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**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF PHILOSOPHICAL LANGUAGE:
LANGUAGE AND PHILOSOPHY IN THE THOUGHT OF
MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

BY
RALPH F. CALISTRO

Presented to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE i

PART I: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: The Problem of Philosophical Language 1

CHAPTER 2: Phenomenology and the Study of Language:
Langue and Parole 15

Footnotes 44

PART II: LANGUAGE

CHAPTER 3: Signification Gestuelle 57

Footnotes 107

CHAPTER 4: Sédimentation 115

Footnotes 157

PART III: PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER 5: Philosophy and Phenomenology 162

Footnotes 195

CHAPTER 6: Philosophy as Interrogation 202

Footnotes 242

PART IV: CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 7: Toward a Philosophy of Philosophical
Language 248

Footnotes 283

CHAPTER 8: Philosophical Language and the Philosophy
of Maurice Merleau-Ponty 286

Footnotes 315

BIBLIOGRAPHY 318

PREFACE

A preface may have various roles to play in a philosophical work. It may provide the author with the opportunity to say something about what went into the writing of the particular work at hand. It may be used to introduce the material in a way more general than that of an introduction. Or, it may say something about the kind of task that the author faces in his work. In this particular preface I would like to indicate the kind of framework or approach that the reader should take toward the work to be read. For as one approaches yet another thesis that deals with the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, one might very well wonder what this work will have to offer. Indeed, a work that concerns itself with the philosophy of another thinker can be approached in various ways, and some of these might be detrimental to the reader's understanding of that work. A reader might approach such a work simply as a commentary on the thinker under investigation. This, however, is not what this thesis is, or, rather, it is not simply this.

A student of philosophy who writes about the thought of a major thinker must carefully steer his course between two extremes. On the one hand, the student, in his continual contact with a major thinker, runs the risk of being totally absorbed into the thought of that person to such an extent that one becomes a mere mimic or weak imitation of the thinker. True, the student might find that the thinker does really have all the answers to the principal philosophical problems. But even if the thinker does have such answers (itself an unlikely possibility), the student will only be deceiving himself in thinking that he himself has nothing further to say about such philosophical problems. In particular, the student might erroneously conclude that a thesis on a major thinker ought to be only a commentary on his thought. But one must never be satisfied with the mere exposition of the thought of another. One must, indeed, one will always be confronted with the project of "going beyond" the given.

On the other hand, the student who works with the thought of a philosopher to any great length also runs the risk of distorting that thought. That is, such a student may very well "interpret" the thought of a thinker to such an extent that the student himself is putting into the writings

of the thinker his own view of matters. In particular, one could write a thesis on Merleau-Ponty by taking some quote or some footnote found in one of his texts and then heading off on his own. Although such a situation is not as undesirable as the first situation above, one must realize that this sort of thesis would not be a thesis on Merleau-Ponty.

What then ought a thesis on Merleau-Ponty be like? Or, more humbly, how ought one envision the dissertation to follow. The work that follows is an attempt to slip between the two extremes mentioned above. First, this is a thesis on Merleau-Ponty. Specifically, it is a thesis on Merleau-Ponty's thought about language and philosophy. In my view Merleau-Ponty has said and written some quite interesting and important things about the phenomenon of language and the activity of philosophizing, and I hope to display some of his insights on these two topics. Second, this is a thesis about language and philosophy. Specifically, it is an attempt to take some insights into the nature of language and some insights into the nature of philosophy and then to relate them in various ways. What I wish to do is to say something about the language of philosophy.

The double title of this thesis does have a significance, notwithstanding its length. It is about Merleau-Ponty and it is about language and philosophy. As it is a thesis about Merleau-Ponty one runs the risk of remaining too close to him. And as it is a thesis about language and philosophy one runs the risk of doing an injustice to his thought on these topics. Merleau-Ponty did have some interesting points to make about language and philosophy. That is why I spend a good portion of this thesis in discussing his thoughts. But the philosophy of philosophical language that I attempt to present in the conclusion is one that ought not to be attributed to him, although it is clearly inspired by him.

PART I: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM OF PHILOSOPHICAL LANGUAGE

How is one to understand the works of a philosopher? How is one to understand the oft-times quite enigmatic statements of a philosopher, especially when such statements contain completely new terms or expressions? The problem of understanding philosophical statements or expressions is certainly not a new one in the history of philosophy. The statements of Parmenides and Zeno have bewildered thinkers for centuries, and in this century the seemingly outlandish statements of such thinkers as Heidegger and Sartre have provided a host of reactions in philosophical circles. In this thesis I shall be concerned with an attempt to make some sense out of the writings of one particular philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and in so doing I would like to indicate how his thought on language and on philosophy will be helpful in understanding philosophical works.

A number of questions immediately arise in this context, and it will be useful to consider some of them as I proceed to explain the project to be undertaken. The most immediate question that arises concerns the very question asked, viz., "How is one to understand the works of a philosopher?"

It is evident that the question may be interpreted in various ways, which in turn would lead to different approaches to the study of the question. First, the question may be understood in a more narrow way. It may be understood as a question about a specific philosopher; that is, one might want to ask, "How is one to understand the works of Plato?" Such a question could be taken as a request for an exposition or an elucidation of the philosophy of Plato, as found in his dialogues. Second, the question may be interpreted as a question about the logical or epistemological status of philosophical propositions. That is, one may be asking, "How is one to understand (or analyze, or verify) the particular philosophical statements of a particular philosopher?" And in this case one would be asking how one can determine the sense of particular philosophical propositions. Third, the question may be interpreted in a more general way. When one asks such a question, one may be asking about the very object of philosophical writings. That is to say, one may be questioning the very nature of philosophy by asking what it is that philosophers are talking about when they philosophize.

Now, it should be evident that the three senses of the question so far presented are not completely independent.

That is, the asking of the question in one sense of the question may lead to the asking of it in one of the other senses. Furthermore, as we shall see throughout the following chapters, all three senses of the question will be at work in this dissertation, albeit in a secondary way. There is another sense of the question, distinct from the first three, yet related to them, however. And it is this sense which will be at work in a primary way throughout what follows. This sense of the question touches upon the relationship between the language of the philosopher and his actual thought. That is to say, it seems clear that when one asks, "How is one to understand the works of a philosopher?" one may be asking about the relationship between the language that a philosopher is using in his works and the thought that is being expressed by means of his language.

This fourth sense of the question brings up a host of further questions which need to be considered, since this fourth sense is the most important one for our purposes. What does it mean, then, to ask about the relationship between a philosopher's thought and the language in which he expresses it? One might easily balk at the attempt to force a wedge between the actual formulations or expressions of a philosopher

and the "thought" behind such formulations. One might want to say that it makes no sense at all to ask about the relationship between thought and language. In other words, one might want to say that asking for the relationship between thought and language is like asking for the relationship between the number "5" and the physical mark '5'. What could such a question mean? Perhaps it could be interpreted as a request for a history of the physical mark. That is, has '5' always been used to refer to "5", or have there been others? Or the question could be interpreted as a request for a linguistic study of the different ways in which '5' is said in different languages. Yet, neither of these would, properly speaking, be philosophical studies. What precisely is the philosophical problem which lies behind the sense of our question, if indeed there is any?

If our question is to have any philosophical sense, it would seem then that we must consider what kind of separation between thought and language can be effected. That is to say, we must ask, "What kind of philosophically relevant distinction can be drawn between the thought of a philosopher and the language in which he expresses it?" If we can find some such distinction, then it would seem that we could investigate the

relationship between thought and language in a philosophical work.

To begin, then, it is fairly clear that in most cases we can easily locate the language of a particular philosopher in the sense of the actual written work of that philosopher. For example, we can point to the set of works of, say, Heidegger or Sartre, and state that those works contain all the philosophical statements or expressions of those philosophers. But then it would seem that if we were to ask where the thought of Heidegger or Sartre is to be found in the sense of the philosophy of Heidegger or the philosophy of Sartre, we would also point to the same set of works. That is to say, it often appears that to talk about the thought of a philosopher is to ask about the actual statements that a philosopher has made, for whenever we talk about the thought of a philosopher, e.g., ideas about Dasein in Heidegger or views about être-pour-soi in Sartre, it seems that we are referring to particular statements, expressions or terms which they use.

Yet, there does seem to be one case in which the thought of a thinker can be distinguished from the statements that he makes. Take, e.g., the question, "What was Plato trying to say when he said that forms are the proper object

of genuine knowledge?" Such a question seems to be a legitimate one. But if it is a legitimate one, then it seems clear that we may genuinely ask about a philosopher's intentions behind a particular statement or set of expressions. We may genuinely ask about what he was trying to express. And in such cases it would seem that we could at least search for some kind of relationship between a philosopher's "philosophical intention" and the actual product. For example, in the case of Plato we might want to ask about the philosophical intention behind his view that forms are the proper object of knowledge.

It should be noted here that the "philosophical intentions" of a philosopher are not the same as the reasons or arguments that he presents for a particular thesis which he is defending. For example, when we ask about Plato's philosophical intentions behind his statements concerning the forms, we are not asking for an elucidation of the arguments that Plato presented to support the position that genuine knowledge is knowledge of forms. Although the reasons for his position certainly are important and should be considered, our question concerning his "philosophical intentions" directs our attention to something very different. The question

concerning the philosopher's "philosophical intentions" is a question concerning what the philosopher was trying to express, regardless of the reasons or arguments for that which he did express. Further, if we can make such a distinction between intention and expression, in the works of a philosopher, it would then seem possible that we could proceed to ask about the relationship (or lack thereof) between the intention and the expression. And if we could very roughly equate at this point "philosophical intentions" with "the thought of the philosopher" and "philosophical expression" with "the language of the philosopher", then it would seem to make sense to ask the following question: What relationship exists between the thought of a philosopher and the language in which he expresses it? Tentatively then, that is the question for our present study.

There still may be some skeptical reservations concerning the legitimacy of our question, i.e., the fourth sense of our question. Further, even if one grants us such a distinction as outlined above, one may still not be convinced that there is anything at all philosophically relevant about the relationship between intention and expression, between thought and language. Moreover, it may not at all be clear

how one might equate "thought" with "intention" or "language" with "expression". Indeed, it should not seem surprising that such doubts linger, for I would be the first to admit that the problem itself does not make sense from particular philosophical viewpoints. And this is one of the reasons why I wish to locate the problem within the context of the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. For it seems to me that Merleau-Ponty not only allows for such a distinction in his philosophy, but also makes some important contributions to the study of the relationship between language and thought in any philosophical work. Indeed, his work will provide a basis for an elucidation of the concepts "philosophical thought" and "philosophical language". Hence, this introduction cannot be taken as an argument for any such distinction. The only argument that can justify such distinctions is the very analysis of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy which appears in this dissertation. But then how shall we proceed? What will be the approach of this particular thesis?

The general structure of the thesis will be the following. After an analysis of the phenomenological approach to language presented in the next chapter, my task in the second part will be to present an account of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of language. A close analysis of his philosophy

of language will provide the basic concepts to be used in the study of a certain type of language, the language of philosophy. The third part will deal with Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of philosophy. This will be necessary for two reasons. First, it will give us an account of what Merleau-Ponty has to say about philosophy in general and, indirectly, of what he himself is doing. Second, it gives us the basis for relating his thought about language with his thought about philosophy. The fourth part, then, arising out of the second and third parts will be an attempt to investigate the relationship between language and philosophy; based on Merleau-Ponty's views about language and philosophy. We shall ask ourselves whether the concepts and distinctions that he uses when talking about language in general have any relevance for the language of the philosopher, and an attempt at a philosophy of philosophical language will be made. Further in the fourth part, the attempt at a philosophy of philosophical language will lead us to take a closer look at what Merleau-Ponty himself is actually doing. That is to say, we shall try to determine whether the relationship between language and philosophy gives us any insight into Merleau-Ponty's own philosophical development. What are the

philosophical intentions of Merleau-Ponty, and how are they expressed in the language that he uses? But now let us look more closely at the method of approach of this dissertation.

There are certain related themes which I shall analyze when considering Merleau-Ponty's views on language. In the next chapter I shall explicate and analyze the distinction that he makes between langue and parole. This distinction is one of the keys to his philosophy of language, for it makes possible the development of a phenomenology of speech, i.e., a description of the linguistic activity of the speaker, as compared to an objective study of a given natural language. In the third chapter the view of Merleau-Ponty, as expressed especially in Phénoménologie de la perception, that the word carries a signification gestuelle will be analyzed. It will be shown in what way this signification gestuelle exists in the language "before" thought, and, further, it will be shown how important these significations are for the speaker who situates himself in a world of meanings. In the fourth chapter it will be shown that although the word is similar to a gesture (since it has a gestural signification) it does differ from the gesture in a significant way. This brings up the question of truth, and in this context

the introduction of another important term will be required, viz., the notion of "sedimentation". It will be shown that for Merleau-Ponty truth is to be understood in terms of sedimentation. In both the section on signification gestuelle and the section on sedimentation, Merleau-Ponty's account of the similarities and differences between language and art will be explored in order to help clarify the above aspects of language.

In the third part of the dissertation I shall discuss Merleau-Ponty's view toward the nature of philosophy. In the fifth chapter I shall try to explore the relationship between phenomenology and philosophy. Merleau-Ponty will want to say that phenomenology puts us into contact with a "nascent logos" or a world of everyday experience, and it will be shown how philosophy reflects this everyday world. But it will also be shown that this "nascent logos" is such that it needs philosophical reflection for its completion. In the sixth chapter the very philosophizing of the philosopher will come under scrutiny. The key to such an analysis will lie in Merleau-Ponty's notion of "interrogation". And the later work of Merleau-Ponty will be analyzed in order to elucidate the notion of philosophy as interrogation. ✕

In the final part of the dissertation, I would like to relate the findings of the section on language with the findings of the section on philosophy. This relating of findings, however, will not be done in any rigid, piecemeal way. I hope to elaborate my own philosophy of philosophical language, and such an elaboration will show the "influence" of Merleau-Ponty. Further, I shall ask a number of questions in this chapter that one might ask in the context of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. First, what is the relevance of the distinction between langue and parole for philosophical language, i.e., the language of philosophy? It will be shown that both are relevant to the study of a philosophy. To study a philosophy as a fait accompli (the actual writings of a philosopher), one could take it as an already accomplished language, viz., from the point of view of langue. That is to say, one would approach the language of a particular philosophy as something already constituted by philosophical thought. On the other hand, and more importantly, one may approach the language of a particular philosophy in terms of parole. In this case one would try to capture the movement from philosophical thought into philosophical expression. One would try to discover why a particular thought is expressed

in a particular way. Second, one might ask how a philosophical language has a signification gestuelle, if in fact it does have such a signification. Furthermore, if it does have a signification gestuelle, how does this facilitate entering into the study of a particular philosophy? Must the philosopher be aware of such meanings, and how do the meanings affect his philosophizing? Third, what does Merleau-Ponty mean when he says that language completes, not merely translates, thought? In what way is the thought of the philosopher incomplete "before" it is expressed? How does language effect this process of completion? In what way does philosophical language exist "before" philosophical thought? In order to answer these questions, I shall try to determine the active role that language plays in the philosophizing of the philosopher. Fourth, what is the role of truth and how is it attained in philosophy? Is Merleau-Ponty's notion of sedimentation applicable to the language of philosophy?

In the last chapter I would like to consider what light all of the preceding sheds upon Merleau-Ponty's own philosophical development. What is the parole of Merleau-Ponty and how did it find its expression in his Phénoménologie?

Further, what significations gestuelles did he confront in his philosophical contemplation and how did they affect his actually-elaborated philosophy? These and other questions will be considered in this last section. The purpose of this thesis, then, is two-fold: an attempt to present a philosophy of philosophical language and an attempt to bring to light the development of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical language.

PART I: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE: LANGUE AND PAROLE

One of the more important distinctions that Merleau-Ponty makes in his writings is the distinction between langue and parole. This distinction, which is one of the key ones for an understanding of his philosophy of language, is made by Merleau-Ponty as a result of a certain methodological approach that he takes in his Phénoménologie de la perception¹, as well as in a number of his other works, as we shall see. But before we consider this distinction in any detail, it would seem necessary to look briefly at the alleged method used by Merleau-Ponty to elaborate such a distinction. In order to present an account of this phenomenological method of Merleau-Ponty, I would like to consider briefly the Phénoménologie de la perception.

In the "Avant-Propos" of the above-mentioned work, Merleau-Ponty asks the question: What is phenomenology? And he proceeds to give a sketch of his own phenomenological method. But it is evident from his sketch that Merleau-Ponty is at the same time trying to situate his type of phenomenology in the context of Husserlian phenomenology. And a number of points

that he makes there relate directly to aspects of Husserl's view of phenomenology. But without involving ourselves in the debate over the exact nature of the relationship between Merleau-Ponty and Husserl, let us see what positive points can be grasped concerning Merleau-Ponty's actual method. In this section Merleau-Ponty discusses four principal notions used in an elaboration of the phenomenological method. They are: "description", "reduction", "essence", and "intentionality". Such an elaboration will provide the basis for understanding the task that Merleau-Ponty sets for himself in the Phénoménologie de la perception.

The terms "phenomenology" and "description" are to many a reader practically synonymous. The phenomenologist, par excellence, is the one who is most interested in the description of phenomena. For Merleau-Ponty that phenomenology is a description of phenomena means that the phenomenologist must bring within his perspective the phenomena arising from our everyday existence and upon which every science is built.

Tout l'univers de la science est construit sur le monde vécu et si nous voulons penser la science elle-même avec rigueur, en apprécier exactement le sens et la portée, il nous faut réveiller d'abord cette expérience du monde dont elle est l'expression seconde.²

One might assume here, then, that if every science or every thematic articulation of the world rests upon the foundation of an everyday world in which we live, then it would be the case, a fortiori, that linguistics, as the science of language, is built upon this everyday world. In this case the everyday world is the world of the person who speaks a natural language. Phenomenology, more precisely the phenomenology of language, would in fact be a description of this everyday world of the person who speaks. And the kind of results that such a description obtains would be used, we would suppose, as the basis for a science of linguistics.

The description that is effected, however, will be one that has as its constant focus of attention the actual everyday world. This, indeed, is the reason why Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is a phenomenology of perception. It is the world that is given to us in perception that is the world to be described.

La perception n'est pas une science du monde, ce n'est pas même un acte, une prise de position délibérée, elle est le fond sur lequel tous les actes se détachent et elle est présupposée par eux.³

This description of perception, furthermore, signals another major point concerning phenomenology for Merleau-Ponty. Even though phenomenological description of the person who uses language will attempt to get at the basic features of speech upon which a linguistics can be built, these basic features will be found within the everyday world of perception. This realm will be a realm of perception, not any sort of realm of absolute consciousness. In other words, the reduction that is effected by the phenomenologist is one that leads back to the world in which one lives and not the world of consciousness. It will bring us to a world which is an on-going process, a world to which one must constantly return and not a world of fixed meanings. "...la réduction phénoménologique est celle d'une philosophie existentielle: l'"In-der-Welt-Sein" ... n'apparaît que sur le fond de la réduction phénoménologique."⁴

The return to the everyday world will be motivated by the search for the essence of the phenomena. Phenomenology will be description for the sake of discovering what are the essential features of the phenomena. When we look to the person who uses language in the next few chapters, we shall be looking for that which indicates the basic features of language. These basic features, their "essence", however,

- will be located in the given world of perception..

Le monde est non pas ce que je pense, mais ce que je vis, je suis ouvert au monde, je communique indubitablement avec lui, mais je ne le possède pas, il est inépuisable. "Il y a un monde", ou plutôt "il y a le monde", de cette thèse constante de ma vie je ne puis jamais rendre entièrement raison.⁵

This openness to the world, furthermore, indicates an essential feature of the phenomenological method, a feature that is the most important feature of those discussed so far, and one which will be more fully elaborated in the next chapters. This feature centers upon the fact that it is I, as a living being, who am open to the world. There is a bond between the subject and the world before it, such that the description of my everyday world will be a description of the intentional link between me as perceiver and the world as object of my perception.

This link, however, is one that exists at an everyday level, a link that is the basis upon which particular theories are constructed.

...l'intentionnalité opérante (fungierende Intentionalität), celle qui fait l'unité naturelle et antépredicative du monde et de notre vie, qui paraît dans nos désirs, nos évaluations, notre paysage, ...et qui fournit le texte dont nos connaissances cherchent à être la traduction en langage exact.⁶

Given these notions of "description", "reduction", "essence", and "intentionality", what is Merleau-Ponty going to do with them? In other words, what is the ultimate task that Merleau-Ponty wishes to accomplish with his phenomenology? For Merleau-Ponty the ultimate task of phenomenology is to push beyond the scientific and philosophical explanations of our experience to find the ground of such experience.

Les vues scientifiques selon lesquelles je suis un moment du monde sont toujours naïves et hypocrites, parce qu'elles sous-entendent, sans la mentionner, cette autre vue, celle de la conscience, par laquelle d'abord un monde se dispose autour de moi et commence à exister pour moi. Revenir aux choses mêmes, c'est revenir à ce monde avant la connaissance dont la connaissance parle toujours, et à l'égard duquel toute détermination scientifique est abstraite, signitive (sic) et dépendante, ...

Ce mouvement est absolument distinct du retour idéaliste à la conscience et l'exigence d'une description pure exclut aussi bien le procédé de l'analyse réflexive que celui de l'explication scientifique.⁷

The phenomenologist is to return to the world before it has been thematized in a particular scientific or philosophical explanation. The phenomenologist is to return to the world of experience before (logically "before") knowledge which is the starting point for knowledge. Our return to this world

then involves a description of the structures of this world in which we live and of which science speaks.

However, the phenomenologist, by pushing beyond different scientific or philosophical explanations of the world, does not destroy or do away with these other accounts. Rather, it is the task of the phenomenologist to show that each of these views has some truth in it, even though it becomes false when made into an exclusive, all-encompassing explanation.

Il faut comprendre de toutes les façons à la fois, tout a un sens, nous retrouvons sous tous les rapports la même structure d'être. Toutes ces vues sont vraies à condition qu'on ne les isole, ...qu'on rejoigne l'unique noyau de signification existentielle qui s'explicité dans chaque perspective.⁸

It is the world in which we live, which the phenomenologist describes, that is the point of departure for all scientific or philosophical accounts of our experience of this world. And since such explanations have their starting point in experience, they do contain elements of truth. And this is especially true in the case of intellectualism and empiricism, two philosophical explanations of experience with which Merleau-Ponty is going to be particularly concerned throughout the Phénoménologie de la perception. It is going to be Merleau-

Ponty's task to overcome both an intellectualist and an empiricist account of experience by showing how both have gone astray from the world of experience. Yet in overcoming them, phenomenology will really be preserving what is essentially true in each position. It will be locating the truth of each in the world of experience. "La plus importante acquisition de la phénoménologie est sans doute d'avoir joint l'extrême subjectivisme [intellectualism] et l'extrême objectivisme [empiricism] dans sa notion du monde ou de la rationalité."⁹

Phenomenology is the return to the world in which we live, of which all knowledge speaks. In returning to this world, the phenomenologist brings together competing explanations of the world by locating their common core of truth. And as we have seen, it will be perceptual experience which will be the focal point of the phenomenologist's description of the lived world. For Merleau-Ponty it is perception which must be studied. "La perception n'est pas une science du monde, ce n'est pas même un acte, une prise de position délibérée, elle est le fond sur lequel tous les actes se détachent et elle est présumée par eux."¹⁰ It is through perception that the everyday world is given to us. Perception is the

foundation of our very experience of the world, and it will be the task of phenomenology to uncover these perceptual foundations at the heart of our experiences (of spatiality, movement, sexuality, or language). Phenomenology must show the perceptual roots of the explanations of these experiences given by intellectualism or empiricism.

When we come to the section "Le corps comme expression et la parole", we find some of these themes present. That is, we see Merleau-Ponty considering the intellectualist and the empiricist models of language, and then we find him pushing beyond these two explanations toward a description of the perceptual foundations of language. He begins by considering the empiricist position. From the empiricist point of view, language is interpreted as a phenomenon amenable to a stimulus-response analysis. A linguistic response is the same kind of response to stimuli as is screaming or crying.

Le sens des mots est considéré comme donné avec les stimuli ou avec les états de conscience qu'il s'agit de nommer, la configuration sonore ou articulaire du mot est donnée avec les traces cérébrales ou psychiques, la parole n'est pas une action, elle ne manifeste pas des possibilités intérieures du sujet: l'homme peut parler comme la lampe électrique peut devenir incandescente.¹¹

From this point of view, the speaking subject disappears completely.

On the other hand, the intellectualist or rationalist account treats language as a mere covering or envelope for a thought already precisely formed. "Car nommer un objet, c'est s'arracher à ce qu'il a d'individuel et d'unique pour voir en lui le représentant d'une essence ou d'une catégorie ..." ¹²

From this point of view, we do have a subject, but it is a thinking subject, not a speaking subject.

For Merleau-Ponty, however, neither account of language does justice to the phenomenon of speech (la parole). In fact, as he says, the two approaches are not all that different in what they deny. "En réalité, nous allons voir une fois de plus qu'il y a une parenté entre les psychologies empiricistes ou mécanistes et les psychologies intellectualistes, et l'on ne résout pas le problème du langage en passant de la thèse à l'antithèse." ¹³ In both cases we find that the speaking subject has disappeared, either into a bundle of sensations or into the thinking subject. Furthermore, "...dans tous les cas le langage n'est qu'un accompagnement extérieur de la pensée". ¹⁴ That is, in both cases language finds itself empty of any meaning proper to itself. For Merleau-Ponty,

however, both points of view can be overcome by the discovery of a meaning proper to language. "On dépasse donc aussi bien l'intellectualisme que l'empirisme par cette simple remarque que le mot a un sens."¹⁵ Merleau-Ponty then launches his ~~own~~ phenomenological account of language, through a consideration of normal experiences as well as abnormal experiences of language. He achieves an account of language that leads him to make the distinction between parole parlante and parole parlée.

On pourrait dire, en reprenant une célèbre distinction, que les langages, c'est-à-dire les systèmes de vocabulaire et de syntaxe constitués, les "moyens d'expression" qui existent empiriquement, sont le dépôt ... des actes de parole dans lesquels le sens informulé non seulement trouve le moyen de se traduire au dehors, mais encore acquiert l'existence pour soi-même, et est véritablement créé comme sens. Ou encore on pourrait distinguer une parole parlante et une parole parlée.¹⁶

This quote distinguishing parole parlante from parole parlée contains the seeds of Merleau-Ponty's later distinction of parole and langue. Unfortunately, Merleau-Ponty does not elaborate on the former distinction in Phénoménologie de la perception. Indeed, one gets the distinct impression that what he is offering us at this time is a programme for the further study of language, a study of language that will revolve

around the distinction parole/langue. This, in fact, seems to be the case if one takes up his later writings on the subject of language.

In one of the many articles about language that followed Phénoménologie de la perception, Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between la parole and la langue.¹⁷ Of the first, Merleau-Ponty offers us "une linguistique synchronique de la parole" which is to be a return to the speaking subject, while of the second he offers "une linguistique diachronique de la langue" which is an objective study of any particular natural language.¹⁸

There is an important question that arises, however, once this distinction has been made. One might wonder whether it is indeed legitimate to look at Merleau-Ponty's later articles on language as a continuation of his views on the methodology of various approaches to language in the Phénoménologie de la perception. That is, one might say, so far Merleau-Ponty has not spoken at all about the study of language (whether langue, langage, or parole) undertaken by linguistics; whereas, his prime concern in his later articles is with the linguistic study of language. Should one look to these later articles as a continuation of the Phénoménologie de la perception?

It might be pointed out, as it has been by Edie and by Fontaine-DeVisscher, among others, that there was a change in attitude toward language on the part of Merleau-Ponty between the time of the Phénoménologie de la perception and that of the articles in Signes.¹⁹ Let us take a closer look at Edie's objections in order to determine whether there is a change in Merleau-Ponty's approach to language.

Edie offers a number of reasons for separating Merleau-Ponty's thought about language in the Phénoménologie de la perception from that found in later articles.²⁰

According to Edie, in the Phénoménologie de la perception

...the study of language is only an adjunct to his development of the 'primacy of perception' ... From this point of view language is important only as an example or an illustration of a more general thesis concerning the origin of meaning and value within the texture of experience.²¹

On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty in his "second period" puts language in a more central position in his thought. It becomes

...the privileged model of the whole of our experience of meaning. From being a peripheral, though always essential, consideration in his phenomenological program, the analysis of language now begins to take the central place.²²

In other words, language has now become the centre of attention for Merleau-Ponty, and since this period of his thought is influenced by his reading of Saussure and scientific linguistics, we should be very hesitant in making any connection between what he says about language at this time and what he says about it in Phénoménologie de la perception.

Although there is some truth in what Edie has to say, he pushes the differences too far, thereby creating a false dichotomy between the Merleau-Ponty of the Phénoménologie de la perception and the Merleau-Ponty of Signes. First, although language is not the centre of attention in the former work as it is in later essays, the reason for this is not to be found in Merleau-Ponty's attitude toward language. Rather, what must be kept in mind is Merleau-Ponty's purpose in the Phénoménologie de la perception. As we have shown above, his intent there is to give us an account of the perceptual roots of our experience. Our experience of language, of course, is one type of experience for which perceptual roots need to be discovered, but it is important to note that there are many other types of experiences which ought to be considered. And Merleau-Ponty does consider these other experiences. Yet, for

all that, it is false to say that language does not have a special place in the Phénoménologie de la perception.

For as we shall see in Chapter 4,

Ce qui est vrai seulement -- et justifie la situation particulière que l'on fait d'ordinaire au langage -- c'est que seule de toutes les opérations expressives, la parole est capable de se sédimenter et de constituer un acquis intersubjectif.²³

Thus, even in this work Merleau-Ponty realizes the peculiarity of linguistic experience in contrast to other types of experience.

On the other hand, even though it is true that the study of language becomes more and more a preoccupation with Merleau-Ponty, it is not clear that language becomes "the privileged model of the whole of our experience of meaning". If language is privileged, it is so only in the way outlined in the quote above. Yet, if this "privileged position" means that Merleau-Ponty made "'linguistics' the paradigm model on the basis of which we would be able to elaborate a theory of the 'human' sciences and thus establish a universal, philosophical anthropology"²⁴, then Edie is certainly overstating the case. One need only consider Merleau-Ponty's article, "Les sciences de l'homme et la phénoménologie".²⁵ In that article it is the problem of psychology, not of language or of linguistics, that occupies the centre position, and Merleau-Ponty applies the

results that he works out for a phenomenological psychology to the areas of language and history. By no means is language the centre of attention. Again, Merleau-Ponty does concern himself ~~more~~ and more with language in his later writings, but not to the extent that he makes linguistics, as the study of this "privileged model of the whole of our experience of meaning", the paradigm for the study of the human sciences. If we can detect no significant "change in attitude" toward language, then we shall view Merleau-Ponty's account of language in Signes, and in other articles, as a consistent development of his views found in the Phénoménologie de la perception.

Let us then look more closely at what Merleau-Ponty has to say about parole and langue in these later essays. As already mentioned, Merleau-Ponty distinguishes a linguistique diachronique de la langue and a linguistique synchronique de la parole. But Merleau-Ponty ties this distinction to the distinction between a phenomenology of speech (parole) and a linguistics of language (langue).

Ce que Husserl appelle phénoménologie du langage, retour au sujet parlant, n'est pas seulement exigence de la pensée philosophique, mais de la linguistique elle-même, telle que Saussure la conçoit. Il ne suffit pas de traiter objectivement les langues qui sont données, il faut faire état du sujet parlant, il faut ajouter à la linguistique de la langue la linguistique de la parole.²⁶

A phenomenology of language, i.e., a certain approach to the phenomenon of speech, la parole, is not only a necessity for any possible linguistics, but in fact is itself a type or way of doing linguistics. What Merleau-Ponty has done here is to tie together the method of a phenomenology of language with a synchronic linguistics of language, such that the method of this synchronic linguistics will be the method of a phenomenology of speech. Merleau-Ponty further indicates that the distinction of langue and parole is not just a distinction in regions of language to be studied, but further that the distinction necessitates methodological considerations that involve different perspectives on language. Merleau-Ponty follows Pos's account of the two different perspectives, the phenomenological perspective of a synchronic linguistics of parole and the objectivist perspective of a diachronic linguistics of langue.²⁷

Il y a, dit M. Pos, une différence fondamentale entre le philosophe, le phénoménologue qui réfléchit sur le langage, et le linguiste qui connaît le langage objectivement, d'après les documents qui sont là. C'est que le phénoménologue essaie de reprendre conscience de ce que c'est qu'un sujet parlant. Or le sujet parlant n'a pas du tout, à l'égard du langage, l'attitude du savant ou de l'observateur. L'observateur est en face de la langue comme en face de quelque chose qui lui est extérieur.²⁸

The phenomenologist, the synchronic linguist, takes the perspective of the speaking subject, the "speaking word" and concentrates on the actual acts of communication that take place between speaking subjects. On the other hand, the objective scientist, the diachronic linguist, takes an objective point of view. He looks at the empirically or externally given means of communication. He can approach a language the same way a geologist approaches rocks: the data are there, right before his eyes. And to demand that he take up the point of view of the speaking subject would make as little sense as it would to ask of the geologist to take up the viewpoint of the rocks which he studies.²⁹

Merleau-Ponty further specifies the differences in perspective between the phenomenologist of language and the scientist of language. Besides the fact that the scientist takes an objective view of the phenomenon, whereas the phenomenologist looks at language from "down below", from the viewpoint of the speaking subject, there are two other characteristic differences. As Merleau-Ponty continues in the above quotation, the scientist

...considère par exemple l'état du français à la date où je parle, et montre comment cet état présent du français s'explique à partir de tel ou tel état antérieur. L'observateur rattache le présent au passé. Le sujet qui parle, lui, ignore le passé. La plupart des sujets qui parlent le français à présent ne savent rien de l'étymologie, du passé linguiste en général, qui a rendu possible la langue qu'ils parlent actuellement, et qui...ne s'explique que par l'usage actuel
...30

The linguist (the diachronic linguist) attempts to explain the actual state of a language by its past forms. (E.g., he would show how particular verb forms in present French can be traced back to the Latin original.) The emphasis is always on the past. On the other hand, the subject who actually speaks the language need know nothing about the history of his language in order to communicate. The speaking subject may know nothing about the historical formulation of grammatical rules; he may know nothing about the rules themselves, yet for all that he can speak. And what he says will depend on the present, and even the future. "Le sujet qui parle est tourné vers l'avenir. La langue est pour lui avant tout moyen d'expression, moyen de communiquer à autrui des intentions qui vont vers l'avenir."³¹ Thus, there is a difference in the two perspectives in regard to the temporal dimension. The

focus of the scientist is ultimately on the past, whereas the focus of the phenomenologist is on the present and the future.³²

The third difference is reflected in the following passage.

Enfin, l'observateur a toujours tendance à décomposer la langue en une série de processus, qu'il considère comme relativement indépendants les uns des autres...C'est ce qui fait dire à M. Vendryès...qu'une langue n'est jamais une réalité, c'est un "idéal qui ne réussit jamais à se réaliser".... Du point de vue de l'observateur donc, il y a lieu de mettre en doute la réalité distincte des langues...Pour le sujet qui parle au contraire, qui n'est pas observateur en face de la langue prise comme objet, mais qui la pratique, qui l'assume, il y a incontestablement une réalité de la langue, il y a des endroits où il se fait comprendre et des endroits où il ne se fait pas comprendre.³³

For the scientist of language the unity and distinct reality of a language tends to disintegrate. When one treats a language objectively, the distinct boundaries of the language tend to collapse. One dialect overlaps with another, and one is hard-pressed to say where one language begins and another one ends. On the other hand, for the phenomenologist the reality and unity of a language becomes evident when one

concentrates on the speaking subject. For the speaking subject, English, e.g., has a distinct reality. It is the language which one speaks and which one understands. And the boundaries of the language are as clear as possible, since what one cannot understand is not English. Again, the two points of view, the phenomenological and the scientific or objective, show different characteristics.

The distinction parole/lanque not only refers to a difference in the aspects or regions of a language to be studied, but also indicates a need for two different methods to accommodate these two regions of language. And from what we have seen so far, the two methods should give us different conclusions concerning language. And from what has been presented, it would seem that our task should be to apply the phenomenological method to parole: However, throughout the rest of this thesis, one will find no strict application of any sort of phenomenological method. Rather, one will find an emphasis on perspective. Our account of language will be an account derived from consideration of what language is from the perspective of the speaking subject, from the perspective of parole. There will be no attempt to apply rigidly the notions of "reduction", "intentionality",

"description", or "essence" in what follows, even though these notions will be used. One reason for not using these terms rigidly is that there are some difficulties involved with the actual method of phenomenology which, I think, become evident when we consider Merleau-Ponty's attempt to grapple with some of the aspects of the phenomenological method. These difficulties are not as evident in Merleau-Ponty's account of Husserl's method in the "Avant-Propos" of the Phénoménologie de la perception. They are evident, however, in Merleau-Ponty's article, "Les sciences de l'homme et la phénoménologie".

One aspect of the phenomenological method that is of concern in this article is the aspect of essence, and, in particular, the question of how essences and facts are related. As Merleau-Ponty points out throughout this article, the notion of eidetic intuition is essential to the phenomenological method. A good starting point for us as we consider this problem is Merleau-Ponty's criticism of Hegel.³⁴ Merleau-Ponty wants to show that Husserl's phenomenology is close to that of Hegel's, yet differs from it in important respects. And in showing the differences, he points out

...Seulement, chez Hegel, la phénoménologie n'est qu'une préface à la 'Logique', de sorte que, du moins selon certains interprètes de Hegel, elle n'a que la valeur d'une introduction à la philosophie proprement dite, et que la philosophie reste d'un autre ordre. Or, si c'est finalement la logique qui régit le développement des phénomènes, ..."³⁵

Now, Merleau-Ponty is right when he points out that Hegelian phenomenology leads to an Hegelian logic. Yet, he does not note the important consequences that follow. The principal task for Hegel in the Phenomenology of Spirit is to show that ultimately all consideration of an object of thought beyond thought leads to the position that there is no such object beyond (and logically prior to) thought. And this position gives one the absolute standpoint of the Logic: Philosophy must proceed not by considering being qua being, but by examining the relationships of concepts that have appeared in the history of spirit. And the consequences for Husserlian phenomenology are important. Hegel wants to show that there can be no naive "giving oneself over to the experience of X (whatever X might be) in order to find the essence of X". The facts are always ordered by a consciousness which precedes it.

Now although it may seem that Merleau-Ponty thinks that Husserl is saying something similar (at least in part) to this in his later writings, still the ghost of "zu den Sachen selbst" haunts Husserlian phenomenology even in his later writings. (This, I think, can be inferred from Merleau-Ponty's account.) In order to show that ultimately the facts must be governed by an essence that comes from thought, let us consider the problems involved in Husserl's Wesenschau. (I might point out here before we do this that strictly speaking one cannot say that Hegel holds that essences are imposed upon facts as form is imposed upon content. However, if one may characterize this "process", it is correct to say that for Hegel the facts are not logically prior to essence and do not have an independent existence outside of essence.)

Merleau-Ponty gives us an example of the Wesenschau when we wish to discover the essence of social processes.³⁶ Supposedly, one takes a concrete example of a social process and then varies it (fictively) in order to discover the essence of a social process. For example, one might take the case in which I pay a grocer for some goods. Now, supposedly I can vary this instance in order to find out what does not vary,

in order to discover the essence. Let us say that I discover that "involving two people" is the essence of a social process. But in discovering this, what have I really done? I really took different examples of a social process (some fictitious) and looked to see what was essential to them all. But the really important question is: How did I know which example to take? (Alternatively: How could I know which particular example of a fictive variation was still a "social process".) It would seem that I could take examples of only social processes if I already had a previous conception of a social process. In other words, I must previously have essential knowledge of social processes in order to "read off" the essence. Thus, it would appear that Husserl's view must be reducible to the Hegelian view of "essences before facts" (to put it crudely).

But then if these speculations are correct, they only intensify the problem that Merleau-Ponty mentions on page 35. According to Husserl there is always present the danger that one's essences could turn into "scholastic" definitions of concepts. That is, if I have already determined the essence of a social process, then a ruling out of other processes as not social processes may become a

mere Wortspiel of words and definitions. "Supposedly, according to Merleau-Ponty, Husserl thought that such a danger can be avoided. Yet, it is not clear how that is possible. He does say that "je ne puis être sûr que ma vision de l'essence est autre chose qu'un préjugé, un concept enraciné dans le langage, que si elle permet de comprendre tous les faits qui nous sont accessibles au moment considéré."³⁷ Yet what can this mean? It would seem that Merleau-Ponty is saying that an essence is not really an essence when it does not "hold together" all the facts which can be "held together" by this essence. But that only means that, for example, a particular candidate for "essence of a social process" which excludes certain "social processes" from actually being social processes is not really a legitimate candidate for the essence of social process! Yet this really provides us with nothing at all. If a certain essence A covers certain facts x, y, and z, while excluding p and q, then how can one really know that p and q are legitimately excluded from A? How could we know that p and q should not really be covered by A? Let us take again the example of social processes. Suppose I say that the essence of a social process is "involving two or more people". Now let us say that someone else does not accept

our essence because it excludes the case of someone standing on his head. And this person wants to have "standing on one's head" covered by the essence of a social process. So now the question is: How do we know if this person is correct in his claim? Is our essence of social process too narrow, thus making it a "prejudice rooted in language"? Obviously, one cannot just look at the particular fact ("standing on one's head") in order to read off the essence. There is no way to discover the essence of this fact by merely looking at it. For, on the one hand, if I judged that this fact should be included within the essence of social process, I would have already altered my concept of social process before considering the particular fact. The fact leads me to a different conclusion because I have already changed my view of the fact. On the other hand, if I rule out this fact as an instance of a social process, I shall have already made the judgement that my notion of essence is adequate and that it necessarily rules out the particular fact which I am considering.

