him and to which he claims special access, nor from a source inside him, which he is specially privileged to possess. The formula is presented to us at the start, and then it is worked upon, in front of us, in terms of sound and sight. The marvellous feeling of release provided by the piece stems from this fact. Once the 13 pitches and the 13 gestures have been established, they are subjected to a process of ever fuller transformations, but these, however complex, are always logical, always clearly stated, and always available for our understanding. There is nothing behind the gesture, just as there is nothing behind the music. And this leads to an extraordinary focussing upon surface: the surface of the mime, like that of the music, becomes luminous. The music takes on plastic form and the mime dissolves into pure relation. The experience is thus at once extremely physical and extremely abstract. It is also extraordinarily cleansing, in that we are made to feel that such luminosity is within the reach of any of us - not through any mystical initiation, not through taking part in any orgiastic rite, but through a kind of submission which allows us to rediscover our full physical and intellectual potential. And it does this through the mode of incarnation.

Perhaps the most moving moment of the entire evening of 23 October came when the composer/conductor and the mime took their bows. They made no extravagant gestures of acknowledgement, such as one is unfortunately used to in the opera house. But neither did they try to give the impression that they were above such things, wrapped in a higher mystery. One merely sensed in them a humility and joyfulness, as though they had only carried out what had to be done, and felt that they had done it well. Outside, the world, in a state of everything, seemed a good place to be alive in.

The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty

Sonia Kruks

This article is the second of a series on neglected or misunderstood philosophers. The first was Adam Bullock's article on Dietzgen in TLS. We also plan articles on Cassirer, Collingwood, and Foucault.

Other suggestions would be welcome.

The work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) has received scant consideration in this country. It has either been ignored, or else it has been dismissed as nastily foreign and obscure. On the appearance of his major work, The Phenomenology of Perception, in 1945, its sole British reviewer dismissed it as failing to be 'a genuine contribution to philosophy.' And when in 1965 an English translation of his first book, The Structure of Behaviour, came out here (twenty-three years after the original was published in France), a reviewer in the Times Literary Supplement described it as 'opaque and somewhat indigestible.'1

The reviewer went on plaintively to attribute these faults to the influence on Merleau-Ponty of various obscure German philosophers who, it appears, have always tried to confuse the British. Thus: '... among those who had most influence on Merleau-Ponty were the three Germans, Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger, all of whom have offered notable resistance to the British philosophical understanding.' This otherwise dubious statement does at least have the merit of pointing to some of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical roots. But a fourth German - who doubtless offers equal resistance to the British philosophical understanding - namely Karl Marx, must be added to the list.

Any philosopher who claims to be influenced by such diverse thinkers as Hegel, Marx, Husserl and Heidegger - and Merleau-Ponty claims an indebtedness to all four of them - must be open to accusations of eclecticism. Merleau-Ponty has frequently been accused, especially by the orthodox left of his time, who detested his blending of Marxism with existential phenomenology.2 Merleau-Ponty would deny the charge. For the term 'eclecticism' implies an arbitrary amalgamation of different theories. But Merleau-Ponty is sufficiently a Hegelian to insist that his philosophy is a synthesis in which, as part of a process of historical development, the ideas of his predecessors are both incorporated and transcended. Thus with regard to Hegel himself, Merleau-Ponty sees his role as both preserving and transforming the Hegelian notion of dialectic: Hegel remains locked in idealism, failing ever to transcend the world of thought. In broadening the notion of the dialectic from the world of thought to that of material human existence, Merleau-Ponty is using Hegel to transcend Hegel.

In his assertion that human existence is materially grounded (as well as dialectical) and that no priority can be given to consciousness Merleau-Ponty's connection with Marx becomes evident. He accepts and incorporates such Marxian notions as the centrality of the productive process in shaping society and the dialectical interpenetration of the material world and consciousness. He too is concerned to 'stand Hegel' - and in a sense Husserl - 'on his feet,' but here the general similarities end. Marx moves on from his stress on human materiality and the importance of the productive process to the notions of classes in production and class conflict. But Merleau-Ponty, while accepting the existence of class conflict, moves primarily back to more traditional issues of ontology and epistemology and remains within a philosophical framework. From his materialism he develops arguments about the bodily basis of all human experience, of all perception and knowledge; he argues in detail that all forms of consciousness, including philosophical speculation, are grounded in praxis, arise from man's social existence. Much of his argument is compatible with Marxism; but the context within which the argument takes place is that of traditional philosophy rather than Marxism.

