ask: Does not the realm of the perceived world take on the form of a simple appearance? Is not pure understanding a new source of knowledge, in comparison with which our perceptual familiarity with the world is only a rough, unformed sketch? We are obliged to answer these questions first with a theory of truth and then with a theory of intersubjectivity, both of which I have already touched upon in essays such as "Le doute de Cézanne," "Le Roman et la métaphysique,"2 and, on the philosophy of history, in Humanisme et terreur [1947]. But the philosophical foundations of these essays are still to be rigorously elaborated. I am now working on two books dealing with a theory of truth.

It seems to me that knowledge and the communication with others which it presupposes not only are original formations with respect to the perceptual life but also they preserve and continue our perceptual life even while transforming it. Knowledge and communication sublimate rather than suppress our incarnation, and the characteristic operation of the mind is in the movement by which we recapture our corporeal existence and use it to symbolize instead of merely to co-exist. This metamorphosis lies in the double function of our body. Through its "sensory fields" and its whole organization the body is, so to speak, predestined to model itself on the natural aspects of the world. But as an active body capable of gestures, of expression, and finally of language, it turns back on the world to signify it. As the observation of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> These are the first two essays in Sens et non-sens (Paris, 1948).—Trans.

apraxics shows, there is in man, superimposed upon actual space with its self-identical points, a "virtual space" in which the spatial values that a point would receive (for any other position of our corporal co-ordinates) are also recognized. A system of correspondence is established between our spatial situation and that of others, and each one comes to symbolize all the others. This insertion of our factual situation as a particular case within the system of other possible situations begins as soon as we designate a point in space with our finger. For this pointing gesture, which animals do not understand, supposes that we are already installed in virtual space—at the end of the line prolonging our finger in a centrifugal and cultural space. This mimic usage of our body is not yet a conception, since it does not cut us off from our corporeal situation; on the contrary, it assumes all its meaning. It leads us to a concrete theory of the mind which will show the mind in a relationship of reciprocal exchange with the instruments which it uses, but uses only while rendering to them what it has received from them, and more.

In a general way expressive gestures (in which the science of physiognomy sought in vain for the sufficient signs of emotional states) have a univocal meaning only with respect to the situation which they underline and punctuate. But like phonemes, which have no meaning by themselves, expressive gestures have a diacritical value: they announce the constitution of a symbolical system capable of redesigning an infinite number of situations. They are a first language. And reciprocally language can be treated as a gesticulation so varied, so precise, so systematic, and capable of so many convergent expressions [recoupements] that the internal structure of an utterance can ultimately agree only with the mental situation to which it responds and of which it becomes an unequivocal sign. The meaning of language, like that of gestures, thus does not lie in the elements composing it. The meaning is their common intention, and the spoken phrase is understood only if the hearer, following the "verbal chain," goes beyond each of its links in the direction that they all designate together.

It follows that even solitary thought does not cease using the language which supports it, rescues it from the transitory, and throws it back again. Cassirer said that thought was the "shuttlecock" of language. It also follows that perhaps, taken piece by piece, language does not yet contain its meaning, that all communication supposes in the listener a creative re-enactment of what is heard. Language leads us to

a thought which is no longer ours alone, to a thought which is presumptively universal, though this is never the universality of a pure concept which would be identical for every mind. It is rather the call which a situated thought addresses to other thoughts, equally situated, and each one responds to the call with its own resources. An examination of the domain of algorithm would show there too, I believe, the same strange function which is at work in the so-called inexact forms of language. Especially when it is a question of conquering a new domain for exact thought, the most formal thought is always referred to some qualitatively defined mental situation from which it extracts a meaning only by applying itself to the configuration of the problem. The transformation is never a simple analysis, and thought is never more than relatively formal.

Since I intend to treat this problem more fully in my work L'Origine de la vérité, I have approached it less directly in a partially written book dealing with literary language. In this area it is easier to show that language is never the mere clothing of a thought which otherwise possesses itself in full clarity. The meaning of a book is given, in the first instance, not so much by its ideas as by a systematic and unexpected variation of the modes of language, of narrative, or of existing literary forms. This accent, this particular modulation of speech-if the expression is successful—is assimilated little by little by the reader, and it gives him access to a thought to which he was until then indifferent or even opposed. Communication in literature is not the simple appeal on the part of the writer to meanings which would be part of an a priori of the mind; rather, communication arouses these meanings in the mind through enticement and a kind of oblique action. The writer's thought does not control his language from without; the writer is himself a kind of new idiom, constructing itself, inventing ways of expression, and diversifying itself according to its own meaning. Perhaps poetry is only that part of literature where this autonomy is ostentatiously displayed. All great prose is also a re-creation of the signifying instrument, henceforth manipulated according to a new syntax. Prosaic writing, on the other hand, limits itself to using, through accepted signs, the meanings already accepted in a given culture. Great prose is the art of capturing a meaning which until then had never been objectified and of rendering it accessible to everyone who speaks the same language. When a writer is no longer capable of thus founding a new universality and of taking the risk of communicating, he has

outlived his time. It seems to me that we can also say of other institutions that they have ceased to live when they show themselves incapable of carrying on a poetry of human relations—that is, the call of each individual freedom to all the others.