These difficulties in giving an account of the so-called eidetic reduction highlight the problems that one has in trying to give an account of the phenomenological method.³⁸ And although we shall see that Merleau-Ponty

corrects some of these difficulties in his later writings, these problems do indicate the one point which I wish to make, viz., that it is more "fruitful" to look not at the methodology of the phenomenologist but to the actual results that he attains. That the phenomenologist attains significant results will be demonstrated in the next chapters.

If one may draw any conclusions from the material presented in this chapter, it is that, in order to proceed in the development of a phenomenological philosophy of philosophical language, one must make some distinctions in our notion of "language". Given "langage", following Merleau-Ponty, as the ordinary, undifferentiated concept that we use in casual discussions of linguistic phenomena, we see that the phenomenologist must distinguish, within langage, the aspect of langue and the aspect of parole. "Langue" will be considered the sum of various natural languages that the linguist studies, and it will not be of concern to us here. "Parole", however, will be taken as speech, the actual using of language by some human being in a concrete speaking situation. The phenomenology of parole will direct our attention to those actual situations.

Indeed, although some of the features of phenomenology will be clarified to a greater extent in what follows, it is

also clear that the whole point of the method is to give us a perspective on the everyday world of the speaking subject in order to allow us to see what speaking, la parole, is. Hence, rather than attempting to develop any extensive account of parole as contrasted with langue, it would appear to be more useful to take the preliminary account of langue and parole given us by Merleau-Ponty in "Les sciences de l'homme et la phénoménologie". With such a rough distinction, we may then direct our attention to the speaking subject and la parole as it is given in our everyday experience. Such an investigation will show two essential features of la parole, viz. la signification gestuelle and la sédimentation, the topic matter for the following two chapters.

FOOTNOTES

1. Merleau-Ponty, Phénoménologie de la perception, Paris: Gallimard, 1945. Note that in most cases I shall be using the original French terms that Merleau-Ponty uses, rather than translating them into English. This will be useful especially when discussing the terms 'langue' and 'langage' for which English has only 'language' and 'parole' and 'mot' where often both are translated as 'word'.
2. Ibid., p. II f.
3. Ibid., p. V. Merleau-Ponty speaks of the importance of perception in his presentation "Le primat de la perception et ses conséquences philosophiques" in Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie, v. 2 (1947), pp. 119-135, discussion pp. 135-153. "/En parlant d'un primat de la perception/... Nous exprimons en ces termes que l'expérience de la perception nous remet en présence du moment où se constituent pour nous les choses, les vérités, les biens, qu'elle nous rend un logos à l'état naissant, qu'elle nous enseigne, hors de tout dogmatisme, les conditions vraies de l'objectivité elle-même, qu'elle nous rappelle les tâches de la connaissance et de l'action." (p. 133) The notion of perception is as difficult to explain as it is important to consider in the thought of Merleau-Ponty. One significant problem for one who attempts to understand it is that it has a wider meaning here than it does in much English or American philosophy or psychology. Further, there is the added difficulty that the meaning of the notion is not constant throughout the Phénoménologie de la perception and that it "grows" (one might say, in Hegelian fashion) from the beginning to the end of the work. (See, e.g., the article by Théodore Geraets, "Le retour à l'expérience perceptive et le sens du primat de la perception" in Dialogue, v. 15, no. 4 (1976), pp. 595-607.) The notion of perception should not, however, present too many difficulties for us in the present work.
4. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. IX.

5. Ibid., p. XI^f. Merleau-Ponty's notion of "essence" will be discussed and criticized later in this chapter.
6. Ibid., p. XIII. More will be said about "intentionality" in the following chapter.
7. Ibid., p. III (italics added).
8. Ibid., p. XIV.
9. Ibid., p. XVI. These notions of "world" and "rationality" will be discussed later.
10. Ibid., p. V (italics added).
11. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 204. It is important to note two points in the discussion presented so far. First, I have not yet given a definition of 'language', nor have I attempted as yet any distinction between "language" and "speaking". Second, I have not really specified the kind of explanations of language that are being offered by the intellectualist or the empiricist. Are they meant to be scientific (i.e., psychological or linguistic) explanations, or are they philosophical explanations? In regard to the first point, let me note that the various distinctions concerning language will arise in the context of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of linguistic experience. In regard to the second point, it is important to realize that the explanations at this point in the discussion may be either scientific or philosophical. Merleau-Ponty wants to attack both sorts. Later in this chapter, the focus will be on scientific accounts, specifically, linguistic explanations.
12. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 205.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. 206.
15. Ibid. How exactly le mot has un sens will be shown in the third chapter. It is not clear whom Merleau-Ponty has in mind when discussing either the empiricist or the intellectualist view of language. Concerning the empiricist view, it would seem that Merleau-Ponty's account of language would have some relevance in, for example, the context of a behaviourist approach to

language, such as found in the work of Skinner's Verbal Behavior (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1957). For an account of the empiricist tradition regarding language, see also Cassirer, E., Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953, v. 1, pp. 133-138). Cassirer in this book also gives an account of the rationalist tradition regarding language.

An interesting example of the rationalist view toward language may be seen in none other than Descartes himself. Descartes speaks so little about language, and when he does discuss it in relationship to thought, i.e., true philosophy, it takes on little significance. Consider, e.g., his letter to Mersenne, 20 November 1629. (From Descartes: Philosophical Letters, ed. and transl. by A. Kenny, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

The letter is a response by Descartes to a proposal for a new language that was sent to Mersenne who had forwarded it to Descartes. Although skeptical of this particular proposal, Descartes does believe, however, that "it would be possible to devise a further system to enable one to make up the primitive words and their symbols in such a language so that it could be learnt very quickly." Descartes points out the essential ingredient for the construction of such a language. "Order is what is needed: all the thoughts which can come into the human mind must be arranged in an order like the natural order of the numbers." Just as the positive integers can be put into an ascending order (i.e., 1, 2, 3, ...) wherein one number clearly follows from a previous one, so also is it the case with thoughts. All thoughts can be ordered in such a way that a particular one strictly follows from the previous one. And once these thoughts have all been arranged, then, in order to create the universal language, one would give these thoughts a "material coating", i.e., they would be put into words. Each word would have a one-to-one-relationship to each thought, and as anyone, no matter what natural language he speaks, can understand "1, 2, 3, ...", so also could he understand the words of this universal language. Thus Descartes sees that "In a single day one can learn to name every one of the infinite series of numbers, and thus write infinitely

many different words in an unknown language. The same could be done for all the other words necessary to express all the other things which fall within the purview of the human mind." But how are all the thoughts of man going to be put into order? What will this ordering principle be? Descartes points out that "in any case the discovery of such a language depends upon the true philosophy. For without that philosophy it is impossible to number and order all the thoughts of men or even to separate them out into clear and simple thoughts..."

It is interesting to note that from this letter two points come to the fore. First, we see how important thought is. Second, we see how really unimportant the new universal language will be! That the true philosophy, which gives us absolutely certain knowledge, is such a great concern for Descartes, cannot seriously be doubted. But why is the universal language so unimportant? It is unimportant because it really helps in no way at all toward the attainment of knowledge, toward the formation of true thought. One can hear echoing in the background Merleau-Ponty's criticism that in rationalist thought the speaking subject disappears completely.

16. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 229.
17. "Sur la phénoménologie du langage" in Signes, Paris: Gallimard, 1960. A number of other articles in Signes, which will be mentioned later, deal with the problem of a phenomenology of language.
18. Ibid., p. 87. As is evident from the text of this and other articles, Merleau-Ponty sees himself as continuing the project of a linguistique synchronique indicated by Saussure in Cours de linguistique générale (Paris: Payot, 1965). Indeed, if one were to consider solely Merleau-Ponty's account of the work of Saussure, one would unhesitatingly accept the kinship of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of language and Saussure's structuralism. There is, however, an issue that arises that is tangential to the concern about methodology in this chapter, but that is still important to consider at this point. As it has been well pointed out by M. Lagueux (in his "Merleau-Ponty et la linguistique de Saussure", in Dialogue, v. 4

(1965), no. 3, pp. 351-364) "langage" for Saussure is divided into "langue" and "parole", and then "langue" is further subdivided into "synchronie" and "diachronie". For Saussure it is "langue" that can be studied scientifically by linguistics. "Parole" has no place at all within the scientific study of language. (See Saussure, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-39 and p. 139). Thus it seems that Merleau-Ponty has taken liberties with the thought of Saussure and that any value to Merleau-Ponty's linguistique synchronique de la parole must be seen as a creative transformation of Saussure's linguistics.

This gap between Merleau-Ponty and Saussure has recently been questioned by two commentators of Merleau-Ponty. In an article entitled, "Was Merleau-Ponty a Structuralist?", (in Semiotica, v. 4 (1971), no. 4, pp. 297-323), James Edie expresses some reservations about accepting too quickly Lagueux's verdict. "While it is difficult not to accept Lagueux's verdict, it is nevertheless true that many of Saussure's own texts are ambiguous and the account Merleau-Ponty gives in La prose du monde (p. 33ff), for instance, would meet most if not all of Lagueux's criticism ..." (*ibid.*, p. 305, n. 22). Edie then goes on to point out how synchronic linguistics has to take into consideration the speech acts that take place within a given linguistic community, while diachronic linguistics need pay no attention at all to actual speech acts. "Now clearly the object with which diachronic linguistics deals is something that can ONLY be studied 'objectively' and in which present, ongoing human experience can play no essential role. But, conversely, the object of synchronic linguistics, though it is the 'form' or 'system' of the present state of a given language and not the speech act itself, is nevertheless nothing other than the presently given, incubating and changing structure of the sum total of all presently recognized acts of speaking that take place within a given community, and it is nothing but the description of these acts. Moreover, since each historical state that can be distinguished in the diachronic study of a given language was at one time a living, future-directed, synchronic system, we can see the sense in which 'a synchronic linguistics of speech' envelops and takes precedence over a 'diachronic linguistics of language'. (*Ibid.*) Thus Merleau-Ponty and Saussure do not differ in any essential way.

Before we consider the second commentator, let us consider more closely Edie's objections. Edie wants to say essentially that diachronics need not take into consideration actual speech acts because it is an historical study, whereas synchronics has to be concerned with speech acts. And if speech acts can be classified under "parole" instead of "langue", then synchronics becomes linguistique synchronique de la parole. It seems, however, that Edie is confusing two different considerations, and it is this confusion which makes the rapprochement between Merleau-Ponty and Saussure feasible. On the one hand, if we are considering the source or foundation of synchronics, then it would seem that parole is essential. That is, synchronics is the study of the present structure of a language, and that present structure is the result of particular acts of speaking, parole. Thus, synchronics ultimately rests on parole. But if we can make such a connection between synchronics and parole, we can make it between diachronics and parole, since the history of a language is based on changes in its actual structure and its actual structure is based on parole. So both synchronics and diachronics, from this point of view, can be seen as linked with parole.

On the other hand, if we consider the actual phenomena, the actual "stuff" on which linguistics focuses, then parole becomes unimportant. Edie rightly points out that the history of a language can be studied only "objectively"; i.e., that actual human experience plays no part in diachronics. Yet, if we are considering only the material to be studied, then synchronics will have as little to do with "actual human experience" as does diachronics. Although it is true that the present structure of a given language arises from the particular speech acts of particular individual human beings, the sole object of study of synchronics is that which they produce regardless of the process by which it comes about. In this context it may be useful to keep in mind Saussure's chess analogy (op. cit., p. 43, p. 125f, p. 153). Analogously, diachronics studies the particular moves of, say, the knight or the bishop from, say, KN1 to KB3 or KB1 to QB4 without taking into consideration at all the relationship of the knight and the bishop at the beginning of the game or

after three moves. On the other hand, analogously, synchronics would study that interrelationship of the white pieces after, say, the second or third move. It is not interested in the movement of the piece, nor is it interested in anything other than the actual "objectively given" pieces on the board. If we take this analogy seriously, we discover that synchronics is as "objective" as diachronics and that actual human experience is as irrelevant to synchronics as the colour of the chess board is to the position of the pieces.

A second reconsideration of the relation between Merleau-Ponty and Saussure is given by G. Charron in his book, Du Langage (Ottawa: Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1972, p. 98f). Charron indicates that certain texts of Saussure can be cited as evidence for such a relationship. E.g., Saussure says in Cours, op. cit., p. 128 that "La synchronie ne connaît qu'une perspective, celle des sujets parlants, et toute sa méthode consiste à recueillir leur témoignage ..." and further concerning diachronics and synchronics that "l'aspect synchronique prime l'autre, puisque pour la masse parlante il est la vraie et la seule réalité." (p. 128) Thus, since it is absurd to think that Merleau-Ponty could have missed the thrust of these texts, it appears more plausible that Merleau-Ponty was developing a hidden theme in Saussure and that there really is less of a gap between the two thinkers than one thinks.

It is clear from Charron's account that there are some ambiguities in the text of Saussure. And perhaps Merleau-Ponty was exploiting them to his own advantage. Yet, there still are the discrepancies between Saussure's own worked out position and Merleau-Ponty's interpretation. But, perhaps we should consider the intentions of Merleau-Ponty when considering his interpretation of Saussure. As Charron has well-pointed out, "Rêtenons pour l'instant que si Merleau-Ponty se tourne vers la parole et la synchronie, vers le sujet parlant, c'est d'abord ses préoccupations de phénoménologue qui l'y portent." (p. 98) Thus, as is the case with Merleau-Ponty's use of the Husserlian texts, so it seems here too that he has used Saussure for his own purposes, viz., those of an existential phenomenologist.

If such is the case, then we must tread carefully so as not to attribute to Saussure that which is not really his.

19. In Edie, op. cit., p. 300f and especially p. 303, where he states, "It was in what we here distinguish as his SECOND PERIOD that Merleau-Ponty developed a new and different attitude toward language, under the influence of his reading of Saussure and scientific linguistics." Fontaine-DeVisscher in her work Phénomène ou structure?: essai sur langage chez Merleau-Ponty, Bruxelles: Publications des Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis, 1974, also sees a discrepancy between the Phénoménologie de la perception account of language and that found in the articles in Signes. The nature of Fontaine-DeVisscher's remarks are such that they can better be handled later in this thesis in the context of the discussion of le mot and la signification gestuelle.
20. Edie gives a list of the works of Merleau-Ponty that deal with the "middle period" of his thought (Edie, op. cit., p. 303).
21. Edie, op. cit., p. 300f.
22. Ibid., p. 303.
23. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 221.
24. Edie, op. cit., p. 303.
25. Cours de Sorbonne, Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, 1951 (hereinafter SHP).
26. Ibid., p. 45. A comment on the parole parlée/parole parlante distinction is desirable here. Charron, op. cit., realizes the relationship between parole parlante/parole parlée and parole/langue. Yet, in his account he seems to want to draw a distinction between parole parlée and langue. As he states "En première approximation on dira que la parole ajoute à la langue l'opération par laquelle tel système linguistique est assumé et utilisé par un sujet pour communiquer avec

quelqu'un." (p. 101) It is not clear, however, that Merleau-Ponty wishes to talk about parole parlée in terms of an operation. In the Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 229, he talks about langages and parole parlée in terms of systems of already acquired significations. If parole parlée is the set of significations already acquired, then it is really similar to langue, the objectively given system of signs studied by the linguist. If there is any real difference between the two, it would be that parole parlée, as indicated by Merleau-Ponty's description of it in the Phénoménologie de la perception, is wider than langue. That is to say, it refers to all sorts of "moyens d'expression", some of which may not be considered as part of the system of signs that the linguist studies. In any case, the distinction that will be of methodological interest to us, for the duration of this chapter as well as for the following two chapters, will be the parole/ langue distinction.

27. Merleau-Ponty cites Pos's article ("Phénoménologie et linguistique", Revue internationale de philosophie, v. 1 (1939), no. 2, pp. 254-365) in Signes, p. 106 and SHP, p. 40f.
28. SHP, p. 41.
29. It may now seem confusing to one that Merleau-Ponty seems to sanction the objectivist point of view, in terms of a scientific analysis when he seemed to be castigating the "objectivist" point of view in the Phénoménologie de la perception. But there really is no contradiction here, for in the Phénoménologie de la perception Merleau-Ponty was not criticizing the objectivist position as a scientific method. Rather, he was criticizing the position when it becomes a philosophical position, a position that would rule out any other view of the phenomena. What Merleau-Ponty is trying to indicate is that the objectivist approach is legitimate when it is restricted to the realm of scientific methodology, and as such it would need to be complemented by a phenomenological account of the data in order to give a more complete account of the phenomena. More will be said about the phenomenological critique of scientific explanations in the two chapters on Merleau-Ponty's view of philosophy.

30. SHP, p. 41. (*Italics added.*)
31. Ibid.
32. A linguist might furiously object to Merleau-Ponty's claim that the scientist of langue is always concerned with the past of language. The linguist might want to say that Merleau-Ponty has in mind a particular branch of linguistics that deals with the past transformations of different words in different languages. (One might even want to say that Merleau-Ponty is really talking about only one possible method used in the study of language, viz., diachronic linguistics.) Thus, the kind of distinction he is drawing between phenomenology and science, one would conclude, is a very weak one. Yet, although the distinction is weak, especially when isolated from the other distinctions he is drawing, one must realize what Merleau-Ponty is doing in drawing any distinctions at all. Merleau-Ponty is certainly not claiming that focus on the past is a necessary condition for a science; he is not even claiming that it is a sufficient condition (it obviously would not be), although one might consider the set of conditions that he is laying out as jointly sufficient, though not jointly necessary, for a scientific perspective. More correctly, however, one would say that Merleau-Ponty, rather than drawing hard-and-fast distinctions between a phenomenology of speech and a science of language, is at this point trying to indicate diverging tendencies or concerns of the two. That is to say, it will more likely be the case that a science of language will be concerned with the past of language (even if it is the immediate past); etc.; whereas, the phenomenologist of speech will focus his concern on the actual, "flesh and blood" speaker of the language in an everyday speaking situation. Throughout our analysis of Merleau-Ponty's thought one must constantly avoid the temptation to interpret him as presenting necessary and sufficient conditions for X, whatever X may be. Although at times he might be doing this, usually he is not.
33. SHP, p. 41f.
34. Ibid., p. 11.

35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., p. 36.
37. Ibid., p. 35.
38. And there are, indeed, other difficulties in Merleau-Ponty's account of phenomenology in SHP. Consider, e.g., the problem of the crisis of the human sciences which is the principal theme of the article. This crisis, which, I might add, is still with us according to Merleau-Ponty, is the crisis brought about by the growth of the sciences of man. "Les recherches psychologiques, sociologiques, historiques, à mesure qu'elles se développaient, tendaient à nous présenter toute pensée, toute opinion et en particulier toute philosophie, comme le résultat de l'action combinée des conditions psychologiques, sociales, historiques extérieures." What is so disturbing to Merleau-Ponty is that such a trend leads irrevocably to an irrational relativism in which all knowledge loses its value. And what value then do these conclusions of the human sciences have, if such is the case?

Merleau-Ponty wants to show that such conclusions ultimately destroy any validation in the social (human) sciences and philosophy. But how exactly does this happen? Undoubtedly, Merleau-Ponty is thinking of a psychology, for example, that reduces all consciousness to a series of causally determined brain processes. In such a situation there would be no place left for questions regarding truth, etc. There would only be causal sequences of brain processes.

The important question for us to ask here is: Does the reductionist tendency of such approaches lead to the disappearance of all justification for knowledge? Certainly this would be the case, if a psychology said not only (a) that there is nothing but brain processes, but also (b) that there are no legitimate grounds that can be furnished for any knowledge claims. But it is more important to note that the second claim (viz., regarding the justification of knowledge claims) does not strictly follow from the first. That is to say, contra Merleau-Ponty, that

psychologism, historicism, or sociology do not necessarily lead from a logical point of view to the destruction of science and philosophy. If such social scientists point out the psychological, historical, or sociological conditions behind the appearance of a particular philosophy (or science), this does not mean that they are ruling out the possibility of deciding which philosophy is "correct" (if we may use this non-technical term here). Such a sanction against such questions can be offered only as another postulate of historicism or psychologism. It does not follow strictly from a consideration of underlying conditions.

One may point out here that I am not taking historicism or psychologism the way Merleau-Ponty is. In other words, I may not be dealing with Merleau-Ponty's notion of these "isms". This may be so. Yet, I would still want to point out the important distinction between an "ism" as a science of the underlying conditions of knowledge and an "ism" which rules out all questions of truth, etc. It would seem to me that one could have an "ism" of the first kind without having an "ism" of the second kind. That Merleau-Ponty does not make this distinction is clear from his consideration of psychologism. "Si le 'psychologisme' nous dit que le philosophe, et sa pensée ne sont que des marionnettes, des mécanismes psychologiques ou de l'histoire extérieure, on peut toujours lui répondre qu'il en va de même pour lui, et discréditer ainsi sa propre critique." (SHP, p. 7) It is not clear that the philosopher-as-marionette approach rules out the possibility of considering the truth of a philosophy. The philosopher may be a pure product of external conditions, yet we may still ask if, according to another standard, his philosophy is "correct". It does not seem that psychologism would necessarily rule out the possibility of another standard. And if this is so, then Merleau-Ponty's reductio proof fails. (We may think of, in this context, the difference between a methodological behaviourism and a philosophical behaviourism.) If one, on the other hand, wishes to assert that for Merleau-Ponty (1) knowledge is possible only if a subject is present and (2) psychologism, etc. rule out the presence of a subject, then it is clear

that Merleau-Ponty must quite explicitly show how (1) is in fact the case. And it is not clear that he has done so.

Such difficulties as I have just outlined are not strictly speaking difficulties pertaining to the phenomenological method per se, although I think that it is important to consider them within the context of Merleau-Ponty's account of phenomenology and science. More, of course, will be said about phenomenology, science and philosophy in the fifth and sixth chapters.

PART II: LANGUAGE

CHAPTER 3: SIGNIFICATION GESTUELLE

The phenomenological viewpoint on language, as we have just shown, brings us back to the speaking subject. Now our question becomes: What do we find when we make such a return? Let us begin to answer this question by looking again at the Phénoménologie de la perception, since this is the place where Merleau-Ponty first discusses the speaking subject. As we have seen so far, our return to la parole is necessary for avoiding the pitfalls of either an empiricist or an intellectualist point of view. By returning to the speaking subject we discover that a word (le mot) is not merely an external covering for a thought. Nor is it a physical response to a given stimulus. Rather, both views of words must be rejected in returning to the speaking subject. "On dépasse donc aussi bien l'intellectualisme que l'empiricisme par cette simple remarque que le mot a un sens!"¹ Our way out of the dilemmas of empiricism and rationalism will be guided by our view of words as having meaning (sens). But what kind of meanings do words have? What is characteristic about meaning that is found in the speaking subject?

From this phenomenological point of view Merleau-Ponty directs us to our actual experience of language, for it is this actual experience that will give us the clue to the type of meaning that is found. What kind of experience, then, do we have of language? Merleau-Ponty discusses briefly two different experiences and it would do us well to look at them closely.² Let us take the case of a writer who is going to sit down to write a book.³ Now, the writer may have some idea in his mind concerning what he would like to write. It is true that he has some ideas which he would like to express. But the ideas are not absolutely and clearly formulated until they are expressed in words. The ideas, in a sense, need the words in order to become clearly formed ideas. The writer does not translate an already precisely formed thought into words. The words bring about the genuine existence of the ideas. Or take, as another example, the situation in which we try to grasp a particular object conceptually by groping for its name.

La dénomination des objets ne vient pas après la reconnaissance, elle est la reconnaissance même. Quand je fixe un objet dans la pénombre et que je dis: "C'est une brosse", il n'y a pas dans mon esprit un concept de la brosse, sous lequel je subsumerais l'objet et qui d'autre part se trouverait lié par une association fréquente avec le mot de

"brosse", mais le mot porte le sens,
 et, en l'imposant à l'objet, j'ai
 conscience d'atteindre l'objet.⁴

When I have to grope for the name of an object, is it really the case that I am just looking for the appropriate name for something which I already have clearly and distinctly in my mind? Or is it rather that insofar as I have to grope for the name I really am groping for the object itself? Do I really know something before I have it, or is it that I come to know the thing by naming it? How can I say that I adequately grasp an object if I cannot find the right word for it?

One might object, however, that this view is not really correct. That is, one might ask: Is it not the case, whenever we name something for the purpose of communicating it, that, say, a Speaker A chooses a word w in order to communicate a thought t to a Listener B who takes word w and finds buried in it the thought t? "Ici comme partout il paraît d'abord vrai que la conscience ne peut trouver dans son expérience que ce qu'elle y a mis elle-même."⁵ And, indeed, it seems that the word which we use to express a thought (which names an object) does not really add anything to the thought itself. The word 'brush' seems to add nothing to the concept "brush". Yet, if this intellectualist account

of speech is true, i.e. if in fact speech (la parole) adds nothing to thought (la pensée), then communication and genuine learning would both be impossible. "Ainsi l'expérience de la communication serait une illusion. Une conscience construit, -- pour X, -- cette machine de langage qui donnera à une autre conscience l'occasion d'effectuer les mêmes pensées, mais rien ne passe réellement de l'une à l'autre."⁶ It would do us well to take a closer look at this argument, since it is one of the more important ones that Merleau-Ponty uses in trying to refute the intellectualist position.

What Merleau-Ponty is arguing is this: If the intellectualist position concerning the nature of language is true, then there would not be any genuine communication and learning. But, contrary to the intellectualist view, we do in fact experience genuine learning and communication. Hence, there is genuine learning and communication. Hence, the intellectualist position concerning the nature of language is false. But, we may ask, why does the intellectualist position involve such a view toward communication? As indicated above, Merleau-Ponty sees that if language is a mere external manifestation of a particular thought, then in order to communicate thought t to Listener B one would

indicate thought t by word w. Word w would then "trigger" the appropriate thought t in Listener B. Nothing would actually pass from A to B. A particular speaking situation would be the occasion for the "triggering" of certain thoughts. But now we must ask: Does the intellectualist position necessarily involve such a view toward communication. Certainly it is the case that from the intellectualist point of view language plays no role at all in the development of thought.⁷ Yet does this mean that there is no true learning or communication? First of all, it is not clear why such a view of communication and learning that Merleau-Ponty claims is implied in the intellectualist position is really not a sound view. Why can communication and learning not involve a kind of "triggering" of ideas already buried somewhere in one's own mind? It may not be our "normal", "everyday" view of communication and learning, but there is nothing contradictory about it. Secondly, why does the intellectualist position have to involve such a view at all? It is not clear, for example, that an "intellectualist" like Descartes had to accept the view that each human being actually had in his mind all the clear and distinct ideas possible. Rather, he could have accepted a different view, viz., that the person

teaching something to someone "wraps" the idea up in a package which is language and passes it to the learner who then "unwraps" the ideas, throws away the wrapper, and assimilates the contents. Since this view is one that is logically possible in the intellectualist position, it seems that Merleau-Ponty has not really refuted the intellectualist, at least on this point.

There is, however, something genuine in Merleau-Ponty's criticism, in an indirect sort of way. At the root of this criticism of the intellectualist account, and of the development of his own view of language, is Merleau-Ponty's genuine concern for the Socratic paradox. Merleau-Ponty does want to say that learning is possible, hence that new knowledge and communication are possible. Yet, what of the paradox of learning found in the Socratic dialogues? Is it not the case that we must in some way know already what we are searching for? Merleau-Ponty does want to accept this half of the paradox; i.e., he does want to say that we know in some way what we are going to learn (or what is going to be communicated to us). Yet, his solution is not a Platonic one: "Cependant le problème étant de savoir comment, selon l'apparence, la conscience apprend quelque chose, la solution ne peut pas consister à dire qu'elle sait tout d'avance".⁸ In other words, as we have fairly well seen

so far, true learning cannot take place, according to Merleau-Ponty, if such "learning" is nothing more than a recollection or a recalling of what we already "know". Yet, Merleau-Ponty does want to say that we do have a prior contact with the truth. That is, we do possess a type of "knowledge" which makes it possible for us to learn. But the "knowledge" which we possess is a type of signification perceptuelle, if we may use that phrase in this context. We are able to learn and to communicate because we are in contact with a sphere of meaning that is based on our contact with the perceptual world, the world in which we live. It is this perceptual world which provides the foundations for communication and learning.

Our excursion into Merleau-Ponty's criticism of the intellectualist view of communication and learning has brought us to the point of our original departure. We have already indicated above that Merleau-Ponty sees that we must go beyond intellectualism and empiricism by recovering the meaning of the word. ("Le mot a un sens.") But what is the meaning of the word? What kind of signification is found in le mot, at the level of la parole? It certainly is true that when we understand someone's thought we understand more than just the thought itself. "Le fait est que nous avons le pouvoir de comprendre au delà de ce que nous pensions spontanément."⁹ That is to say,

the words which we confront, for example, when we read a new philosophical work, bear a sense beyond the literal sense of the words. We may read the text all the way through, and we may understand every word in it. Yet, we still may not understand the text itself. We would begin to understand it only by trying to capture the "tone" or "style" of the text (or what will be called "the gesture" of the speaker). That is, we begin to understand the thought of another, not by trying to translate the language of a text directly into the thought behind it, but by trying to understand the language "beyond" (au delà de) the thought which is the very foundation of that thought. "Il faut bien qu'ici le sens des mots soit finalement induit par les mots eux-mêmes, ou plus exactement que leur signification conceptuelle se forme par prélèvement sur une signification gestuelle, qui, elle, est immanente à la parole."¹⁰

It is this signification gestuelle which is the meaning (le sens) of the word (le mot) that Merleau-Ponty indicated earlier.¹¹ It is speech with its gestural signification that is the key to the understanding of linguistic expression. This realization of the signification gestuelle of language helps us to see the true "physionomie" of la parole. Language as speech is not a sign of thought, in the sense that a sign "announces"

that which it signifies. For language to "announce" thought both would have to exist separately in a thematically complete form. But such is not the case with language and thought.

"...en réalité elles sont enveloppées l'une dans l'autre, le sens est pris dans la parole et la parole est l'existence extérieure du sens."¹² Language is not something which obtains all its power or meaning from thought alone. Rather language itself has its own hidden source of power. "C'est donc que la parole ou les mots portent une première couche de signification qui leur est adhérente et qui donne la pensée comme style, comme valeur affective, comme mimique existentielle, plutôt que comme énoncé conceptuel."¹³ There is no such thing, for Merleau-Ponty, as a thought in itself, complete before expression. Expression, through la parole, adds a new interior dimension to thought, and it is language with its signification gestuelle which provides that new dimension. Language gives thought a body, a being-in-the-world. Language, in fact, is itself a gesture; this is the sense of its signification gestuelle. "La parole est un véritable geste et elle contient son sens comme le geste contient le sien...La parole est un geste et sa signification un monde."¹⁴

In short, then, the meaning that words have, above all, is a gestural meaning, a signification gestuelle. But now we must ask: What is the nature of this gestural meaning? How is la parole essentially a gesture? In order to see how speech is a gesture, we must first look at the gesture itself. Yet, we do not find Merleau-Ponty giving us any explicit account of the gesture. But this is so only because it is everywhere discussed in the Phénoménologie de la perception. This will become more clear by our considering three principal aspects of the gesture, viz. (a) that the gesture is located at the level of le corps propre; (b) that the gesture is thoroughly intentional; and (c) that the gesture is encountered and understood pre-predicatively or pre-reflectively. Let us consider each point.

As was explained in the first chapter, the principal task for Merleau-Ponty in the Phénoménologie de la perception is the exploration of the foundations of our experience of spatiality, motility, sexuality, etc. And, further, we saw that all these experiences were grounded in one's everyday world, the perceived world. Moreover, at this level one's contact with the perceived world is through one's body; i.e., one might at this point be called a body-in-the-world. Thus,

for Merleau-Ponty, the task is to uncover the structures of this body-subject in its everyday experiences. And, indeed, the key to our understanding of the body-subject is the gesture. But what can this mean? We have seen that the body-subject is in the world, that it acts, that it does things, whatever they may be. But this very presence of the body-subject in the world is epitomized by the gesture. This may become more clear if we consider even our ordinary notion of 'gesture'.

The gesture of a person, as we encounter it in everyday experience, is something that is encountered as belonging to a person, i.e. as something personal. The way a particular person walks, the way he moves his head or hand, the kind of facial expressions that he makes, all of these indicate a particular person's particular way of being-present-in-the-world. For Merleau-Ponty this is precisely what such gestures indicate, viz., a person's particular way of living in the world. It is the body-subject's way of being-in-the-world that is portrayed by the gesture. Indeed, a particular body-subject must express itself, i.e. live, in a particular fashion in the world. Thus, it must express itself through the gesture.

Furthermore, for Merleau-Ponty, the gesture of a particular person is not simply confined to the kinds of movement that the person expresses in his daily life. Rather, every aspect of a person's daily existence, including his sexual life, is a gesture in the sense that it is an expression of his particular way of being-in-the-world. And, as we shall see, language too is a gesture. But let us take a closer look at the gesture itself.

The gesture is essential to le corps propre: But insofar as it is so, it is at the same time thoroughly intentional. As such the notion of intentionality is a rather familiar one to phenomenologists. Indeed, in the "Avant-Propos" to Phénoménologie de la perception Merleau-Ponty indicates that such a notion is often cited as the principal discovery of phenomenology, viz., that all consciousness is consciousness-of-something, that every conscious act is directed toward an object.¹⁵ But according to Merleau-Ponty, it is necessary to distinguish, as he claims Husserl did, two kinds of intentionality, a thematic intentionality, at the level of reflective judgements, and an operant intentionality, at the level of our everyday existence.¹⁶

The corps propre is essentially directed to a world and is necessarily tied to it. And this linkage is expressed in all the activities of the body-subject in its everyday world. Thus, the gesture, as the expression of le corps propre, is intentional also. That is, it is directed toward a world in which it and the world form a whole. The various gestures of a particular person, whether understood in our narrower everyday sense or the wider Merleau-Pontian sense, do not exist in isolation; they are gestures that are aimed at a particular perceived situation. A person does not frown, smile, or move his head at random. Rather, all these gestures are found in a situation and it is the situation as the background or backdrop for the gestures that forms the noematic correlate of the intentional act. Thus, we can never understand a gesture in isolation from the situation in the world which is the background for the gesture. But this point about one's understanding of the gesture brings us to our third point.

The gesture is the essential aspect of le corps propre and is intentional in character. And further, the intentionality of the gesture of le corps propre is an operative intentionality, rather than an explicitly thematic intentionality. But as the gesture resides at this pre-reflective level, so too does one's

comprehension of it. In other words, we might ask: How is it that we understand the gestures of another? Do we need to conceptualize or to bring to reflection the gestures of another? Or, rather, do we "understand" them by being in a situation in which we live with the particular person? For Merleau-Ponty we really "understand" another's gesture by being in a situation wherein our comprehension of one's gesture involves our being able to interact with the given individual. For example, we may not be able to give an explicit account of what is characteristic about a particular person whom we know, yet we still could recognize such a person when we encounter him on the street. Further, we may very well be able to recognize particular gestures of said person when, say, we see the person walking down the road at a very great distance. That is, we can recognize that a particular gesture belongs to a particular person even though we are not clearly and distinctly aware of either the gesture or the person. That a person has a particular gestural characteristic is something that is experienced and comprehended pre-reflectively.

If these are the key aspects of the gesture, then we should expect to find them when we consider la parole, since the meaning of speech is its signification gestuelle. Let us

look at each aspect of le geste in relation to la parole.

First, speech, if it is a gesture, should be an essential part of the body-subject's being-in-the-world. That is, the way a particular person speaks and the kinds of words he uses will be a manifestation of the way that he lives. Moreover, a particular language, with a particular vocabulary, will indeed be a manifestation of the way that a particular group of persons, united in a particular culture, will live in their world. Indeed, language as a gesture will be rooted in the being-in-the-world of a particular set of persons. However, one might object, can we really call language anything but arbitrary or conventional? How can we talk about significations gestuelles when in fact it seems that all that words have are significations arbitraires? "Si nous ne considérons que le sens conceptuel et terminal des mots, il est vrai que la forme verbale -- exception faite des désinences -- semble arbitraire."¹⁷

Indeed, if we look just to the conceptual meaning of a word, it appears arbitrary that, e.g. in English "night" is called 'night', whereas in French it is 'nuit'. But Merleau-Ponty is getting at something deeper than the conceptual meaning. If we look to the lived world, the world of le corps propre in which a natural language functions, we find a variety of differences among these

different languages. The various connotations, the nuances which make poetry possible, the predominance of vowels over consonants all indicate "plusieurs manières pour le corps humain de célébrer le monde et finalement de le vivre."¹⁸

All of these variations in various languages all point to the fact that their roots are in the body-subjects of a particular culture.

Further, since language is essentially gestural and thus rooted in le corps propre and since le corps propre is essentially intentional, then we would expect that language is essentially intentional. Indeed, this is clearly indicated by Merleau-Ponty: "La parole est un geste et sa signification un monde."¹⁹ The words that are spoken by persons in a particular culture are essentially words that are directed toward a world. The words we speak are bound to the world in which we live, the world in which we move, think, act, etc. The peculiar characteristics of any language, which were pointed out above, arise out of the background of our everyday world of human activity, and one cannot give an adequate account of a language unless we also give an account of the world in which it is spoken. Indeed, the tie between a language and its world is so tight that

...le sens plein d'une langue n'est jamais traduisible dans une autre. Nous pouvons parler plusieurs langues, mais l'une d'elle reste toujours celle dans laquelle nous vivons. Pour assimiler complètement une langue, il faudrait assumer le monde qu'elle exprime et l'on n'appartient jamais à deux mondes à la fois.²⁰

Merleau-Ponty's reasoning is subtle at this point and it would do us well to consider this passage more closely.

If language intends a world, then there is an inseparable link between the two. Thus the meaning of the words of the language will always be linked to the world in which one lives. And further, the meaning (sens) of any word will not be completely translatable from one language into another. For in order for that to happen, one would actually have to transpose the world of the first language into the world of the second. But this is logically impossible. Thus, one cannot completely translate from one language into another. Let us consider an example of this. In fact, let us not take a more obvious example, that of poetic expression, but rather let us consider an everyday example. We all know that the English 'night' can be translated into the French word 'nuit'. Indeed, it would seem that this is a very good example of the complete translatability of one word into

another. Ask anyone on the street and he will tell you that 'night' is 'nuit' (or conversely 'nuit' is 'night'). Yet, can 'night' always be translated by 'nuit'? It does seem that some of our most colloquial expressions give us reason to answer affirmatively, for even the expression "Good Night!" is translated as "Bonne Nuit!" and vice-versa. Yet, what about a most common example "Hockey Night in Canada"? The French, as we all know, is "Soirée du Hockey". But why is it not "Nuit du Hockey"? Why is 'night' here translated as 'soirée'? Obviously, 'nuit' would just not fit. But then, why is the English not 'evening' instead of 'night', as our dictionary tells us? Just as obviously, "Hockey Evening in Canada" would also not work. But why is that? If 'night' and 'nuit' were completely interchangeable, i.e. if the sense of one were completely translatable into the other, then we would expect that wherever we use the one we may use the other. But such is not the case. 'Night' could be 'nuit', but it could also be something else. And we can know which is appropriate only by living in a particular language rooted in a particular culture. Such examples show us that the idea of a completely transparent sense of a word is an illusion and that we must come to see the signification conceptuelle

of a language rooted in the signification gestuelle.²¹

Finally, if speech is a gesture and thus grounded in le corps propre and thoroughly intentional, it would then seem that we have to understand or comprehend language in the same way that we understand or comprehend the gesture. In other words, language as a gesture is first encountered and ultimately comprehended pre-reflectively, at the level of our everyday experience. Merleau-Ponty makes this clear in the following passage.

...en pays étranger, je commence à comprendre le sens des mots par leur place dans un contexte d'action et en participant à la vie commune, -- de même un texte philosophique encore mal compris me révèle au moins un certain "style", -- soit un style spinoziste, criticiste ou phénoménologique, -- qui est la première esquisse de son sens, je commence à comprendre une philosophie en me glissant dans la manière d'exister de cette pensée, en reproduisant le ton, l'accent du philosophe.²²

Merleau-Ponty is making two points here. First, we begin to understand another language or particular words and phrases of such language, only by approaching it at the level of action. That is, we will not really begin to know what 'nuit' is in French, e.g., until we experience how it is used by the people who speak the language every day in various situations. Indeed,

any language which we confront, whether a natural language or special "language" of a philosopher or novelist, will first confront us the way a particular gesture of a person confronts us. We begin to know it only by living with it. Second, Merleau-Ponty is indicating something even stronger. That is, he is implying here that living with a particular language is a necessary condition for complete comprehension of that language. In other words, I can never know a language completely until I have experienced it spoken in an everyday setting. I would be able only to obtain the signification conceptuelle of the particular langue if I were to attempt to confront it as a completely transparent entity.