This said, it must be added that Merleau-Ponty's view of history always remained dominated by the notion of class conflict, that he always tried to assert a humanistic communism as the solution to world problems and that he gave 'critical support' to the French Communist Party in the late 1940s. Throughout his life he wrote copiously on politics, articles ranging from theoretical discussions of

(1) TLS, 30.9.65; (2) See, for example. G. Lukacs, Existentialisme ou marxisme?, Paris, 1948; R. Garaudy, Nésaventures de l'anti-marxisme, Paris, 1956
Marxism to topical pieces on the French political scene. Yet still he remained primarily a philosopher. In his hands Marxism is foremost an analytical tool, and he stresses the differences between the method of historical materialism and his own phenomenological methodology: both attempt to grasp the totality of human existence in all its complexity.

Merleau-Ponty has a complex relationship with Marx, an even more complex relationship with Husserl. He explicitly connects his own work with that of Husserl, regarding Husserl as the originator of the phenomenological method and claiming to be using that method as the cornerstone of his own philosophy. In the preface to the *Phenomenology of Man* he quotes approvingly Husserl's command that phenomenology be "a descriptive psychology" or a return to the "things themselves".13 Like Husserl, he regards such a return to the "things themselves" as requiring a suspension of both our 'scientific' knowledge, of which knowledge always regards such a return to the 'things themselves'. We must perform the 'phenomenological reduction', in which we cease to take our experiences - such as seeing or touching - for granted and radically question their possibility, instead of automatically assuming it.

'To return to things themselves,' Merleau-Ponty writes, is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematization of the object and description of the world is a dialectic conception of the nervous system, whereas in Husserl the system of sign-language.4 In assessing Merleau-Ponty's relationship with Husserl (1859-1938), we have to contend with the fact that Husserl's ideas changed considerably during his lifetime. Until the 1930s, Husserl regarded the 'transcendental ego', as the means of arriving at the 'transcendental ego', or pure consciousness. If we compare Merleau-Ponty's views with this position it is hard to see why he insisted on identifying himself as a disciple of Husserl, for the concept of pure consciousness is antithetic to his entire philosophy. However, during the last few years of his life, Husserl altered his ideas considerably, and it is in fact on the later Husserl that Merleau-Ponty draws. The Husserl of the *Krisis* (1936) no longer attributes an absolute status to the transcendental ego; rather, the transcendental ego is 'correlative' to the world. He focuses his attention on the concept of the 'lived world', the world as we experience it, on human existence and its subjective elements. Thus for the late Husserl, as for Merleau-Ponty, the 'reduction', the questioning of the normally 'given', leads us back ultimately to man's existence in and relationship with the world.5 For both of them the 'reduction' reveals 'a subject destined to be in the world',6 man as a necessarily material and social existence, not a pure consciousness.

Merleau-Ponty also frequently refers to Heidegger, but regards him as of secondary importance to Husserl. There are certain similarities between Merleau-Ponty's work and that of Heidegger, especially in their treatment of time and in their common hostility to Cartesian dualism. But their essential orientations were very different. Heidegger was primarily an ontologist, involved in the 'quest for being', while for Merleau-Ponty concrete human existence was always the central concern. Sartre summed up the divergence: 'Being is the sole concern of the German philosopher; in spite of sometimes using a common vocabulary, man remained the principle concern for Merleau.6

It is perhaps now time to cease considering Merleau-Ponty's intellectual sources and to turn to his work itself. For, as has been suggested, his work is a unique synthesis, not reducible to those ideas of others which it incorporates in it. The systematic development of his philosophy is to be found in his first two books - *The Structure of Behaviour* (1942) and *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) - on which the following account draws. The account is divided into four sections: (1) The critique of scientism and idealism; (2) The body-subject and the natural world; (3) The social world; (4) Freedom and history.