Hegel said that the Roman state was the prose of the world. I shall entitle my book *Introduction à la prose du monde*.<sup>3</sup> In this work I shall elaborate the category of prose beyond the confines of literature to give it a sociological meaning.

For these studies on expression and truth approach, from the epistemological side, the general problem of human interrelations-which will be the major topic of my later studies. The linguistic relations among men should help us understand the more general order of symbolic relations and of institutions, which assure the exchange not only of thoughts but of all types of values, the co-existence of men within a culture and, beyond it, within a single history. Interpreted in terms of symbolism, the concept of history seems to escape the disputes always directed to it because one ordinarily means by this wordwhether to accept it or to reject it-an external Power in the name of which men would be dispossessed of consciousness. History is no more external to us than language. There is a history of thought: the succession of the works of the spirit (no matter how many detours we see in it) is really a single experience which develops of itself and in whose development, so to speak, truth capitalizes itself.4 In an analogous sense we can say that there is a history of humanity or, more simply, a humanity. In other words, granting all the periods of stagnation and retreat, human relations are able to grow, to change their avatars into lessons, to pick out the truth of their past in the present, to eliminate certain mysteries which render them opaque and thereby make themselves more translucent.

The idea of a single history or of a logic of history is, in a sense, implied in the least human exchange, in the least social perception. For example, anthropology supposes that civilizations very different from ours are comprehensible to us, that they can be situated in relation to ours and vice-versa, that all civilizations belong to the same universe of thought, since the least use of language implies an idea of truth. Also we can never pretend to dismiss the adventures of history as something

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> This work was never published as such, though some of the studies it occasioned are the basis of the early chapters of *Signes* (Paris, 1960).—*Trans*.

<sup>4</sup> That is, truth becomes Truth by "building up its capital."—*Trans*.

foreign to our present action, since even the most independent search for the most abstract truth has been and is a factor of history (the only one, perhaps, that we are sure is not disappointing). All human acts and all human creations constitute a single drama, and in this sense we are all saved or lost together. Our life is essentially universal.

But this methodological rationalism is not to be confused with a dogmatic rationalism which eliminates historical contingency in advance by supposing a "World Spirit" (Hegel) behind the course of events. If it is necessary to say that there is a total history, a single tissue tying together all the enterprises of simultaneous and successive civilizations, all the results of thought and all the facts of economics, it must not be in the guise of a historical idealism or materialism—one handing over the government of history to thought; the other, to matter. Because cultures are just so many coherent systems of symbols and because in each culture the modes of work, of human relations, of language and thought, even if not parallel at every moment, do not long remain separated, cultures can be compared and placed under a common denominator. What makes this connection of meaning between each aspect of a culture and all the rest, as between all the episodes of history, is the permanent, harmonious thought of this plurality of beings who recognize one another as "semblances," even when some seek to enslave others, and who are so commonly situated that adversaries are often in a kind of complicity.

Our inquiries should lead us finally to a reflection on this transcendental man, or this "natural light" common to all, which appears through the movement of history—to a reflection on this Logos which gives us the task of vocalizing a hitherto mute world. Finally, they should lead us to a study of the Logos of the perceived world which we encountered in our earliest studies in the evidence of things. Here we rejoin the classical questions of metaphysics, but by following a route which removes from them their character as problems—that is to say, as difficulties which could be solved cheaply through the use of a few metaphysical entities constructed for this purpose. The notions of Nature and Reason, for instance, far from explaining the metamorphoses which we have observed from perception up to the more complex modes of human exchange, make them incomprehensible. For by relating them to separated principles, these notions mask a constantly experienced moment, the moment when an existence becomes aware of itself, grasps itself, and expresses its own meaning.

The study of perception could only teach us a "bad ambiguity," a mixture of finitude and universality, of interiority and exteriority. But there is a "good ambiguity" in the phenomenon of expression, a spontaneity which accomplishes what appeared to be impossible when we observed only the separate elements, a spontaneity which gathers together the plurality of monads, the past and the present, nature and culture into a single whole. To establish this wonder would be metaphysics itself and would at the same time give us the principle of an ethics.