In short, then, the three features of the signification gestuelle that are at the bottom of the meaning of words are: (a) it resides at the level of the body-subject; (b) it is thoroughly intentional; and (c) it is encountered and understood pre-reflectively. There is one problem, however, that one may have, given the above account. If language has a gestural basis, one may ask, then how can we distinguish between natural signs and conventional signs? Is Merleau-Ponty not confusing something which is conventional or arbitrary, i.e. language, with something which is natural, i.e. gestures, emotions, etc.?

Has not Merleau-Ponty mixed together two areas of experience that should remain separated? Merleau-Ponty is aware of such difficulties, and his answers to these questions may seem outrageous.

Il est impossible de superposer chez l'homme une première couche de comportements que l'on appellerait "naturels" et un monde culturel ou spirituel fabriqué. Tout est fabriqué et tout est naturel chez l'homme, comme on voudra dire, en ce sens qu'il n'est pas un mot, pas une conduite qui ne doive quelque chose à l'être simplement biologique...²³

Everything is natural and everything is created, or cultural, in the human world! Instead of circumventing the seemingly sensible objections indicated above, Merleau-Ponty sets full sail into them. In what way can everything be natural and cultural? How can one make any sense out of Merleau-Ponty's position? First, it should be pointed out that Merleau-Ponty is not stating something which is self-contradictory. What he is trying to indicate by making such a paradoxical claim is that one cannot separate into completely isolated compartments that which is natural and that which is cultural. One cannot, as it were, classify in a double-column ledger on the one side that which is natural and on the other side that which is cultural. There can be no hard-and-fast distinction between

the two which would allow us to classify an entity, such as a word, a tree, or a bicycle, as either natural or cultural. Every entity found in the world has a natural aspect and a cultural aspect. A tree, a supposed example of a natural object, is certainly "natural" to the extent that it is something which is not created by human beings. Yet, it does have a cultural aspect. It is something which is recognized by human beings as being a thing that has certain useful properties. It is an entity that is classified in our sciences and studied by our scientists. Thus, the tree, an object of nature, is also an object for the human world, the world of culture. We must not, however, conclude from this that Merleau-Ponty wishes to do away with the distinction "natural/cultural". He does not want us to stop talking about natural objects and cultural objects. Rather, what Merleau-Ponty wants us to realize is that the distinction should not become a division. That is, we may for particular purposes classify some things as natural and others as cultural. Given a particular context and a particular goal, we may classify a tree, e.g., as a natural object and the word 'tree' as a cultural object. But we should remember that given very different contexts, we may possibly want to classify them in just the opposite way. Trees and 'trees' both

have a natural and a cultural dimension.

Merleau-Ponty follows out the consequences of this position in a very interesting way when he treats the problem of the distinction between artificial languages and natural languages. Ultimately, what he will want to show is that since "all is natural and all is cultural" there can be no hard-and-fast distinction between artificial languages and natural languages and that both will have aspects of the conventional and the natural. He first treats the topic in the section called "Le Cogito" in Phénoménologie de la perception, and that is where we shall begin the discussion.²⁴ Merleau-Ponty has many problems in mind when he begins the discussion of the cogito, and one problem is the problem of the relationship between language and thought. Although this topic will be treated in more detail later in this thesis, one point emerges from his discussion. Language shows that

...pensées, dans leur actualité, n'ont jamais été, elles non plus, de "pures" pensées, qu'en elles déjà il y avait excès du signifié sur le signifiant et le même effort de la pensée-pensée pour égaler la pensée pensante, la même provisoire jonction de l'une et de l'autre qui fait tout le mystère de l'expression.²⁵

Merleau-Ponty wants to say that all thoughts are rooted in expression and that no thought is sufficient unto itself. That is to say, no thought is totally transparent, and thought is incomplete until expressed. (Of course, no thought is complete even after it is expressed, in the sense that nothing further could be said. What Merleau-Ponty seems to be implying here is that an idea does not have the status of something intersubjective nor does it have any clear-cut shape, until it is expressed.) But then this must be true for any thought or idea.

Ce qu'on appelle idée est nécessairement lié à un acte d'expression et lui doit son apparence d'autonomie. C'est un objet culturel, comme l'église, la rue, le crayon, ou la IX^e Symphonie.²⁶

Paradoxically enough, it is the fact that thoughts or ideas must be expressed that is the ground for the appearance of autonomy. Yet, more importantly, an idea is as cultural an object as is a church, a street, etc. But what is the nature of this cultural aspect of an idea? How, for example, can we say that something as "pure" as the idea of a triangle is really not so pure and that it really has a cultural aspect? In other words, to relate it to our original problem, how can we say that the idea of a triangle is anything but a pure

convention which is true for all time?²⁷ What makes Merleau-Ponty think that the idea of a triangle is somehow essentially tied to the human world? "En réalité, l'idée du triangle avec ses propriétés, celle de l'équation du second degré ont leur aire historique et géographique."²⁸ Even though the triangle may appear to us as something completely constructed and hence completely arbitrary, it is still true that the triangle had a beginning in the history of humanity. The triangle has an historical foundation and even a geographical one, since it was "created" at a particular time in a particular place. The sort of "finitude" of what appears to be "infinite" is reflected in Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the distinction between truths of reason and truths of fact. Indeed, this discussion is really an extension of the discussion of the idea of a triangle (with its three angles equalling two right angles), which is a specific example of a truth of reason.

It may seem that one can in fact make a hard-and-fast distinction between a truth of reason and a truth of fact. Truths of reason, e.g. "A = A", are truths for all times, under all conditions, while truths of fact, e.g. "This table is brown", may be true today but not so tomorrow.

Cependant, cela ne fait pas, entre vérités de fait et vérités de raison, une différence essentielle. Car il n'est pas une de mes actions, pas une de mes pensées même erronées, du moment que j'y ai adhéré, qui n'ait visé une valeur ou une vérité et qui ne garde en conséquence son actualité dans la suite de ma vie non seulement comme fait ineffaçable, mais encore comme étape nécessaire vers les vérités ou les valeurs plus complètes que j'ai reconnues dans la suite... Réciproquement, il n'est pas une vérité de raison qui ne garde un coefficient de facticité: la prétendue transparence de la géométrie euclidienne se révèle un jour comme transparence pour une certaine période historique de l'esprit humain, elle signifie seulement que les hommes ont pu pendant un temps prendre pour "sol" de leurs pensées un espace homogène à trois dimensions, et assumer sans question ce que la science généralisée considérera comme une spécification contingente de l'espace. Ainsi toute vérité de fait est vérité de raison, toute vérité de raison est vérité de fait.²⁹

Even though there may seem to be some essential difference between truths of reason and truths of fact, such is not the case. On the one hand, any truth of fact, e.g., "this table is brown", has an aspect of permanence. That is, no matter what happens, it is true now, and indeed true "for all eternity" that it is true now, that the table is brown. No matter what happens, it is true and always will be true that at such-and-such a time in such-and-such a place this table was brown. Further, as Merleau-Ponty points out, each truth

of fact is not some isolated truth, i.e., it is not something completely finite. Rather, any truth of fact will have some place in the course of my life, in the course of my search for more complete truths. And it is in this respect that it takes on the "air" of the eternal. On the other hand, there is not one truth of reason that did not have its beginning some time in history. That is, every truth of reason, even, e.g., "A = A" had some beginning, it was discovered or "constructed" at some time by some people in a particular geographical location. Further, the "discovery" was really an historical event in the sense that those who did first "discover", say, the principle of identity radically transformed their milieu so as to make that truth a truth. They had to begin first of all to look at the world in a particular way and then to make appear that particular truth. Ultimately, it is the bodily presence of a particular community to nature that is the foundation for the appearance of a truth of reason, and it is this "facticity" of such truths that gives them a non-conventional or non-arbitrary aspect. In this way can Merleau-Ponty claim that "toute vérité de fait est vérité de raison, toute vérité de raison est vérité de fait."

This corporeal foundation of ideas, thoughts, truths of reason, and by extension, artificial languages, is further explored by Merleau-Ponty in his Prose du monde.³⁰ Indeed, he there gives us a more extensive account of the foundation of an artificial language, a foundation which was, for all practical purposes, merely outlined in the section on the Cogito. In Prose du monde we find Merleau-Ponty concerned with a number of themes that were the object of his concern in Phénoménologie de la perception, and some of these concerns will be discussed later. What is of importance here, however, is that Merleau-Ponty does want to confront "the phantom of a pure language" by showing us that something as seemingly "pure" as an algorithm really does have perceptual roots. This is not, however, to be construed as a reduction of mathematics, or of the intelligible world per se, to the perceived world.

Nous essayons seulement de défaire le tissu intentionnel qui relie l'un à l'autre, de retrouver les voies de la sublimation qui conserve et transforme le monde perçu dans le monde parlé et cela n'est possible que si nous décrivons l'opération de parole comme une reprise, une reconquête de la thèse du monde, analogue dans son ordre à la perception et différente d'elle. Le fait est que toute idée mathématique se présente à nous avec le caractère d'une construction après coup, d'une re-conquête.³¹

Merleau-Ponty wants to show that any mathematical idea, e.g. a particular algebraic formula, is not a simple deduction which flows directly out of the nature of mathematical entities. Rather, it will be shown to be a construction based on the mathematician's existence in the world. It will be shown to be a "reconquest" in the sense that the mathematical formula is not something transparently given to an objective observer but something which has to be accomplished by a person, by someone rooted in the perceptual world. How then does he go about showing this?

Merleau-Ponty focuses upon the formula for determining the sum of the first n positive integers. As we all know, that sum can be determined by using the formula $S_n = \frac{n}{2}(n + 1)$ where n is the last integer of a series of consecutive integers commencing with '1'. Thus, e.g., if we would want to know what is the sum of the first ten integers, we would take the number '10', divide by '2' and multiply by '(10 + 1)', i.e. '11'. We arrive at the sum '55'. But, we may ask, how is it possible to construe this formula as anything else than a derivation that follows directly from the nature of the numbers themselves? How

can this possibly be construed as a "creative transformation" of the numbers based on the mathematician's perception? "La relation nouvelle $\frac{n}{2}(n-1)$, cette signification nouvelle de la série des nombres entiers y apparaît à condition qu'on reconsidère et qu'on restructure S_n ."³² What is important and necessary, first of all, is that we restructure the positive integers in a particular way. But what way? It is necessary, first of all, that we see '1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10' in a different relationship, viz. '1 - 10, 2 - 9, 3 - 8, 4 - 7, 5 - 6'. By coupling the numbers in this way, we have five different sums, and each sum, remarkably enough, equals eleven. The progression from '1' to '5' of these integers is symmetrical to the regression from '10' to '5'. Further, we see that each sum, i.e. eleven, is comparable to '10 - 1' or 'n - 1'. And still further we see that there are five such couples or $\frac{10}{2}$ couples, or more generally $\frac{n}{2}$ couples. By multiplying the sum of any couple '(n - 1)' by the number of couples $\frac{n}{2}$ we come up with the sum for that series of positive integers.³³ We made such a discovery by means of a certain questioning and these transformations "n'apparaissent que devant une certaine interrogation que j'adresse à la structure de la série des nombres ou plutôt qu'elle me propose

en tant qu'elle est situation ouverte et à achever... "34

And it was the questioning or interrogation which led us to see something in a new way. "L'opération par laquelle j'exprime S_n dans les termes $\frac{n}{2}(n-1)$ n'est possible que si dans la formule finale j'aperçois la double fonction de n , d'abord comme nombre cardinal, ensuite, comme nombre ordinal."35

That is to say, we had to see that the n was being used in two different senses. The $(\frac{n}{2})$ represents the number of units in the series, i.e. ten units. Hence, the n is a cardinal. The $(n-1)$ represents the last number in the series, i.e. the tenth one. Hence, n here is an ordinal. Once we have our formula, it is no longer necessary to recognize the difference. But in order to generate the formula, it was necessary to see the numbers in two different fashions. Hence, even the pure algorithm cannot escape the fact that it has roots in the perceptual world.

This rather long excursion into some of the consequences of Merleau-Ponty's view about the signification gestuelle of language may have appeared unnecessary to some. But it is important to keep in mind just what are the consequences of his views about language. Indeed, this rather close connection of language and thought will reappear again

when we consider his views about philosophy and especially about the cogito. What is important to keep in mind is that for Merleau-Ponty there will always be some link between the intelligible and the perceptual through the linguistic, and this view will have some important consequences for the nature of philosophy. Let us, however, move forward in our attempt to unravel the intricacies of Merleau-Ponty's thought on signification gestuelle through consideration of his later essays on language.

A consideration of these essays, especially those in Signes, provides us again with unforeseen difficulties of the sort encountered in the second chapter. In particular, Fontaine-DeVisscher finds a tension developing between Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of language and his attempt to assimilate Saussurian structuralism.³⁶ Her criticisms and difficulties involve a number of points, some of which cannot now be discussed. (These involve the metaphysical and ontological presuppositions of phenomenology and structuralism and will be taken care of in the discussion of Merleau-Ponty's notion of philosophy.) However, there is one focal point of interest for us here, and this involves the notion of "signification". In particular, Fontaine-DeVisscher sees a conflict developing

in Merleau-Ponty's view of signification. On the one hand, as we have seen, Merleau-Ponty has shown us that a phenomenology of language will lead us back to la parole. And what we find at this level is le mot which has a certain signification gestuelle. On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty, after contact with the thought of Saussure on linguistics, begins to accentuate the reality of language as a system. It is no longer the individual words or signs that have meaning, but rather the systems which give meanings to words. According to Fontaine-DeVisscher

D'ailleurs les mots non plus...n'ont pas de signification, pris isolément. Ce sont des intersections de sens, des relais, qui, tous ensemble, visent une signification toujours en sursis. Faisons un pas de plus; c'est le sursis qui fait le sens (la direction) du langage. Ainsi tant au niveau des sons qu'au niveau des mots, c'est le système qui produit le sens.³⁷

This tension reverberates throughout a number of different issues related to a phenomenology of language and a structuralist view of language, and supposedly it is only in Merleau-Ponty's last work, Le visible et l'invisible, that such difficulties and tensions are solved.³⁸ However, do we really need to go that far to solve them? Indeed, is there really such a tension between a phenomenology of language and a structuralist approach

to language? In order to solve this problem, we need to go back to Signes to see what is being said there about language in general and about signification in particular.

As we confront this work even in a very superficial way, we discover one fact which Fontaine-DeVisscher has well pointed out. "Comme partout dans Signes, Saussure est présent."³⁹ And further, in one particular way do we find Saussure present, viz. in Merleau-Ponty's view of the signification of signs.

Ce que nous avons appris dans Saussure, c'est que les signes un à un ne signifient rien, que chacun d'eux exprime moins un sens qu'il ne marque un écart de sens entre lui-même et les autres. Comme on peut en dire autant de ceux-ci, la langue est faite de différences sans termes, ou plus exactement les termes en elle ne sont engendrés que par les différences qui apparaissent entre eux.⁴⁰

It would seem then that Fontaine-DeVisscher is right after all. It is no longer the individual word or sign that carries the meaning; it is no longer the case that "le mot a un sens". Rather, the meaning of words is paradoxically enough found between the words. Individual words do not signify; rather, it is the difference between a word and another word which gives rise to signification. Merleau-Ponty has taken an about-face after all! Before we accept this conclusion, however, let

us look more closely at what Merleau-Ponty means when he says that the meaning of signs is to be found between them. In spelling out the consequences of this view of signification, Merleau-Ponty introduces one example that may clarify this paradox. Merleau-Ponty discusses the difference between the English phrase "the man I love" and the French equivalent "L'homme que j'aime". Now, for the French speaker "l'homme que j'aime" completely expresses a meaning.⁴¹ One understands it completely; there is nothing left out. Because one gets the impression that this expression totally and completely signifies, the French speaker may view the English "the man I love" as being somehow incomplete. That is, the English phrase lacks the relative pronoun "that". It is as if it were that each word in the French phrase reflected, in a one-to-one fashion, some ideal meaning! That is, one might conclude that the following is the case:

1.	"le"	"homme"	"que"	"je"	"aime"
	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕
2.	'l'	'homme'	'que'	'j'	'aime'

Wherein the second line represents each word of the phrase and the first line represents each concept or each signification which is reflected in the phrase. Thus, according to Merleau-Ponty, the French speaker may conclude that there is something missing in the English phrase in the following way.

1.	"the"	"man"	"that"	"I"	"love"
	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕
2.	'the'	'man'		'I'	'love'

In this case there seems to be something missing in the second line, viz. the word that reflects the concept "that".

However, our French speaker gets that impression only because he thinks that his language expresses totally and completely and that every other language must express itself in the same way. What we have here, ultimately, is a naive version of the error that Merleau-Ponty claims Husserl made when he reflected on language in his earlier writings. That is, Husserl thought that phenomenology ought to come up with an eidetic of language that would give us the indispensable signification for my language to be a genuine language.⁴² That is, it would give us an account of the different types of propositions, e.g., the

proposition of existence, the proposition expressing predication, and any natural language would have to express, in some way or other, these ideal significations. The error is comparable to the intellectualist error that we encountered earlier. Words do not reflect, in a one-to-one fashion, the ideal significations existing already at the level of pure thought. Merleau-Ponty is saying something similar here. The separate words of a language, found in any particular phrase, do not reflect previously existing ideal significations.

The similarity of Merleau-Ponty's critique of the one-to-one view of word and signification with his critique of intellectualism is an important clue for the solution of the puzzle concerning the apparent change in his notion of language. Rather than being a reversal of his phenomenological view of language, Merleau-Ponty's adoption of Saussurian linguistics is really an aid in the continuation of his critique of intellectualism. For by appealing to the Saussurian definition of the linguistic sign, Merleau-Ponty is able to avoid, in yet another way, the intellectualist view of language. Words do not signify in the hierarchical fashion that our diagrams suggest. Rather, there is a lateral relationship among the words that give us the complete signification.

1. 'the' ↔ 'man' ↔ 'I' ↔ 'love'

The words of the phrase do not relate to some ideal signification but to each other. And it is by means of this interrelationship that the signification "the man I love" is produced.

One might want to argue, however, that we have missed some important points of his account in Phénoménologie de la perception. First, one may want to point out that Merleau-Ponty does treat cases of individual words in Phénoménologie de la perception. E.g., he points out that according to his view "...il ne soit pas arbitraire d'appeler lumière la lumière si l'on appelle nuit la nuit."⁴³ Second, one easily gets the impression that Merleau-Ponty is merely replacing the heaven of ideal signification with earthly significations gestuelles, such that, we would still end up with a one-to-one relationship, but this time between the word and the significations found in the world.

That such objections fall short will become evident once we more carefully examine them. It may seem to be the case that Merleau-Ponty concentrates on individual words and the significations gestuelles which they apparently reflect.

Yet, is such really the case? Let us look more closely at the passage quoted above.

On trouverait alors que les mots, les voyelles, les phonèmes sont autant de manières de chanter le monde et qu'ils sont destinés à représenter les objets, non pas, comme le croyait la théorie naïve des onomatopées, en raison d'une ressemblance objective, mais parce qu'ils en extraient et au sens propre du mot en expriment l'essence émotionnelle. Si l'on pouvait défalquer d'un vocabulaire ce qui est dû aux lois mécaniques de la phonétique, aux contaminations des langues étrangères, à la rationalisation des grammairiens, à l'imitation de la langue par elle-même, on découvrirait sans doute à l'origine de chaque langue un système d'expression assez réduit mais tel par exemple qu'il ne soit pas arbitraire d'appeler lumière la lumière si l'on appelle nuit la nuit.⁴⁴

A number of points become clearer upon closer inspection. First, Merleau-Ponty is not saying that it is not completely arbitrary to call "nuit" "la nuit" or "lumière" "la lumière". Rather, he says that it is not arbitrary to call "lumière" "la lumière" if we call "nuit" "la nuit". That is, the emotional or gestural signification of 'lumière' is present only in relation to the word 'nuit'. And, in the opposite fashion, 'nuit' has a gestural signification only in relation

to the word 'lumière'. What Merleau-Ponty seems to be implying here is that if one were to take each word in isolation, then, it would not be possible to find the non-arbitrariness of the word. The gestural signification of the word comes about only insofar as one takes the words of a language as they actually exist in their relationships with other words of the language. Ultimately he is implying that the true gestural signification of words can be clearly seen only when words form a part of actual speech (la parole) wherein the words come alive in the gesture of the speaking subject. (These implications will be developed in more detail as we proceed in this chapter.)

Second, following from this point, it should seem clear that the emphasis here has to be upon the notion of "system". We find at the heart of each language a system of expression.⁴⁵ A language is not a conglomeration of different vowels, sounds, and words. Rather, the language forms a totality in which each part has a relationship. We do not see Saussure mentioned here, but what is obvious is that Merleau-Ponty is on the verge of the discovery of Saussure's definition of signification. Words do not have a signification gestuelle in a one-to-one relationship with the world. It is the whole of the language, the language as a system, which provides the speaker with gestural significations.⁴⁶

Does such an account help us refute Fontaine-DeVisscher's claim? It would seem that she would still want to have us choose one of two alternatives. Either the signification of words is derived from the system which comprises a language, or such signification derives from the gestural sphere of the world in which the language is rooted. It seems that we have to choose between system or gesture. But do we? Let us take our example of 'night' again. If we take Merleau-Ponty's Saussurian definition of meaning, then we would have to say that the word 'night' means nothing in isolation. But surely this cannot be so. May we not look up 'night' in the dictionary in order to discover its meaning? But, then, does it really mean any one thing at all? Do we not discover in the dictionary merely an open-ended disjunction? That is, does it not mean either "the period between dusk and dawn" or "the darkness of that period" or...? The dictionary does not give us "the" meaning of the word; rather, it gives us a limited number of the possible meanings. Further, even the knowledge of the possible meanings does not really help us. For we must know what the other words of, e.g. a phrase are in order to know what the word itself means. Take the examples of "good night" and "hot night". In the first case, when the phrase is used in a form of a good-bye, the word 'night' does

not mean the same as it does when I use the phrase "hot night" in referring to the sweltering heat in the evening. The word 'night' in each case takes up a different meaning because it is related to a different word.

Furthermore, and more importantly, the signification of 'night' does not depend solely on its relationship to 'hot' and 'good'. There is an equally significant relationship, and that is to the situation in which the word is used. The meaning which 'night' has in any particular phrase also depends on the speaking situation in which it is rooted. "Good night" has a particular meaning not just because there is a certain relationship between 'good' and 'night' but also because there is a certain relationship between them and the time and place in which a particular person utters those words. Indeed, the phrase itself, when uttered at the wrong time or in the wrong place may make no sense at all. What does "good night" mean when I utter it at 9:00 a.m. as I walk into the office?⁴⁷ Further, this speaking situation may in fact determine the meaning when the structure of the phrase is no help at all. For example, what word would one fill in in the phrase "good ..." when the choices are 'night' and 'evening'. Neither fits exclusively, and 'night' does not distinguish itself from

'evening' by its relationship to 'good' since we may say both "good evening" and "good night". Rather, it would depend upon the actual speaking situation that would allow us to differentiate one phrase from the other.

What this leads to, ultimately, is a rejection of Fontaine-DeVisscher's dichotomy of gesture and system. Merleau-Ponty is not contradicting himself when he says, on the one hand, that the meaning of a word is a signification gestuelle and, on the other hand, that the meaning of a word is "oppositive, diacritical, and negative". There is no contradiction here, and, if there is any tension at all, it is a tension that would result from a dialectical relationship that exists between the two. That is to say, at one time the gestural aspect of the words of a language may take the fore, and one may be able to analyze such words in terms of the gestural signification. At another time the "oppositive, diacritical, and negative" aspects of the words may become prominent, in which case one would analyze such words in terms of their relationships to other words. The dialectic would exist not only between the gestural and systematic aspects of the language, but also between the two types of analyses that would centre on one of the two aspects. Further, such a dialectical relationship would indicate not only that the two

aspects of language are opposed to each other, but also that both aspects are necessary for the opposition. Contrary to Fontaine-DeVisscher, we do not need a solution to this tension. Rather, the tension itself is one that is necessary to the two aspects of language.

This dual characteristic of language, as gestural and as systematic, is clearly brought out in one other passage. In one of the courses at Collège de France, Merleau-Ponty discusses "Le problème de la parole" and begins the lecture by pointing out:

La fameuse définition [of Saussure] du signe comme "diacritique, oppositif et négatif" veut dire que la langue est présente au sujet parlant comme un système d'écart entre signes et entre significations, que la parole opère d'un seul geste la différenciation dans les deux ordres, et que finalement, à des significations qui ne sont pas closes et des signes qui n'existent que dans leur rapport, on ne peut appliquer la distinction de la res extensa et de la res cogitans.⁴⁸

The gestural and systematic aspects of language, as seen from the viewpoint of the speaking subject, are intertwined and cannot be rigidly separated. This is the main point that Merleau-Ponty is trying to communicate.

All that we have said about language, in terms of its signification gestuelle, may be put into a different light by relating it to the expression of the artist. Indeed, for Merleau-Ponty there is a close relationship between the subject who speaks and the painter who paints, and he discusses it quite extensively. Let us take a closer look at this relationship, as a way of summarizing and crystalizing Merleau-Ponty's account of signification gestuelle.

The first significant point that Merleau-Ponty makes in this context is that we must avoid the intellectualist prejudice concerning painting in the same way that we avoid the intellectualist prejudice concerning language. What, then, is this intellectualist prejudice concerning painting? When discussing the intellectualist view of language, we saw that the intellectualist approached language as a mere reflection of thought. The task of language was to provide a material sign for a thought already precisely formed. In regard to painting, the intellectualist sees it as a representation of objects of nature. That is to say, the task of the painter is to represent on canvas some precisely formed objects in the natural world. Yet, for Merleau-Ponty, such is not the case, even for "classical" paintings.

Reste que les peintres classiques
 étaient des peintres et qu'aucune
 peinture valable n'a jamais consisté
 à représenter simplement. Malraux
 indique que la conception moderne de
 la peinture -- comme expression
 créatrice, -- a été une nouveauté
 pour le public beaucoup plus que
 pour les peintres eux-mêmes, qui
 l'ont toujours pratiquée même s'ils
 n'en faisaient pas la théorie.⁴⁹

For the painter at least, painting is something more than just representation; it is genuine creative expression, similar to the genuine creation of new meanings in the world of linguistic expression. It surpasses nature in the same way that language surpasses the world of ideas. But what does this creative expression involve? In the same way that we looked at the speaking subject in the speaking situation, let us look at the painter as he is about to paint.

The artist before his brush and paints is in a situation similar to that of the speaker "in front of" the words of his language. The artist is situated in the perceptual world and has before him an infinite number of possible variations and combinations. Yet, what comes across on the canvas will be something that he uniquely produced. In the same way, the speaking subject has his vocabulary, but that which he speaks will be something more than what just anyone could put together.

That is to say, that which is spoken, by this particular speaker in this particular situation, bears the "signature" of his concrete being-in-the-world. Everything this speaker says will have a certain style, and so also is it the case with the painter. Each painting the painter paints will bear the mark of the particular painter. Each will be a concrete expression of the way that he exists in the perceived world.

"Ce que le peintre met dans le tableau, ce n'est pas le soi immédiat, la nuance même du sentir, c'est son style, et il n'a pas moins à le conquérir sur ses propres essais que sur la peinture des autres ou sur le monde."⁵⁰

The paintings of a particular artist bear a style; there is something characteristic about them that makes them his. This style, moreover, crystalizes the meanings that the painter has confronted in the perceptual world, just as the style of a speaker crystalizes those meanings which he confronts.

Il y a signification lorsque les données du monde sont par nous soumises à une "déformation cohérente". ... Cette convergence de tous les vecteurs visibles et moraux du tableau vers une même signification X, elle est déjà ébauchée dans la perception du peintre.⁵¹

Le style est ce qui rend possible toute signification. Avant le moment où des signes ou des emblèmes deviendront en chacun et dans l'artiste même le simple indice de significations qui y sont déjà, il faut qu'il y ait ce moment fécond où ils ont donné forme à l'expérience, où un sens qui n'était qu'opérant ou latent s'est trouvé les emblèmes qui devaient le libérer et le rendre maniable pour l'artiste et accessible aux autres.⁵²

The artist is rooted in a world of perceptual significations, but these significations are incomplete as such. Yet, these significations become pictural significations when they are subjected to a "coherent deformation". That is to say, the artist takes these incomplete meanings and ties them together in a unique way. The meanings that he finds in his world are coherently changed when the artist paints on his canvas. The result, the painting, is the product of this unique restructuring of the artist's world of meanings. The painting is a creative expression which represents the artist's creative transformation of the given. In this way the style of the artist's works is that which makes artistic signification possible, for it is the result of the artist's transformation of the significations of his perceptual environment. Artistic expression transforms meanings in the same way that linguistic expression does, insofar as linguistic expression transforms meanings that were given

incompletely in the everyday world of the speaking subject.⁵³

Ultimately, it is the fact that the body-subject is at the heart of artistic expression that makes possible such artistic expression. "...C'est l'opération expressive du corps, commencée par la moindre perception, qui s'amplifie en peinture et en art."⁵⁴

Indeed, the style of a painter, as presented in various works, is comparable to the movement of the body itself in different contexts. Let us take the example of handwriting.

Notre écriture se reconnaît, que nous tracions les lettres sur du papier, avec trois doigts de la main, ou à la craie, sur le tableau, avec tout notre bras, parce qu'elle n'est pas dans notre corps un automatisme lié à certains muscles...mais une puissance générale de formulation motrice capable des transpositions qui font la constance du style. Ou plutôt, il n'y a même pas transposition: simplement, nous n'écrivons pas dans l'espace en soi... Nous écrivons dans l'espace perçu,...⁵⁵

The body-subject expresses itself in all its activity, and its peculiar way of being-in-the-world is the foundation for the artist's peculiar style. The unique expression of the body-subject in painting is but one example of the body-subject's unique expression in all its various ways of

existing in the perceived world. The pictorial signification of painting, as with the signification gestuelle of la parole, finds its source in the body-subject as a subject imbedded in the world of perception.

Painting, as we have just seen, can be construed as a gesture, in the same way that language can be so construed. However, language is different in one respect from all other gestures, including painting.

...C'est que seule de toutes les opérations expressives, la parole est capable de se sédimenter et de constituer un acquis intersubjectif.⁵⁶

La parole...cherche à se posséder, à conquérir le secret de ses propres inventions, l'homme ne peint pas la peinture, mais il parle sur la parole.⁵⁷

What this characteristic difference of sédimentation involves will be the topic for the next chapter.

FOOTNOTES

1. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 206.
2. It is interesting to note here, before we proceed with Merleau-Ponty's account of some experiences of language that we have, that in all of what follows it seems that Merleau-Ponty is arguing more against the intellectualist position than against the empiricist position. That is, he seems to be trying to avoid the subsumption of the speaking subject into the thinking subject and the fact that there is a subject or a thinker at all is never really questioned. Perhaps it is the case that for Merleau-Ponty it is absurd to abolish the subject, as empiricism does, because our experience indicates that we think. That is to say, from the point of view of the phenomenologist, it would be a blatant prejudice to assume that there is no such thing as thinking. That I think seems to be one of the assumptions that Merleau-Ponty is making at this point. See, for example, "Le primat de la perception et ses conséquences philosophiques", op. cit., p. 130 wherein he discusses the certitude of the cogito. "La certitude que j'ai de moi-même est ici une véritable perception: je me saisis, non pas comme un sujet constituant transparent pour lui-même, et qui déploie la totalité des objets de pensée et d'expérience possibles, mais comme une pensée particulière, une pensée engagée dans certains objets, une pensée en acte, et c'est à ce titre que je suis certain de moi-même." Merleau-Ponty recognizes that thinking is given indubitably in experience and that what is at issue is the interpretation that is given to the experience. If this is so, then any theoretical position that leads to the rejection of what is given indubitably is in fundamental error. We can further see this a priori rejection of the empiricist position in Merleau-Ponty's return to the speaking subject. If we are going to return to such a speaking subject, then it is clear that for him there is such a thing as a subject. To talk about a speaking subject already presupposes the demise of the empiricist position.

3. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 206.
4. Ibid., p. 207.
5. Ibid., p. 208.
6. Ibid.
7. This point should be obvious from our discussion of Descartes and language in Chapter 2, n. 11.
8. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 206.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 208f.
11. Although I emphasize the gestural signification of "le mot" at this point, the focus is already shifting toward la parole as a system or constellation of words. (And this theme of "system of words" is something that will be developed later in this chapter.) Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the singular (le mot) is meant only for rhetorical purposes. See below n. 46.
12. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 212.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. 214.
15. Ibid., p. XII.
16. Ibid., p. XIII. "C'est pourquoi Husserl distingue l'intentionnalité d'acte, qui est celle de nos jugements et de nos prises de position volontaires, la seule dont la Critique de la Raison Pure ait parlé, et l'intentionnalité opérante (fungierende Intentionalität), celle qui fait l'unité naturelle et antéprédicative du monde et de notre vie, qui paraît dans nos désirs, nos évaluations, notre paysage, plus clairement que dans la connaissance objective, et qui fournit le texte dont nos connaissances cherchent à être la traduction en langage exact." (Italics added.)

17. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 218.
18. Ibid. The reader may note here that I am switching back and forth from the singular of 'body-subject' to its plural. Some may object at this point to such a move, since it appears that I am taking too lightly the problem of Others. There is no real difficulty here since for Merleau-Ponty language itself already involves other persons. In fact, one ought not expect a proof that the Other exists. This for Merleau-Ponty would really end up being a case of begging the question. What one should seek is an elucidation of one's experience of the Other, given both in dialogue and in non-linguistic perception.
19. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 214.
20. Ibid., p. 218.
21. There are still a few difficulties in determining the exact meaning of Merleau-Ponty's comments. First, there is some question about the variety of natural languages which are tied to particular worlds. Are American and English two different languages? Few linguists would agree. Yet even if they are not distinct languages (langues), it would certainly seem to be the case that they indicate or "intend" two different worlds. That is, the cultural world of the Englishman is certainly different from the cultural world of the American. Thus, Merleau-Ponty would have to say that for each language (langue) there is a numerically different world, but that the converse does not hold. That is to say, it need not be the case that for every numerically distinct world there is a distinct language. Second, there is certainly some problem involved in Merleau-Ponty's assertion concerning the bilingual person. It would seem that Merleau-Ponty is claiming that one cannot be truly bilingual since to be so one would have to live in two numerically distinct worlds. Yet, for him this is logically impossible. Thus, so is the bilingual person a logical impossibility. But can one really accept this? It would seem that we have numerous cases of bilingual persons. Furthermore, what distinguishes the world of the Prime Minister and the world of the University of Ottawa student, in which the same

languages are spoken, from the world of a Chinese or Japanese person? Some of these difficulties, especially concerning the tie between a language and the world that it intends, will be resolved, indirectly, by Merleau-Ponty in Signes and his later work. For it is there that the distinction between lanque and parole is used more clearly, with the emphasis on the intentional relationship between parole and world.

22. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 209.
23. Ibid., p. 220f.
24. Ibid., pp. 423-468.
25. Ibid., p. 442.
26. Ibid.
27. There may be a problem of terminology under the surface here. Above we mentioned that Merleau-Ponty wanted to show that everything was cultural and natural. And at this point 'cultural' was more or less equivalent to 'conventional' or 'artificial' while 'natural' was comparable to 'non-conventional', 'finite' or 'part of the given world'. At this point in the discussion, however, 'cultural' is now opposed to 'conventional' or 'arbitrary' and is much closer in meaning to 'natural'. Let us not be misled, however, by this terminological problem. One thing should be kept in mind: Merleau-Ponty wants to show that ideas, thoughts, and ultimately any artificial language based on them, are not purely conventional or arbitrary.
28. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 447.
29. Ibid., p. 451.
30. La Prose du monde, (texte établi et présenté par Claude Lefort), Paris: Gallimard, 1969. (Hereinafter Prose.)
31. Ibid., p. 173.
32. Ibid., p. 176.

33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. op. cit., especially in Chapter V, pp. 63-79.
37. Ibid., p. 78.
38. Ibid., p. 78.
39. Ibid., p. 65.
40. Signes, p. 49. See also Signes, p. 110.
41. Ibid., p. 112.
42. Ibid., p. 105.
43. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 218.
44. ibid. (Italics added.)
45. In Sens et non-sens (Paris: Les éditions Nagel, 1966; hereinafter SNS), in the article "La métaphysique dans l'homme", Merleau-Ponty compares this system of expression to the perceptual structures that Gestalt psychologists discuss. Merleau-Ponty here wants to point out that the individual living languages form a "whole" which is more than the sum of the individual parts. This whole has a certain life of its own which the speaking subject comes in contact with and which the speaking subject incorporates in the mastering of a language. "Cet esprit général, que tous constituent par leur vie commune, cette intention déjà déposée dans le système donné du langage, préconsciente, puisque le sujet parlant l'épouse avant de s'en rendre compte et de l'élever au niveau de la connaissance, et qui cependant ne subsiste qu'à condition d'être reprise ou assumée par les sujets parlants et vit de leur volonté d'échange, c'est bien sur le terrain de la linguistique, l'équivalent de la forme des psychologues, aussi étrangère à l'existence objective d'un

processus naturel qu'à l'existence mentale d'un idée. Ni chose, ni idée, la langue, comme le psychisme, n'est accessible qu'à une méthode de "compréhension" qui retrouve dans la multiplicité des faits quelques intentions ou visées décisives; les "faits profonds et en quelque sorte secrets sur lesquels repose la construction de la langue." (SNS, p. 154) This shows, in yet another way, that the meaning of the words or sounds of a language cannot be grasped in isolation from the other elements of the language.

46. But what about Merleau-Ponty's claim "le mot a un sens"? Again, it is a matter of seeing this in context. Both empiricists and intellectualists deny any signification at all to words themselves. Merleau-Ponty opposes them by emphasizing the sense of words, and this is done by using the catch-phrase "le mot a un sens". One must not take the phrase too literally. It was not meant to be so taken.
47. Indeed "Good night!" uttered to someone at 9:00 a.m. may have some meaning, but the meaning would depend almost entirely on the actual speaking situation. If one, e.g., walks into one's office in the morning to find some unexpected visitor, the phrase "Good night!" would have a meaning, but not a meaning relevant to night-time.
48. Merleau-Ponty, Résumés de cours: Collège de France, 1952-1960. Paris: Gallimard, 1968, p. 33f. (Hereinafter Résumés).
49. Signes, p. 60. See also Prose, p. 71.
50. Signes, p. 65. See also Prose, p. 79.
51. Signes, p. 68. See also Prose, p. 85.
52. Prose, p. 81f.
53. It is not by chance that Merleau-Ponty discusses the works of Cézanne as examples of "coherent deformation". See, e.g., "Le doute de Cézanne" in SNS, op. cit., pp. 15-44, also Madison, G.B., La phénoménologie de Merleau-Ponty (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1973, pp. 91-97, especially p. 93). I find even better examples of "coherent deformation", and especially of "gesture" and "system" in the works of Monet.

54. Signes, p. 87.
55. Signes, p. 82. See also Prose, p. 107f.
56. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 221.
57. Signes, p. 100. The account of painting presented here remains incomplete. For one, I have not ventured to say anything about the history of painting, a discussion that takes up a large portion of both the article in Signes and the section on art in Prose. And since Merleau-Ponty puts so much emphasis on it, it would seem that a discussion of it would be useful. As such, however, the question of the history of painting is not important in this context, which was the relationship between language and painting especially in terms of signification gestuelle. Yet, this objection may have some force, for it is within this context of the history of painting that Merleau-Ponty asserts some points that seem to contradict his view about the uniqueness of language in terms of its sedimentation. That is to say, Merleau-Ponty, especially in Prose, gives one the impression that it is not only language that can sediment. At one point, in the margin of his working text, Merleau-Ponty makes the following note: "...3) Réserve à faire...: la sédimentation de l'art retombe à mesure qu'elle se fait. ...le langage est peinture comme la peinture est langage. (Prose, p. 97.) Later on he states "On verra alors qu'il est légitime de traiter la peinture comme un langage: ce traitement de la peinture met à nu en elle un sens perceptif...cependant capable de recueillir en lui-même dans une éternité toujours à refaire toute une série d'expressions antérieures sédimentées." (Prose, p. 123. Note that the word 'sédimentées' does not appear in the parallel passage in Signes, p. 94.) Such passages may lead one to think that Merleau-Ponty has rejected his earlier view that only language can "sediment". Although this objection cannot be fully dealt with here, one should remain aware of the fact that Merleau-Ponty nowhere in Prose gives the impression that one could paint about painting. Furthermore, the very attempt to obtain a pure language, the principal theme of Prose, is based on the fact that language is peculiarly different from other forms of expression. No painter has ever tried to create a painting that is "pure" in the way that scientists have attempted to create a pure language. These "facts",

which Merleau-Ponty is quite aware of in Prose, provide at least prima facie evidence for the claim that he has not contradicted his earlier position. However, this problem is but one aspect of Merleau-Ponty's account of art and its relationship to language, and the question of that relationship will be explored in the following chapter.