**The Critique of Scientism and Idealism**

As has already been suggested, the notion of dialectic materialism is central to Merleau-Ponty's work. His first book, *The Structure of Behaviour*, is an analysis of human and animal behaviour from a dialectical viewpoint. Much of the book is taken up with refuting non-dialectical approaches to behaviour. The first method which is attacked is that mechanistic materialism or 'scientism' which attempts to explain all behaviour in terms of the necessary working of 'objective' causal laws. Merleau-Ponty's main targets are the reflex theorists, including Pavlov, but his criticisms apply equally to all forms of positivistic social science, including present-day behaviourism.

Reflex theory cannot, in his view, even account fully for animal behaviour. It is based on an atomised conception of the nervous system, whereas in Husserl the system of sign-language is a whole. It artificially views the brain as split into separate segments, each of which must produce a particular response when subject to a particular stimulus. But this model is unable to explain deviations from the 'necessary' response, such as the way animals can adapt their behaviour to compensate if sections of the brain are damaged. Nor can it explain how the same stimulus can produce different responses in different situations. It is only in examining the total - and thus dialectical - relation of an animal to its environment that we can explain such phenomena. In explaining human behaviour positivist theories are even more inadequate. A man is an integrated whole and there are no clear-cut distinctions between his instincts, his reflexes and his conscious activity. It is thus not possible to explain behaviour in terms of discoverable chains of stimulus and response. Learning cannot be explained in terms of the necessary response, such as the way animals can adapt their behaviour to compensate if sections of the brain are damaged. Nor can it explain how the same stimulus can produce different responses in different situations. Because it involves adaptation, learning must presuppose an intentional interaction with the situation, not a passive response to it. When, for example, a child learns to distinguish red and green, he does not learn a mechanical response to the different colours, but the general facility of distinguishing colours. However, it is not only 'scientism' which is open to criticism in Merleau-Ponty's view. Equally undialectical and incomplete are those approaches to behaviour which Merleau-Ponty describes variously as 'idealist', 'critical' and 'intellectualist'. In this group he includes the philosophies of Descartes and Kant and, by implication, the neo-Kantian tradition which dominated French academic philosophy when he was a student.

Idealism's inadequacy stems from the fact that by asserting the priority of consciousness over matter it divorces

(3) Phenomenology of Perception (Phénoménologie de la perception, Gallimard, Paris, 1945)
man from the world and from his own corporeality. Descartes' 'cogito', for example, might reveal a world - but it is a world of thoughts only. The priority of mind must lock man in a world of pure consciousness, of purely intellectual knowing, while reducing the physical world to a mere object of knowledge. For the idealist, mind and matter exist in an unbridgeable dualism; for Merleau-Ponty they exist in a dialectical unity - and behaviour can only be fully accounted for within that duality.

Merleau-Ponty begins to give this account in the final sections of The Structure of Behaviour, but he does not develop it fully until the Phenomenology. In the former he describes what he calls 'meaningful' structures or 'forms' emerging from the dialectical relations between individual organisms and their environment, in which each is necessary for the existence of the other. To describe behaviour adequately is to elucidate the genesis and meaning of such 'forms'.

But in what, we may ask, do their meaning consist? We must turn to the Phenomenology to answer this question. There, Merleau-Ponty asserts that meaning exists primarily in the 'intentionality' of all things - animate and inanimate - or in what he calls 'their unique mode of existing': 'Whether we are concerned with a thing perceived, a historical event or a doctrine, to 'understand' is to take in the total intention ... the unique mode of existing expressed in the properties of the pebble, glass or piece of wax, in all the events of a revolution, in all the thoughts of a philosopher.'

The assertion that a pebble or a piece of glass has 'intention' or a 'unique mode of existing' is at first glance puzzling, especially to one unfamiliar with the vocabulary of the phenomenological tradition. In equating 'intention' with having a 'unique mode of existing' and in applying the terms to inanimate objects, Merleau-Ponty is obviously not using the notion of intention in its usual sense of a goal towards which action is

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Editor Responsible:

Paul A. Segal, 17 Platt's Lane, London, NW3 7NP, U.K.