PART II: LANGUAGE

CHAPTER 4: SEDIMENTATION

In the last chapter we studied one important aspect of language, viz. signification gestuelle. And we saw how language and painting both had this aspect in common. Yet, it was also indicated at the very end of the chapter that in spite of this similarity there was something that distinguished the two, viz. the aspect of sédimentation. In this chapter I would like to examine this second characteristic of language first by looking more closely at the differences between language and painting and then by considering sedimentation as it might be distinguished from "history" and "institution". This will give us a clearer notion of what sedimentation itself is.

As we have seen in the last chapter, Merleau-Ponty spends quite a bit of time, both in the Signes article and in La Prose du Monde, discussing the similarities between language and painting. In fact, one gets the impression that he is going to tie the two together under his notion of expression. But at a crucial point he introduces the difference between

the two. Yet, this is not the first time that Merleau-Ponty distinguishes language from art in general and from painting in particular. Even in the Phénoménologie de la perception Merleau-Ponty distinguishes the two and in order to determine exactly what this difference is, it would do us well to look at all of the contexts in which language and painting are differentiated. Let us begin at the beginning, with the Phénoménologie de la perception. In the chapter "Le corps comme expression et la parole" we have seen that Merleau-Ponty relates language and art. But he also indicates that they are not the same, that language is peculiarly different. One paragraph in particular outlines the difference.

Ce qui est vrai seulement -- et justifie la situation particulière que l'on fait d'ordinaire au langage -- c'est que seule de toutes les opérations expressives, la parole est capable de se sédimenter et de constituer un acquis intersubjectif. On n'explique pas ce fait en remarquant que la parole peut s'enregistrer sur le papier, tandis que les gestes ou les comportements ne se transmettent que par l'imitation directe. Car la musique, aussi peut s'écrire, et, bien qu'il y ait en musique quelque chose comme une initiation traditionnelle -- bien qu'il soit peut-être impossible d'accéder à la musique atonale sans passer par la musique classique -- chaque artiste reprend la tâche à son

début, il a un nouveau monde à délivrer, au lieu que dans l'ordre de la parole, chaque écrivain a conscience de viser le même monde dont les autres écrivains s'occupaient déjà, le monde de Balzac et le monde de Stendhal ne sont pas comme des planètes sans communication, la parole installe en nous l'idée de vérité comme limite présomptive de son effort. Elle s'oublie elle-même comme fait contingent, elle se repose sur elle-même, et c'est, nous l'avons vu, ce qui nous donne l'idéal d'une pensée sans parole, alors que l'idée d'une musique sans sons est absurde. Même s'il ne s'agit là que d'une idée limite et d'un contre-sens, même si le sens d'une parole ne peut jamais être délivré de son inhérence à quelque parole, il reste que l'opération expressive dans le cas de la parole peut être indéfiniment répétée, que l'on peut parler sur la parole alors qu'on ne peut peindre sur la peinture, et qu'enfin tout philosophe a songé à une parole qui les terminerait toutes, tandis que le peintre ou le musicien n'espère pas épuiser toute peinture ou toute musique possible.¹

This rather long passage raises a number of points concerning the difference between language and art. Let us look at some of them. First, we see that Merleau-Ponty initiates the discussion by indicating that language can sediment itself and constitute an intersubjective acquisition. But what is this acquisition? Does it mean that only language can be written down in order to be shared by other persons? Obviously, as

Merleau-Ponty points out, this cannot be what 'sedimentation' and 'intersubjective acquisition' mean, for we all realize that music may be written down. (He could have also pointed out that painting is "written down" in a sense, in that it is there on a canvas for all others to view.) It is not the case that music and painting can be "transmitted" by direct imitation only. But then how do they lack intersubjective acquisition? This leads us to Merleau-Ponty's second point.

Although the artist may be and usually is familiar with the history of art, whenever he begins to produce his art he begins "at the beginning". That is to say, the artist, whether painter or musician, starts as if there were no history behind him. The painter begins anew each time he attempts to put something on canvas. The musician begins anew each time he attempts to compose a musical piece. The task of the artist is to bring about, to "deliver", a new world; the world that the artist brings about is a newly created one. In a sense there is no inherent connection between the painting the painter has produced and all other paintings (including his own) that were created in the past. Paintings exist, we might say, as planets without communication.

Such is not the case, however, with the writer, the one who uses language. The speaking subject, in contrast to the artist, has the "notion" that he is speaking of the same world of which other subjects are speaking. That is to say, the writer or the speaking subject projects before himself an idea of truth. The writer or the speaking subject is aware of the goal of speaking or writing, viz., to come to some intersubjectively valid account of the world. The writer or speaker aims at the truth, whereas the musician or painter does not, and their effort to obtain the truth establishes the idea of truth as a "presumptive limit". That is, they aim at a common truth which they do not yet have and which acts as a guide to their speaking or writing.

Indeed, this idea of truth as a "presumptive limit" is the basis for the writer's or the speaker's attempt to obtain a truth that would put an end to all further searchings for the truth. Such a truth would make any further speaking or writing in search for the truth an unnecessary redundancy. Even though, as one might point out, such an attempt may never be successful, language has created this hope in past and present writers and speakers; whereas, the musician or the

painter has never had the dream of composing a piece of music or painting a work that would put an end to any further attempts at music or painting. Furthermore, speaking or writing can be "indefinitely repeated", unlike art which cannot, and one can speak about speaking, whereas one cannot paint about painting.

This account by Merleau-Ponty has given us a number of points with which to work, as we attempt to give an account of this notion of sédimentation. Let us try to assemble them. Among other things Merleau-Ponty wants to say the following about sédimentation. (1) Sedimentation is the basis for the fact that the speaking subject is inherently connected with the history of his language. The artist, to the contrary, begins anew each time. (2) Sedimentation is the basis for the fact that speakers aim at the same world. Artists do not aim at an intersubjectively given world. (3) Sedimentation installs in the speaker the idea of truth as a presumed limit. One aims at the truth which one does not have, but which seems a possibility. (4) Sedimentation is the ground for the attempt of the speaker to obtain a truth that would put an end to all further speaking. The artist, on the contrary, never wishes

to create something that would put an end to art. (5) Sedimentation makes it possible for language to be indefinitely repeated or reiterated. Art, however, can never repeat itself. (6) Sedimentation makes it possible for language to be self-reflexive, in that one may, in fact one must, use language to talk or to write about language. The painter, on the contrary, cannot paint about painting. At this point in the investigation we may take these six statements as tentative elucidations of the meaning of the term 'sédimentation'.² However, as we have seen before, Merleau-Ponty has more to say about the relationship between art and language, and the notion of "sédimentation" again appears in later articles.

As we have shown above, the Signes article on indirect language contains an extended analogy on the relationship between art and language. Yet, as has also been indicated, this analogy cannot be carried on "to the end", as one might say. Art and language cannot be identified and Merleau-Ponty discusses the difference between the two in the following passage.

La peinture accomplit un vœu du passé, elle a de lui procuration, elle agit en son nom, mais elle ne le contient pas à l'état manifeste, elle est mémoire pour nous, si nous connaissons par ailleurs l'histoire de la peinture, elle n'est pas mémoire pour soi, elle ne prétend pas totaliser ce qui l'a rendue possible. La parole, non contente d'aller au-delà du passé, prétend le récapituler, le récupérer, le contenir en substance, et, comme elle ne saurait, à moins de le répéter textuellement, nous le donner dans sa présence, elle lui fait subir une préparation qui est le propre du langage: elle nous en offre la vérité.³

Here again we see some of the same themes re-emerging.

Here Merleau-Ponty points out again that the painter, the artist, has a history behind him. The painter is aware of the past of the painting just as we may be aware of its past. Yet, the history of painting is not an integral part of the painter's painting; "elle n'est pas mémoire pour soi". The painter's attempt at painting is not an attempt to recapture the history of painting. On the other hand, however, language does try to recapture its past, and thereby tries to contain it "in substance". Language does try to become "the totality of its past". This ultimately means that it tries to recapture the very same world that was spoken of by previous speakers. In other words, language sets up the idea of truth. Indeed,

this is what Merleau-Ponty has said in Phénoménologie de la perception, as outlined in statements (1), (2), and (3) above.

Further, Merleau-Ponty points out, "La parole... cherche à se posséder à conquérir le secret de ses propres inventions, l'homme ne peint pas la peinture, mais il parle sur la parole..."⁴ Speaking aims ultimately at the complete possession of the world of which it speaks. Indeed, this aim at totality must include language itself, in such a way that speaking takes itself too as an object to be discussed. As we have seen in point (6) above, the painter does not and cannot paint about painting, but the speaking subject does, in fact, speak about speaking. La parole is self-reflexive in a way that painting, or art in general, is not. As Merleau-Ponty sums it up, "Enfin le langage dit, et les voix de la peinture sont les voix du silence."⁵

What is most peculiar, however, in the Signes article is that although the descriptions of sédimentation come through clearly, as we have just seen, Merleau-Ponty nowhere uses the term. This might make one wonder whether he is attempting to get rid of the notion altogether, perhaps by replacing it with another. There are two good reasons, however, why we should not accept this conclusion. That is, it would seem that

Merleau-Ponty still wants, or he ought to want, to talk about sedimentation, even though the term is not used in the above article. The first reason for believing this is that the term does have a fairly prominent place in another article appearing about one year before. This article is "Sur la phénoménologie du langage".⁵ We shall see more of this article later, in the discussion of truth and sedimentation. A second, and equally important, reason for believing that the term is still viable is to be found in the work that parallels "Le langage indirect et les voix du silence", viz., the section "Le langage indirect" in La Prose du monde.⁷ Indeed, we have had the chance to discuss parts of this work earlier in this thesis, and we have found that at least two of Merleau-Ponty's analyses in that work, viz., on pure language and on the art-language relationship, have fit in well with his other pronouncements on said topics. But perhaps at this point we should say a few words about the work. As is well pointed out by M. Claude Lefort in the "Avertissement" to the work, "L'ouvrage que Maurice Merleau-Ponty se proposait d'intituler La prose du monde ou Introduction à la prose du monde est inachevé".⁸ M. Lefort further shows that during the construction of this volume, "le philosophe décide d'extraire de son ouvrage un chapitre important

et de le modifier sensiblement pour le publier en essai dans Les Temps modernes..."⁹ Indeed, this is the same article that later appears in Signes. The important question for us then is: What did Merleau-Ponty leave out and why? One may note, by comparing the two texts, that a few long passages were left out of the published article. (One in particular, concerning philosophy in general, and Descartes and his followers in particular, will be of interest to us later.¹⁰) But more importantly for us, we find the word 'sédimentation', or one of its cognates, no less than five times in the section in La Prose du monde.¹¹ Indeed, one gets the distinct impression that in Signes Merleau-Ponty was in fact trying purposely to avoid the word!

Whatever the purpose for leaving out this term in the published article, Merleau-Ponty nowhere indicates it. Perhaps, he was trying to avoid the term in preference for another, but there is no evidence for such a move. Whatever may have been the reason, we see no good reason why Merleau-Ponty could not have continued to use the word. Thus, we see no good reason why this term should be abandoned in our presentation of Merleau-Ponty's thought on this subject. What does threaten the project at this point, however, is not the

lack of the use of the word, but rather the actual usage in La Prose du monde. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty uses the term 'sédimentation' in two places which threaten to upset the contrast we have been drawing between art and language. As has already been noted in footnote 57 in the previous chapter, there are two places where Merleau-Ponty invokes the term 'sédimentation' when discussing art, and this may lead one to believe that he is abandoning the distinction between art and language. But need we conclude that? As has already been pointed out, Merleau-Ponty nowhere in La Prose du monde admits that there can be a painting about painting, whereas there is a speaking about speaking. And this, from what we have encountered so far, is part of the meaning of 'sédimentation'. Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty concentrates on the "phantom of a pure language" in La Prose du monde, but nowhere in that work does he even hint at the possibility of a "pure" painting, viz., a painting that will put to an end all future painting. Thus, we find that Merleau-Ponty is not changing his mind about the differences between art and language. He seems only to be wavering on his use of an adequate term to describe it. Indeed, this may be the very reason that he did in fact delete the word 'sedimentation'

and its cognates from the published version of the text. He may very well have decided to sort out his use of the term, and in sorting out the use he may have thought it was better to avoid using it at all in his published material.

Whatever the reasons for the lack of the use of the term 'sedimentation', I would like to opt for its use. There seem to me to be no good reasons for retaining the term. First, it is most useful whenever we wish to contrast the "sedimentational" characteristics peculiar to language with the historical and institutional-traditional characteristics found also in art. We shall see more of this in a moment. Second, Merleau-Ponty clearly uses and explains the term in another article on language, viz., "Sur la phénoménologie du langage" and in that article we find him balancing the gestural and "sedimentational" aspects of language. We shall also see more of this account later. For the nonce let us look at some of the differences between "sedimentation", "history" and "institution-tradition".

When we commenced this chapter with a tentative account of some of the features of "sedimentation", we saw that point (2) related sedimentation to the history of language.

In fact, the relationship is close enough for one to wonder whether the two are identical. Moreover, there is a further problem. Although the notions "institution" and "tradition" are not explicitly mentioned in our earlier account, the notion (if I may take them together) is present throughout Merleau-Ponty's account of art and language. This may make one wonder whether sedimentation and institution are identical. If we are going to arrive at an adequate notion of sedimentation, it will be necessary to see exactly how it is related to the notions of "history" and "institution". For it is only in distinguishing sedimentation from these two other notions that one will be able to grasp the veritable meaning of the term. Thus, let us now look at these two notions and try to see what is involved in them.¹²

Merleau-Ponty discusses the idea of a history of painting within the context of Malraux's account of the painter. The first statement that we may make about painting, and here Merleau-Ponty agrees with Malraux, is that there is a genuine history of painting.

L'unité de la peinture, elle n'est pas seulement au Musée, elle est dans cette tâche unique qui se propose à tous les peintres, qui fait qu'un jour au Musée, ils seront comparables, et que ces feux se répondent l'un à l'autre dans la nuit.¹³

There is some kind of unity revealed in the multiplicity of paintings that have appeared over the ages. And, further, this unity is not something artificially created by the Museum. That is to say, this unity is not brought about by means of some ad hoc collection of paintings in a museum of art. Rather, there is really something there in the paintings that genuinely connects them. This history of paintings, in terms of the "historicalness" or "historicity" of painting

...est constituée et reconstituée de proche en proche par l'intérêt qui nous porte vers ce qui n'est pas nous, par cette vie que le passé, dans un échange continu, nous apporte et trouve en nous, et qu'il continue de mener dans chaque peintre qui ranime, reprend et relance à chaque oeuvre nouvelle l'entreprise entière de la peinture.¹⁴

Merleau-Ponty does agree with Malraux that there is a history of painting. But the important question is: How shall one conceive of this history? In other words, one might ask: How is it possible that there is a history of painting? And it is here that Merleau-Ponty's account diverges from Malraux's account.

Malraux rencontre donc, au moins à titre de métaphore l'idée d'une Histoire qui réunit les tentatives les plus distantes, d'une Peinture qui travaille derrière le dos du peintre, d'une Raison

dans l'histoire dont il soit l'instrument.
 Ces monstres hegelien sont l'antithèse et
 le complément de son individualisme.¹⁵

Malraux, as Merleau-Ponty had indicated earlier in the article, had given an "individualistic" interpretation of painting. Each painting was the creative expression of the painter's own private world of experience. And since each painter works in such isolation, and yet since there is a history to painting, there must be some kind of external connection between them. That is to say, there must be something that ties them together, and this for Malraux is the task of the Painter, of the "Surartiste", that is, the one who works "behind the back" of the individual painter or artist. This "Surartiste" somehow invisibly guides the hand of the artist in such a way that the individual painting that he accomplishes will also fulfill a "higher" destiny in terms of the history of painting. For Merleau-Ponty such explanations of the history of painting are inevitable; "...quand on a enferm  l'art au plus secret de l'individu, la convergence des oeuvres ind pendantes ne peut s'expliquer que par quelque destin qui les domine".¹⁶

Such an explanation, however, is not satisfactory for Merleau-Ponty. Indeed, the difficulty does not lie so

much in the notion of a "Surartiste" but rather further below that. That is to say, Merleau-Ponty is criticizing not so much the introduction of a "Surartiste" but the very necessity for introducing it. The trouble lies with Malraux's individualism. If he had not described the painter in terms of one who creates on the basis of a single, solitary, private world, then he would not have had to try to account for the history of painting in terms of the "Surartiste". The trouble, then, lies in the individualistic account of the painter. And the remedy for the trouble lies in the re-introduction of Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty asks, "Que deviennent-ils [i.e., such notions as "Surartiste", "higher destiny"] quand la théorie de la perception réinstalle le peintre dans le monde visible et retrouve le corps comme expression spontanée?"¹⁷ For Merleau-Ponty it is necessary to correct the individualist's account, and this can be done only by putting the painter back into the world of perception. Indeed, the solution to the problem of the history of painting lies with Merleau-Ponty's notion of creative expression; "... de même l'histoire de la peinture qui court d'une oeuvre à une autre repose sur elle-même et n'est portée que par la cariatide de nos efforts qui convergent du seul fait qu'ils

sont efforts d'expression".¹⁸ There is a connection between paintings that rests in the painter's being-in-the-world, and this foundation makes it possible for painting to be a creative expression arising out of the painter's world. Indeed, the body's situation in the world of perception is the paradigm of the individual painter's creation. Or, more precisely, painting is but one particular way for the body to express itself.

...c'est l'opération expressive du corps, commencée par la moindre perception, qui s'amplifie en peinture et en art. Le champ des significations picturales est ouvert depuis qu'un homme a paru dans le monde...La quasi-éternité de l'art se confond avec la quasi-éternité de l'existence incarnée et nous avons dans l'exercice de notre corps et de nos sens, en tant qu'ils nous insèrent dans le monde, de quoi comprendre notre gesticulation culturelle en tant qu'elle nous insère dans l'histoire...Disons plus généralement que la tentative continuée de l'expression fonde une seule histoire -- comme la prise de notre corps sur tout objet possible fonde un seul espace.¹⁹

The themes that Merleau-Ponty is presenting here ought not to be that unfamiliar to the reader, as we saw them in the chapter on signification gestuelle. Indeed, what Merleau-Ponty is saying here about painting ought to strike one as being very similar to what he had to say about language.

But therein lies a difficulty. If language and painting both have a history, and if, as we have seen above, history is connected in some way with sedimentation, then it would appear that sedimentation is not the peculiar characteristic of language and further that there is no significant difference between language and painting. That is to say, if such is the case, language and art are really the same type of expression. However, if we are going to avoid this tentative conclusion, we must ask two questions. First, is the history of painting comparable to the history of language? Second, how can we conceive of the relationship between history and sedimentation?

In regard to the first question, the answer is not that difficult to find. Indeed, we have already seen it in one of the above quotes. When Merleau-Ponty discusses the history of painting in the context of language, he says, "... l'histoire de la peinture, elle n'est pas mémoire pour soi, elle ne prétend pas totaliser ce qui l'a rendue possible."²⁰ In other words, even though there is a history of painting, it is not a history "pour soi"; it is not an integral history which becomes aware of itself as history. More so, it is not a history that tries to recapture itself in the very act of painting. No painter has attempted to bring the history of

painting to the canvas. In fact, for Merleau-Ponty, the task would be impossible, since painting would need language for such an enterprise, and "les voix de la peinture sont les voix du silence". On the other hand, language can and does attempt to give an account of its history. Since one may "speak about speaking", one of the ways to do so is to give an account of speaking that has preceded what is now spoken. We have, for example, a history of English which is really a speaking about speaking. We are given an account of past speech, and the account itself is in words! Such cannot happen with painting.

If such a distinction between these two types of history can be made, then it is possible to answer our second question, although Merleau-Ponty does not, in fact, even raise the question. How might one conceive of the relationship between sedimentation and history? First, from what we have seen previously, it is evident that the two notions are in some ways positively related. When the first outline of the notion was presented at the beginning of this chapter, we saw that "having a history" was part of the meaning of the term. But, given the distinction Merleau-Ponty outlines above, it becomes necessary for us to determine exactly what kind of

history is meant by "having a history". If a sufficient condition for 'sedimentation' is "having any sort of history", then it would certainly be the case that painting in particular and art in general would display the characteristic of sedimentation. And thus our distinction between art and language would break down. But if we wish to preserve the distinction and still hold that art has a history, we may do so by saying that it is a history "pour soi" that is a sufficient condition for the presence of 'sedimentation'. That is to say, if we are going to insist upon the positive relationship between sedimentation and history, then it must be between sedimentation and history "pour soi", i.e., a history that can be brought to awareness through the very activity whose history it is. And it is precisely this type of history which language has.

What we have seen so far is that there is some positive relationship between sedimentation and history, although it was necessary for us to distinguish two kinds of history. Before we make even more precise the definition of sedimentation in terms of history, let us now consider the relationship between sedimentation and institution. Indeed, we must first ask ourselves what this notion of "institution" is. In fact, to begin with,

it may seem odd to the reader that such a notion has crept into the discussion at all. Whereas we had seen the notion "history" appear in the context of the Phénoménologie de la perception account of sedimentation, the notion of "institution" did in no way fit in. Why, then, should we discuss it here? It becomes rather evident, when one carefully examines the discussion of painting and language in the Signes article and in La Prose du monde, that the notion of "institution" is as important as the notion of "history". In two passages in particular Merleau-Ponty discusses the notion. Let us look at each.

In discussing painting as expression, Merleau-Ponty indicates that there is a triple "reprise" of the expressive act which makes it a "provisional eternity".

This expressive act

...n'est pas seulement métamorphose au sens des contes de fées, ...elle est aussi réponse à ce que le monde, le passé, les oeuvres faites demandaient, accomplissement, fraternité. Husserl a employé le beau mot de Stiftung, -- fondation ou établissement, -- pour désigner d'abord la fécondité illimitée de chaque présent qui, justement parce qu'il est singulier et qu'il passe, ne pourra jamais cesser d'avoir été et donc d'être universellement, -- mais surtout

celle des produits de la culture qui continuent de valoir après leur apparition et ouvrent un champ de recherches où ils revivent perpétuellement. C'est ainsi que le monde dès qu'il l'a vu, ses premières tentatives de peintre et tout le passé de la peinture livrent au peintre une tradition, c'est-à-dire, comme Husserl, le pouvoir d'oublier les origines et de donner au passé, non pas une survie qui est la forme hypocrite de l'oubli, mais une nouvelle vie, qui est la forme noble de la mémoire.²¹

In this passage we find Merleau-Ponty using the German equivalent of 'institution', viz. 'Stiftung', which he borrows from Husserl. There are a number of important points that he makes about "institution". First, "institution" may be looked at in terms of a foundation or an establishment of something in the past which affects the present. - In other words, the present is pregnant with possibilities, and these possibilities are the result of the fact that there is institution. In regard to painting, for example, what we might call the institution of painting is precisely the fact that in the past paintings were created but did not pass away. That is to say, they founded or instituted new possibilities for the future of painting. When the painter sits down before his canvas, he may seem to be starting all over "from scratch", but such is not really the case. The past of painting is there, working

on him in the present. Indeed, as Merleau-Ponty indicates, the products of the past of painting, as with the products of all of culture, "ouvrent un champ de recherches". Painting is possible for the painter as an acquisition from the past, and this acquisition opens new horizons for further painting.

'Institution' then is a way of indicating that the past is active in the present. But more so, and this is Merleau-Ponty's second main point, 'institution' or 'tradition' also indicates the ability, even the necessity, to surpass the past. That is to say, tradition or institution is also the ability to forget one's origins. But this forgetting is not the mere ignoring of one's origins. The painter, for example, must not refuse to admit that there is a tradition in painting; he must not ignore its past. Rather, he must be aware of them, but in the manner of surpassing them. He must remember that painting has origins, has a past, but he must also forget them by going beyond them. He must push beyond the old techniques and strive for new styles. Painting can be creative expression only by forgetting its origins and throwing itself into the future.

Later in the same article Merleau-Ponty broadens the horizon of this notion by relating perception itself to institution.

Toute perception, toute action qui la suppose, bref tout usage humain du corps est déjà expression primordiale. -- ... l'opération première qui d'abord constitue les signes en signes, fait habiter en eux l'exprimé par la seule éloquence de leur arrangement et de leur configuration, implante un sens dans ce qui n'en avait pas, et qui donc, loin de s'épuiser dans l'instant où elle a lieu, inaugure un ordre, fonde une institution ou une tradition..."

Here we see Merleau-Ponty include the whole range of corporeal activities under the notion of expression, and it is this expression which brings about a new creation of meaning. But the meaning that is created is not one that is exhausted the moment it is created. Rather, expression brings about a meaning that lasts; it sets up an order, a foundation, an institution. That is to say, expression brings about a meaning that is connected with us in the present. It sets up a foundation upon which to build further meaning.

We have seen so far that Merleau-Ponty discusses the notion of "institution" in terms of fecundity of the present and forgetting of the past. As we try to fill in this picture

more extensively, we find that a not so unfamiliar problem arises again. In both examples of Merleau-Ponty's use of the term 'institution' we find that something more than just language is being described. In the first case Merleau-Ponty describes the institution of painting, and, in the second, he talks about all of one's corporeal-perceptual activities as founding a tradition or institution. The problem then is the same as the one with 'sedimentation' and 'history'. If we would like to equate 'sedimentation' and 'institution' we could do so only at the expense of our distinction between language and art. That is to say, if "having an institution, tradition, or foundation", is a sufficient condition for sedimentation, then language, art, and, indeed, all expressive activity would have the characteristic of sedimentation, and, thus, the peculiarity of linguistic expression would be lost. However, we may be able to avoid this fateful consequence, as we avoided the similar one earlier on, by attempting to distinguish different types of institution. If this were possible, then perhaps we would be able to set off one sort of institution from the others and give it the label 'sedimentation'.

Unfortunately, neither in the Signes article nor in the Prose account do we find any distinctions made for our notion of "institution". However, Merleau-Ponty does give us an account of "institution" in Résumés de cours²³, and there he does distinguish different types of institution. As before, he is talking about institution in a two-fold sense, i.e., in terms of fecundity of the present and forgetting of origins. Indeed, this is clear from the definition that he gives us.

On entendait donc ici par institution ces événements d'une expérience qui la dotent de dimensions durables, par rapport auxquelles toute une série d'autres expériences auront sens, formeront une suite pensable ou une histoire, -- ou encore les événements qui déposent en moi un sens, non pas à titre de survivance et de résidu, mais comme appel à une suite, exigence d'un avenir.²⁴

The institutional aspects of an event give me or "deposit" in me a meaning. But the meaning is one that lasts. And it lasts, not as a residue, but as the force that projects me into the future, toward the creation of new meaning. Institution makes it possible for there to be a foundation for my creative expression, and it also makes possible the pushing beyond the foundation in the actual expression itself. Beyond this, however, Merleau-Ponty wants to distinguish four types

of institution. "Cette notion a été approchée à travers quatre ordres de phénomènes, dont les trois premiers ont trait à l'histoire personnelle ou intersubjective, et le dernier à l'histoire publique."²⁵ The first three, then, are more closely related to one another than to the last. Let us look at this four-fold distinction.

Although Merleau-Ponty does not label each type clearly, it would seem that the type-classification would be as follows: (a) biological, (b) personal, (c) artistic, (d) cognitional or cognitive. Merleau-Ponty, to begin, says very little about the first.

Il y a quelque chose comme une institution jusque dans l'animalité (il y a une imprégnation de l'animal par les vivants qui l'entourent au début de sa vie), et jusque dans les fonctions humaines que l'on croyait purement "biologiques" (la puberté présente le rythme de conservation, reprise et dépassement des événements anciens,...)²⁶

Even at the biological level, there are events that occur which have "durable dimensions". Merleau-Ponty gives the example of puberty wherein the events in the life of the human being build up a foundation. The events in the sexual life of the person at ten years of age form the foundation

or institution for the events at sixteen years. We find even here the notions of fecundity and forgetting, "reprise et dépassement". The second level, the personal, may be exemplified in the activity of love. Love may be construed by some as something which does not have any foundation or origins. One would be mistaken in thinking, however, that one's love in the present has not developed and that it is not the product of different feelings that have brought about the love.

...il est bien impossible de prétendre que l'amour présent ne soit qu'un écho du passé: le passé au contraire fait figure de préparation ou préméditation d'un présent qui a plus de sens que lui, quoiqu'il se reconnaisse en lui.²⁷

The third-level of institution, exemplified by the artist, is one with which we are more familiar.

l'institution d'une oeuvre chez le peintre, d'un style dans l'histoire de la peinture, offre la même logique souterraine. Le peintre apprend à peindre autrement en imitant ses devanciers. Chacune de ses oeuvres annonce les suivantes, -- et fait qu'elles ne peuvent pas être semblables.²⁸

Il y a donc, ...une "interrogation" de la peinture, qui suffit à donner un sens commun à toutes ses tentatives et à en faire une histoire, sans permettre de l'anticiper par concepts.²⁹

The institution or tradition in painting makes it possible for the painter to draw upon the past of painting in order to go beyond it. The painter, when he begins to paint, confronts the common resources of past painters, but these common resources allow him to break through the old restrictions and to bring about something that is truly a creative expression.

The fourth level of institution is the cognitional level. What is meant here by 'cognitional'? This term, I think, aptly describes the fourth level that Merleau-Ponty discusses. This level is, precisely, the level of knowledge or the level of ideas. Yet, even at this level wherein the question of truth arises we may find the characteristics of fecundity and forgetting, "reprise et dépassement", that had been found in the other three levels of experience. This point, however, as Merleau-Ponty realizes, may seem odd to some. One might object, "S'il doit y avoir une vérité, ne faut-il pas que les vérités soient liées en un système qui ne se révèle que peu à peu, mais dont l'ensemble repose en soi hors du temps?"³⁰ Merleau-Ponty does admit, in response to this question that, "l'historicité du savoir n'en est pas

un caractère "apparent",...³¹ Yet, for all that, there is an institutional aspect of truth that ties truth to its past ~~and~~ allows there to be future truth. "Même dans l'ordre du savoir exact, c'est à une conception "structurale" de la vérité...qu'il faut tendre. Il y a vérité au sens d'un champ commun aux diverses entreprises du savoir."³² Knowledge does have this institutional characteristic. The knowledge that we have at the present moment is linked with its past. Indeed, this institutional aspect makes it possible for there to be truth, since the past appearance of ideas provides the foundation or ground upon which can be built future ideas. Truth appears here as an acquisition based upon a common way of obtaining knowledge in the past. Merleau-Ponty gives a geometry example at this point, but it is not discussed. Yet, it would be most appropriate here to recall a comparable example, the example of the sum of the first n positive integers that was discussed in the previous chapter. There we say that the attainment of a particular algebraic truth depended upon a certain relationship to one's being-in-the-world. There was a signification gestuelle to be found in the pure realm of mathematical truth. Yet, too, there is an

institutional aspect to such a truth. We were able to deduce the formula for the sum of the first n positive integers. But this depended also upon our comprehension of "integer", "whole number", etc. In other words, these notions or ideas had to be developed in the past history of algebra. These ideas had to appear and then remain active in their influence on present algebraic thinking. They provided a way or a path for further algebraic operations. The present is "pregnant with possibilities" which derive from the past of algebra. Yet, these possibilities push beyond what is already given. We must, in a sense, forget what has been done with the integer in the past in order to push beyond toward the discovery of new mathematical relationships. As Merleau-Ponty puts it in Prose,

Ce qu'il faut voir, cependant, c'est que nous ne sortons toujours pas du temps, ni d'un certain champ de pensées, que celui qui comprend même la géométrie n'est toujours pas un esprit sans situation dans le monde naturel et dans la culture, qu'il est l'héritier, dans le meilleur des cas le fondateur, d'un certain langage, que la signification ne transcende la présence de fait des signes, que comme l'institution est au-delà des contingences qui lui ont donné naissance.³³

But if this is so, why is the cognitional level of institution different from the first three levels? In fact, can we say that the first three are significantly different from the fourth? There is a difference to be examined here for Merleau-Ponty, and the key to it lies in the word 'vérité'. At the level of knowledge, a level wherein language is obviously present, the acquisition of a truth which would be a stable acquisition becomes a distinct possibility. The attaining of truth is not a possibility at any of the other levels. Now, one might point out that there is some kind of acquisition at the other levels. Indeed, this seems to be part of the meaning of 'institution', since, in fact, it refers in part to the fecundity of the present which derives from the past. Yet, one should be aware that if there is an acquisition, it is not one that is explicitly expressed in the present. The painter may build upon the past, but this connection with the past is not one that is brought to explicit awareness and expressed by the painter as he paints. Indeed, if any term is appropriate for labelling this type of institution, i.e., the type that involves the possibility of bringing the past to explicit awareness and

expression, it is the word 'sedimentation'. At the fourth level, the level of cognition and linguistic activity, there is what might be called sedimentation; whereas, at any of the other levels there is no such thing. This difference again is recalled by Merleau-Ponty in Prose.

Ici la sédimentation n'accumule pas seulement création sur création, elle intègre, -- les premières démarches ne lancent pas seulement vers l'avenir un appel vague, la consommation qu'il réalise est celle-là même qu'elles appelaient, puisqu'elle les sauve --, elles sont l'expérience de la même vérité dans laquelle elles viendront se fondre. De là vient qu'il y ait de l'acquis dans la science, alors que la peinture est toujours en suspens, de là vient que l'algorithme rende disponibles les significations qu'il a réussi à proférer, c'est-à-dire qu'elles nous paraissent mener, au-delà de leurs formulations provisoire, une existence indépendante. Or il y a quelque chose d'analogue dans tout langage. L'écrivain ne se conçoit que dans une langue établie, alors que chaque peintre refait la sienne. Et cela veut dire beaucoup. Cela veut dire que l'oeuvre du langage, construite à partir de ce bien commun qu'est la langue, prétend s'y incorporer. Cela veut dire aussi qu'elle se donne d'emblée comme incluse dans la langue, au moins à titre de possible; les transformations mêmes qu'elle y apporte y demeurent reconnaissables après le passage de l'écrivain, au lieu que l'expérience

d'un peintre, en passant dans ses successeurs, cesse d'être identifiable. Cela veut dire que le passé du langage n'est pas seulement passé surmonté, mais aussi passé compris. La peinture est muette.³⁴

There is an acquisition in painting, but it is not one that is comprehended as such in painting. Institution, at the level which I call the level of sedimentation, allows language to push beyond its past into the future. But this pushing beyond is not just the mere "surmounting" of the past of language, as is institution in painting the surmounting of the past of painting. Rather, institution at the former level, the level of language (which we may take to be the cognitional level discussed above), also involves the comprehension of the past. Language can make explicit its past, and this makes possible the "independent existence" that language attempts to achieve.

Now that we have compared "sedimentation" and "institution", what conclusions have we reached so far concerning the notion of "sédimentation"? On the one hand, we were able to say that sedimentation and history were positively related and that, in fact, sedimentation could be construed as a peculiar type of history. Sedimentation is

history at the linguistic level. That is to say that sedimentation is history when history can become aware of itself as history. And this takes place only at the level of language, wherein language itself can bring its own history to self-reflection. It is at this level that the question of a truth can arise. On the other hand, we were also able to say that sedimentation and institution were positively related and that sedimentation could be construed as a peculiar type of institution. Four levels of institution were distinguished, viz., the biological, personal, artistic, and cognitional (linguistic) levels. And sedimentation was institution of the fourth level, the level of language. At this level the past acquisitions that affected the present were not just surmounted in the present. Language does not just surmount its past, it also can comprehend it. The comprehension of the possibilities for the future gives language a privileged position and there arises the notion of "truth to be obtained".³⁵

What seems to be common to both of these relationships, i.e., sedimentation in terms of history and in terms of institution, is the notion of truth. Indeed, the notion

"truth" is the key here, as is evident from this passage where neither 'painting' nor 'history' nor 'institution' is explicitly used.

Dire qu'il y a une vérité, c'est dire que, lorsque ma reprise rencontre le projet ancien ou étranger et que l'expression réussie délivre ce qui était captif dans l'être depuis toujours, dans l'épaisseur du temps personnel et interpersonnel s'établit une communication intérieure par laquelle notre présent devient la vérité de tous les autres événements connaissants. C'est comme un coin que nous enfonçons dans le présent, une borne qui atteste qu'à ce moment quelque chose a pris place... A ce moment quelque chose a été fondée en signification, une expérience a été transformée en son sens, est devenue vérité. La vérité est un autre nom de la sédimentation, qui elle-même est la présence de tous les présents dans le nôtre.³⁶

Here we see that Merleau-Ponty equates the terms 'sedimentation' and 'truth'. Sedimentation is truth. Truth is sedimentation. Each past linguistic expression was at one time a present, i.e., a present linguistic expression. It was uttered at some moment in the past which was once a present. But these past expressions have not faded into oblivion. They are still present in some way in the present. This pool of acquired significations, this network of past meanings which

are active in the present, form the foundation for our present experience. The truth is precisely this set of acquired significations that is present in my experience.

At this point it would seem that some definite conclusions may be drawn. It would seem that we must also revise a few of our points that were made earlier in this chapter. First, it would seem to be the case that sedimentation involves or indicates an inherent connection between the speaking subject and his history. But, contra what was said in the Phénoménologie de la perception, the artist also has a connection with art history. The difference, however, as we have seen, is that the speaking subject qua speaking has a certain sort of inherent history, viz., a history that can comprehend itself. Further, it is a type of history that makes it possible to have a foundation or institution that gives rise to the notion of truth. Second, the notion of truth is most important for our understanding of sedimentation. As has been indicated all along from the Phénoménologie de la perception to the Signes articles, sédimentation installs in the speaker the idea of a truth to be obtained. What makes history and institution sedimentation is the characteristic of truth. (And if "truth" may be equated with "intersubjectively

valid world", then Merleau-Ponty's position in Phénoménologie de la perception is still viable, since the artist does not aim at truth.) Third, sedimentation involves the possibility of language being self-reflexive, the possibility of language speaking about itself. The painter cannot paint about painting; a person cannot love about loving. But the speaker can and does speak about speaking.

* * *

The standpoint of the speaking subject has given us an insight into two essential characteristics of la parole, viz., the characteristics of signification gestuelle and sédimentation. Indeed, both these characteristics are accessible only from the viewpoint of the speaking subject, since both these characteristics indicate a specific relationship between the speaking subject and his past and present situation. From the viewpoint of langue, the speaking subject could not be seen as situated in a world of significations that become actualized through the act of speaking. Nor can the viewpoint of langue show us that the past of the

language is affecting the present and that the speaking subject aims at the truth. All this can be obtained only by taking the standpoint of la parole. One question remains, however, and that is: How are these two characteristics of language related? In one particular passage in Signes, Merleau-Ponty does make the connection.

In speaking about la parole, Merleau-Ponty describes the movement toward actual speech, i.e., the actual bringing-to-the-level-of-linguistic-utterance of the meaning that the speaking subject has encountered.

L'intention significative se donne un corps et se connaît elle-même en se cherchant un équivalent dans le système des significations disponibles que représentent la langue que je parle et l'ensemble des écrits et de la culture dont je suis l'héritier. Il s'agit, pour ce voeu muet qu'est l'intention significative, de réaliser un certain arrangement des instruments déjà signifiants ou des significations déjà parlantes...qui suscite chez l'auditeur le pressentiment d'une signification autre et neuve et inversement accomplit chez celui qui parle ou qui écrit l'ancrage de la signification inédite dans les significations déjà disponibles. Mais pourquoi, comment, en quel sens, celles-ci sont-elles disponibles? Elles le sont devenues quand elles ont, en leur temps, été instituées comme significations auxquelles je puis avoir recours, que j'ai -- par une opération expressive de même sorte.

The meaning which the subject is about to bring into the world "se donne un corps" when the speaking subject actually does make an utterance. Indeed, the signification gestuelle of la parole is quite apparent here, for the speaking subject crystallizes a signification which has its roots in the perceptual world. Yet, in order for the speaker to bring about this signification, he must have recourse to a world of linguistic instruments. That is, he must use the vocabulary, grammar, etc., of la langue that has already been brought into existence. These instruments are already present and available in the world of the speaking subject. But, Merleau-Ponty asks, and this is the key question, how is it that these instruments are available? How is it that we have such instruments? There are such instruments precisely because past acts of speaking have brought them into existence, i.e., have instituted them. (Merleau-Ponty could have just as well used the term 'sédimentées' at this point.) Past acts of speaking have created the instruments, but these instruments did not just pass away into oblivion once they were used. Rather, because of institution or sedimentation they have an effect on the present. And it is because of this effect that the speaking subject, in the present situation, can bring to realization a signification

that is present in his experience. Further the "forgetting" aspect of sedimentation is also present in the speaking situation, for sedimentation allows the speaking subject to forget the origins of the instruments available. If the speaking subject is to bring to expression a new meaning originally encountered in the perceptual world, he must forget what they originally meant in order to make them express something new. This allows the speaking subject to push into the future in order to establish a new meaning.