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consciously motivated. The use of the word is almost metaphorical, implying a reaching out or a reciprocal relationship between objects. The world is not range of descriptive terms; it consists of intelligible relationships between things. Thus there is meaning and 'intention' in the basic structure of the world. It is a world of relationships.

But such relationships do not exist for things 'in-themselves', as pure objects, but for things which we perceive. Thus, for example, the structures that the physicist discovers do not exist in things themselves, independently of the physicist, but as the objects of his perception. This is not to say that they are 'only' objects of his perception, but that his perceiving is what brings them into being for him. In other words, the intentionality of objects or their uniqueness is a function of our dialectical relationship with the world. In the Phenomenology Merleau-Ponty expresses it as follows: 'I am the absolute source ... for I alone bring into being for myself (and therefore into being in the only sense the word can have for me) the tradition which I elect to carry on, or the horizon whose distance from me would be abolished ... if I were not there to scan it with my gaze.'

Merleau-Ponty is at pains to distinguish his views from traditional idealism, for he recognises that the world actually exists and that I am of it and in it: while idealism places man 'outside' the world as a consciousness which surveys it. If man's relationship with the world, in which he draws from it its intentions, is not one of a conscious subject to the objects of consciousness, we have to ask: how this relationship does arise. If man is in a dialectical relationship with the material world, he cannot be outside it. For a dialectical relationship is, for Merleau-Ponty, one in which subject and object not only imply each other, but form a unity, interpenetrating each other. Thus man has to be both subject and object and the world has to be the source of subjective meaning for man, as well as an objective given. It is because man is a 'body-subject' that such a dialectic is possible.

The Body-Subject and The Natural World

The concept of the 'body-subject' appears, at first consideration, paradoxical. For the body is normally regarded as an object. Either as the object of external forces in materialist thought, or as the object of consciousness in idealist philosophy. In regarding the body as a subject, Merleau-Ponty is denying both these views and is asserting it is only through our materiality, through our bodily existence, that we are able to 'know' the world, which is also to create it.

But to 'know' the world through one's body is not to 'know' it in the way pure consciousness does. Bodily 'knowledge' differs in two ways from that of 'a universal constituting consciousness'. Firstly, it is 'situated' knowledge. Our body is in the world; we thus cannot know the world from a distance, but only from our own time and place. Our knowledge of the world varies as our situation within it alters and there can be no universal or a-temporal, no absolute or objective knowledge. The 'in-itself', the material world as given, is always known, not by 'objective' thought, but for us'.

Secondly, bodily knowledge differs from that of a 'constituting consciousness' in that it is, in the first instance, knowledge of the perceptions of intelligent, but not the knowledge of pure reason. Unlike the latter, it does not arise through contemplation but through intentionality when we act. Our fundamental ex-
perience is that of our bodies. We come to know the world and to realise our interconnectedness with the world through our bodies; and this knowledge is sensual or perceptual before it is conscious.

The body is the contact point which makes possible the dialectical relations between man and the world, in which each sustains the other. It is because of the primacy of body, rather than mind, in this relationship that our initial knowledge of the world has to be 'perceptive' - i.e. bodily - rather than of the 'cogito'. Merleau-Ponty talks about a 'tacit cogito', a pre-conscious 'knowing of ourselves and of existence, as the basis of our knowledge. Reason and philosophy - the 'spoken cogito' - are grounded in and sustained by the 'tacit cogito'. Perception always remains experientially prior to reason. The 'tacit cogito', he writes, 'does not constitute the world, it divines the world's presence round about it as a field not provided by itself ... the tacit cogito, the presence of oneself to oneself, is anterior to any philosophy.'

But, we might ask, what kind of world can it be that the body 'divines' prior to rational consciousness? Certainly it is not the ordered world of science or philosophy, for such order is elicited by systematic or philosophical activity and does not exist prior to such activity. The world that I 'know' or 'perceive' through my body is described by Merleau-Ponty as a 'primordial layer' of being, or as 'the mode of the impersonal 'One'.

It is at the level of interaction of the body with this inchoate being that the dialectic has its source. Here the dichotomy of man, as subject ('pour-soi') and world, as object ('en-soi') can be transcended, since the body lives its oneness with the world without a defined line between the two being possible; body and world coincide: 'In this primary layer of sense experience which is discovered only provided that we really coincide with the act of perception and break with the critical attitude, I have the living experience of the unity of the subject and the intersensory unity of the thing.'

It is at the level of pre-conscious sense experience that man first creates and elicits meanings through his dialectical interaction with the world, and the more conscious elaborated structures of meaning, including philosophy and the shape of history and politics, therefore arise, in the final analysis, from this pre-conscious level. - 'it is upon our experience of the world as logical and with significance must be based'. It is just because it arises from the primary dialectic that all conscious experience is guaranteed as also being of and in the world.

The Social World

This far in our exposition, the analysis has been of men as individuals, or of 'man' in general. But 'man' for Merleau-Ponty is not 'individual man' or 'man in general'; he is man among men. Human experience is a two-fold dialectic. Firstly, it is a dialectic between man and the natural world; secondly, grounded in the first dialectic, there occurs a dialectic between men, in which the 'social world' of language, culture and institutions is the prop of our being. Man's relation to the social world is similar in many ways to his relation with the natural world. For the social world is also rooted in a pre-conscious level of incipient meanings and is a field within which individuals act, drawing out more explicit meanings and structures from the pre-conscious. Myth, magic, science and legal systems are all, at their different levels, 'crystalizations' of what already exists inchoately in the social world.

Merleau-Ponty writes: 'Our relationship to the social is, like our relationship to the world, deeper than any express perception or any judgement.... Prior to the process of becoming aware, the social exists obscenely and as a sum.'

Most of Merleau-Ponty's works after the Phenomenology discuss specific aspects of the social world - politics, history, art, literature etc. In these works he generally takes the existence of the social world as 'given'. In The Structure of Behaviour and the Phenomenology, however, he is concerned with the question of how the social world is possible. The question falls into two distinct but connected parts: firstly, how can shared meanings arise, or - in Merleau-Ponty's terminology - how is 'intersubjectivity' possible? Secondly, what is the dynamic through which the social world is created? Through what means does it come into existence and endure?

The question of intersubjectivity is treated at some length in the final sections of the Phenomenology. The discussion would appear to be a reply to Sartre's view of inter-personal relations, as developed in Being and Nothingness (1943). Merleau-Ponty's critical position follows logically from his notion of the body-subject and its inherence in the natural world. Sartre, in Merleau-Ponty's opinion, fails to overcome the duality of subject and object in his philosophy. For if (as Sartre does) the individual is regarded as a subject, a pure consciousness, the world, including other people, is for him no more than an object of consciousness. Thus when two people meet, each reduces the other to an object, an opaque 'thing-in-itself' which he can observe, but whose perceptions and feelings he cannot share.

Merleau-Ponty argues that such a view of human relations is mistaken, for man is not a pure subject. Far from the other being a threat to my subjectivity, he is an extension of it, since his perceptions confirm mine. This is because we are both bodily beings, a composite of objectivity and subjectivity, grounded in the same dialectic with the primordial world: 'The possibility of another person's being self-evident is owed to the fact that I am not truly a single and closed structure of meaning, but that my subjectivity draws its body in its wake ... if another's body is not an object for me, nor mine an object for him, if both are manifestations of behaviour, the positioning of the other does not reduce me to the status of an object in his field, nor does my perception of the other reduce him to the status of an object in mine.'