We have seen, so far, what sedimentation is in respect to language. Sedimentation and signification gestuelle are the two principal characteristics of language. Now our attention must turn to a different region of experience, that of philosophy.

FOOTNOTES

1. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 221f.
2. In rather uncharacteristic style Merleau-Ponty seems to be creating a fairly rigid division between language and all other types of expression. However, one ought not to jump to such conclusions before the material in Signes and in Prose is presented. It may just be the case that Merleau-Ponty is exaggerating the differences between language and art in the account in Phénoménologie de la perception in order to underscore the peculiarities of linguistic expression. And if it is an exaggeration, one will certainly find in his later account of language and art an overcoming of those exaggerated differences. However, if Merleau-Ponty is not exaggerating here and does want some rigid separation of language and art, then his view is certainly open to criticism. But if Merleau-Ponty does hold here to such a rigid separation of the two, it is certainly the case that he will move away from this position in his later work. In any case, it would be more desirable to hold off any criticisms of this account of the differences between language and art until we see the complete picture of the relationship between the two.
3. Signes, p. 99f.
4. Ibid., p. 100.
5. Ibid., p. 101.
6. This article also appears in Signes, pp. 105-122.
7. Prose, pp. 66-160.
8. Ibid., p. I.
9. Ibid., p. V.
10. This passage appears in Prose, pp. 129ff.

11. See Prose, p. 97, p. 123, p. 142, p. 151, p. 155.
12. In the discussion on sedimentation and history, it is important to keep in mind that I shall not be attempting a complete account of Merleau-Ponty's notion of history. Since the notion of history is not so important in this context, it is not really clear that a more detailed account of "history" is necessary at this point. For what I am trying to do is to uncover the meaning behind Merleau-Ponty's position that language (and art) have histories. It is not the concept of history that is especially problematical at this point. Rather, it is the fact that language and art have histories. What we are interested in is the meaning of the proposition "Language has a history" or "Art has a history".
13. Signes, p. 75.
14. Ibid. Indeed, the history of painting that the Museum makes possible is really based on this living historicity found in painting. "Le Musée ajoute un faux prestige à la vraie valeur des ouvrages en les détachant des hasards au milieu desquels ils sont nés et en nous faisant croire que des fatalités guidaient la main des artistes depuis toujours. Alors que le style en chaque peintre vivait comme la pulsation de son coeur et le rendait justement capable de reconnaître tout autre effort que le sien, -- le Musée convertit cette historicité secrète, pudique, non délibérée, involontaire, vivante enfin, en histoire officielle et pompeuse." (Signes, p. 78)
15. Ibid., p. 81.
16. Prose, p. 107.
17. Signes, p. 81.
18. Ibid., p. 86.

19. Ibid., p. 87. Merleau-Ponty sums it up well in Prose, p. 104. "La vraie histoire de la peinture est, non pas celle qui met la peinture au passé et invoque les Surartistes et les fatalités. Ce serait celle qui la met toute au présent, habite les artistes et réintègre le peintre à la fraternité des peintres."
20. Signes, p. 99.
21. Ibid., p. 73f.
22. Ibid., p. 84.
23. Résumés, pp. 59-65. The course is entitled "L'"Institution" dans l'histoire personnelle et publique".
24. Ibid., p. 61. One might note here that the word 'history' has crept into the definition. I shall try to outline a bit the relationship between "history" and "institution" further below.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., p. 62.
28. Ibid., p. 63.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., p. 64.
32. Ibid.
33. Prose, p. 148f.
34. Ibid., p. 142f. (*Italics added.*)

35. It should be fairly clear from this that institution and history are at least indirectly related. Indeed, it is very difficult to give an account of "history" without mentioning 'acquisition' which involves "institution" or "tradition". Further, it is even more difficult to discuss "institution" without discussing the notion of "past" and this leads directly into "history". From what has been presented in the text so far, it would seem that history and institution are related in the following way. "History", as even our everyday notion indicates, involves a notion of "the past". To say that X has a history is to say that X has a past. But the genuine history of, say, art or language, is not a dead history. That is to say, if X is to have a genuine history, the events or occurrences that constitute the history of X must be connected somehow, and the connection cannot be something that is imposed on it from the outside. (This is not to say, however, that the history of X must be a history "pour soi". We must distinguish at least three types of history, viz. a non-genuine history that is imposed by an observer, a genuine history, and a history "pour soi" which is aware of itself as history. The last is characteristic of language.) But if the genuine history of X must in some way be internally or inherently related to X, then by taking this notion of inherent connection one step farther we are able to say that the history of X in some way affects the present state of X. But, then, to say this is really to say that the history of X initiates a foundation, tradition, or institution upon which X may build. "Institution" is the taking of the notion "genuine history" one step farther. And then, as we have seen above, the other side of the coin of "institution" is the notion of "forgetting". "Institution" allows X to surpass its origins by forgetting them. What is clear too, I think, from this account, is that a genuine history is a necessary condition for the presence of institution or tradition. If we had something which has a non-genuine history (perhaps an example would be the history of the physical world), then it would not be the case that the notion of "institution" would be applicable to it. Indeed, this seems evident from the fact that for Merleau-Ponty the lowest level of institution is already the biological.

36. Signes, p. 120. (Italics added except for 'vérité de'.)
37. Ibid., p. 113.

PART III: PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER 5: PHILOSOPHY AND PHENOMENOLOGY

The analysis of the speaking subject from the phenomenological point of view has presented us with two principal characteristics of la parole. Now, we must ask a more fundamental question: In what way was this phenomenology of speech a philosophy of speech? That is to say, what is the relationship between phenomenology and philosophy and what is the task of philosophy according to Merleau-Ponty? In this chapter I shall attempt to clarify Merleau-Ponty's notion of philosophy while commenting on philosophy's relationship to phenomenology. In the next chapter I shall consider further development of Merleau-Ponty's notion of philosophy in Le visible et l'invisible.

From the point of view of this thesis, language and philosophy have a particular relationship. That is to say, as has been pointed out in the Introduction, we are making an attempt to relate Merleau-Ponty's account of language and his account of philosophy in order to develop a philosophy of philosophical language. In this way one might say that language and philosophy have an external relationship, i.e., a relationship imposed upon them from the outside, from the point of

my own particular interests and concerns. Yet, the two are related in more than an external way. When it comes to the question of the relationship between phenomenology and philosophy, the phenomenology of language is of particular interest and bears important considerations in this context. Indeed, the phenomenology of language provides an important passage for entry into the problem of the relationship between phenomenology and philosophy.

Cela est particulièrement clair quand il s'agit de la phénoménologie du langage. Ce problème /i.e., concerning the distinction between a phenomenology of language and a philosophy of language/, plus évidemment qu'aucun autre, nous oblige à prendre une décision en ce qui concerne les rapports de la phénoménologie et de la philosophie ou de la métaphysique. Car, plus clairement qu'aucun autre, il apparaît à la fois comme un problème spécial et comme un problème qui contient tous les autres, y compris celui de la philosophie. Si la parole est ce que nous avons dit, comment y aurait-il une idéation qui permette de dominer cette praxis, comment la phénoménologie de la parole ne serait-elle pas aussi philosophie de la parole, comment, après elle, y aurait-il place pour une élucidation de degré supérieur? Il nous faut absolument souligner le sens philosophique du retour à la parole.¹

This passage raises two interesting points. First, it is rather clear, in Merleau-Ponty's mind at least, that there is more than just some kind of external relationship possible between philosophy and language. Rather, the phenomenology of language is a significant gateway to the sphere of philosophy, and, in fact, the problem of the relationship between phenomenology of language and philosophy of language is a paradigm of the relationship between phenomenology and philosophy. And, indeed, this is the question with which we must begin. Where does phenomenology end and philosophy begin? In what way, if any, is a phenomenology of language already a philosophy of language? If we are going to find out what Merleau-Ponty's conception of philosophy is, it would seem that we must find out in what way phenomenology leads to philosophy. Second, one can see from Merleau-Ponty's statement concerning the above that the phenomenology of language shows that there is some kind of relationship between phenomenology and philosophy and that phenomenology is in some way the entrance to philosophy as such. Indeed, this is clear from his comment concerning "le sens philosophique du retour à la parole". If we are going

to arrive at a clear notion of what philosophy is by taking the phenomenological path, however, we must then construe the philosophical sense of phenomenology in such a way that there would be a relationship between the two. In other words, and very simply, our conception of phenomenology must make it possible for there to be an intricate connection between philosophy and phenomenology. In particular, there are two ways of construing phenomenology that would destroy any type of intricate connection between phenomenology and philosophy. One view takes phenomenology as a propaedeutic to an idealist philosophy of constituting consciousness, and the other takes phenomenology as mere psychological observation. Let us look at both.

The problem of the relationship between phenomenology and philosophy, as Merleau-Ponty points out, is a problem with which Husserl himself was concerned. Certainly, the two were in some way distinct and yet in some way related, for Husserl, but one is not quite sure in what way.² Yet, for Merleau-Ponty, the real difficulty lies in the situation of phenomenology within the enterprise of a subjectivist notion of philosophy. Would there be any relationship at all between phenomenology and philosophy?

Si le sujet philosophique était une conscience constituante transparente devant laquelle le monde et le langage fussent entièrement explicites comme ses significations et ses objets, n'importe quelle expérience, phénoménologique ou non, suffirait à motiver le passage à la philosophie, et l'exploration systématique du Lebenswelt ne serait pas nécessaire.³

Merleau-Ponty has acutely perceived two complementary difficulties in what he conceives to be the Husserlian enterprise. On the one hand, if we start from a phenomenological explication of the given, à la Husserl, nothing in his explication will lead us to adopt the standpoint of the transcendental subject. Nothing will lead us to conceive of consciousness as constituting consciousness. (Indeed, one might infer here that the Husserlian philosophy needs an Hegelian phenomenology so that one might be "led by the hand" to the standpoint of the absolute!) On the other hand, if we start from a philosophy of the transcendental subject, Merleau-Ponty rightly indicates that one is hard pressed to say why one should go through a phenomenological explication of the given, when, in fact, we can give a philosophical elucidation of the constitution of the given by the transcendental subject. It is rather clear, then, that if one starts with either phenomenology or philosophy, one cannot arrive at the other by any internal development of

thought. The movement would be unmotivated except by external considerations. One would have to juxtapose one to the other. Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, the earlier Husserlian view of philosophy made any essential relationship between phenomenology and philosophy impossible.

There is a second way of viewing phenomenology that would make any type of relationship with philosophy impossible. This too, although Merleau-Ponty does not quite make this clear, is motivated by a certain notion of philosophy.

La description que nous avons donnée de la puissance significative de la parole, et en général du corps comme médiateur de notre rapport à l'objet, ne fournirait aucune indication philosophique si l'on pouvait la considérer comme affaire de pittoresque psychologique.⁴

Indeed, if one considers phenomenology as merely an account of psychological experience, there would be no philosophical sense to such an account, and, thus, there would be no relationship between phenomenology and philosophy. But, to have such a notion of phenomenology would already involve a certain notion of philosophy. That is, if one is to reduce phenomenology to psychology, one would already have a philosophical perspective by means of which this could be done. For example, a Cartesian position concerning the ability of philosophy to obtain the

truth would reduce any account of our corporeal experience to the status of psychological impression. Thus for a Cartesian, e.g., an account of our lived experience would be irrelevant to a philosophical pursuit of the truth. But Merleau-Ponty will have none of this. For him two requirements are imperative. First, one must develop a notion of philosophy that will permit the existence of a philosophically relevant phenomenology. A notion of philosophy that turns phenomenology into psychology must be rejected. Second, one must develop a notion of philosophy that will permit a phenomenology which will not itself be a philosophy. In other words, one must develop a philosophy which will make room for an analysis that would be beyond one's phenomenological investigation. One's notion of philosophy must be such that it is not equivalent to phenomenology. We need a phenomenology which allows "une élucidation de degré supérieur..."⁵ To sum it up:

Le propre d'une philosophie phénoménologique nous paraît donc être de s'établir à titre définitif dans l'ordre de la spontanéité enseignante qui est inaccessible au psychologisme et à l'historicisme, non moins qu'aux métaphysiques dogmatiques. Cet ordre, la phénoménologie de la parole est entre toutes apte à nous le révéler.⁶

We shall be able to establish our philosophy, based in phenomenology, through the development of our phenomenology of language.

We have seen so far that the philosophy that is to be developed from phenomenology is to be both distinct from phenomenology and related to it. But what precisely is to be the task of such a phenomenological philosophy? To be more specific, two questions need to be asked here. First, what is the subject matter of a phenomenological philosophy? That is, what is the object of inquiry for the philosopher qua phenomenological philosopher? Second, what is philosophizing à la phenomenological philosophy? That is, what is the philosopher qua phenomenological philosopher supposed to do? To answer these questions, let us return to two sources, the essay in Signes on the phenomenology of language and the Preface in Phénoménologie de la perception.

In Signes we have seen that Merleau-Ponty claims that the phenomenology of language is the port of entrance to a phenomenological philosophy. But why is this so?

Quand je parle ou quand je comprends, j'expérimente la présence d'autrui en moi ou de moi en autrui, qui est la pierre d'achoppement de la théorie de l'intersubjectivité, la présence du représenté qui est la pierre d'achoppement de la théorie du temps, et je

comprends enfin ce que veut dire
l'énigmatique proposition de Husserl:
"La subjectivité transcendantale est
intersubjectivité." Dans la mesure où
ce que je dis a sens, je suis pour moi-
même, quand je parle, un autre "autre",
et, dans la mesure où je comprends, je
ne sais plus qui parle et qui écoute.⁷

The significance of the phenomenology of language for philosophy can be seen clearly here. The phenomenology of language returns us to the speaking subject. And from the point of view of the speaking subject, we are able to discover some "truths" about our everyday experience. But these "truths" have philosophic import. These "truths" provide us with a certain path to follow in our attempt to develop an account of intersubjectivity, time, subjectivity. That is to say, these phenomenological "truths" provide us with the "data" upon which we may build a theory of time or a theory of intersubjectivity.⁸ What is clear from all this is that it is the philosopher's task to give us a theory of time or a theory of intersubjectivity. It is the philosopher who must take the phenomenological data in order to develop a more general account of "what is real" in terms of the parameters of subjectivity, temporality, etc. The philosopher, as Merleau-Ponty conceives him here, is not so different from the

philosopher of the past. For Merleau-Ponty the philosopher must give us a theory of the human subject, a theory of other persons, a theory of time, etc. But these tasks are no different than the ones facing such thinkers as Plato, Descartes, or Kant. What is different, however, is the method that the philosopher is to use. The philosopher must begin with an account of the world as he experiences it, and this "data" will provide the basis for his theorizing. But the sorts of things about which he is to theorize will be the same as those of his predecessors.

In the "Avant-Propos" of Phénoménologie de la perception we find Merleau-Ponty outlining a similar position. In this "Avant-Propos" Merleau-Ponty treats the question "What is phenomenology?", and he answers it by sketching his position on some of the traditional themes of phenomenology (i.e., the themes that Husserl developed). After treating such notions as "intentionality", "reduction", etc., he addresses the question of phenomenological philosophy, a philosophy based on the "data" of phenomenological experience.

Le monde phénoménologique, c'est non pas de l'être pur, mais le sens qui transparait à l'intersection de mes expériences et à l'intersection de mes expériences et de celles d'autrui, par l'engrenage des unes sur les autres, il

est donc inséparable de la subjectivité et de l'intersubjectivité qui font leur unité par la reprise de mes expériences passées dans mes expériences présentes, de l'expérience d'autrui dans la mienne. Pour la première fois, la méditation du philosophe est assez consciente pour ne pas réaliser dans le monde et avant elle ses propres résultats. Le philosophe essaye de penser le monde, autrui et soi-même, et de concevoir leurs rapports.⁹

Here we see again Merleau-Ponty making three points concerning the philosopher. First, the philosopher begins with a phenomenology of his everyday experience which itself provides the "data" for further elucidation. Our everyday experience of ourselves, of other people, etc. provides the foundation for a future philosophical account of such subjects. Second, such a starting point for the philosopher is unique in the history of philosophy. The philosopher may no longer philosophize in a "dark closet" and attempt to come up with an account of the world which does not take the world into account. Third, even though the procedure is different, the object of philosophical activity is the same. The philosopher must still attempt to philosophize about the world, himself, and other persons. He must still attempt to come up with an account of reality, an account of intersubjectivity, an account of time.¹⁰

Philosophy, then, goes beyond phenomenology by relating the data of phenomenological experience to the exigencies of traditional philosophical endeavours. However, one must not conclude from this that the philosopher merely mirrors the data of the world given in experience. Philosophical reflection is not this at all.

Mais l'Ego méditant, le "spectateur impartial".../ "the Philosopher", one might want to say/...ne rejoignent pas une rationalité déjà donnée, ils "s'établissent"...et l'établissent par une initiative qui n'a pas de garantie dans l'être et dont le droit repose entièrement sur le pouvoir effectif qu'elle nous donne d'assumer notre histoire. Le monde phénoménologique n'est pas l'explicitation d'un être préalable, mais la fondation de l'être, la philosophie n'est pas le reflet d'une vérité préalable, mais comme l'art la réalisation d'une vérité.

The philosopher does not just take the results of phenomenology and raise them to a higher level. The thinker does not merely reflect a pre-existing truth. Rather, in the very act of philosophical reflection something is accomplished. The philosopher brings into existence a truth which has not yet existed. For example, when the philosopher reflects on the data concerning the other given in one's experience of speaking, he is not just putting into words what is already there to be

observed. Rather, his theory of intersubjectivity based on this data will be a transformation of the given along one of many possible paths. Many theories of intersubjectivity could be developed from the phenomenological data. There is no "pre-existent Truth" or "pre-existent Reason" with which the philosopher must coincide. Rather each philosophy is a creative transformation and accomplishment of a truth that is given only in an incomplete way in our everyday experience.

Merleau-Ponty's claim concerning the creative aspects of philosophical reflection is, of course, quite consistent with his notion of language. Indeed, if the philosopher, in his reflection, is primarily one who speaks, then one would expect to find the same creative power of speech at work in the speaking of the philosopher. The speaking of the philosopher is a transformation of what is given to him in his experience, and just as thought, in general, is incomplete unless it is expressed, a fortiori philosophical thought too is incomplete until the philosopher speaks. While discussing the "discovery of subjectivity" in "Partout et nulle part" in Signes, Merleau-Ponty makes just this point.

La réflexion n'a pas seulement dévoilé l'irréfléchi, elle l'a changé, ne serait-ce qu'en sa vérité. La subjectivité n'attendait pas les philosophes comme l'Amérique inconnue attendait dans les brumes de l'Océan ses explorateurs. Ils l'ont construite, faite, et de plus d'une manière. Et ce qu'ils ont fait est peut-être à défaire.¹²

Philosophical discoveries are not discoveries like geographical discoveries. Philosophical reflection brings to completion that which exists only in an incomplete way.

If philosophy is a creative transformation of the given, then one "truth" must inevitably follow, viz., that there is more than just one philosophy possible. This, naturally, does not surprise many a student of philosophy. What is evident to one who is familiar with the history of philosophy is precisely the fact that there are many different philosophies. But Merleau-Ponty's point here is more than just a commonplace one. Merleau-Ponty wants to say more than just that there are many philosophies. He wants to say (1) that it is inherent in the philosophical enterprise that there be more than just one philosophy, and (2) that the attempt to reduce all philosophies to one philosophy destroys all of philosophy. Let us look at the last point first.

The history of philosophy is often embarrassing to the philosopher, both professional and apprentice. What can philosophy be, if, in fact, there are so many philosophies? This embarrassment has led to different attempts to remove the source of the difficulty. In fact, Merleau-Ponty in different contexts, considers three such attempts. The first attempt involves the reduction of philosophy to a set of truths. The second involves the reduction of philosophy to a product of socio-historical conditions. The third involves the reduction of philosophy to a system that encompasses all others.

The attempt to reduce philosophy to a set of truths may find itself expressed in two different ways. On the one hand, the philosopher may declare that a certain philosophy or a certain set of principles contains the truth. The philosopher may opt for what Merleau-Ponty calls a dogmatic metaphysics. For such a philosopher there is only one truth, and whatever falls outside of the truth is non-philosophy. On the other hand, some philosophers have attempted to arrive at a true philosophy by subordinating it to a theology or a religion wherein a set of truths is revealed. Neither attempt, however, to exclude other philosophies by appealing to established principles will solve the problem of the plurality

of philosophies. Indeed, such an attempt itself is the destruction of any philosophy whatsoever. Philosophy cannot be philosophy if it becomes "frozen" in a set of principles or truths that are to be genuine for all time.

La philosophie, elle, s'établit dans un autre ordre, et c'est pour les mêmes raisons qu'elle élude l'humanisme prométhéen et les affirmations rivales de la théologie. Le philosophe ne dit pas qu'un dépassement final des contradictions humaines soit possible et que l'homme total nous attende dans l'avenir: comme tout le monde, il n'en sait rien.¹³

A quite different, and potentially more dangerous, threat to philosophy is involved in a different sort of attempt to account for the plurality of philosophies. Instead of reducing all philosophies to one philosophy, let each be considered as genuine. Let us not search for one truth in the many different philosophies of the past. Rather, let us look at each philosophy as a product of a certain set of socio-historical conditions. Whereas the first attempt involved the reduction of philosophy to religion or quasi-theological metaphysics, this attempt involves the reduction of philosophy to history. However, in many ways, the "religious" view toward philosophy is the antithesis of this view toward it. Whereas the former removed philosophy completely from the

course of human events, the latter puts philosophy completely in those events. Whereas the former purified philosophy of all historical contingency, the latter reduces it to that contingency. Both end up destroying philosophy as philosophy.

This second attempt, however, must fail in the end. For those who attempt to reduce philosophy to history fail in their very effort. Philosophy itself will spring up in their own position.

On ne peut penser à remplacer l'étude interne des philosophies par une explication socio-historique qu'en se référant à une histoire dont on croit connaître avec évidence le sens et le cours. On suppose, par exemple, une certaine idée de "l'homme total" ou un équilibre "naturel" de l'homme avec l'homme et de l'homme avec la nature. Alors, ce telos historique étant donné, toute philosophie peut être présentée comme diversion, aliénation, résistance à l'égard de cet avenir nécessaire, ou, au contraire, comme étape et progrès vers lui. Mais d'où vient et que vaut l'idée directrice? -- La question ne doit pas être posée: la poser, c'est déjà "résister" à une dialectique qui est dans les choses, c'est prendre parti contre elle -- Mais comment savez-vous qu'elle y est? Par philosophie. Simplement, c'est une philosophie secrète, déguisée en Processus. Ce qu'on oppose à l'étude interne des philosophies, ce n'est jamais l'explication socio-historique, c'est toujours une autre

philosophie, cachée en elle...Une conception de l'histoire n'explique les philosophies qu'à condition de devenir philosophie elle-même, et philosophie implicite.¹⁴

The attempt to solve the problem of the plurality of philosophies by reducing them to historical products does not accomplish what it sets out to do. Paradoxically, it creates another philosophical position with which one must contend. Indeed, the attempt to escape philosophy through history brings us back to philosophy and the unity of philosophy, in the same way that the attempt to escape history through a pure philosophy brought us back again to history and the plurality of philosophies. We cannot choose one while disregarding the other.

Nous n'avons pas à choisir entre ceux qui pensent que l'histoire de l'individu ou de la société détient la vérité des constructions symboliques du philosophe, et ceux qui pensent au contraire que la conscience philosophique a par principe les clefs de l'histoire sociale et personnelle. L'alternative est imaginaire, et la preuve en est que ceux qui défendent l'une de ces thèses ont subrepticement recours à l'autre.¹⁵

Philosophy and history co-imply each other. One cannot opt for a philosophy purified of all history nor a history separate from all philosophy. In different terms,

the problem of the unity and plurality of philosophy cannot be solved by opting for one over against the other. There cannot be one, true philosophy that does not raise the problem of many philosophies, just as there cannot be many philosophies that do not raise the question of the one, true philosophy.

Neither of these attempts, as we have just seen, is able to resolve the difficulty that faces the philosopher, viz.; the problem of one philosophy in many philosophies. Again, what is philosophy if, in fact, there are so many philosophies? The third attempt to solve this problem avoids the dichotomy mentioned above. This attempt tries to combine the many philosophies appearing in the history of philosophy and the single, solitary philosophy which is the truth of them all.

Pour avoir égard à ce qu'ils ont cherché et pour parler d'eux dignement, ne faudrait-il pas au contraire prendre leurs doctrines comme les moments d'une seule doctrine en marche, et les sauver, à la manière hégélienne, en leur donnant une place dans l'unité d'un système?¹⁶

This third attempt is really an Hegelian or quasi-Hegelian attempt to do justice to both the plurality of philosophy, in terms of its history, and the unity of philosophy, in

terms of a system of philosophy. Hegel tried to show that all past philosophies contained a partial truth and yet were surpassed and comprehended in the system of philosophy. The Hegelian answer to Merleau-Ponty's question thus is that there are many philosophies, but they all lead up to one philosophy. But Hegel's answer will not satisfy Merleau-Ponty. The union of history and philosophy behind Hegel's solution must break down.

Hegel les avait déjà identifiées en faisant de la philosophie l'intellection de l'expérience historique et de l'histoire le devenir de la philosophie. Mais le conflit n'était que masqué: la philosophie restant pour Hegel savoir absolu, système, totalité, l'histoire dont parle le philosophe n'est pas sérieusement histoire, c'est-à-dire quelque chose qu'on fasse, c'est l'histoire universelle, comprise, accomplie, morte. Inversement, l'histoire, étant pur fait ou événement, introduit dans le système auquel on l'incorpore un mouvement intérieur qui le déchire. Les deux points de vue restent vrais pour Hegel, et l'on sait qu'il a soigneusement maintenu l'équivoque... En réalité, l'équivoque joue au profit du philosophe: l'histoire ayant été mise en scène par lui, il ne trouve en elle que le sens qu'il y avait déjà placé et il ne s'incline que devant lui-même.

If one opts for "the system", the one true philosophy, the history of thought that leads to the system must be a fabricated history. This means, ultimately, that if one

opts for absolute knowledge, the standpoint of the system, one will not be able to do justice to the philosophies which led up to that system.

Quand on "dépasse" une philosophie "de l'intérieur", on lui vole son âme, on lui fait l'affront de la garder sans ses "limitations", dont on se fait juge, c'est-à-dire sans ses mots, sans ses concepts, comme si les méandres du Parménide ou le cours de Méditations pouvaient être sans perte, réduits à un paragraphe du Système. 18

The Hegelian attempt must fail ultimately because the systematic attempt to incorporate all philosophies within the genesis of one philosophical system will fail to do justice to the variety of philosophies. Such an account will fail to see various philosophies as various attempts to give an account of the dimensions of existence in the life of the particular philosopher.

Les philosophies du passé ne survivent pas dans leur esprit seulement, comme moments d'un système final. Leur accès à l'intemporel n'est pas l'entrée au musée. Elles durent avec leurs vérités et leurs folies, comme entreprises totales, ou elles ne durent pas du tout. Hegel lui-même, cette tête qui a voulu contenir l'Être, vit aujourd'hui et nous donne à penser non seulement par ses profondeurs, mais aussi par ses manies et ses tics. Il n'y a pas une philosophie qui contienne toutes les philosophies;

la philosophie tout entière est, à certains moments, en chacune. Pour reprendre le mot fameux, son centre est partout et sa circonférence nulle part.¹⁹

For Merleau-Ponty, the philosopher must give up the attempt to incorporate all other philosophies into a system. There is no one final philosophy that comprehends all others.

We have, so far, seen three attempts to account for the plurality and unity of philosophy, but all three attempts, from Merleau-Ponty's perspective, fail in what they try to accomplish. Yet, these attempts reflect the permanent temptation of philosophy to become something fixed and determined. They reflect the constant temptation of the philosopher to reject the ambiguity of existence by fleeing into the realm of clear and distinct ideas. Indeed, in the last chapter we saw how language leads thought to the point where language itself will no longer be needed. This paradox of language is especially evident in the case of philosophical thought. The philosopher is constantly tempted to arrive at a clear and distinct idea which will no longer need language in order to be expressed. This particular attempt to solidify philosophy is as important as the previous ones, especially when we consider the problem within the context of our own

particular concerns about language. Moreover, whereas the first three attempts to solidify philosophy must and can be avoided, it is not clear that this attempt to solidify philosophy by purifying it of all linguistic expression is one that can be avoided by the philosopher. In any case, the attempt to reduce philosophy to the reflection of a realm of clear and distinct ideas is one which Merleau-Ponty is most concerned to reject. He deals at length with the problem in the Phénoménologie de la perception wherein he confronts the most concerted effort to purify philosophy of all existential ambiguity, viz., Descartes' attempt to found philosophy on the Cogito. Let us look at Merleau-Ponty's account, for it will show us how such an attempt to divorce philosophical thought from linguistic expression, and, hence, from the ambiguity of existence, must fail.

The chapter on the Cogito in Phénoménologie de la perception is one of the more extensive ones, and in it Merleau-Ponty treats a number of features of the Cartesian enterprise. Some of these features we have seen in the chapter on signification gestuelle, but Merleau-Ponty wants to say much more than what we outlined above. Among other things, he wants to show: (1) The Cartesian distinction

between the world as dubitable and the Cogito as certain cannot be held. There are indubitable aspects of the perceptual world as there are indubitable aspects of my thinking, and some features of my perceiving experience can be called into question as can some of the realities of the perceptual world.²⁰ (2) The Cogito is not an entity independent of all time and history; it cannot be a-temporal. One's own individual thinking is as much rooted in history and time as are the other features of one's being-in-the-world.²¹ (3) The Cartesian notion of evidence must be revised. Evidence cannot be based on the absolute certitude of my self-awareness. Rather, evidence, and any truth based on such evidence, must be understood as evidence-rooted-in-the-world or as truth-rooted-in-the-world.²² (4) The Cogito of which Descartes spoke logically presupposes a Cogito of which he did not speak and which he could only indirectly obtain.²³ This last point is the most important one for us here. Let us consider it more closely.

In the Second Meditation Descartes arrives at the Cogito. What is this Cogito? For Descartes it was the terminus of a process of doubting and the starting point for a system of truth. The Cogito was the apprehension of Descartes himself as a thinking subject. It indicated the direct contact of oneself with one's thought. But is this what Descartes really got hold of?

Le Cogito que nous obtenons en lisant Descartes (et même celui que Descartes effectue en vue de l'expression et quand, se tournant vers sa propre vie, il la fixe, l'objective et la "caractérise" comme indubitable), c'est donc un Cogito parlé, mis en mots, compris sur des mots et qui, pour cette raison même, n'atteint pas son but, puisqu'une partie de notre existence, celle qui est occupée à fixer conceptuellement notre vie et à la penser comme indubitable échappe à la fixation et à la pensée.²⁴



The Cogito that Descartes discovered was a Cogito that was uttered, a Cogito that was put into words. When Descartes said to himself (and to us) "I think", he was expressing a truth that was already precisely formed by language. In other words, he had arrived at a mediated truth, a truth that had gone through the process of verbalization. This truth, however, was not the one Descartes was after. The one he sought was an immediate truth. But this truth Descartes missed, yet it is there as the foundation of the Cartesian Cogito.

...je ne pourrais pas même lire le texte de Descartes, si je n'étais, avant toute parole, en contact avec ma propre vie et ma propre pensée et si le Cogito parlé ne rencontrait en moi un Cogito tacite. C'est ce Cogito silencieux que Descartes visait en écrivant les Méditations, il animait et dirigeait toutes les opérations d'expression qui, par définition, manquent

toujours leur but puisqu'elles interposent, entre l'existence de Descartes et la connaissance qu'il en prend, toute l'épaisseur des acquisitions culturelles, mais qui ne seraient pas même tentées si Descartes n'avait d'abord une vue de son existence.²⁵

What is at the foundation of the utterance "I think" is my experience of myself as an existing being. Descartes uttered "I think" and thought that he had obtained the foundation of philosophy. But the foundation itself has a foundation. The spoken Cogito "sits upon" a tacit Cogito. And it is this tacit Cogito, this "épreuve de moi par moi"²⁶, this "presence de soi à soi"²⁷, which is at the heart of any attempt at philosophizing. "Le Cogito tacite, la presence de soi à soi, étant l'existence même, est antérieur à toute philosophie ..."²⁸ In order for the philosopher to develop a philosophy based solely on clear and distinct ideas, he must already have an experience of himself as a person who exists in the world. The realm of clear and distinct ideas is not a self-sufficient, independent realm. It is based upon a not-so-clear-and-distinct region which is existence itself.²⁹

Descartes' failure to achieve a philosophy totally distinct from the world in which we live has important consequences for our notion of philosophy. Philosophy cannot

have a foundation other than the foundation of the world of existence. The philosopher cannot philosophize in such a way that all contacts with the perceptual world are severed. The philosopher cannot escape existence, and his philosophy must return again and again to that from which it rose. Philosophy must keep returning to its origins in an ever expanding way. That is, philosophy cannot be a simple return to the given; reflection does not mirror a prior reality. Philosophy, in its essence, must be an expansion of the given. These statements indicate two key notions that are at the heart of our discussion of philosophy: existence and dialectic.

These two notions are key notions for our comprehension of the activity of the philosopher. Indeed, the philosopher must be aware of two important points, viz., that the philosopher is rooted in existence and that the philosophy he produces will be dialectical in nature. Let us more closely look at these points. First, Merleau-Ponty wants to remind us that the philosopher cannot escape from existence.

C'est pourtant un fait, pour nous, qu'ils /i.e. philosophers of this century/ ont tous travaillé, même ceux qui y tenaient le plus, à dépasser le criticisme, et à dévoiler, au-delà des relations, ce que Brunschvicg appelait l'"incoordonnable" et que nous appelons l'existence... tous cherchaient un passage entre le possible et le nécessaire vers le réel, tous désignaient comme une dimension de recherche nouvelle notre existence de fait et celle du monde.³⁰

The philosopher is rooted in the world of existence, the world in which we live. This world of existence, however, is not one that has fixed and determined dimensions. As we have seen, the world of existence is open-ended and the philosopher's task in philosophical reflection is to complete this world in a particular way. The world of existence is there to be made specific by critical reflection. It exists as a set of paths for our philosophical thought.

...l'existence dévoile, face à la liberté, toute une nouvelle figure du monde, le monde comme promesse et menace pour elle, le monde qui lui tend des pièges, la séduit ou lui cède, non plus le monde plat des objets de science kantien, mais un paysage d'obstacles et de chemins, enfin le monde que nous "existons" et non pas seulement le théâtre de notre connaissance et de notre libre arbitre.³¹

If the philosopher reflects on a world of existence, and if this world is always incomplete yet always there to be accomplished, then the philosopher's reflection will always be an on-going activity. The philosopher will never be able to arrive at a complete synthesis of the world. There will always be a give-and-take interchange between the philosopher and the world of existence. This is to say, ultimately, that philosophy must be dialectical. However, one must not see in this statement a tendency for philosophy to become a completed system. Merleau-Ponty rejects what he considers to be an Hegelian notion of dialectic.³² For Merleau-Ponty, nevertheless, the notion of dialectic must be preserved and reinterpreted as the movement of philosophical thinking which does not, in any case, end up with a completed system. This notion of dialectic, then, finds its complement, not its antithesis, in the notion of intuition or meditation. "Cette dialectique-là et l'intuition ne sont pas seulement compatibles: il y a un moment où elles confluent."³³ Indeed, to Merleau-Ponty this rapprochement between dialectic and intuition is evident in the development of thought in both Bergson and Husserl. For them dialectic and intuition cannot be separated.

Car ils rencontrent alors la première et la plus profonde des oppositions, la phase inaugurale et jamais liquidée de la dialectique, la naissance de la réflexion qui, par principe, se sépare et ne se sépare que pour saisir l'irréfléchi. La recherche de l'"immédiat" ou de la "chose même", dès qu'elle est assez consciente, n'est pas le contraire de la médiation; la médiation n'est que la reconnaissance résolue d'un paradoxe que l'intuition, bon gré mal gré, subit: pour se posséder, il faut commencer par sortir de soi, pour voir le monde même, il faut d'abord s'éloigner de lui.³⁴

The philosopher then, to recapitulate, is rooted in the world in which he lives, the world of existence, and the philosophy which he generates will be the result of, as well as subject to, the continuing dialectical interchange between himself and his world. The reflection of the philosopher will always be rooted in the world and will be subject to it. But is such a philosophy, since it is always "in the world", much of a philosophy at all?

On demandera peut-être ce qu'il reste de la philosophie quand elle a perdu ses droits à l'a priori, au système ou à la construction, quand elle ne surplombe plus l'expérience. Il en reste presque tout. Car le système, l'explication, la déduction n'ont jamais été l'essentiel. Ces arrangements exprimaient -- et cachaient -- un rapport avec l'être, les autres, le monde.³⁵

Within this context it would be useful, perhaps, to look at what the philosopher, as Merleau-Ponty has envisaged him, would have to say about language. In other words, what would a philosophy of language be like according to Merleau-Ponty? A number of things may be said about such a philosophy of language. First, as we have seen earlier, such a philosophy must commence with a phenomenology of language, which, as we have seen in previous chapters, is an account of the perceptual roots of language in the speaking subject. But a philosophy of language would surpass this phenomenology of language by treating some of the philosophical issues that are relevant to language. That is to say, the philosopher would reflect on, e.g., the consequences for our understanding of the other based on our phenomenology of language. Or, to take another example, the philosopher of language would ask what notion of the world as we live it is present in our phenomenology of the speaking subject. These questions, however, cannot be answered once and for all. As we live in the everyday world, new experiences of language, etc., provide us with new material for philosophical reflection. The philosopher, as we have seen, is rooted in this world, and his philosophy must change as the world

changes. New relationships between language, the world, and other persons will be forged, and the philosopher will present an account of them. The philosopher of language thus can give us neither the necessary nor the sufficient conditions of what a language is or what role language plays in our comprehension of the other. Such a task is ruled out by the very nature of philosophy, as Merleau-Ponty sees it.

The task of philosophy, and its relationship to phenomenology, is clearly brought out by Merleau-Ponty in the "Avant-Propos" of Phénoménologie de la perception.

La phénoménologie, comme révélation du monde, repose sur elle-même ou encore se fonde elle-même... Toutes les connaissances s'appuient sur un "sol" de postulats et finalement sur notre communication avec le monde comme premier établissement de la rationalité. La philosophie, comme réflexion radicale, se prive en principe de cette ressource. Comme elle est, elle aussi, dans l'histoire, elle use, elle aussi, du monde et de la raison constituée. Il faudra donc qu'elle s'adresse à elle-même l'interrogation qu'elle adresse à toutes les connaissances, elle se redoublera donc indéfiniment, elle sera, ... un dialogue ou une méditation infinie, et, dans la mesure même où elle reste fidèle à son intention, elle ne saura jamais où elle va.³⁶

Here we see Merleau-Ponty tie together a number of points concerning philosophy. First, philosophy is phenomenological philosophy in that it puts into question the "postulates" about the world, rationality, etc., that our everyday "knowledge" as well as our scientific knowledge have recourse to. Second, philosophy, as phenomenological philosophy, is a radical reflexion of the notions that these "knowledges" use. Third, philosophy continually puts into question its very own existence. It continually questions itself as philosophy. Fourth, based on the first two points, philosophy as phenomenological philosophy is rooted in existence. Fifth, based on the third and fourth points, philosophy is an open-ended inquiry, "an infinite meditation". It never arrives at a completed synthesis.

Throughout all that has been said about philosophy above, another important point has been implied. This one we see clearly in the last passage above, wherein Merleau-Ponty discusses philosophy and mentions interrogation. Indeed, insofar as philosophy reflects on itself and all other types of knowledge, it continually interrogates or questions. This notion of interrogation is amplified in Merleau-Ponty's later writings, and it becomes the key to his notion of philosophy. Let us then look at philosophy as interrogation.

FOOTNOTES

1. Signes, p. 116. At this point I shall not attempt to give an account of the intriguing phrase "de la philosophie ou de la métaphysique".
2. Ibid., p. 115.
3. Ibid., p. 116.
4. Ibid., p. 116f.
5. Ibid., p. 116. This second point, and that which follows, may mislead one concerning the relationship between phenomenology and philosophy, unless a clarification is made at this time. The claim "...one must develop a notion of philosophy that will permit a phenomenology which will not itself be a philosophy" may lead one to think that phenomenology and philosophy are going to be clearly separated in what follows. However, such is not the case. Although I shall be describing both phenomenology and philosophy in a way that would imply that phenomenology is one type of activity and philosophy a distinctly different type of activity, one ought not to be misled by the implications. Merleau-Ponty will want a philosophy that is to be "une élucidation de degré supérieur". He will want a philosophy that is somehow more than just a phenomenology. However, that is not to say that Merleau-Ponty wants a philosophy that can be separated from phenomenology. That, indeed, is the point of calling philosophy "philosophie phénoménologique" in the next quotation in the text. The phenomenological philosophy that we are going to develop must always remain a phenomenological philosophy.

A way of understanding this relationship between philosophy and phenomenology may be to visualize the relationship as two concentric circles with the philosopher-phenomenologist standing at the centre. As phenomenologist his experience covers a certain area, his vision is a certain distance. As philosopher he stands at the same point, but his experience is more extensive. That is, what he sees as phenomenologist is put into a different perspective. It acts as a foreground for a new background or wider context. The philosopher will be able to "see more" than the phenomenologist does.

6. Signes, p. 121. We shall see later how phenomenological philosophy is to avoid the pitfalls of historicism on the one hand and dogmatic metaphysics on the other.
7. Ibid.
8. It is important to note carefully the word 'data' in quotation marks. As will be pointed out in more detail further on, the "data" of phenomenological investigation is not a set of absolutely clear and distinct truths which the philosopher takes as such in order to philosophize about reality or intersubjectivity. The data always remains data that needs to be "finished" by the philosopher. It always needs a more intensive elucidation, "de degré supérieur".
9. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. XV. (Italics added.) Of course, Merleau-Ponty is not using 'penser' or 'concevoir' in a rationalist sense. The philosopher will "think" the world in a phenomenological sense, i.e., by clarifying and developing his everyday experience of the world, of others and of himself.
10. The implications of Merleau-Ponty's account are obvious: philosophical method changes, philosophical problems remain the same. But does Merleau-Ponty really want to commit himself to the latter? Are the philosophical problems with which he and other contemporary philosophers deal the same problems with which their predecessors dealt? On the one hand, such a view seems to be at odds with the tenor of his philosophy. Merleau-Ponty is always focusing on the developing, on-going experience of the individual. This seems clear even from his account of language. Yet, how can he claim such mobility on the part of experience while also claiming stability on the side of philosophy? The problem becomes acute when we consider, as we shall do shortly, the nature of philosophical reflection as something that develops and grows. On the other hand, if there are new philosophical problems, what are they? This difficulty, however, cannot be adequately handled at the moment and will come up again in the next chapter on philosophical interrogation.

11. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. XV.
12. Signes, p. 193.
13. Merleau-Ponty, Eloge de la philosophie, Paris: Gallimard, 1953, p. 52, (hereinafter Eloge). Quotations are taken from the edition Eloge de la philosophie et autres essais, Paris: Gallimard, 1960, pp. 9-79.
14. Signes, p. 161ff.
15. Ibid., p. 161.
16. Ibid., p. 159.
17. Eloge, p. 57f. For an account of Hegel's philosophy that attempts to overcome this dilemma, see Théodore F. Geraets, "Dialectique et interrogation", in Archives de Philosophie, v. 39 (1976), pp. 269-283.
18. Signes, p. 159.
19. Ibid., p. 161. See also p. 165.
20. For the detailed account see Phénoménologie de la perception, pp. 429-437.
21. Ibid., pp. 450-452. Merleau-Ponty uses a reductio argument to show that any thinking self or self-consciousness that is not rooted in time must become logically an infinite self. This means that there cannot be a plurality of such selves, since that would mean that there would be a plurality of infinite substances. But this is impossible. Hence, if there is a self-consciousness not rooted in time, there is only one! See Phénoménologie de la perception, pp. 426-429.
22. Ibid., pp. 452-456.
23. Ibid., pp. 459-463.
24. Ibid., p. 460.
25. Ibid., p. 460f.

26. Ibid., p. 464.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Merleau-Ponty's statements about a tacit Cogito have been the source of controversy concerning the development of his thought. Although I do not want to make at this time any pronouncements about the continuity or discontinuity of his thought, the controversy about the tacit Cogito is important to consider at this time, and I do think that it can be clarified without involving one in an overall position on his development. This particular problem, concerning the tacit Cogito, is, however, an acute one, since in fact it seems that Merleau-Ponty rejects the tacit Cogito outright in his later works. In particular, in his "Notes de travail" appended to Le visible et l'invisible (Paris: Gallimard, 1964, texte établi par Claude Lefort, hereinafter VI), Merleau-Ponty states "Ce que j'appelle le cogito tacite est impossible" (p. 224). One gets the distinct impression, then, that Merleau-Ponty is rejecting his earlier view about the Cogito, which could mean, ultimately, that he could be rejecting his view about philosophy as such. But what precisely is he rejecting? Is he just rejecting the terminology of "Cogito tacite" while still maintaining the explanation behind it? Or is he rejecting outright everything he said about Cogito parl  and Cogito tacite in the Ph nom nologie de la perception? In order to solve this difficulty, and show that Merleau-Ponty is being quite consistent with some of his basic views about language and philosophy presented above, let us look at three statements, all three of which Merleau-Ponty accepts in the Ph nom nologie de la perception.
- A. There is a pre-linguistic world of signification, the world of existence.
- B. This pre-linguistic world of signification comprises the Cogito tacite, the experience of myself by myself.

C. Language brings about this experience of myself by myself.

Merleau-Ponty accepts all three statements, as may be witnessed by the following four quotations.

- P₁: "En fait l'analyse montre, non pas qu'il y ait derrière le langage une pensée transcendante, mais que la pensée se transcende dans la parole, que la parole fait elle-même cette concordance de moi avec moi et de moi avec autrui sur laquelle on veut la fonder" (p. 449). This exemplifies C.
- P₂: "Par delà le cogito parlé, celui qui est converti en énoncé et en vérité d'essence, il y a bien un cogito tacite, une épreuve de moi par moi." (p. 462). This exemplifies A and B.
- P₃: "Le Cogito tacite, la présence de soi à soi, étant l'existence même, est antérieur à toute philosophie, mais il ne se connaît que dans les situations limites où il est menacé: par exemple dans l'angoisse de la mort ou dans celle du regard d'autrui sur moi." (p. 462). This exemplifies A and B.
- P₄: "Le Cogito tacite n'est Cogito que lorsqu'il s'est exprimé lui-même." (p. 463). This exemplifies C.

Thus, it is clear from these four quotations that Merleau-Ponty is supporting all three propositions, viz., A, B, and C. In VI, however, such is not the case. In VI, Merleau-Ponty explicitly rejects the second proposition, B, while still holding onto propositions A and C. Consider the following quotations.

- V₁: "Pour avoir l'idée de "penser" (dans le sens de la "pensée de voir et de sentir"), pour faire la "réduction", pour revenir à l'immanence et à la conscience de...il est nécessaire d'avoir les mots. C'est par la combinaison de mots...que je fais l'attitude transcendantale, que je constitue la conscience constituante. (p. 224f). This supports C while implicitly rejecting B.

V₂: "Les mots ne renvoient pas à des significations positives et finalement au flux des Erlebnisse comme Selbstgegeben. Mythologie d'une conscience de soi à laquelle renverrait le mot "conscience" -- ..." (p. 225). This is an explicit rejection of B.

V₃: "Cependant il y a le monde du silence, le monde perçu, du moins, est un ordre où il y a des significations non langagières; oui, des significations non langagières, mais elles ne sont pas pour autant positives." (p. 225). This explicitly supports A while rejecting B.

Thus, to simplify the preceding, what Merleau-Ponty is saying is that there is a world of signification that exists before expression, but this world of signification is not a Cogito tacite, an experience of self by oneself. For, in fact, any such self-experience, or self-awareness, is brought about by linguistic expression. Any Cogito tacite must ultimately be "post"-linguistic, but then it could not be "tacite". Indeed, Merleau-Ponty must have come to realize the utter contradiction involved in holding both B and C. If B is the case, then C cannot be the case, and vice-versa. When Merleau-Ponty denies that there is any such thing as a Cogito tacite, what he is denying is that there is a pre-linguistic level of signification which involves any self-awareness or experience. For all that, though, there still are pre-linguistic significations.

This refinement by Merleau-Ponty of his position is really not that surprising, even if we consider his more general claims on the nature of thought and language. As we have seen in other contexts above, according to Merleau-Ponty there is no such thing as a precisely defined thought that exists before expression. We say, for example, that he completely rejected the intellectualist view of communication because it gave too little importance to language as such. Language does not just translate a thought already precisely formed. Rather, it accomplishes thought. This position, however, would be threatened by Merleau-Ponty's claim that there is some pre-linguistic tacit cogito. In order to be more consistent with the overall view of language and

thought, it would be more advantageous to drop the notion of a tacit cogito. And this is what he did. Yet, Merleau-Ponty still maintains that there is some kind of pre-linguistic signification. He does not want to reduce thought to expression. There still is something more, some signification which language crystalizes.

30. Signes, p. 195f.
31. Ibid., p. 196.
32. Ibid. See also Sens et non-sens (pp. 125-140) where Merleau-Ponty distinguishes what might be called for him the "good" Hegel (that of the Phaenomenologie des Geistes) from the "bad" Hegel (that of the Logik). Whenever Merleau-Ponty criticizes Hegel, as here in Signes, he seems to have in mind this later Hegel, the one of the "system". (This, of course, does not imply that Merleau-Ponty was correct in his view of the "Hegel of the system". See, e.g., the article by Geraets noted in n. 17 above.)
33. Signes, p. 197.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., p. 199.
36. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. XVI.. (Italics added.)

PART III: PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER 6: PHILOSOPHY AS INTERROGATION

In the previous chapter we have seen that philosophy is an attempt to clarify the world of everyday existence. The key to this clarification is now to be found in the notion of "interrogation". It is Merleau-Ponty's notion of philosophy as interrogation that is developed in his later work, especially in Le visible et l'invisible. In order to attempt to discover what precisely this activity of philosophical interrogation is, we must look, along with Merleau-Ponty, at some of the unsuccessful attempts at clarification of the everyday world of existence. Merleau-Ponty first considers the scientific attempt to clarify the world. In pointing out the failure of science to do justice to the world, he considers a more properly philosophical attempt, in particular the "intellectualist" or "reflexivist" attempt at making sense of the world. This approach too does not adequately account for the world, and Merleau-Ponty then considers in detail a "dialectical" and an "intuitionist" attempt at philosophizing. These two attempts then lead Merleau-Ponty to show that for him the "way out" of the dilemmas of these approaches is through an interrogation

of the world that uncovers the "flesh" of the world and the body-subject in this world. In this particular chapter, then, I would like to investigate Merleau-Ponty's notion of philosophy by considering what he finds wrong with certain other attempts at philosophy and by elaborating on what he considers to be the appropriate method for philosophical interrogation. In considering Merleau-Ponty's criticism of other approaches, I shall not be so concerned with the "correctness" or "incorrectness" of such approaches as I shall with the reasons why Merleau-Ponty thinks that such approaches are limited. For it will be in his criticisms of these other approaches that one shall be able to see more clearly what he has in mind for philosophy.

In the previous chapter we saw that the philosopher's task is defined in part by the kinds of problems that he undertakes. In particular, we saw that the philosopher's task is to make sense of the world, to give an account of the world, but the "account" that one gives is restricted in that the philosopher must not derive an account of the world wherein the existence of the self, the existence of the Other, or the existence of the world itself does not find a place. The philosopher must not "explain away" these realities in giving

an explanation of reality. In other words, the philosopher's activity is limited by the existence of the everyday world in which Self, Other, and World all have a rightful place. In Le visible et l'invisible this fundamental truth, which is the starting point and basis for philosophical inquiry, is called "la foi perceptive". Although there is no straightforward definition of this perceptive faith,¹ Merleau-Ponty does give some indications of what it involves.

Quand nous parlons de foi perceptive, et quand nous nous donnons pour tâche de revenir à la foi perceptive, nous ne sousentendons par là, non seulement aucune des "conditions" physiques ou physiologiques qui délimitent la perception pour le savant, aucun des postulats d'une philosophie sensualiste ou empiriste, mais même aucune définition d'une "première couche" d'expérience qui concernerait des êtres existant en un point du temps et de l'espace, par opposition au concept ou à l'idée. Nous ne savons pas encore ce que c'est que penser, si cette distinction est valable et en quel sens. Pour nous, la "foi perceptive" enveloppe tout ce qui s'offre à l'homme naturel en original dans une expérience-source, avec la vigueur de ce qui est inaugural et présent en personne, selon une vue qui, pour lui, est ultime et ne saurait être conçue plus parfaite ou plus proche, qu'il s'agisse des choses perçues dans le sens ordinaire du mot ou de son

initiation au passé, à l'imaginaire,
 au langage, à la vérité prédicative
 de la science, aux oeuvres d'art,
 aux autres, ou à l'histoire.²

In the above passage one can see that Merleau-Ponty is ready to make some fine distinctions when he talks about perceptive faith. For him this perceptive faith is not just some sort of primordial sense experience. Nor is it the set of physical, physiological, social, and psychological background conditions which make science and philosophy possible. Rather, it is something more fundamental than that. "Foi perceptive" points to the very source, the very origin of human experience. It points to the everyday, existential groundwork that makes possible our experience of objects, of other persons, of the truths of science, etc. In other words, it is the "reservoir" of the fundamental, everyday, existential truths upon which science and philosophy are built. Yet, even though we are confronted by, and must respect, such fundamental truths, "la foi perceptive" does not indicate in what manner these truths exist and interact.

Nous ne préjugeons pas des rapports qui peuvent exister entre ces différentes "couches", ni même que ce sont des "couches", et c'est une partie de notre tâche d'en décider, selon ce que nous aura enseigné l'interrogation de notre expérience brute ou sauvage. La perception comme rencontre des choses

naturelles est au premier plan de
notre recherche, non pas comme une
fonction sensorielle simple qui
expliquerait les autres, mais comme
archétype de la rencontre originaire,
...³

The human person, rooted in the everyday world of existence, is confronted by certain truths. However, the exact nature of these truths, even the sense in which they can be called truths, is in question. One does know, or rather ones does experience, these truths, but the exact explication of them is to be left to someone else. It is the background of this perceptive faith, then, that offers the problematic for Merleau-Ponty's confrontation with certain attempts to make sense of the everyday world of existence. Indeed, it is the very obscurity of perceptive faith (as Merleau-Ponty indicates in the first sub-section of "Réflexion et Interrogation", viz., "La foi perceptive et son obscurité") that leads the human person to seek a world free from the tensions, confusions and obscurities of the everyday world. In fact, it is the very attempt at an intellectual clarification of the everyday world that leads one to the discovery of the obscurity of this world, for in our daily activity the reality of this world is as evident as anything that the human intellect can discover.

Or, ici encore, et plus que jamais, la certitude naïve du monde, l'anticipation d'un monde intelligible, est aussi faible quand elle veut se convertir en thèse qu'elle est forte dans la pratique.

Quand il s'agit du visible, une masse de faits vient l'appuyer: par-delà la divergence des témoignages, il est souvent facile de rétablir l'unité et la concordance du monde. Au contraire... dès qu'on accède au vrai, c'est-à-dire à l'invisible, il semble plutôt que les hommes habitent chacun leur flot,...

Quand on pense à la masse des contingences qui peuvent altérer l'un et l'autre, rien n'est plus improbable que l'extrapolation qui traite comme un monde aussi, sans fissures et sans impossibles, l'univers de la vérité.⁴

In the world of everyday activity, everything fits together in a practical way, although whenever different thinkers at different times attempt to bring about an intellectual synthesis of this world the result is often paradox, contradiction, or anomaly. Yet, for all that, Merleau-Ponty does not want to go one step further. He does not want to claim that one ought to abandon these attempts at intellectual synthesis. Even though the thinker will often fall into the pitfalls that surround such an attempt, one must pursue that attempt in any case. It will become clear in the remainder of this chapter that Merleau-Ponty does not want to point

out the errors of scientism, intellectualism, etc., in order to discourage us from doing philosophy or science. Rather, his main concern is to attack the errors of the past in order to set the philosopher on the right path. Consequently, the very critique by Merleau-Ponty will constitute something more than just a critique. It will really amount to an indirect indication of what philosophy is to be about. Merleau-Ponty's critique of other attempts at making sense of the everyday world of existence will show the proper path of philosophical inquiry, an inquiry which will not lose sight of the "truths" of the everyday world.

A rather common attempt at the explication or intellectual synthesis of the everyday world is to be found in one of philosophy's traditional antagonists, viz., science. The intellectual synthesis of the world that has attempted to make sense out of everyday life, and indeed has attempted to give direction to the seeming confusions of that life, is to be found in science. However, it is not just to intellectuals, frustrated philosophers, et al., that science seems a rational and coherent way out of the difficulties of practical life. Even to the "man on the street" science is a way to bring order to the seeming chaos.

On pourrait être tenté de dire que ces antinomies insolubles appartiennent à l'univers confus de l'immédiat, du vécu ou de l'homme vital, qui, par définition, est sans vérité, qu'il faut donc les oublier en attendant que la seule connaissance rigoureuse, la science, en vienne à expliquer par leurs conditions et du dehors ces fantasmes dans lesquels nous nous embarrassons. Le vrai, ce n'est ni la chose que je vois, ni l'autre homme que je vois aussi de mes yeux, ni enfin cette unité globale du monde sensible, et à la limite du monde intelligible que nous tentions de décrire tout à l'heure. Le vrai, c'est l'objectif, ce que j'ai réussi à déterminer par la mesure ou plus généralement par les opérations qu'autorisent les variables ou les entités par moi définies à propos d'un ordre de faits.⁵

Based on what may be called an "objectivist" theory of what there is, science, then, becomes for the scientist a way to give order to the multiplicity of everyday facts. The scientist attempts to explicate what truly is by applying the criterion "what truly is is public, in the world, objective". Further, this objectivist ontology can be observed at work in two different ways. One type of objectivism may be seen in those who wish to claim that physics (or the physical sciences) provides the key to what is. The second type may be seen in those who claim that a scientific psychology is the only answer. Merleau-Ponty considers both claims.

From the study of the macroscopic world to the study of the microscopic world, it is evident to Merleau-Ponty that physicists do have something to say about the world. Indeed, the results of the development of the physical sciences in this century are there for everyone to observe. However, what is not so evident, yet there also for one to see, is that the scientists have gotten themselves into difficulties whenever they have attempted to push their results too far and to arrive at a complete account of what is.

Cependant, on a vu beaucoup de physiciens chercher tantôt dans la structure serrée et la densité des apparences macroscopiques, tantôt au contraire dans la structure lâche et lacunaire de certains domaines micro-physiques, des arguments en faveur d'un déterminisme ou, au contraire, d'une réalité "mentale" ou "acausale". Ces alternatives montrent assez à quel point la science, dès qu'il s'agit pour elle de se comprendre de manière ultime, est enracinée dans la pré-science, et étrangère à la question du sens d'être.⁶

Physical explanations do not, in fact, cannot go far enough in giving an account of what there is. It is not the results of the science itself that Merleau-Ponty is calling into question. Rather, it is the interpretation of these results within an objectivist ontology that leads the physicist into trouble.

This point is clear from a passage in which Merleau-Ponty briefly refers to Einstein.

Il est saisissant de voir Einstein déclasser comme "psychologie" l'expérience que nous avons du simultané par la perception d'autrui et le recoupement de nos horizons perceptifs et de ceux des autres: il ne saurait être question pour lui de donner valeur ontologique à cette expérience parce qu'elle est pur savoir d'anticipation ou de principe et se fait sans opérations, sans mesures effectives. C'est postuler que ce qui est est, non pas ce à quoi nous avons ouverture, mais seulement ce sur quoi nous pouvons opérer; et Einstein ne dissimule pas que cette certitude d'une adéquation entre l'opération de science et l'Etre est chez lui antérieure à sa physique ... Nous aurons à montrer comment l'idéalisation physique dépasse et oublie la foi perceptive.⁷

To summarize Merleau-Ponty's argument, physics as a science does not go far enough in investigating what there is. However, whenever it does attempt to push its findings to discover the meaning of what there really is, the physicist ends up in contradictions. Yet, these difficulties cannot be settled for the physicist by accepting a certain objectivist ontology that would provide the physicist with an allegedly adequate account of what there is. Such an objectivist ontology will lead the physicist to forget something that ought not be forgotten, viz., perceptive faith.⁸ But what

the physicist does not realize, according to Merleau-Ponty, is that, although the speculations of the physicist ought to be framed within an ontology if one is to search for the "meaning of being", no particular ontology is required by his work.

Ce que le philosophe peut noter, -- ce qui lui donne à penser --, c'est que les physiciens précisément qui conservent une représentation cartésienne du monde... font état de leurs "préférences" comme un musicien ou un peintre parlerait de ses préférences pour un style. Ceci nous permet d'avancer... qu'aucune ontologie n'est exactement requise par la pensée physique au travail, qu'en particulier l'ontologie classique de l'objet ne peut se recommander d'elle, ni revendiquer un privilège de principe, alors qu'elle n'est, chez ceux qui la conservent, qu'une préférence.

The physicist, then, while doing physics, need not commit himself to any particular account of what is, and, in fact, he should not commit himself to some traditional accounts. What is needed, as such, is some new ontology, some new account of what is, such that the particular findings of the scientist will find an interpretation which does not "forget perceptive faith". This need for a new ontology, however, is not stressed in Merleau-Ponty's discussion of

physics and becomes clear only in his critique of scientific psychology.

The field of scientific psychology is not an unfamiliar one to Merleau-Ponty. Indeed, a rather extensive portion of Phénoménologie de la perception is concerned with the critique of scientific psychology. In Le visible et l'invisible very little time is actually given to a discussion of it, yet what Merleau-Ponty does say about it shows not only that it remains one of the areas of vital concern for him, but also that the critique of it is one of the prime concerns of philosophical investigation.

The position of scientific psychology, as with the position of the natural sciences, is entrenched in an "objectivist" ontology. The scientific psychologist attempts to get at the reality of the "psychical" by means of the same method. The scientific psychologist wants to treat objectively the human person as the physicist wants to treat objectively the surrounding world.

Le psychologue à son tour s'installe dans la position du spectateur absolu. Comme l'investigation de l'objet extérieur, celle du "psychique" ne progresse d'abord qu'en se mettant elle-même hors du jeu des relativités qu'elle découvre, en sous-entendant un sujet absolu devant lequel se

déploie le psychisme en général, le mien, ou celui d'autrui. Le clivage du "subjectif" et de l'"objectif", par lequel la physique commençante définit son domaine, et la psychologie, corrélativement, le sien, n'empêche pas, exige au contraire, qu'ils soient conçus selon la même structure fondamentale: ce sont finalement deux ordres d'objets, à connaître dans leurs propriétés intrinsèques, par une pensée pure qui détermine ce qu'ils sont en soi.¹⁰

Such a study of the "psychical" wants to be as objective as physics. And it is only by taking an objective standpoint of "le spectateur absolu", that such an analysis can be effected. It is this standpoint, the one which divides the world into "the objective" and "the subjective" and then claims that only "the objective" can be scientifically studied, that is for Merleau-Ponty characteristic of contemporary scientific psychology. Yet the difficulties of this type of science are similar to the difficulties experienced by a physics that wants to be "too much". Merleau-Ponty wants to make essentially two points concerning such a scientific psychology, two points which are basically the same as those made above. First, Merleau-Ponty wants to show that a scientific psychology, when pushed to the extremes, will lead to contradictions, confusions and

paradoxes. This can be seen especially if we consider the development of a social psychology.

On ne voit pas, par exemple, comment une psychologie sociale serait possible en régime d'ontologie objectiviste. Si l'on pense vraiment que la perception est une fonction de variables extérieures, ce schéma n'est (bien approximativement) applicable qu'au conditionnement corporel et physique, et la psychologie est condamnée à cette abstraction exorbitante de ne considérer l'homme que comme un ensemble de terminaisons nerveuses sur lesquelles jouent des agents physico-chimiques. Les "autres hommes", une constellation sociale et historique, ne peuvent intervenir comme stimuli que si l'on reconnaît aussi bien l'efficience d'ensembles qui n'ont pas d'existence physique, et qui opèrent sur lui non selon leurs propriétés immédiatement sensibles, mais à raison de leur configuration sociale... Du seul fait qu'on pratique la psychologie sociale, on est hors de l'ontologie objectiviste...

Thus, the very development of the objectivist position in psychology has led to its own downfall, in that "its actions belie its words". From a strictly objectivist standpoint the attempt to develop a psychology of the social, i.e., a psychology of persons in contact with other persons who share a common social code and a common history, becomes a sham. The objectivist must talk about the sorts of things that his ontology does not really permit him to talk about.

Thus, the objectivist position can do nothing but end up in contradiction when it tries to study anything beyond the psychophysical. But this downfall of objectivist psychology has deeper roots. It has its source in the very "forgetting" of perceptive faith that was exemplified in the objectivist ontology of the physicist.

L'idée du sujet aussi bien que celle de l'objet transforment en adéquation de connaissance le rapport avec le monde et avec nous-même que nous avons dans la foi perceptive. Elles ne l'éclairent pas, elles l'utilisent tacitement, elles en tirent des conséquences. Et puisque le développement du savoir montre que ces conséquences sont contradictoires, il nous faut de toute nécessité revenir à lui pour l'élucider.¹²

Objectivist psychology, indeed any science, has its roots in the everyday world and in our existence in that world characterized by the phrase 'la foi perceptive'. It is only by returning to the world in which we live and by uncovering the essential features of that world that the philosopher can contribute to the proper development of the natural and social sciences. It is only by calling into question the presuppositions of these sciences that one can then make clear the path for such sciences.¹³

The attempt by science to give a complete account of the world has failed, as we have seen. But the attempt has in part failed because it was, in fact, made by science. In other words, it is not the task of science to give an account of the world which would be a complete or total account. Rather, it is the task of philosophy to attempt to bring about such an account. When science goes beyond its bounds and surreptitiously becomes philosophy it ends up in difficulty.

La philosophie n'est pas science, parce que la science croit pouvoir survoler son objet, tient pour acquise la corrélation du savoir et de l'être, alors que la philosophie est l'ensemble des questions où celui qui questionne est lui-même mis en cause par la question.¹⁴

The scientist does not question the foundation of science as the philosopher does the foundation of both science and philosophy. The questioning of the philosopher is a more radical examination of the foundation of our everyday life, as well as our scientific life, "l'examen radical de notre appartenance au monde avant toute science".¹⁵

Merleau-Ponty, once showing that science by itself cannot give us an account of our everyday existence, now turns to the consideration of some "properly philosophical"

attempts at such an account. One approach, an approach that Merleau-Ponty has considered before in Phénoménologie de la perception is what might be called the intellectualist approach, or what Merleau-Ponty labels "la philosophie réflexive". The rationale for this approach is rather clear. To the philosopher, as to the scientist, it is evident that the world of perception is an opaque world. The scientist finds that different accounts of the natural world, when pushed to the extremes, become paradoxical or contradictory, as we have seen so far. The intellectualist philosopher is also aware of the uncertainty of the everyday world of perception. To this philosopher the opaqueness, confusion and paradox of perception must be surpassed and the surpassing of it can be accomplished only by reflection.¹⁶ By reducing sensing, perceiving, and imagining to the thought of sensing, the thought of perceiving, and the thought of imagining, the philosopher would be able to provide a firm foundation for truth. And it would be this firm foundation that would provide the philosopher with a way to avoid the deceptions of everyday life while giving an adequate account of that life.¹⁷

Ainsi les antinomies de la foi perceptive semblent être levées; il est bien vrai que nous percevons la chose même, puisque la chose n'est rien que ce que nous voyons, mais non pas par le pouvoir occulte de nos yeux: ils ne sont plus sujets de la vision, ils sont passés au nombre des choses vues, et ce qu'on appelle vision relève de la puissance de penser qui atteste que l'apparence ici a répondu selon une règle aux mouvements de nos yeux. La perception est la pensée de percevoir quand elle est pleine ou actuelle.¹⁸

This intellectualist attempt is really an attempt to take the truths of everyday life and to "purify" them by raising them to the level of thought. For only at the level of thought can the difficulties of perceptual experience be overcome. Whatever we see before us is absolutely certain for us only insofar as we think we see something. The advantages of such a position are evident.

Désormais, tout paraît clair; le mélange de dogmatisme et de scepticisme, les convictions troubles de la foi perceptive, sont révoqués en doute; je ne crois plus voir de mes yeux des choses extérieures à moi qui les vois: elles ne sont extérieures qu'à mon corps, non à ma pensée, qui le survole aussi bien qu'elles.../And referring to the problem of the existence of other persons/, si les autres sont des pensées, ils ne sont pas à ce titre derrière leur corps que je vois, ils ne sont, comme moi, nulle part; ils sont, comme moi, coextensifs à l'être, et il n'y a pas de problème de l'incarnation.¹⁹

Yet, for all that, is intellectualism, "la philosophie réflexive", really a completely satisfactory position? Does it, as Merleau-Ponty asks, really put an end to all questioning?²⁰ The difficulties with intellectualism in fact are comparable to the difficulties with the position of science which Merleau-Ponty encountered. Merleau-Ponty wants to show, as he did concerning this other position, that the intellectualist approach ends up forgetting perceptive faith, our basic contact with the everyday world. It does not realize that its own foundation is really this everyday world.

En tant qu'effort pour fonder le monde existant sur une pensée du monde, la réflexion s'inspire à chaque instant de la présence préalable du monde, dont elle est tributaire, à laquelle elle emprunte toute son énergie.²¹

Toute l'analyse réflexive est non pas fausse, mais naïve encore, tant qu'elle se dissimule son propre ressort, et que, pour constituer le monde, il faut avoir notion du monde en tant que préconstitué et qu'ainsi la démarche retarde par principe sur elle-même.²²

Intellectualism suffers from what might be called "self-deception". It thinks that it has surpassed the troubles of perceptual experience by fleeing to a world wherein no such troubles are found. Yet, the very existence of this latter

type of world depends in every way on the existence of the "preconstituted" world of everyday perception. Intellectualism thinks that it has surpassed the world of experience, but it is really only deceiving itself. In fact, the naiveté of intellectualism is really a distortion and betrayal of the everyday world which it wants to surpass and, yet, wants to purify.

Une philosophie réflexive, comme doute méthodique et réduction de l'ouverture au monde aux "actes spirituels", aux rapports intrinsèques de l'idée et de son idéal, est trois fois infidèle à ce qu'elle se propose d'éclaircir: au monde visible, à celui qui le voit et à ses relations avec les autres "visionnaires".²³

Merleau-Ponty shows in part how the intellectualist position is "unfaithful" to perceptual experience by taking a favorite aspect of this position, viz., the analysis of an illusory experience. Let us say that I am walking along the beach and I think that I see a piece of wood smoothed by the constant wash of the surf. Under closer inspection, however, I find that the piece of wood is not really a piece of wood. What is actually there is a clay rock. My first perception was illusory, and only by further analysis was I able to discover what really was there. For the intellectualist the first

experience is something completely negative, i.e., something which must be completely overcome by reflective analysis. We made an error precisely because we were not absolutely sure of what we saw, and to be absolutely sure we need to raise our experience to the level of reflection. Thus, for the intellectualist, it would appear that the world of reflection needs the perceptual world only as a negative starting point. The task for the intellectualist is to leave this perceptual world as quickly as possible. But for Merleau-Ponty the perceptual world does not play a solely negative role: rather, it remains an essential part of the reflective analysis.

Car lorsqu'une illusion se dissipe,
lorsqu'une apparence, éclate soudain,
c'est toujours au profit d'une nouvelle
apparence qui reprend à son compte la
fonction ontologique de la première.
Je croyais voir sur le sable une pièce
de bois polie par la mer, et c'était
un rocher argileux. L'éclatement et
la destruction de la première apparence
ne m'autorisent pas à définir désormais
le "réel" comme simple probable, puisqu'ils
ne sont qu'un autre nom de la nouvelle
apparition, qui donc doit figurer dans
notre analyse de la dés-illusion.²⁴

It is within the context of an on-going perceptual experience that the observer realizes that illusions play an important role. Within the totality of experience, illusions make up

an essential part, for without such illusory experiences one would have not a purified reflective experience, but rather nothing at all. The reflective position, then, can be only a futile attempt at surpassing the "truths" of everyday perceptual life.

La philosophie réflexive n'a pas tort de considérer le faux comme une vérité mutilée ou partielle: son tort est plutôt de faire comme si le partiel n'était qu'absence de fait de la totalité, qui n'a pas besoin qu'on en rende compte, ce qui finalement supprime toute consistance propre de l'apparence. L'intègre par avance à l'Être, lui ôte, comme partiel, sa teneur de vérité, l'escamote dans une adéquation interne où l'Être et les raisons d'Être ne font qu'un.²⁵

The intellectualist position fails to take genuine account of the "truths" of the everyday world by aiming at a realm of truth wherein the perceptual would play no positive role at all, only a negative one as stepping-stone to the ideal. However, Merleau-Ponty wants to make it clear that his attack on intellectualism does not, or at least need not, lead to a skeptical position regarding reflection. That is to say, one must not conceive of the intellectualist position as the only rational exposition of everyday life, whose rejection would be irrationalism. Rather, Merleau-Ponty

wants to make it clear from the beginning that the intellectualist path of philosophizing is not the sole path.

Les remarques que nous faisons sur la réflexion n'étaient nullement destinées à la disqualifier au profit de l'irréfléchi ou de l'immédiat (que nous ne connaissons qu'à travers elle). Il ne s'agit pas de mettre la foi perceptive à la place de la réflexion, mais, au contraire, de faire état de la situation totale, qui comporte renvoi de l'une à l'autre. Ce qui est donné ce n'est pas un monde massif et opaque, ou un univers de pensée adéquate, c'est une réflexion qui se retourne sur l'épaisseur du monde pour l'éclairer, mais qui ne lui renvoie après coup que sa propre lumière.²⁶

The task of reflection is not to establish a world purified of all ambiguities of the everyday world. Rather, the philosopher must seek to put reflection back into the everyday world. The philosopher must find the right place for reflection as an integral part of our everyday experience. Yet, the approach to reflection within experience cannot be the approach of another sort of reflective philosophy. Even though, as Merleau-Ponty has pointed out, the intellectualist position is not totally mistaken, the task for the philosopher is not a revision of intellectualism. One must, instead, take a completely different path.

Ce que nous proposons, ce n'est pas d'arrêter la philosophie réflexive après avoir pris le départ comme elle, -- c'est bien impossible, et, à tout prendre, une philosophie de la réflexion totale nous semble aller plus loin, ne serait-ce qu'en cernant ce qui, dans notre expérience, lui résiste -- ce que nous proposons c'est de prendre un autre départ.²⁷

This other way, indeed, will be the very path of philosophical interrogation that Merleau-Ponty has set for himself.

In showing that the "scientific" position and the reflective-analytic position both break down, Merleau-Ponty has in a sense continued his attack on these positions first outlined in Phénoménologie de la perception. Only there, as we saw above, the opponents were empiricism and intellectualism. In Le visible et l'invisible, however, one finds another position which Merleau-Ponty has not dealt with in any extensive way. Yet, it is a position which he considers important enough to spend more than sixty-five pages discussing. This position is the Sartrean one, which Merleau-Ponty labels as the "philosophy of negation".

Sartre's position, when one looks closely at it, shows some of the concerns of Merleau-Ponty's interrogative philosophy. From the introduction to L'être et le néant²⁸

one sees that Sartre poses a philosophy that will overcome dualism, and for this we may read among other things "Cartesian dualism", by supplanting it with a genuine philosophy of experience. Yet, in presenting a philosophy of experience, Sartre is not opting for an "empiricist" or "scientific" analysis of everyday life. Rather, as Sartre clearly points out, the very starting point for such a philosophy must be the pre-reflective cogito. Sartre's philosophy, then, is an attempt at an analysis of pre-reflective awareness which is firmly entrenched in the everyday world of existence.

Sartre's philosophy, at least in its most general features, appears to be quite similar to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of perceptual experience. Indeed, one has the distinct impression that the similarities are "too close for comfort", although Merleau-Ponty himself never indicates why so much of Le visible et l'invisible is composed of a critique of Sartre's position. In any case after the criticism of both science and reflective philosophy, Merleau-Ponty considers the "dialectical" position, the philosophy of negation. (Although the critique, as mentioned, is fairly extensive, many of the points Merleau-Ponty makes against

this position are similar to points previously made. Consequently, not as much time will be spent on analyzing the text.)

The "dialectical" position is a fairly straightforward one. Indeed, it makes reading Sartre much easier than reading Merleau-Ponty, for one always knows how to classify something along Sartrean lines. For Sartre there are two and only two modes of being, being in-itself and being for-itself. The first, equated more or less with "the world", is full positivity, absolute plenitude. The second, consciousness, is absolute negation, absolute lack of being in-itself. And everything that needs to be analyzed in perceptual experience must belong either to one or to the other. Anything is either being in-itself or being for-itself.

C'est par cette intuition de l'Être comme plénitude absolue et absolue positivité, et par une vue du néant purifiée de tout ce que nous y mêlons d'être, que Sartre pense rendre compte de notre accès primordial aux choses, toujours sous-entendu dans les philosophies réflexives, et toujours compris dans le réalisme comme une action des choses sur nous qui est impensable.²⁹

And, indeed, Sartre's philosophy does offer us a new way of getting around the difficulties of intellectualism and empiricism, for as Sartre himself points out³⁰ the philosophy of the pre-reflective must overcome the dualism of act and potency, of being and appearance.

Du point de vue d'une philosophie de la négativité absolue, -- qui est du même coup philosophie de la positivité absolue, -- tous les problèmes de la philosophie classique se volatilisent, car ils étaient des problèmes de "mélange" ou d'"union", et mélange et union sont impossibles entre ce qui est et ce qui n'est pas, mais, par la même raison qui rend le mélange impossible, l'un ne saurait être pensé sans l'autre. Ainsi disparaît l'antinomie de l'idéalisme et du réalisme: il est vrai à la fois que la "connaissance" comme néantisation ne se soutient que par les choses mêmes dans lesquelles elle se fond, qu'elle ne saurait affecter l'être, qu'elle ne lui "ajoute rien",...³¹

The difficulties of traditional philosophy seem to be overcome by the philosophy of the negative, a philosophy of pre-reflective consciousness, which is a "néant". Yet, although the impulse towards a philosophy of the pre-reflective is shared by Merleau-Ponty, he cannot go so far as to accept this radical separation of being and consciousness.

The ultimate thrust of Merleau-Ponty's criticism of the Sartrean approach is to be found in this rejection of a new sort of dualism, i.e., the one between being and nothingness. But Merleau-Ponty does not just a priori reject this dualism. The key, again, to the criticism of a philosophical position, the key to philosophical interrogation, is perceptive faith. What Merleau-Ponty wants to show, among other things, is that the Sartrean position makes it impossible for one to talk about a genuine other person who is open to a common world. Merleau-Ponty wants to say that the radical dualism of this philosophy of the negative ends up closing each individual within a private realm of experience. There is no common access to one world.³²

Au total donc, une philosophie rigoureuse de la négintuition rend compte des mondes privés sans nous y enfermer: il n'y a pas à proprement parler d'intermonde, chacun n'habite que le sien, ne voit que selon son point de vue, n'entre dans l'être que par sa situation; mais parce qu'il n'est rien et que son rapport avec sa situation et son corps est un rapport d'être, sa situation, son corps, ses pensées ne font pas écran entre lui et le monde, ils sont au contraire le véhicule d'une relation à l'Être dans laquelle peuvent intervenir des tiers témoins.³³

The implications of Sartre's philosophy, then, are clear for Merleau-Ponty. Whereas such a philosophy was supposed to begin with our pre-reflective experience as a necessary condition for any account of being, such a philosophy has ended up with a sort of solipsism which prevents one from really being able to speak about other persons. Sartre's philosophy has led us to a point where one basic pillar of perceptive faith, viz., the existence of the other, has for all practical purposes been removed. And as such the philosophy of negation, or "négintuition", has left us in no better state than a philosophy of the reflective.

En inversant les positions de la philosophie réflexive, qui mettait tout le positif au-dedans et traitait le dehors comme simple négatif, en définissant au contraire l'esprit comme le négatif pur qui ne vit que de son contact avec l'être extérieur, la philosophie du négatif passe le but: encore une fois, bien que ce soit maintenant pour des raisons opposées, elle rend impossible cette ouverture à l'être qui est la foi perceptive.³⁴

The rejection of the philosophy of "négintuition", however, does not lead Merleau-Ponty back to a philosophy of intuition. If an analysis of the perceptual world by means of the intuition of nothingness, the pre-reflective, violates our opening to the world, so equally will an

analysis of that world by means of the intuition of essences. Merleau-Ponty, at this point, considers one more attempt to explicate the perceptual world. This attempt is made by those who follow a Husserlian approach to the intuition of essences.³⁵

The approach of this philosophy of intuition is rather straight-forward. The purpose of philosophy is to ask questions about the essence, or whatness, of things. What is time? What is a logical law? What is a social act? And the answers that are given are in terms of the intuition of the necessary and universal conditions of these things conditions that would hold for any possible particular instance of that thing.