Our perceptions cannot be identical as we each start from our own unique 'situation', be it spatial or socio-cultural. But because we both, through our bodies, open onto the same natural world and draw our intentions from the same source, our perceptions must overlap considerably and we are able to create common areas of meaning, an 'interworld' between us. Solipsism, which would be impossible if men were exclusively dialectic. Firstly, it is a dialectic between man and the natural world; secondly, grounded in the first dialectic, there occurs a dialectic between men, in which the 'social world' of language, culture and institutions is the prop of our being. Man's relation to the social world is similar in many ways to his relation with the natural world. For the social world is also rooted in a pre-conscious level of incipient meanings and is a field within which individuals act, drawing out more explicit meanings and structures from the pre-conscious.
human 'interworld' may at its simplest level be merely one of bodily significations. But with the use of the term 'work', rather than to talk about human 'action', because it is not any action, but only that which transforms nature which is significant in the creation of the human world. To understand consciousness and culture, we have to start from our concrete perceptions. The human body is the first thing we perceive; a baby 'knows' its mother's body before anything else. But after the human body, it is objects of use which form the basis of our fields of perception and hence the basis of the human world. It is his ability to work, his ability to transform and humanise nature, that distinguishes man from animals. Most animals cannot do, and which is unique to man, is to project themselves beyond their given environment and create the means to bring their projection into being. Man alone has a capacity to 'transcend' the given in creating the social world. This transcendence is two-fold: man transcends nature or the natural world through the work dialectic; he also transcends the social world as it is given at any moment, through his capacity to look and act beyond the given. Within this continual creation and recreation of the social world, within the two-fold dialectic of man with nature and man with the social world, consciousness is to be found emerging from the pre-conscious perception of things, or is it the exercise of judgement; rather, it is a 'network of intentions' with no boundaries - 'la conscience est plutôt un réseau d'intentions significatives, tantôt claires pour elles-mêmes, tantôt au contraire vécus plutôt que connues.'

It is also through the dialectic of work that the essential ambiguity and openness of human existence are revealed. We have already talked about 'transcendence', the process of men continually going beyond the present that they have created. It is an essential element in human existence that man creates and is then trapped in his own creations, that he negates his creations in transcending them and that this process repeats itself endlessly.

This is, in a sense, man's burden. But it is also the source of his freedom since it means that the present is not immutable and that man's actions open endlessly onto the future. It is to Merleau-Ponty's conception of freedom that we must now turn.

**Freedom and History**

It could be said that the genesis of human freedom is the central, though implicit, theme of both The Structure of Behaviour and the Phenomenology. For in both works Merleau-Ponty is at pains to reject deterministic explanations of behaviour and to show how it is that man creates his own world. However, the explicit consideration of the notion of freedom does not take place until the final chapter of the Phenomenology. It is to this discussion that we now turn.

Merleau-Ponty starts his discussion by considering the traditional debate over free will and determinism, a debate which is central to the split in philosophy between idealism and the kind of philosophy which Merleau-Ponty calls 'scientism'. The idealists are correct in saying that if man is determined by external factors, in the sense that they 'cause' him inevitably to act in certain ways, then he is a 'thing' and in no sense free.

Merleau-Ponty's analysis of human behaviour, both in The Structure of Behaviour and the Phenomenology, implies a rejection of determinism, as un-
able to account either for human behaviour or for the role of the observer of behaviour in contributing to what he observes.

But although the idealists are correct in rejecting determinism, their assertion that man, is undetermined, is absolutely free, is still inadequate. By insisting that all of each man's actions are necessarily free, idealists make freedom a 'primordial acquisition', which we all have automatically as part of our essential being: freedom belongs to the slave as much as it belongs to his master and it belongs to the slave whether he acquiesces in or revolts against his servitude. In short, the idealist view makes freedom a property of being, instead of an attribute of actions. It can provide us with no criterion for distinguishing free actions from unfree ones, since it places freedom anterior to action. '... if the slave displays freedom as much by living in fear as by breaking his chains, then it cannot be held that there is such a thing as free action, freedom being anterior to all actions.'

For freedom to have a concrete meaning, it must be an attribute of action and not its non-specific background; free action must involve choice, but we cannot discount the part it plays in our habitual behaviour, nor the 'privileged' status that it has, which makes its transcendence 'improbable'. An 'absolute' freedom, such as Hegel posits through the State, cannot be more than an empty universality. Just as the idealists reduce freedom to being through man's insertion in and dialectical relationship with the world, so freedom can only come into being through 'the roots which it thrust into the world'. Just as it is man's materiality which makes intersubjectivity possible, so it is his social, physical and temporal situation which makes acts of freedom possible - 'Taken concretely, freedom is always a meeting of the inner and the outer'. That is, free action results from the dialectical interpenetration of man and the world; a dialectic in which man himself creates the 'obstacles' to his freedom through his way of being in the world.