La philosophie serait cette même lecture du sens menée à son terme, science exacte, la seule exacte, parce qu'elle seule va jusqu'au bout de l'effort pour savoir ce que c'est que la Nature et l'Histoire et le Monde et l'Etre, quand nous prenons avec eux, non seulement le contact partiel et abstrait de l'expérience et du calcul physiques ou de l'analyse historique, mais le contact total de celui qui, vivant dans le monde et dans l'Etre, entend voir pleinement sa vie, notamment sa vie de connaissance, et qui, habitant du monde, essaie de se penser dans le monde, de penser le monde en lui-même, de démêler leurs essences brouillées et de former enfin la signification "Etre".³⁶

The search for such essences, however, involves two further points that are essential for the success of any such endeavor. First, the one who carries out the search must, in some sense, be divorced from the very flow of experience. The philosopher must become an absolute or pure spectator of the given, such that, by means of the appropriate intuitions, this observer would come to the recognition of the necessary and universal conditions of any such experience. Second, this type of search for essences leads one to the absolute separation of essence and fact. For the essences derived from experience will be derived from a purified experience, and the situation will be such that no new fact will have any real bearing on the status of the essence discovered. What is to be sought, for this philosophy of intuition, is an account of the essence of something, no matter what future experience brings.

These two consequences, however, are unacceptable to Merleau-Ponty, for the emphasis on pure essences ultimately destroys our contact with perceptual experience, which, as we have seen, is the basis of our perceptive faith.

Quand je me demande ce que c'est que le quelque chose ou le monde ou la chose matérielle, je ne suis pas encore le pur spectateur que, par l'acte d'idéation, je vais devenir; je suis un champ d'expériences où se dessinent seulement la famille des choses matérielles et d'autres familles, et le monde comme leur style commun...³⁷

...la solidité, l'essentialité de l'essence est exactement mesurée par le pouvoir que nous avons de varier la chose. Une essence pure qui ne fût pas du tout contaminée et brouillée par les faits ne pourrait résulter que d'un essai de variation totale.³⁸

The rejection of the absolute spectator leads Merleau-Ponty to reaffirm our contact with things. The philosophy of intuition attempted to isolate the observer and the observed from the actual process of perceptual experience, but this attempt must always fail. "Nous n'avons jamais devant nous des individus purs, des glaciers d'êtres insécables, ni des essences sans lieu et sans date..."³⁹ This ultimately leads us to the consequence that the very foundation of this philosophy of intuition must be rejected. One must abandon the search for essences that would be given once and for all time.

Il est pourtant clair que jamais Husserl lui-même n'a obtenu une seule Wesenschau qu'il n'ait ensuite reprise et retravaillée, non pour la démentir, mais pour lui faire dire ce que d'abord

elle n'avait pas tout à fait dit, de
 sorte qu'il serait naïf de chercher
 la solidité dans un ciel des idées
 ou dans un fond du sens...⁴⁰

This is not, however, to reject the use of the notion of "essence" altogether. In our perceptual experience we do find what one might call an "essence", but this essence is more rightly called "essence opérante". We use, in our everyday intercourse with the world, provisional essences, essences in practice. We all, e.g., have a working definition of a social act, such that we are able to specify certain events as social acts. Yet our definition of 'social act' is not something that is fixed for all possible future experience. What a social act is for us tomorrow will depend on what kinds of experiences take place today. There is, in fact, a sort of dialectic between essence and fact such that what an essence is will depend upon what facts we encounter and what facts we encounter will depend upon what essences we have already provisionally stipulated.⁴¹

The critique of the philosophy of intuition leaves Merleau-Ponty, it would seem, with nothing more than the remnants of a critical devastation that has passed through the positions of scientism, intellectualism, a philosophy of negation, and a philosophy of intuition. However, the

critiques have not left us without some positive content. Throughout especially Merleau-Ponty's critiques of both the philosophy of negation and the philosophy of intuition, a number of important points concerning philosophy have been made, at least surreptitiously. The keys to philosophical analysis, as we have seen so far this chapter, are interrogation and perceptive faith.

From Merleau-Ponty's criticisms of other attempts at philosophical interrogation one sees that the starting point for philosophical questioning, or, in fact, any sort of questioning, is the fact that I am rooted in the everyday world of existence. This rootedness, this being-in-the-world, however, means more than just the fact that I exist. I am in the world insofar as I am open to the possibilities of experience in the world. "L'ouverture au monde suppose que le monde soit et reste horizon, non parce que ma vision le repousse au-delà d'elle-même, mais parce que, de quelque manière, celui qui voit en est et y est."⁴² This opening to the world, then, is something that is given at the start of my experience. Indeed, it can be seen as the very ground of perceptual experience, in that there would be no such experience if I were not open to the world. The opening, however, is not something that is fixed. That is, that to

which I am open does not exist as something definite. There are no fixed essences in that opening. As Merleau-Ponty points out in the margin of his text, "...ce qu'il y a de vrai: ce qui n'est pas rien est QUELQUE CHOSE, mais: ce quelque chose n'est pas dur comme diamant, pas inconditionné. ERFÄHRUNG."⁴³ My opening to the world is something that is on-going, something that is constantly changing. The only thing that I know for certain is that there is this opening to the world. Indeed, this is what is implied in the notion of "la foi perceptive". "On peut dire d'elle, comme de toute foi, qu'elle est foi parce qu'elle est possibilité de doute, et cet infatigable parcours des choses, qui est notre vie, est aussi une interrogation continuée."⁴⁴ The dubitable, as well as the indubitable, is given to us in experience, and they both are a part of our perceptive faith.

This ambiguous opening toward the world provides the key to philosophical questioning, for it is the task of philosophy to question this perceptive faith.

Au total, la philosophie interroge la foi perceptive, -- mais n'attend ni ne reçoit une réponse au sens ordinaire, parce que ce n'est pas le dévoilement d'une variable ou d'un invariant inconnu qui satisfera à cette question-là, et parce que le monde existant existe sur le mode interrogatif. La philosophie, c'est la foi perceptive s'interrogeant sur elle-même.⁴⁵

But how can perceptive faith interrogate itself, and why is this philosophy? It is evident, and has been pointed out by Merleau-Ponty in a number of examples, that whenever we question something in our experience we are actually questioning from a position within experience. When, e.g., we ask whether the polished piece of wood is really a clay rock in the sand, it is evident that our question comes from our particular standpoint on the beach. It is impossible to divest ourselves of our perceptual rootedness to ask questions about appearances and reality. It is always the case that one is rooted in perceptive faith in order to ask questions about things given to us in perceptive faith.

But the questioning of whether something is a clay rock or a pièce of wood is not a philosophical question. Indeed, this type of question is a questioning of something within our perceptual experience. The very questioning of

experience itself, or the possibility of experience, the very questioning of perceptive faith itself, however, is a more fundamental type of questioning which Merleau-Ponty would call philosophy. Yet what is this questioning a questioning of? In what way does philosophy question perceptive faith?

As we have seen, perceptive faith is our fundamental contact with the world around us, in terms of our existing in a world which we see, hear, taste, smell, and touch. We first live in this world and then only afterwards reflect on it. Yet this reflection on it is philosophy, which attempts not to question certain elements within this experience, but to question this very contact with the world. What philosophy questions is the pre-existing world where our perceptive faith is located. And what it seeks is precisely the answer to the question, "What do I know about this world with which I am in contact?" or more so an answer to the question, "What is really taking place at the level of perceptive faith, when I see, hear, feel, etc.?" Philosophy's task is in this case an elucidation that will attempt to unearth or uncover the fundamental aspects of this pre-existing world.⁴⁶

S'il est vrai que la philosophie, dès qu'elle se déclare réflexion ou coïncidence, préjuge de ce qu'elle trouvera, il lui faut encore une fois tout reprendre, rejeter les instruments que la réflexion et l'intuition se sont donnés, s'installer en un lieu où elles ne se distinguent pas encore, dans des expériences qui n'aient pas encore été "travaillées", qui nous offrent tout à la fois, pêle-mêle, et le "sujet" et l'"objet", et l'existence et l'essence, et lui donnent donc les moyens de les redéfinir. Voir, parler, même penser, ...sont des expériences de ce genre, à la fois irrécusables et énigmatiques. Elles ont un nom dans toutes les langues, mais qui dans toutes aussi porte des significations en touffe, des buissons de sens propres et de sens figurés, de sorte que ce n'est pas un de ces noms, comme ceux de la science, qui font la lumière, en attribuant à ce qui est nommé une signification circonscrite, mais plutôt l'indice répété, le rappel insistant, d'un mystère aussi familier qu'inexpliqué, d'une lumière qui, éclairant le reste, demeure à son origine dans l'obscurité. Si nous pouvions retrouver dans l'exercice du voir et du parler quelques-unes des références vivantes qui leur assignent dans la langue une telle destinée, peut-être nous apprendraient-elles à former nos nouveaux instruments, et d'abord à comprendre notre recherche, notre interrogation elles-mêmes.⁴⁷

The attempt to shed light on the pre-existing world and on our perceptual contact with this world brings us full-circle back to the problem of language. The attempt to elucidate perceptual faith has led philosophers, and

others, to develop a specific terminology involving such terms as 'subject', 'object', and 'essence'. Indeed, the point is more fundamental, for some of these terms, along with everyday terms, have derived from the common experience of different peoples. It is their contact with the pre-existing world, their perceptual faith, along with ours, that is embodied in the different languages of the world. And if philosophy is to inquire into this perceptual faith, it must confront the discourse that has been made about this faith, and it may even find it necessary to revise this discourse in the light of a further analysis.

However, the relationship between philosophy and language is even closer than this. The questioning of perceptive faith is not just a reflection on the faith, and a fortiori on linguistic activity which is a part of perceptive faith. Rather philosophy, as questioning of perceptive faith, and language, as the expression of this questioning, become almost one.

Elle-même /philosophy/ est langage, repose sur le langage; mais cela ne la disqualifie ni pour parler du langage, ni pour parler du pré-langage et du monde muet qui les double: au contraire, elle est langage opérant, ce langage-là qui ne peut se savoir que du dedans, par la pratique, est ouvert

sur les choses, appelé par les voix du silence, et continue un essai d'articulation qui est l'Être de tout être.⁴⁸

Our analysis and explication of language and philosophy has really brought us to the point where one can see a fundamental relationship emerging between the two. The connection between philosophy and language in the thought of Merleau-Ponty is not just a study of the connection of some x and some y that are otherwise separate and distinct. The phenomenology of language, which focuses on parole in contrast to langue, leads one to raise the question of a philosophy of parole, and, hence, the question of what philosophy is. But, in turn, the interrogation of philosophy, which is really interrogation itself, leads one to raise the question of the language of philosophy, and, hence, leads one back to language. The philosophy of language, the language of philosophy; one begins to see now the interrelation of the two. Merleau-Ponty, however, in his last work, gives only a few hints at the relationship between the two. Inspired by his account of language and philosophy, I propose, in the next chapter, to present an exploration of these twin themes.

FOOTNOTES

1. Indeed, as the editor indicates at the very beginning of the text, "L'auteur note, en regard du titre de ce chapitre: Notion de foi à préciser. Ce n'est pas la foi dans le sens de décision mais dans le sens de ce qui est avant toute position, foi animale et [?]." (VI, p. 17). Unfortunately, it seems that the author did not have a chance to make precise this notion of "foi perceptive".
2. VI, p. 209f. According to the editor, "la pagination du manuscrit indique clairement que le chapitre qui s'ouvre ici [in which the above quote lies/ n'aurait pas été conservé par l'auteur. Il a été remplacé par interrogation et intuition. Comme, toutefois, il n'a pas été biffé, nous avons cru bon de le présenter en annexe." (VI, p. 207). Whatever Merleau-Ponty planned to do with this section, it would be a shame to discard it, since it does contain the closest to what can be considered a definition of "foi perceptive". For this reason it seems worthwhile to include in our discussion this addendum.
3. Ibid., p. 210. Although Merleau-Ponty is talking about perception and not "perceptive faith" here, we may still discern the outlines of perceptive faith from his description of perception, since perception is "comme archétype de la rencontre originale..." "Perceptive faith", indeed, seems to be something even more fundamental than perception. See the account given in Geraets, Théodore, "Le retour à l'expérience perceptive et le sens du primat de la perception", Dialogue, v. 15 (1976), no. 4, pp. 595-607.
4. Ibid., p. 30. (Italics added.)
5. Ibid., p. 31. One might easily point out that Merleau-Ponty is presenting a very distorted picture of how science takes itself, as there are as many scientists who reject operationalism as there are those who claim to accept it. But in this case as in previous cases

Merleau-Ponty is not attacking the procedures of science as such. Rather, as will become evident, he is attacking a certain philosophy of science, which he had previously called 'empiricism'. It is not with science that Merleau-Ponty has his quarrel, but with those philosophers of science who want to claim that science is the only way to make sense of the world. This point should be kept in mind when considering, e.g., the article by Madison ("Le postulat d'objectivité dans la science et la philosophie du sujet", Philosophiques, v. 1 (1974), pp. 107-139.)

6. Ibid., p. 33.
7. Ibid., p. 35f. (Italics added to passage starting with 'anterieure'.) It is not clear that Merleau-Ponty actually ever shows fully how physics forgets perceptive faith. However, it is clear from the text that he does claim that such is the case. Further, Merleau-Ponty does claim, and also shows, that scientific psychology makes the same mistake.
8. As indicated earlier in this chapter this critique of intellectual syntheses that forget perceptive faith is one of the keys to philosophical interrogation.
9. VI, p. 34f.
10. Ibid., p. 37f. (Italics added.)
11. Ibid., p. 42f. (Italics added in last sentence.) One might seriously question here whether Merleau-Ponty is begging the question. This critique of psychologism by Merleau-Ponty is similar to earlier critiques, and the comments made in previous chapters are relevant at this point.
12. Ibid., p. 42.
13. One might infer from Merleau-Ponty's critique of objectivist science that he is just pointing out lacunae in the development of science. He is, however, not doing that, nor is he trying to lead one into a skeptical position on science. That he is attempting something more

fundamental can be seen from the following passage. "Notre but n'est pas d'opposer aux faits que coordonne la science objective un groupe de faits, -- qu'on les appelle "psychisme" ou "faits subjectifs" ou "faits intérieurs" --, qui "lui échappent", mais de montrer que l'être-objet, et aussi bien l'être sujet, conçu par opposition à lui et relativement à lui, ne font pas alternative, que le monde perçu est en deçà ou au-delà de l'antinomie, que l'échec de la psychologie "objective" est à comprendre, -- conjointement avec l'échec de la physique "objectiviste" --, non pas comme une victoire de l'"intérieur" sur l'"extérieur", et du "mental" sur le "matériel", mais comme un appel à la révision de notre ontologie, au réexamen des notions de "sujet" et d'"objet". (VI, p. 41 (Italics added.)) What Merleau-Ponty wants, and what he will present in part, is a more genuine account of what there is. And even though such an account will call into question such cherished notions as "the subjective" and "the objective", this new ontology will bring about, not the destruction of science, but its proper development. And it is the task of the philosopher as interrogator to call into question the "old" ontology and critically present a new one.

14. VI, p. 47.

15. Ibid., p. 48.


16. Ibid., p. 48ff.

17. Although Merleau-Ponty does not mention him by name at this point in VI, it is rather obvious that the tradition of reflective thinking initiated by Descartes is what Merleau-Ponty has in mind. And although some of the specific points that he makes may not count against what Descartes actually said, it is clear that Merleau-Ponty is again attempting to deal with a "paradigm case" of what he considers to be a principal "path" of philosophical activity.

18. VI, p. 50. (Italics added.)

19. Ibid., p. 51f.
20. Ibid., p. 52f.
21. Ibid., p. 55.
22. Ibid., p. 56.
23. Ibid., p. 62.
24. Ibid., p. 63.
25. Ibid., p. 65.
26. Ibid., p. 57. Merleau-Ponty further points out. "La marche à l'adéquation, dont les faits de dés-illusion témoignent, n'est pas le retour en soi d'une Pensée adéquate, qui se serait inexplicablement perdue de vue. -- ... --, c'est la pré-possession d'une totalité qui est là avant qu'on sache comment et pourquoi, dont les réalisations ne sont jamais ce que nous aurions imaginé qu'elles fussent, et qui pourtant remplit en nous une attente secrète puisque nous y croyons inlassablement. (Ibid., p. 65f.)
27. Ibid., p. 67. (Italics added.)
28. Sartre, Jean-Paul, L'être et le néant, Paris: Gallimard, 1943, pp. 11-34.
29. VI, p. 78.
30. L'être et le néant, pp. 14-17.
31. VI, p. 81f.
32. Ibid., pp. 86-89. The details of the argument are to be found in these pages, and I shall not comment upon them. What is significant for us is to see the approach to the analysis of Sartre's position based on the notion of "la foi perceptive".
33. Ibid., p. 89f.

34. Ibid., p. 121f.
35. In this particular section Merleau-Ponty seems to be attacking, not Husserl himself, but one form of phenomenology that may be called Husserlian. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty's criticisms in this section seem to be of a less all-embracing nature than were those made against Sartre's philosophy. (This can be seen just in the amount of space that was given to each critique. The section on "interrogation et intuition" is less than half the length of "interrogation et dialectique".) Merleau-Ponty's main concern is this section, as will be shown below, is to clarify the nature of the relationship between fact and essence. In fact, his criticism of a certain interpretation of the notion of "essence" is a welcomed criticism, and falls in line with the remarks that we have made above in Chapter 2. In any case Merleau-Ponty seems to be less opposed to the "philosophy of intuition" than he is to the "philosophy of negintuition".
36. VI, p. 146. (Italics added except for 'est'.)
37. Ibid., p. 149. (Italics added.)
38. Ibid. One might see here a critique of the notion of "fictive variation" along the lines of our discussion of this in Chapter 2. In any case Merleau-Ponty is rejecting outright any real separation of the essences of things from the things themselves ("the facts").
39. Ibid., p. 154.
40. Ibid., p. 155.
41. See ibid., p. 158f. Merleau-Ponty no more than hints at such a dialectic on p. 159.
42. Ibid., p. 136.
43. Ibid., p. 146.
44. Ibid., p. 139f.

45. Ibid., p. 139.
 46. See ibid., p. 170f., wherein Merleau-Ponty indicates the kind of answer that needs to be given to the question "What do I know?".
 47. Ibid., p. 172. (Italics added.)
 48. Ibid., p. 168.
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PART IV: CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 7: TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF PHILOSOPHICAL LANGUAGE

In a course on history one will eventually confront the question "What is history?" Correspondingly, in courses on psychology, sociology, biology, etc., one will confront the parallel questions, "What is psychology?", "What is sociology?", "What is biology?" To the teacher of philosophy, such a question as "What is philosophy?" will too eventually arise. However, the case for philosophy seems a bit different from these other questions, and for two reasons. First, the expert in history, psychology or sociology knows well that the questions listed above are not historical, psychological or sociological questions. The expert in these disciplines realizes that such questions are properly philosophical questions, and that one is actually doing philosophy when answering these questions. Yet for philosophy the very question of what philosophy itself is is part of the subject matter. This, as we shall see, will present a few problems for the study of philosophy. Second, and more importantly for us, one realizes that the answers to the questions "What

is history?", "What is sociology?", "What is psychology?", although they may be provisional for the student of the subject, do not present any serious obstacles for the study of these disciplines. The teacher of psychology will present a provisional definition of psychology and then proceed to study the subject matter with little concern for the definition. That is to say, what the psychologist or sociologist does as such will not be rejected on the grounds that such experimentation "is not really psychology" or "is not really sociology". The scientist defines his subject matter and, whatever that definition may be, proceeds merrily on his way. But such is not often the case in philosophy.

For the person studying philosophy, and this is more so for the teacher of philosophy, a provisional definition will often present more than a few obstacles to the study of the subject matter. A teacher of philosophy might tell his students that philosophy is conceptual analysis, but then he will inevitably confront the students' protestations later in the course in such questions as: "Is Descartes doing conceptual analysis?" or "Is logic really conceptual analysis?" The teacher of philosophy will find that inevitably something that is accepted as "true blue" philosophy will not fit

within his definition of philosophy. But, one might protest, does this not just show that the teacher of philosophy, in this case, has provided a too narrow definition, such that a legitimate area of the discipline had been excluded? It is certainly true that a definition of philosophy, or for that matter any discipline, might be so narrow that it is bound to leave out something. One may, for example, define psychology as the study of the behaviour of pigeons. Such a definition would obviously be inadequate to even the introductory student of psychology. In fact, one would expect that only an outrageously dogmatic, or incredibly sick, teacher of psychology would offer such a definition to his students. But such is not the case in philosophy. Philosophers who were anything but outrageously dogmatic or notoriously sick have given us definitions, or defining descriptions, of philosophy that inevitably rule out certain types of legitimate philosophical inquiry. This would be true of the philosopher who defines philosophy as conceptual analysis as it would be for the philosopher who defines it as the study of being, as the study of the presuppositions of science, or as the search for absolute, indubitable truth. It is evident that each definition will rule out some other

definition, and unlike the scientist who will proceed in spite of his definition, the philosopher continually confronts the problem throughout his studies.¹

The problem of the definition of philosophy, however, is one that cannot be dispensed with, even though the solution seems so elusive. For as pointed out above, even though the psychologist or sociologist could dispense with the problem of definition of his subject matter (if there really were a problem for him), since the problem itself is not a psychological or sociological one but a philosophical one, the philosopher cannot so dispense with the problem. The problem itself is part of what philosophy is all about. For no other reason than this, the philosopher must confront the task of defining his inquiries because such a task itself constitutes part of philosophy. But there is even a further problem that arises within the context of this dissertation.

As I have indicated in the first introduction to this thesis, my main task is to analyze and discuss Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of language and philosophy of philosophy and, by relating the two, to develop a philosophy of philosophical language. What is implied in all this, and undoubtedly inferred on the part of the reader, is that, in fact, this

analysis and development of Merleau-Ponty's thought would itself be a piece of philosophy! This, however, might seem to be a strange point to make. If this were not philosophy, what could it possibly be? Indeed, one could imagine a similar task that perhaps would be entitled, "The Development of Merleau-Ponty's Philosophical Thought". Such a work might turn out to be nothing more than an historical analysis of Merleau-Ponty's thinking. One could also imagine psychological biographies of his life or sociological analyses of his political thinking. But even though such could be undertaken, nothing of the sort was done in this thesis. This dissertation was meant to be, and should be construed as, a philosophical work (or at least an exercise in philosophy!). But if this is supposed to be a piece of philosophy, then, surely, I should know what philosophy is; otherwise, how would I know what I am doing? The oddity here is that the questioning of the subject matter brings forth a questioning of that very questioning. What is philosophy if Towards a Philosophy of Philosophical Language is itself an attempt at philosophy? Perhaps the clue to the answer to the question "What is philosophy?" will be found by reflecting on the proceedings of this thesis.

In reflecting on the account of Merleau-Ponty's analysis of language and his analysis of philosophy, one realizes that a number of "activities" were involved in the unfolding of Merleau-Ponty's thought. First, it should be evident that a number of distinctions were made throughout the sections on language and the sections on philosophy. For example, a distinction was drawn in an earlier chapter between the task of a phenomenology of language, on the one hand, and a linguistics of language, on the other. Another distinction was drawn between the gestural aspects of language and the gestural aspects of painting. In regard to philosophy a distinction was drawn between a scientific account of experience and a properly philosophical account of the same experience. Whatever the difficulties of such distinctions, it is clear that an essential part of the preceding work involved making distinctions of a particular kind.² Second, it is clear enough from just the introduction that one of the main tasks of the thesis is to relate different areas of inquiry. The thesis itself is an attempt to relate the thought of Merleau-Ponty on language with his thought on philosophy. A more particular example is to be found in the discussion on language and painting, wherein an attempt

to relate these two areas of study with regard to the gestural aspects of each was made.³ Third, one of the more important aspects of the previous research, and, indeed, once again one that is not peculiarly philosophical, is the asking of questions. The thesis itself began with a question, viz., "What is the relationship between language and philosophy in the thought of Merleau-Ponty and what implications does it have for a philosophy of philosophical language?" And from this topic question a number of others have appeared, viz., "What is the difference between langue and parole?", "How is language different from painting?", "What is philosophical interrogation?" Fourth, one specific activity which has up to now been executed only in piecemeal fashion, is the task of grounding of human activity in the everyday world of experience. This needs a bit of elaboration. Throughout the discussions on language and philosophy, the attempt had been made to give some "body" to Merleau-Ponty's thinking on these subjects by presenting concrete examples from everyday experience that would shore up the point on any particular occasion. In elaborating on the gestural aspects of language, one had to focus on common, everyday situations in which particular words were normally used. In discussing the

systematic aspects of language, one had to show the inter-relationship of particular words that are used in specific situations. The most important example of this grounding of thought will take place in the next chapter when the attempt is made to show how the connection between language and philosophy, as developed in this chapter, can be exemplified in the development of Merleau-Ponty's own philosophical language. Further, it would seem that this fourth aspect of the thesis is peculiarly different from the first three. Whereas the making of distinctions, the relating of areas of inquiry or the asking of questions is in no way the exclusive right of philosophical inquiry, the grounding of human activity in the everyday world can be construed as the task of philosophy solely. For although it is certainly possible to locate, e.g., the source of political behaviour in particular social conditions, the task of locating the ultimate source of any type of human activity, even thinking, in the everyday world, where the body subject, other persons, and the world itself exist, is the task of phenomenological philosophy. Indeed, it is the rooting of language and philosophy, as two types of human activity, in the everyday world that will give the other tasks a peculiarly philosophical twist.

What clues, then, does the research in this thesis on Merleau-Ponty's thought give us in our attempt to clarify the nature of philosophical inquiry? In what way can one construe philosophy along the lines of making distinctions between different types of activities, relating different areas of inquiry, asking certain sorts of questions, and grounding all this in the everyday experience of the body subject, other persons, and the world itself? Let us look at the concrete situation of philosophical thinking in order to attempt an answer to these questions.

It has often been a criticism of philosophy, or rather of philosophers, that much of what passes for philosophy is really a sort of "thinking in a dark closet". Both laymen and specialists in many different disciplines have raised the protest that the philosopher's concerns have little, if anything, to do with the "real world". Now, it is true that many of the philosophical disputes of the past, and of the present, do seem to have little to do with anything in the everyday world. But these disputes notwithstanding, one must admit that the philosopher does live in an everyday world. Indeed, the question that is important to ask is not "What practical relevance do certain philosophical disputes have for the real world?" but rather "How

is it that any human being comes to philosophize?" For it is by looking at the genesis of philosophical thinking that one may be able to determine more precisely what is involved in such thinking.

If one were to follow the daily activities of any human being, one would find an array of activities ranging from very common ones, such as eating and sleeping, to some very unique ones, such as performing experiments in atomic fission. Every individual person performs numerous actions and these actions or activities may be classified in many different ways. One could distinguish "voluntary" ones, such as deciding to walk to the store, from "involuntary", ones, such as sneezing or scratching one's head. One could distinguish "social" ones, such as greeting a friend, from "private" ones, such as painting a chair. Further, beyond certain practical distinctions that might be made between, say, cooking a hard-boiled egg and cooking a poached egg, it is evident that numerous refined analyses can be made of this everyday life. Psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, biologists, historians, et al. all have attempted to advance, and refine, the analyses that could be made of our everyday life. And, indeed, we have a wealth of knowledge

from what bodily mechanisms are involved in scratching one's head to what the chances of my upward economic mobility are given my educational background.

It is clear, furthermore, that there are certain types of questions that one could ask about the activities of everyday life that would be of a type different from the type of questions provided by the sciences mentioned above.⁴ It would seem appropriate to ask questions concerning the meaning of specific terms that are used in a scientific description of our everyday experience. One might, for example, become interested in a Skinnerian account of certain "learning" experiences. These sorts of experiences would be experiences of an everyday variety, such as reaching for one's key when one finds one's apartment door locked. The behaviourist description, which is also meant to serve as an explanation of why one does such things, would in this case employ such notions as "operant", "discriminative stimulus", and "reinforcement". One might want to question, however, given this descriptive account, what the particular terms mean. What is an operant? What is a reinforcement? Now obviously we would be able to find definitions of these terms somewhere in the Skinnerian account of behaviour. But there is more

to our question, something that indicates a philosophical concern. One might ask further whether the terms that are used in the description are logically consistent, or are ambiguous or equivocal. It is evident that such questions would not properly speaking form part of the scientific description that is being offered. One would have to say that such questions are more philosophical than scientific. But there are even more fundamental questions that one could ask. One could, in fact, ask whether the terms that are being used are the most appropriate ones for the description. That is, one could ask whether the terms 'operant', etc. are really the most suitable for a description of a particular sort of human activity. But what could determine the suitability of such terms? What is being sought here is a link between the terms that are used in a scientific description and the everyday situation which ultimately provides the source material for the scientific description. One is searching for a way to "cash out" the descriptive terms by relating them back to our everyday life situations.⁵

There is another aspect of our questioning that may also be called philosophical, and it too arises from our concern with scientific descriptions of everyday situations.

It is clear, from the previous paragraph, that a philosophical questioning of scientific descriptions may involve the focusing on one set of terms in one discipline. But consider this aspect of such descriptions. One may certainly have a psychological account of, e.g., opening a locked door. But it is certainly clear that one might very well have a physiological account of this action or even a sociological account, given a certain context. (The door might be locked because the wife was angry with her husband and wanted to reject him by locking the door.) It is certainly true that such accounts have been given by the different sciences, but that just leads to the question "How do all these different accounts relate to one another, if, in fact, they relate at all?" We do, in fact, have many different accounts of what appears to be the same action. Can each account be genuine? If so, how can the same action be accounted for in many different ways? Furthermore, one might consider an even more involved question. What is the world itself like, in which I have these everyday experiences, if, in fact, there can be many different accounts of this world? The kinds of question being asked here again constitute the philosophical enterprise of relating the everyday world of experience with the accounts that are

generated to describe that world. Here again we find philosophy interrogating the world of experience.

At this point one might want to register a protest. One might wonder why philosophy tries to relate scientific accounts back to the world of experience. Surely one might point out, philosophy does begin with an individual thinker rooted in the everyday world. But, one would add, why does this entail that the individual must relate something back to this world of experience? Is it not true, as exemplified by Descartes, that philosophy attempts to abandon the everyday world in search for truth? Although such questions raise again the problem of finding a definition of philosophy that would satisfy every prima facie example of it, and although looking at the problem in terms of these necessary and sufficient conditions for what philosophy is may lead to a futile search, there is an aspect of this problem that can be circumvented. First, let us admit that Descartes and others in the "intellectualist" tradition have rejected the everyday world for a world of truth. But let us remember that Descartes can be viewed as one who was attempting to find the absolute foundation for any correct judgement that philosopher, scientist or "man on the street" could produce.

Construed in this way one can see that the basic difference between the Cartesian account and the modest one presented here is the foundation itself. What has been argued in this chapter is that the end point in the search for the base or ground of scientific descriptions is to be found in the everyday world of existence. The type of philosophy that is being presented here is one that responds to the question "What is the world like, if we have such and such descriptions of human or non-human behaviour?" And the answer will focus on the world of everyday experience in which we all live.

There is another minor point that should be made here in the context of this rather cursory comparison with Cartesian thought. Unlike the Cartesian impulse toward absolute certainty, the type of philosophy that is being sketched here is not one that seeks absolute certitude as the basis for scientific thinking.⁶ Whereas the Cartesian desire is for an account of the foundation of all truth "for all time", the view presented here in no way seeks such an account. And there are at least two reasons for this. First, since philosophy, as presented here, is the attempt to relate scientific descriptions to the everyday world of existence, it is clear that there may be many new descriptions generated in the future which may be

quite different from any we have now. And whatever these new descriptions may be, the philosopher must be open to them and ~~seek to relate them to the world of everyday existence.~~ -But

a second, and more important reason, for the reluctance to search for an absolute foundation is to be found in the world of experience itself. That there will be new scientific descriptions of human existence will in part be the result of the "demand" by the everyday world that new descriptions be generated to reflect the new features in this on-going, everyday world of existence. The world about us is changing every day, new human organizations and institutions appear, and it must be the task of philosophy to reflect this new world. Philosophy cannot presume to have come up with the final account of the everyday world of existence; it must seek to continue the task of relating new scientific descriptions to the new features of everyday life.

The above discussion of some of the similarities and differences between the view of philosophy presented here and Cartesian philosophy raises a more general concern. It is more than evident to anyone who attempts to do any serious philosophy today that he is not the first person to have attempted such an undertaking. Philosophy has been

around with us for a long time. The question arises, however, given that there is a history of philosophy, whether there is any relationship between past attempts at philosophy and present-day attempts. From our study of Merleau-Ponty, one finds that a constant concern of his is the consideration of past attempts at philosophizing. From Descartes to Sartre, Merleau-Ponty attempts to show how past philosophers sometimes have and sometimes have not forgotten the everyday existential world. And these criticisms, both negative and positive, show Merleau-Ponty the way toward a genuine philosophy. Indeed, the philosopher today who critically analyzes the descriptions of the world by attempting to relate them to that world must be aware of previous attempts at philosophy. And this must be so, not because the philosopher should be open-minded to other versions of philosophy, but because the past thinking of philosophers provides an integral part of our present-day world and of the world of science. Let us look at this more closely.

The past attempts at philosophy, whether or not they are construed as philosophy as conceived in this chapter, must be looked at as an integral part of our everyday world.

For any philosophy rises from the everyday experience of the philosopher. But more so, that which is developed by the philosopher is not just something that can sit independently of the everyday world. The writings of the philosopher do not exist in splendid isolation. Rather, there is a relationship that is generated between philosophical thinking and the everyday world which can best be labeled 'dialectical'. Now it is true that the notions "dialectic" and "dialectical" have been overworked in especially present-day thinking. But these terms are the best ones that may be applied to this relationship. For in Hegelian fashion the works of past philosophers have reintegrated themselves with the on-going world of everyday existence, such that our present world is as much composed of "thought" as it is composed of "world". But how can this be so? Although many facets of this dialectic could be unfolded in some sort of Hegelian phenomenology, what I would want to do at this point is to underscore just one facet of that dialectic. If past philosophy has contributed anything to the present-day world, the language of past philosophies must be seen as forming an integral part of the world. Indeed, if the history of philosophy ought to be a concern for the present-day philosopher, it ought to be in terms of the language of those past philosophies.

And it is the question of language that raises the central issue of this thesis: What is the relationship between the language of the thinker and the philosophy that he develops? What is the relationship between language and philosophy?

Throughout the writings of Merleau-Ponty one finds that a constant concern of his is the rejection of intellectualism. Indeed, as pointed out in the chapter on langue and parole, Merleau-Ponty, although attempting to situate the analysis of language somewhere between empiricism and intellectualism, really is concerned much more with the refutation of the intellectualist view of language than with the refutation of the empiricist view. And such an elaborate refutation of the intellectualist view is certainly in order for Merleau-Ponty, because one of the most attractive aspects of that position is to be found in the intellectualist fusion of language with thought. Indeed, intellectualism seems to be such a reasonable position to take toward language, because language appears so transparent when used to convey a thought. That is to say, from the philosopher to the "man in the street", one would seemingly agree that the language one uses to express a thought is not distinguishable from the thought itself. When I use the word 'building' to refer to the building across the way, it

would certainly seem that the word 'building' is coincidental with the thought "building" that I have at that time. The word seems to be nothing but a transparent cloak for the thought, and it is the thought that is important here. Indeed, such a view is so tempting that a goodly amount of time was spent in Parts I and II above in trying to show that the intellectualist position must be abandoned, if one is to develop a more accurate picture of the relationship between language and thought and for our case, language and philosophy.

Earlier in this chapter we considered the problem of what philosophy is. In so doing, we saw that, in fact, the question of what philosophy is was a real problem for us. Since this thesis itself was meant to be a piece of philosophical writing, the question of what language is, and more specifically what the characteristics of philosophical language are, becomes a question that too has real significance. For it is evident that if this thesis is a piece of philosophy, then it too is an example of philosophical language in action. What, then, can this thesis tell us about philosophical language.

Throughout the discussion of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of language and philosophy of philosophy, it became evident that a certain vocabulary was being developed in order that language

and philosophy could be rooted in the everyday world of existence. A basic distinction was first developed between langue and parole, and parole was placed at the level of everyday speech. Certain notions of "body-subject" and "intentionality" were introduced to indicate the type of everyday basis that speech had in the world of existence. Further, speech was investigated to determine the significations that are embodied by speech, and it was found that words have meaning in terms of gestural significance and in terms of systematic relationships with other words. Moreover, a certain style of language use arose in the discourse of a particular speaker. Concerning philosophy it was seen ultimately that philosophy is an interrogation that brings us back to the everyday world of existence.

One might wonder, however, whether the specialized vocabulary of a philosopher could possibly have the same characteristics as everyday words used by a native speaker of some natural language. Is not the intellectualist at least correct concerning rarefied philosophical terminology? Let us look, in particular, at the terminology that has been developed in this particular chapter.⁷ In discussing what philosophy is, I introduced the notion "interrogation" and "everyday world of existence". What do these terms mean, and what characteristics do they have?

In developing the notion "interrogation", we saw that it referred to a type of questioning. The questioning was a critical reflection on the notions used, e.g. in certain psychological descriptions. The questioning ultimately led to the locating of these descriptive terms in the experience that is commonly shared by different human beings. And this commonly shared region of experience was labeled 'the everyday world of existence'. But, why were these terms used and not others? The answer to this question can be found in a discussion of the characteristics that these words have.

The word 'interrogation' was used to refer to a type of questioning. What kind of questioning is interrogation? What connotations does this term have for the native speaker of English? Whenever I think of 'interrogation', I often think of some kind of incessant questioning, usually of the type that is carried out by the police or military. What is important here is that the questioning is incessant. It is a type of questioning that never ceases until it gets to the heart of the matter. One would not call interrogation such a casual question as "What time is it?" asked by a stranger on the street. The person asking the question would really have to be asking a series of questions, but a series that has some

underlying theme or motif. The interrogator wants to find out what the case really is by asking a series of inter-related questions. And as we have seen the philosophical interrogator questions various descriptions of the world to get "to the bottom" of these descriptions in the world itself.

The phrase 'everyday world' also has particular connotations in English. The word 'world', to begin, gives one the thought of something all-encompassing or all-embracing. One gets the picture of some sort of total environment in which an individual or group of individuals lives. When prefixed by the word 'everyday', moreover, a more specific type of environment comes to mind. When one thinks of an everyday world, one thinks of that surrounding social and physical environment that any sort of individual lives in. The everyday world of existence, then, is that common, ordinary social and physical environment in which the scientist, philosopher, public servant, or factory labourer works or lives.

In what way, however, may these connotations be considered to be gestural significations? They can be considered, in one way, gestural in that they are part of the meanings of these words that spring from or originate in one's situation in the everyday world. That 'interrogation'

has a certain meaning to most people arises from the fact that the word itself has a "home" in the common usage of a native speaker of the language. It arises from the individual person's contact with a surrounding environment which includes other persons. But a crucial problem lurks behind this answer. Do the gestural significations for philosophical terminology come exclusively from the everyday world? Obviously it has been shown that part of the meaning of a philosophical term comes from one's use of such words in this everyday world. And, indeed, this should be expected, since the philosopher too lives in this world, in one fashion or the other. But can one say that all the gestural signification comes from this world? Depending on how one delineates this surrounding world of the philosopher, one might answer affirmatively or negatively to this question. For one might very well, and perhaps one ought to, include in the everyday world of the philosopher the world of philosophical speculation. That is to say, part of the world in which the philosopher thinks, speaks, and even feels, is the world that has been "constructed" by past philosophical thinking and by present-day dialogue with contemporaries, wherein particular terms are used by a group of philosophers in certain ways. That part of the gestural signification of a philosophical term comes from past and present philosophical thinking can be

seen, for example, in the word 'reflecting'. Although the "man on the street" may have a certain notion of "reflection", it is also clear to any would-be philosopher that a certain philosophical tradition, stemming back to Descartes, has given a certain connotation to this term. 'Reflection' to any one familiar with this tradition, inevitably brings to mind the notion of "thought", the notion of "something opposed to the physical situation". One might say that such a term has intellectualist overtones that conjure up mind-body dualism, absolute truth, etc. The term 'everyday world' also conjures up a certain more recent philosophical tradition that stems from the thinking of the later Husserl and Heidegger.

The gestural signification of a philosophical term, especially that part of it that comes from the philosophical tradition, raises an important problem concerning the relationship between philosophical thinking and philosophical language. Indeed, this perhaps is the focal point of what is to be said in this chapter. The problem arises when we consider that philosophical thought, as outlined in this chapter, must be expressed in language. For the intellectualist this would be no problem at all, since there is a one-to-one relationship between a thought and its expression. But if Merleau-Ponty's

critique of the intellectualist view of language is correct, then there is an issue here. For as the philosopher reflects on the everyday roots of the descriptions of science, he finds that the reflections must be expressed in some fashion. But the reflection is not something that is "complete" or "whole" before it is expressed. Indeed, the philosopher's grappling with his reflections really turns out to be a groping for the right terms or phrases to express what the philosopher has only a partial grasp of. The experience of this chapter is a case in point. What has been attempted here is an examination of what philosophy is, and the difficulty in finding the "right" words to describe philosophy is evident throughout the chapter.

But part of the difficulty in expressing a philosophical thought arises from the fact that the thought that is trying to be expressed must be expressed in a terminology that already has a philosophical signification. This signification which has been built up from the past may be called the sedimentational aspect of philosophical language. This sedimentational aspect, which arises from the past usage of particular philosophers, or more generally, from the past usage of the speaking subject, is a characteristic that sets off language from other "gestures". This sedimentation of past terms, however, may be viewed as a

47

two-edged sword. On the one hand, there is the positive benefit in that the possibility for a dialogue with other philosophical thought is possible only if there is some intersubjective validity to the language of the philosopher. That is to say, a philosopher who attempts to develop a completely new terminology will soon find that he is able to communicate with no other philosopher. And the intersubjective validity of the philosopher's language comes from the fact that there is a built-up gestural signification built up through past usage that inhabits philosophical terms. One might say, further, that past philosophical thinking that has been expressed in a particular interrelated terminology sets up an institution (a 'Stiftung'). And this past thinking, being sedimented in a particular philosophical language really opens up, or makes for the possibility of, "un champ de recherches". But, on the other hand, as we have already seen, this sedimentational aspect has a negative side. For the sedimentation of past philosophical terms acts as an obstacle to the expression of a new philosophical thought. The old terms, no matter what they are, never quite capture the sense of the thought that is trying to be expressed. The new thought will be bent or contorted as it is expressed in the mold of

past philosophical language.

To look at this phenomenon in a slightly different way, one might describe the language of philosophy in terms of langue and parole. The language of past philosophers might be considered la langue philosophique. That is, the past thinking of philosophers has found its way into an interrelated set of words which the present-day philosopher learns as he would learn the grammar of a natural language. However, when we look at the present-day philosopher as he attempts to use these terms in his philosophizing, we should approach his language as a type of parole philosophique. Speech, as we have seen, is the attempt to take one's acquired language to express oneself in one's present situation. The philosopher takes la langue philosophique of his predecessors, a langue that was once a parole of those predecessors, and uses it to express his own thinking. It is through his actual speaking that the philosopher confronts the sedimented meanings of some prior philosophical speaking. Since, however, there is a positive aspect to the sedimentation of past signification, one might wonder why there is any need at all for the philosopher to develop a new terminology. Could not the philosopher just use the terms that have been used by Plato, Descartes and others? Although a completely new terminology

would present difficulties in communication, as would any "private" language, the need to develop new terms rests upon the requirements of scientific description and everyday experience. For as we have assumed everyday experience is in constant change, and following experience, the descriptions of that experience are also constantly changing. And even though such development does not strictly necessitate a new philosophical language to describe the world, since there is nothing contradictory about using the same philosophical notions to describe new experiences it would seem more appropriate at least that new terms be developed to reflect adequately new experience and the new scientific descriptions that follow experience. And further, as we have pointed out above, the old philosophical notions may provide a hindrance to our adequately describing the world. (We shall see in the next chapter that this last reason was the prime motivating force behind Merleau-Ponty's developing new philosophical terms.)

If the philosopher must develop new philosophical terminology, the question arises as to the extent that a new vocabulary must be developed. Will it suffice to develop certain specific terms, or will more extensive changes need

to be made? From our analysis of the gestural aspects of language, this question cannot be answered either way. But if we consider another major aspect of language, as was outlined in the chapters on language above, we realize that there are systematic relationships between the different terms of a philosophical vocabulary. We have seen already in these earlier chapters that the meaning of a word is in part due to its gestural aspect and in part due to its relationship with other terms. Just as the word 'good' takes part of its meaning from the possible combinations it has with other words ("Good Night", "Good Play"), so also might we expect the same with philosophical terms. Indeed, that the phrases 'mentalistic language', 'empiricist language' have any meaning at all demonstrates in part what this systematic relationship is. For 'mentalistic language' refers to nothing else but the fact that there is a certain type of philosophical style, arising from the history of philosophy, that is characteristic of a certain way of describing different types of reality. The terms 'pure thought', 'reflection', 'meditation', 'body' all form a language with which to describe the world from a particular philosophical perspective. And the terms have as much meaning in relationship

to other philosophical terms as they do individually. The word 'reflection' takes on a particular meaning in the context of other intellectualist terms such as 'thought', 'meditation', or 'spirit'. These, and other terms, form a philosophical vocabulary, such that the meaning of each hinges in part on the meaning of the others.⁸

The interrelationships of the terms in a philosophical language leads one to realize that the development of a new philosophical vocabulary must be an extensive project. For it will not suffice for the philosopher to introduce one or two new terms, if, in fact, he retains for the most part the vocabulary of another philosophical perspective. That is why, for example, it will be difficult for the existential phenomenologist to introduce the term 'being-in-the-world' while retaining such terms as 'subject', 'object', 'mind', 'body'. The latter terms have a whole philosophical tradition (perhaps even a number of philosophical traditions) behind them, and this tradition will come to bear on the development of the philosopher's thinking by means of these terms. If the philosopher wishes to avoid Cartesian dualism, it will be difficult to do so if he continues to use such terms as 'body', 'mind', 'thought', 'subject', and 'object'. For

these terms will not fit comfortably in a non-dualistic context. It would be necessary, then, for such a philosopher to attempt to introduce a whole set of terms that would have a different sort of meaning which would more accurately complete the thought that is trying to be expressed.

* * *

The relationship between the thought of a philosopher and the philosophical terminology in which it is expressed, as has been outlined in this chapter, is a many-faceted one. The philosopher who reflects and analyzes accounts of the world in order to ~~ground these~~ accounts in the everyday world is confronted with the question of what terminology will best express his reflections. The terminology that the philosopher does use will have a gestural aspect ~~arising~~ arising from the fact that the philosopher is actively situated in an everyday world, will have a sedimentational aspect arising from the fact that the terminology will be in part the product of past philosophizing, and will have a systematic aspect arising from the fact that the terms in a particular philosophical vocabulary are inter-related. But the relationship between a philosopher's thought

and his language is not an unambiguous one. It is difficult to determine in any exact manner what the gestural, sedimentational, or systematic aspects are of the terms that a philosopher uses. These aspects blend together to form a philosophical style, which is something that is readily recognizable on the part of the observer, yet not really definable. Nor can it be determined exactly which of these aspects may be related to the questioning, analyzing, and grounding aspects of philosophical thought. Indeed, if anything has been shown in this chapter, it is that the relationship between philosophical thought and philosophical language is a many-faceted one. It cannot be conceived in a univocal fashion as it might be from the perspective of intellectualism.

But this perhaps is not the only point that has been made. If it has been shown that there are some important characteristics of philosophical language that gives it some force of its own, then the development of philosophical thought must be seen as being directly affected by the development of the language in which that thought is expressed. In other words, the expression of a philosophical thought cannot be conceived as unimportant to that thought itself. The intellectualist account, epitomized in the Cartesian desire for an ideal language that would be constructed to express an

already-precisely-formed thought, must be rejected. What the thought is will in part determine what terms are to be used, but it is also true that what the terms are will determine what that thought is to be. In fact, from what has been presented in this chapter, one might see that a certain tension builds up when the philosopher attempts to express his thought in a particular terminology. The gestural, systematic, and sedimentational aspects of the language that the philosopher uses will interact and even conflict with one another, and this will produce a tension between the thought that is to be expressed and the terminology that will express the thought. The need to develop new terms will be opposed by the need to communicate in a language that has already been developed.

The tension and conflict between these two requirements, however, may not be that evident in this particular chapter. For although I have been trying to reflect on the relationship between philosophical language and philosophical thought, and although I have tried to express this relationship in terms of the phrases 'everyday world', etc., I have not attempted to develop a new terminology. Yet, there is a need to develop such a new terminology as there is a need to

use established philosophical terminology, if one is going to communicate one's thought. This type of dialectical development of the thought of the philosopher and his language, although not evident in this chapter, is quite evident in the development of the thought of Merleau-Ponty. For his philosophical writings, from Phénoménologie de la perception to Le visible et l'invisible, appear to me to demonstrate one of the best examples of this kind of ambiguous tension that develops when a philosopher tries to express more accurately his reflections on the world. Let us then consider the kind of tension that develops between the thought of this philosopher and the language he expresses himself in.

FOOTNOTES

1. It would help little here to offer the suggestion that, e.g., philosophy is really the study of being and that every philosophy is the study of being, whether one recognizes it or not. Although this would solve the problem of the nature of philosophy de jure, it would do little to solve the problem for one who has any real sympathy for the works of other philosophers. For only perhaps by standing on one's head could one lump together the works of Descartes, Kant, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Austin, Kuhn, et al. under the title "the study of being". This would be so too for any other suggested definitions of philosophy. Nor would it help to define 'philosophy' as "whatever philosophers do", for although that may open one's mind toward the history of philosophy, such a definition is ultimately reducible to a tautology and, thus, not very useful to us at this point. The same would be so for a definition of philosophy that is an open-ended disjunction. (I.e., philosophy is either conceptual analysis, or the study of being, or...) Since the definition is open-ended, one confronts the problem of deciding where to draw the line between philosophy and non-philosophy. (Certainly not everything can be philosophy.) And even if one could end the disjunction somewhere, one would still have to face the problem of how to mediate between some of the incompatible disjuncts that would inevitably be included. Such a definition becomes either a smorgasbord (i.e., "choose some of the following") or an unmelttable melting-pot (i.e., "it is all of these, even though some contradict others").
2. Obviously any type of research requires the making of distinctions. What needs to be indicated, and this will be done shortly, is how "philosophical" distinctions may be distinguished from "non-philosophical" distinctions.
3. The comment in note 2 is relevant here also. One must further indicate how the type of relating that was undertaken in this thesis can be distinguished from any other type of attempt at relating two areas of inquiry.

4. At this point one could also add that the types of questions that are going to be asked would also differ from the kinds of questions that poets, painters and novelists ask about the human situation. For although the kinds of descriptions of human life that are offered by the above would not be classified as scientific descriptions, for the purposes of approaching philosophy one may lump together the sciences and the above-mentioned humanities on the one hand in order to contrast them with philosophy.
5. This point obviously introduces problems of an evaluative nature, viz., how is one to determine whether judgements about the link between the scientific terms and the everyday situation are really correct? Although it may seem absurd not to consider such questions at this point, since my principal aim is to focus on the rise of philosophical thinking in everyday experience, such questions will have to be pushed aside for another time. For my purpose is not to determine which philosophical account is correct (this is why I was not particularly interested in the "truth of" Merleau-Ponty's critique of Sartre, Husserl, et al.) but to ask the question "What is philosophy all about anyway?"
6. It might be noted here that at times I am using the terms 'science', 'scientific thinking' and 'scientific description' in the widest sense possible, a sense that is close to the German notion of "Wissenschaft" or what Collingwood in Essay on Metaphysics calls "orderly thinking on a subject matter". These notions would embrace, then, the kinds of descriptions that one finds in the humanities as well as in physics and chemistry. However, although I do want to operate with this very broad notion at times in this chapter, I shall more frequently be focussing on science in the narrower sense, in terms of psychological or sociological explanations.
7. I am purposely avoiding discussion of the characteristics of Merleau-Ponty's terminology because the terms he uses are obviously French terms and I would not be able to unravel the gestural and systematic aspects of 'corps-propre', 'la geste', or 'interrogation'. This ultimately raises some questions about the translatability of language,

in particular, philosophical language. That is, is one correct in thinking that 'geste' can be translated as 'gesture', 'corps sujet' as 'body-subject', etc.? Although this question cannot be completely answered here, all that one needs to assume, in order for one to be able to use Merleau-Ponty's terms in an English context, is that languages, even philosophical languages, are in principle translatable. To assume this would mean that one could take Merleau-Ponty's thought and translate it into English, even though there may be some problems with specific terms.

8. This philosophical style that arises in a particular philosophical tradition can be seen quite clearly when one considers the questions that are asked by different philosophers. If one takes the questions a) "What are the limits to knowledge?", b) "How is the word 'know' used ordinarily?" and c) "What is it for a concrete, individual human being to know something?"; one may fairly easily identify the styles as a) Kantian, b) linguistic analysis, and c) existential, even though all may be considered to be questions in epistemology. The language that is used in a philosophical tradition "bends" the problems of epistemology, metaphysics, etc. in a recognizable pattern.

PART IV: CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 8: PHILOSOPHICAL LANGUAGE AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

In the previous chapter we have seen a number of features of a philosophy of philosophical language that have been inspired by the analysis of the philosophy of language and the philosophy of philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. What we have seen so far is that the philosopher, like everyone else, is situated in an everyday world and is confronted with explanations of that world. The philosopher, however, unlike everyone else, attempts to raise questions about these explanations and their relationship to the actual world of experience. In order to describe these relationships the philosopher must resort to language, as one might imagine. But as was shown in the previous chapter, the language the philosopher uses will ultimately fail to express the philosopher's reflections on the meanings that are uncovered in the questioning of those relationships. This lack of coincidence between the philosopher's language and his thought, then, will be the driving force in the philosopher's further reflections and his attempt to express those reflections in

an adequate way. Given, furthermore, that this philosophy of philosophical language, as outlined above, is inspired by Merleau-Ponty's own discussions of language and of philosophy, it would seem that one might, quite appropriately, ask how this development of a philosophical language can be illustrated by Merleau-Ponty's own philosophical development. In other words, one might want to ask: Is there anything in the development of the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty that shows one the tension that develops between thought and language? Does Merleau-Ponty's own language have any of the characteristics of a philosophical language?

It is important to point out here, right at the beginning, that such a question is not a contrived one, born out of some narrow, pedantic interest in applying the results of this thesis to the source of its inspiration. Rather than being of merely academic interest, the question whether the thought of Merleau-Ponty reveals some of the essential aspects of philosophical thought is a question vital to one's interpretation of that thought. For the very interpretation of that thought is at issue, as evidenced by a number of commentators on the writings of Merleau-Ponty.¹ And as we shall see, the question about the development of the thought of

Merleau-Ponty is really tied to the question about the relationship between philosophical thought and the language in which it is expressed in the work of Merleau-Ponty. In other words, the claim that is going to be made is that the philosophy of philosophical language that was outlined in the previous chapter is most important for deciding the question of the development of the thought of Merleau-Ponty.

There is a problem, however, in the way that the above question is put, and, indeed, it may be a problem that haunts any attempt to interpret the thought of Merleau-Ponty. One might want to argue that there is a vicious circle at the heart of this enterprise and that one really cannot "get off the ground" with this project. That is to say, one might want to argue the following. This thesis is an attempt to develop a philosophy of philosophical language based on the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. The general insights into and explanations of the relationship between philosophy and language were insights and explanations derived from an interpretation of the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. But the key term here is 'interpretation'. One might want to say that I had to interpret the thought of Merleau-Ponty in a certain way in order to obtain the results I did obtain. Yet, if I had to interpret, the

philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, I would already have had to decide upon the development of his philosophy. As such there is no difficulty. But if I now want to use the results of the thesis up to this point in order to take a stand on an interpretation of the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, one might want to argue that I am merely begging the question. How can one but argue circularly if one interprets Merleau-Ponty in order to obtain results which one then uses to interpret Merleau-Ponty?

There may be, one might point out, an easy way out of this difficulty. One might suggest that a circle could be avoided if one did not attempt to interpret the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty in the light of the findings based on an interpretation of his philosophy. In other words, one might suggest that this thesis should have ended with the last chapter. If such had occurred, no difficulties would have arisen. Yet, one cannot accept such a proposal. Although one could imagine a thesis that would be based on an interpretation of Merleau-Ponty which did not need to be reapplied to his philosophy, such cannot be the case in this work. For the very subject of the thesis is philosophical language, and, yet, that is precisely what is the source material for the thesis. In

other words, and very simply, if one is going to say anything very meaningful about philosophical language, based on the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, then one would expect that Merleau-Ponty's own language should manifest some of the characteristics of philosophical language.

It would seem, then, that the project as stipulated is a necessary one, given the subject matter. But then is it possible to avoid circular reasoning? At this point it would seem impossible to avoid it. One is using Merleau-Ponty's philosophy to make sense of his philosophy. But one must ask in this context: Is such a procedure all that undesirable? The problem of circular reasoning is the problem at the heart of every philosophical enterprise, in one way, in that philosophers are always pushing back to "the foundations" (of experience, of our language, or whatever). And the attempt to ground rationally one's foundations or presuppositions leads to the difficulty of finding a starting point or presupposition which itself will allow one to examine critically one's foundations or presuppositions. And, of course, one would expect that this "starting point" too will be critically analyzed, which then will lead to the possibility of a circular endeavour. This problem of the circularity of philosophical

reasoning is one that has been realized by philosophers, especially Hegel, for whom, of course, circularity was not something to be avoided. For the problem of this thesis one might ask the same question: Must one attempt to avoid a circularity in this project of developing a philosophy of philosophical language?²

Let us, then, put aside this question of the circularity of the argument and, instead, let us consider the problem before us. How can one tell whether there is a development in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty? This question is the one to be answered, in the light of the findings we have made on the nature of philosophical language. This question, however, could be asked in a more general way. One might want to ask: How can one even tell whether the thought of any philosopher has gone through a particular development? What one needs to do here is to consider the criteria for determining whether there has been a particular development in the thought of a philosopher, and if there has been, whether this change has been a significant one. Let us consider, then, some of the ways one might come to the conclusion that a philosopher's thought has changed. First, and perhaps least importantly for us,

there is a fairly straightforward case in which one could conclude that a philosopher has changed his position on some philosophical point. It is the case, simply, where the philosopher tells us that he has changed his position! Such cases, however, are quite rare.³ But even such rare cases, straightforward as they may seem, are not quite as simple as they would seem. If, e.g., a philosopher had previously accepted the position P, but now rejects P in favour of not-P, one still might wonder whether the philosopher really does now accept not-P (or alternatively one might wonder whether he ever did accept P). The skepticism that one displays over this shift in thought would not necessarily be a dogmatic skepticism, or one that is based upon certain beliefs about a philosopher's deep unconscious wishes and desires. Rather, one may quite simply wonder whether a change has occurred, and the questioning might arise in the context of what the philosopher is now saying. The point being made here is a rather simple one, yet quite important for more complicated cases. The point is that one will be able to determine whether a philosopher has really changed his position (and we might look at a "position" as either some particular

philosophical proposition or something much more extensive) only by looking at the kinds of propositions that the philosopher is asserting at two different times. If a philosopher first asserts P, which means that he proposes and defends P in his writings, and if he changes his position by asserting not-P, then, one may conclude that the philosopher's thought has changed. But the key to the change is the language that the philosopher uses. In other words, it will only be in what the philosopher says or writes which will provide conclusive evidence for whether a philosopher has changed his position.

This point about language, however, may seem to be a rather trivial point, in that one might wonder how else we could determine that a philosopher's position has changed except through what he writes. Indeed, perhaps it is a trivial point, as often times are the truths that phenomenology uncovers. Yet, if it is a trivial point, it is a point which one should constantly be reminded of. For in considering more complicated cases of a change in position, this truth may easily be forgotten. Let us consider some of these more complicated cases.

We have talked, so far, about a philosopher asserting a particular proposition P and then changing his position by asserting not-P. Yet, most cases where changes in position are alleged are not quite as simple as that. Most cases do not involve the assertion of just a single proposition. Rather, they often involve a multitude of interrelated assertions and beliefs. Let us take, for example, a philosopher whom we might classify as a realist. What would be the reason why one would classify him as a realist? The answer would most likely not be this one: that he asserted the proposition "There is a real world which is the object of my awareness". Obviously, he may assert such a proposition. But the reason why we would call him a realist is that his assertions about the world, the self, other persons, etc., all go together to make up the realist position. In other words, it is the set of assertions the philosopher makes (we may even call it 'a system') that is the basis for our judgement that this philosopher is a realist. Now, if we find that a certain development takes place in the thinking of this philosopher, if we can make the claim that he has changed his position, such a claim about a change in his position, again, is not

based on the possibility of his asserting the proposition not-P. Rather, it would be based on the types of assertions, and their relationships, that we find in the later writings of the philosopher. Metaphorically speaking, we may say that we would have to look at the kind of picture the philosopher paints with the assertions that he makes, and it is only by comparing the new picture with the old picture that will allow us to assert that the second philosophical position is a new one.

But what precisely is it about a new philosophical position that will allow one to claim that it is a new position? What is it about the set of assertions and their relationships of some position that makes it different from some other set of assertions with its own set of relationships? Obviously, one might want to say, it is the meaning of the propositions of the first set and those of the second set which would indicate whether the propositions are the same or different. But this is the point where we may re-emphasize the relevancy of Merleau-Ponty's thinking on language, in light of the previous chapter on philosophical language. It is not just the meaning of the propositions that will determine the difference. Or, more correctly, it is not just the denotative

meaning of the words that the philosopher uses to express his propositions. Rather, it is the gestural and sedimentational aspects of the terms that the philosopher uses which will provide the decisive clue to any change in position that may have taken place.⁴

The question of whether a change has taken place in the thinking of a philosopher, however, is also connected with an equally important question. And that question is: If a philosopher has changed his position, why has he done so? Whenever one deals with the question whether there has been a change in thought, one usually is concerned, too, with this other problem. In fact, one is usually more concerned about the reason why a thinker has changed his position than about the fact that he has done so. As we shall see with the case of Merleau-Ponty, the discussion about whether Merleau-Ponty has changed his position in his later work goes "hand in hand" with the discussion of why he has done so, and the latter discussion often takes on a more significant character than the former. For the discussion concerning the reasons why Merleau-Ponty changed his position becomes generalized to a discussion of why any

phenomenologist of the existential variety would develop a new position. And this sort of discussion itself becomes a genuine philosophical discussion of the problems and difficulties of a certain philosophical position.

But what is important here is not whether the question whether a change in position has occurred is more important than the question why it has occurred. Both are equally important. The real question, however, concerns the method for determining why a certain change has taken place. As we shall see, from what has been said about philosophy and philosophical language, the clues that answer our "whether" question will also help us to answer our "why" question. For the gestural and sedimentational aspects of the language in which the philosopher first formulates his thought will, as we have seen, provide the sort of "resistance" to the thought that will become the driving force in the dialectic that unfolds between the thought and the language in which it is expressed. That is to say, from what we have seen in the last chapter, the reason why a philosopher will change his position should revolve around the fact a) that the language (la langue) first used to formulate the thought will never quite "fit" the thought it is to express, insofar

as that thought is expressed in the speaking (la parole) of the philosopher; b) that the lack of coincidence between the thought and the language of the philosopher is due both to the fact that there is a sedimentational residue in la langue philosophique that the philosopher uses and to the fact that la parole philosophique of the philosopher who philosophizes always surpasses la langue that he is using; c) that the lack of coincidence between the language and the thought will lead the philosopher to search for a more adequate thought and to search for a more adequate language in which to express this thought; and d) that this two-fold search will lead in many cases to what we might call a change in the position of the philosopher. However, in order to better illustrate this activity, perhaps we should now look at the controversy surrounding the development of Merleau-Ponty's own philosophy.

As has been stated earlier in this chapter, this thesis has taken an interpretation of a number of points in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, and in specific instances decisions were made concerning some point about some of Merleau-Ponty's apparent shifts in thought.⁵ But the more

general question about Merleau-Ponty's development as a whole was never asked. Indeed, we must now formulate our question as precisely as possible: Is there a change in the thought of Merleau-Ponty between Phénoménologie de la perception and Le visible et l'invisible? We shall not now be interested in any minor shifts in perspective, as we were in previous chapters. Rather, our concern now will be with any alleged major shift in Merleau-Ponty's thought.

Although there have been a number of commentators on the development of the thought of Merleau-Ponty (see note 1 of this chapter), there are two commentators in particular whom I would like to consider in the context of this question, T. Geraets and G. Madison. The works of these authors that I wish to discuss, however, are not their major commentaries (again, see note 1). Rather, I want to concentrate on the debate that took place between them at the C.P.A. meeting in 1974, which was subsequently published. For as we shall see, the debate focuses upon some points that are crucial for one's understanding of the development of the thought of Merleau-Ponty.

Both Geraets and Madison, in their respective works, developed different, and in some ways conflicting, interpretations of the thought of Merleau-Ponty. Geraets's book, although concerned primarily with the difference between Merleau-Ponty's La Structure du comportement and Phénoménologie de la perception contains some remarks concerning his later thought. As Madison points out

En plus de préciser de cette manière la nature du changement chez Merleau-Ponty, M. Geraets nous dit que l'attitude fondamentale qui est alors apparue en 1939 "régit et rend compréhensible l'ensemble de son oeuvre ultérieure" /p. 3 of Vers une nouvelle philosophie transcendentale/. La lecture de Husserl aurait permis à Merleau-Ponty de "trouver l'attitude philosophique fondamentale qu'il gardera toute sa vie" /Ibid., p. 171/ 6

For Madison, however, there is a further break in the thought of Merleau-Ponty that developed between Phénoménologie de la perception and Le visible et l'invisible. This break was motivated by Merleau-Ponty's failure to develop an adequate phenomenology of existence in Phénoménologie de la perception, a failure resulting from Merleau-Ponty's attempt to use the idealistic language of a philosophy of consciousness (borrowed from Husserl) to set forth a philosophy of lived existence.

It is this philosophy which, even though it is expressed in the terminology of a philosophy of consciousness, attempts to overcome both realism and idealism.⁷ Madison's principal claim, then, is that this attempt to overcome realism and idealism failed, and it forced Merleau-Ponty to push further beyond phenomenology toward an ontology of being. Only such an ontology, whose beginnings are seen in Le visible et l'invisible, can genuinely overcome the idealism of a philosophy of consciousness.⁸

This debate between Geraets and Madison, however, revolves around a number of different points, as Madison points out in his response to Geraets,⁹ including the interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's attitude toward the work of Husserl and the interpretation of the notion of "being" in the later works of Merleau-Ponty. However, Madison, in his response, wishes to treat the development of Merleau-Ponty's thought along with these other points by taking up the question of philosophical language.¹⁰ And it is this point of philosophical language which I wish to use as the focal point in the ensuing discussion of Merleau-Ponty. Indeed, a correct understanding of philosophical language will provide the key to an interpretation of Merleau-Ponty.

Madison's comments about philosophical language are simple and straightforward.

Une chose que nous a enseignée Merleau-Ponty, c'est qu'il existe entre la pensée et la parole un rapport étroit et indissoluble. Le langage n'est pas le simple véhicule d'une pensée autonome. Même si par un certain côté la pensée dépassait son expression, c'est par l'expression que ce dépassement est rendu possible. Cela veut dire par conséquent que le sens de ce qu'on dit ne peut rester indifférent à la façon dont on le dit ou, autrement dit, que les expressions et les mots qu'on utilise déterminent pour une grande part la signification de ce qu'on dit, quel que soit par ailleurs le sens qu'on croit exprimer en le disant.¹¹

The argument then is fairly simple. Merleau-Ponty attempted to use an idealist language, based on a philosophy of consciousness, to express his existential philosophy of "being-in-the-world". However, the language of idealism is "indissolubly" linked with a philosophy of idealism, i.e., a philosophy of consciousness. This idealistic language, then, resisted the intrusion of a "foreign body", especially since one of the aims of this foreign body, i.e., existential thinking, was the criticism of the philosophy of consciousness. This failure to criticize idealism with an existential philosophy expressed in the language of idealism then forced

Merleau-Ponty to search more deeply for a philosophy, and an adequate philosophical language, which would provide a critique of not only realism but also idealism.

The question of the language that Merleau-Ponty uses is also a concern in Geraets's discussion of Merleau-Ponty. Geraets too points to Merleau-Ponty's own criticism in the "Notes de travail"¹² which indicates that Merleau-Ponty was unhappy with the language of the Phénoménologie de la perception. But the question for Geraets is: Why did he become unhappy with the language of Phénoménologie de la perception? What went wrong with the philosophy expressed in that work?

Il faudra, en tout cas, se demander comment exactement la distinction "conscience"- "objet" a servi de point de départ et dans quel sens Merleau-Ponty aurait gardé en partie la philosophie de la conscience.

Selon moi, une seule réponse doit être donnée aux deux questions à la fois: la langue philosophique de la PP est celle d'une philosophie de la conscience. Tout ce système linguistique est articulé autour de la distinction radicale "conscience"- "objet", mais l'usage que Merleau-Ponty fait de cette langue vise justement à remettre en question cette distinction même ... Cette "première description" (VI 237) devait rester inadéquate, car la

"partie" de la philosophie de la conscience que Merleau-Ponty y a gardée est une "partie totale"... 13

Both authors, then, recognize two important points. First, it is evident to both that Merleau-Ponty does make a conscious break in Le visible et l'invisible with the language of Phénoménologie de la perception. Second, both are ready to accept the conclusion that the language (la langue philosophique, as we might call it) of the Phénoménologie de la perception does retain the idealistic overtones of a philosophy of consciousness, and these overtones, in part, provided Merleau-Ponty with the reasons for developing a new philosophical language. What needs to be explained more fully, however, is the reason why there were these idealistic overtones and how exactly they play a role in the development of Merleau-Ponty's thought. For whether one sees Merleau-Ponty's development as the result of a failure of the philosophy expressed in Phénoménologie de la perception (as Madison would have it) or whether one sees that work only as an "inadequate" attempt more fully developed in Le visible et l'invisible (as Geraets would have it), one still needs to discover the driving force of the change. Perhaps, then, after one attempts to sort out what type of relationship

there is between Merleau-Ponty's thought and his language, one will be able to come to some conclusion about the nature of this "change".

What then is the role of philosophical language in the developing thought of Merleau-Ponty? In what way is the language of the Phénoménologie de la perception a language of the "philosophy of consciousness"? To answer these questions one must consider what is going on in that work and in Le visible et l'invisible. In the former work, as one is well aware, one finds Merleau-Ponty attempting to give us a certain account of particular phenomena of the human world. Merleau-Ponty, that is to say, attempts to clarify such human phenomena as movement through space, movement through time, sexuality, language, etc. What he says about these phenomena is not important for us at this point. Rather, what is important is the perspective he takes in order to explain them. Merleau-Ponty, as has been pointed out in this thesis, attempts to account for these phenomena in terms of the human person's actual bodily contact with the world and with other persons in this world which surrounds him, and such a contact may be linguistic, sexual, spatial, etc. Merleau-Ponty further wants to tell us in Phénoménologie de la perception that this bodily

contact of the human person in the everyday world is the most fundamental relationship between the human being and the world in which he lives. This relationship provides the foundation for any of the more abstract contacts that the human person develops in his intercourse with the world, contacts which are made explicit in such enterprises as mathematics and natural scientific knowledge. This philosophy about the body's contact with the world may be called a philosophy of existential phenomenology, but whatever it is called, it is clear what the intention of such a philosophy is. The intention is clearly to ground the many different types of human activities in a pre-reflective contact of body-subject and world.

Given that this is the intention of the existential philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, what kinds of words does he use to set forth this fundamental relationship? As we have seen, Merleau-Ponty uses such terms as 'corps propre'¹⁴, 'cogito tacite'¹⁵, 'intentionnalité opérante'¹⁶. But such terms are taken by Merleau-Ponty in part from another kind of approach to philosophy. E.g., such a notion as "cogito" obviously comes from the Cartesian tradition, and the whole chapter on the cogito in Phénoménologie de la perception is really a discussion or dialogue with the Cartesian dualism of res

extensa and res cogitans. The notions of "intentionality" even "consciousness" are taken from the Husserlian context, as is evident from the "Avant Propos" of the Phénoménologie de la perception. There in fact Merleau-Ponty tries to show how one can really be Husserlian, but in such a way that one's resulting philosophy will be an existential one rather than an idealistic one. We may say, then, that Merleau-Ponty does attempt to put forth a philosophy of existence based on the central role of the body, but this philosophy is expressed in the language of a philosophy of consciousness.¹⁷ We may, in fact, describe this situation in the terminology used in this thesis. We might say that the terms that Merleau-Ponty absorbs into his thinking, i.e. such terms as 'cogito tacite' or 'consciousness', are la langue philosophique of the philosophy of consciousness. That is to say, the past thinking of philosophy that may be labeled "rationalist" or "idealist" has culminated in a constellation of interrelated terms. Indeed, this past thinking may be considered a parole philosophique of the philosophy of consciousness, and this parole philosophique of Descartes and others has resulted in a langue philosophique which Merleau-Ponty resorts to in his earlier philosophizing.

If we look, however, at Merleau-Ponty's work Le visible et l'invisible we find that the words he uses are different. We find such terms as 'chair'¹⁸, 'foi perceptive'¹⁹, and 'l'être charnel'²⁰. These words and others, are ones that Merleau-Ponty had not used in Phénoménologie de la perception. But why are these terms used rather than the others? Is there really a change in Merleau-Ponty's thinking? And what brought it about? The answers to these questions are interrelated, although in answering them I may be glossing over some finer points that Geraets and Madison would want to raise. It does seem, however, that there is a change or "shift" in Merleau-Ponty's thinking between Phénoménologie de la perception and Le visible et l'invisible. And the one clear signal of such a change is the change in the terminology. For as we have seen, and as Madison points out, there is something more than just an external, arbitrary bond between the thought of a philosopher and his language. The thought of the philosopher cannot be considered something like an object which is then placed into the container of language. As we have indicated in the chapters on language above, the thought of the speaker, whether philosopher or not, is affected by the gestural and sedimentational aspects of the language which he attempts to

speak. And the case of the philosopher speaking is even more pointed, since the language he uses, in most cases, is a language arising out of a philosophical tradition, such that the particular philosophical terminology of the tradition will have its own sedimentational and gestural characteristics. And these characteristics will be determined in part by the previous philosophy that had been expressed in these terms. In the case of Merleau-Ponty, the terminology that he uses in Phénoménologie de la perception already has been molded by an idealistic philosophy of consciousness. The terms 'intentionality', 'cogito', or even 'body' (especially 'body subject') are all terms used quite freely by Husserl or Descartes. That is, a type of philosophy focusing on conscious acts was expressed in such a terminology, and no matter what one tries to do with such terms they will always carry this idealistic "flavour".

To continue this in the terminology of this thesis, one might say that the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty in Phénoménologie de la perception was a parole philosophique, and that the gestural aspect of this speaking can be interpreted as the thrust or intention to overcome realism and idealism with a philosophical thought that was existential. Or, more simply, one could say that the gestural tone of this speech is existential. But this

gestural aspect of Merleau-Ponty's parole philosophique confronted the sedimentation of la langue philosophique that he used to speak. And this sedimentation, as we have seen, may be considered the "idealistic" or "rationalistic" sediment of a prior philosophizing.

This friction, or tension, between the philosophical language (langue) of rationalism and idealism and the philosophical thought embodied in the speaking (parole) of Merleau-Ponty provides a clue for the answers to our questions above. For one may say that this tension is the driving force behind Merleau-Ponty's attempt to find a more adequate language in which to express his existential thinking. But this attempt to find a more adequate language itself will lead him to clarify and refine the thought which he is attempting to express. We may at this point even say that there is a shift in his later thinking, since the dialectic between the thought of the philosopher and the language in which he expresses it will lead to a change in both the thought and the language. Alternatively, one may say that the tension between la langue philosophique and la parole philosophique in the Phénoménologie led to a change in both. The philosophical language of Le visible et l'invisible reflects a new langue as well as a new parole. There is, then, a shift

in Merleau-Ponty's thinking, whether one wants to call this shift a "radical break" or a "harmonious development". But in determining that there is such a shift, we have really seen why it happened. Or at least one can say that we have seen the necessary, but perhaps not sufficient, condition for the change. The language (la langue) of the Phénoménologie de la perception was born of the intellectualist tradition, as Merleau-Ponty might want to say. The terms mentioned above, as well as the terms 'subject', 'object', 'consciousness', are terms that even in their everyday use imply the separation of the human subject and his world. One cannot use such terms without invoking the connotation of "the human being is on one side of the fence and the world is on the other". This connotation, derived from the sedimentation of a philosophy of consciousness in such words, is something that Merleau-Ponty wanted to overcome. The implication of his thought in the Phénoménologie de la perception is clearly a desire to overcome the separation of the human subject and the world. The notion of "body" and the notion "being-in-the-world" were about as close he could get to putting the human subject in contact with the world. Yet, that was not good enough. It is clear that Merleau-Ponty realized that a new terminology was necessary. To describe it

in a way consistent with the findings of the previous chapter, we might say that the thought of the philosopher, when in the process of being expressed, i.e., as la parole philosophique, confronts the sedimentation of the language in which it is expressed, i.e., la langue philosophique of the tradition. This confrontation is the driving force then behind the philosopher's attempt to express his thought in a more adequate language. But this search for a more adequate language, however, will also result in the search for a more adequate thought to be expressed in that language. That is, the thought of the philosopher will change as will his language, since the original thought was a thought expressed in the first language. And since the language changes so does the thinking.

Let us again describe this in the terminology of the thesis. La parole philosophique of Merleau-Ponty in the Phénoménologie de la perception conflicts with la langue in which it is expressed. This leads Merleau-Ponty to search for a more adequate language. But two points are important concerning this search. First, it is not just a search for a new vessel for a thought already precisely formed. Indeed, since the intellectualist is mistaken on this point, we must say

that la parole of Merleau-Ponty is something that molds and shapes his thinking, as much as that parole is molded and shaped by the language in which it appears. Second, this search for a new language really becomes a creative thrust of the philosopher to develop a new terminology. And this new terminology, appearing as a new parole philosophique in Le visible et l'invisible, shows all the characteristics of speech. Merleau-Ponty's parole in this work reflects the gesture of the philosopher attempting to express the human being's fundamental relationship with the world. And these terms, 'chair', 'l'être charnel' unfold in such a way as to form a new system of interrelated concepts. Moreover, the terms themselves seem to have a gestural aspect to them that implies a breaking down of the "wall" between the subject and the world. (Perhaps this gestural aspect could be discussed in more detail by a native French speaker.) This langue philosophique that Merleau-Ponty is developing in his later work may itself institute a new tradition in philosophy and may sediment so as to provide a new basis for future philosophizing.

The question of the interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's thought was the explicit concern of this present chapter. Perhaps no hard-and-fast conclusions can be made about the

development of that thought. But the kinds of discovery that I have sought in this thesis have been about philosophical language, and clearly the discoveries have been made with the explicit aid of the thought of Merleau-Ponty. One might even say that his parole philosophique provided us with a genuine langue philosophique which acted as both the beginning and the end of this thesis.

FOOTNOTES

1. Various interpretations of the philosophical development of Merleau-Ponty have appeared in recent years. (Take, e.g., the works of the following authors: Geraets, Vers une nouvelle philosophie transcendantale; Madison, La phénoménologie de Merleau-Ponty; Kabil, Merleau-Ponty: Existentialist of the Social World; Tilliette, Merleau-Ponty; and, Kwant, From Phenomenology to Metaphysics.) In this chapter, however, I shall concentrate on the debate between Geraets and Madison, as that debate will prove to be most useful in my discussion of the problem under consideration. (See Madison, G.S., "Sur l'interprétation de Merleau-Ponty de Th.F. Geraets" in Philosophiques, v. II (1975), no. 1, pp. 103-112; and, Geraets, Th.F., "Merleau-Ponty selon Madison" in the same issue of Philosophiques, pp. 113-123.)
2. There is, of course, a way in which the project would not be interpreted as circular, and this way is an important way. In this thesis the insights of Merleau-Ponty have not been accepted just because he has made them. If one were to accept his insights on his authority alone and then use them to justify his stating them, then, in fact, there would be another sort of circularity present. But this sort would be unacceptable precisely because it would be based on an Argumentum ad Verecundiam, and it would be for that reason that such a circularity would be unacceptable. In this thesis, however, I have accepted the insights of Merleau-Ponty, not because he made them, but because there seems to be something acceptable about them, as I have tried to show in the last chapter.
3. Perhaps the most notable case in contemporary philosophy at least, is the case of G.E. Moore. One instance of his public renouncement of something he had accepted as true is told in a passage in Kaufmann, Critique of Religion and Philosophy, section 12.

4. Of course, the denotative meaning of the terms that the philosopher uses do count for something when one is attempting to decide whether a change has taken place. If a philosopher asserts "there is a world beyond my thought" and if at some later time he asserts "the world is just an idea in my mind", the meaning of the terms do indicate to us that two different claims are being made. Unfortunately, many of the cases that one considers will not be as simple as this one, and this, as we shall see, is especially true of Merleau-Ponty's writings.
5. One specific instance of this can be found in the second chapter. There I was concerned with Edie's claim that Merleau-Ponty shifted his emphasis toward linguistics in his articles in Signes. If one looks back, however, to that chapter, one will note that Edie's criticisms were handled without recourse to the discussion of philosophical language.
6. Madison, G.S., "Sur l'interprétation de Merleau-Ponty de Th.F. Geraets", op. cit., p. 106.
7. Ibid., p. 108f. This theme of the overcoming of both realism and idealism is a theme that was developed in the second chapter of this thesis in the context of Merleau-Ponty's discussion of language.
8. Madison, op. cit., p. 109-111.
9. Ibid., p. 124.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 124f.
12. VI, p. 253. "Les problèmes posés dans Ph.P. sont insolubles parce que j'y pars de la distinction "conscience" - "objet" - ."
13. Geraets, T.F., "Merleau-Ponty selon Madison", op. cit., p. 115f.

14. Phénoménologie de la perception, p. 231.
15. Ibid., p. 462.
16. Ibid., p. XIII.
17. If anyone really doubts that such is the case, I think that the sections in this thesis on Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of language give clear evidence to this.
18. VI, p. 175.
19. Ibid., p. 31.
20. Ibid., p. 179.

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