Merleau-Ponty gives us as an example of free action in a societal setting the development of proletarian class consciousness, leading to revolution: the man who is 'objectively' a worker does not automatically identify himself with the working class because of this fact; the recognition of his class position is not inevitable: it is a choice made by the worker. But it is a choice made by a man 'situated' in a particular kind of social world; and it is a choice which arises from his social mode of existence and which need not be an intellectual choice. Merleau-Ponty sums up his analysis as follows: 'Objectivist thought derives class consciousness from the objective condition of the proletariat. Idealist reflection reduces the proletarian condition to the awareness of it, which the proletarian arrives at... In each case we are in a realm of abstraction, because we remain torn between the in-itself and the for-itself'.

What we have to arrive at is the unity and interpenetration of the 'in-itself' and the 'for-itself', that is, of matter and consciousness, in a dialectical whole. Such a unity can only be discovered if we apply a 'genuinely existential method' and seek to discover 'class consciousness itself', rather than the 'causes' of class consciousness. We find that class is not a pure idea nor a scientific and objective fact; class is a mode of existence. 'What makes me a proletarian is not the economic system or society considered as systems of impersonal forces, but these institutions as I carry them within me and experience them; nor is it an intellectual operation devoid of motive, but my way of being in the world within this institutional framework.' Freedom consists in embracing all the possibilities in one's mode

of existence and transcending its limitations, the 'obstacles' to a free existence, that he and others share.

However, free action does not have a clearly defined goal. A free action is 'open', it transcends the given, but it can be a leap into the unknown. The revolution is more likely to arise from a desire to change a restricting present than from a clearly defined conception of revolution, or of a post-revolutionary society. Merleau-Ponty says that 'it is doubtful whether the Russian peasants of 1917 expressly envisaged revolution and the transfer of property. Revolution arises day by day from the concatenation of less remote and more remote ends.' He compares the revolutionary movement to the work of an artist. 'Both are projects in which man asserts his freedom by transcending the present, but without knowing exactly where he is going: 'The revolutionary project, like the work of an artist, is an intention which itself creates its instruments and its means of expression.'

In this analogy, as in his discussion so far, Merleau-Ponty would appear to regard the individual free project and the project - or historical development - of whole social groups as essentially the same: the relation of individual projects and the social project, or history, is far more complex than the analogy would suggest. It is a relationship of dialectical interpenetration. As we have seen, the individual project is given from the given social situation or period of setback. A social history includes the social and historical world of the individual. It is thus not a project that is the outcome purely of individual decision or consciousness; it is not the project of a pure subject, but of the individual as he sustains intersubjectivity. But, if we turn to the other side of the coin, in his discussion so far, Merleau-Ponty has taken the general social project - history - and given it meaning. We cannot treat history as anything so simple as the sum of individual wills or the acts of great men. Such concepts, implicitly idealist, since they assume pure and autonomous consciousnesses, would make history a wholly random affair: 'There would not be, in the history of social progress, revolution-ary situations or periods of setback. A social revolution would be equally good, and one might reasonably expect a despot to undergo a conversion to anarchism. History would never move in any direction, nor would it be possible to say that even over a short period of time events were conspiring to produce any definite outcome.' But history is not random or arbitrary; it does have a direction; events create structures, traditions. It is through the generality of individual projects that history develops: '...there must be strictly speaking an intersubjectivity; each one of us must be both anonymous in the sense of absolutely individual, and anonymous in the sense of absolutely general. Our being in the world, is the concrete bearer of this double anonymity.'

'Provided that this is so, there can be situations, a direction ('sens') of history, and a historical truth: three ways of saying the same thing.' We can see in this statement one of the main reasons for Merleau-Ponty's interest in Marxism: Marxism alone has considered the 'direction' and 'truth' of history in a manner which integrates general material factors with individual consciousness. Marxism alone attempts to examine the integration of the particular and the general within the historical process.

It can do this, in Merleau-Ponty's view, because, in the method of historical materialism, it has an 'open' tool of economic analysis: 'The economics on which it bases history is not, as in classical economics, a closed cycle of phenomena, but a correlated and productive pair. It is likely to arise from a desire to change a restricting present than from a clearly defined conception of revolution, or of a post-revolutionary society. Merleau-Ponty says that 'it is doubtful whether the Russian peasants of 1917 expressly envisaged revolution and the transfer of property. Revolution arises day by day from the concatenation of less remote and more remote ends.' He compares the revolutionary movement to the work of an artist. Both are projects in which man asserts his freedom by transcending the present, but without knowing exactly where he is going: 'The revolutionary project, like the work of an artist, is an intention which itself creates its instruments and its means of expression.'

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ontology, nor with the formulation of a general philosophy. They are concerned with such topics as politics, aesthetics, literature, anthropology, linguistics, and are often very specific in content. They often discuss a particular political event or situation, a particular artist or the theories of a specific anthropologist and many are journalistic in form. However, for all their concreteness, these writings - even newspaper articles - cannot be fully appreciated without an understanding of the philosophy implicitly contained in them. For whether writing about the Algerian war or the French Communist Party, Cézanne's painting or Lévi-Strauss, Merleau-Ponty's approach remains a function of his own philosophical perspective.

Thus, for example, his discussion of Cézanne's painting in "Cézanne's doubt" cannot be fully understood unless we realise the implicit parallel which Merleau-Ponty draws between what he believes Cézanne is doing and what he sees himself doing: Cézanne is concerned to overcome the dichotomy of art and nature; he attempts to paint the world and his feelings about it as they are, avoiding either a total subjectivism, which could make his vision and feeling non-communicable, or an 'objective' approach, which would make of him the dispassionate observer of a thing-like nature - analogous to the philosopher who surveys the world as if he is not part of it. Cézanne's use of perspective does not conform to its 'laws'. We know that 'objectively', according to geometric perspective, objects diminish in size for us as we get further away from them. But 'lived perspective' is not like that: we do not perceive by geometry, but on the basis of our own situation which is not purely spatial, but is a function of our total existence. The 'deformations' of perspective, for which Cézanne is known, capture the non-geometric manner in which we actually see, in which size and spatial relations vary according to what concerns us about a scene.

To give another example, this time drawn from politics: we have to grasp Merleau-Ponty's notions of freedom and history, as developed in the Phenomenology, in order to understand his criticisms of the Soviet Union and of the French Communist Party. These criticisms are most fully developed in a book entitled The Adventures of the Dialectic, written in 1955. In this work, Merleau-Ponty's central argument against the Communism of the time is that it has destroyed the dialectic of individual and history - and hence the possibility of a humanistic society and individual freedom - by denying the subjectivity of men in the name of the inevitable laws of historical development. For Merleau-Ponty, as we have seen, men make history as concrete, experiencing individuals. If we forget this and suppress the individual in the name of the general - i.e. the inevitable march of the proletariat to communism - then we destroy the relationship of the 'for-itself' and the 'in-itself'; we destroy the dialectical relationship in which the free and open human project consists.

Merleau-Ponty's breadth of interests and his competence in fields as apparently distant from each other as art and politics, physiology, linguistics and history of philosophy is something rarely found among British philosophers. It is a breadth of interest, however, wholly consistent with his conception of philosophy. To philosophise is, in his view, to 'return to things themselves'. Philosophy cannot be an endless scrutiny of its own propositions. If it were, it would become a solipsistic activity, divorced from the world around it and doomed to unreality. To philosophise is to think about something and the concrete world around the philosopher must be his field of study. Philosophy is an activity turned outwards towards the world; the philosopher a person who examines in wonderment the complexity and coherence of the world ... it is, among other qualities, his sense of wonderment and his ability to communicate it which makes Merleau-Ponty a philosopher worth reading.

**Film and Popular Memory**

An Interview with Michel Foucault

The following interview originally appeared in Cahiers du Cinema (251-2), July-August 1974. It has been translated by Martin Jordin. The discussion is introduced by PB and ST of Cahiers.

Lacombe Lucien, Night Porter, The Chinese in Paris, The Infernal Trio, etc, films whose avowed aim is to rewrite history, are not isolated occurrences. They are themselves part of history, a history in the making; they have (as we are sometimes reproached for saying) a context. In France, this context is the coming to power of a new bourgeoisie, a fraction of the bourgeoisie with its own ideology (Giscard, president of all the French; a more-just-and-humane society, etc), with its own conception of France and of history. What is called 'post-Gaulism' is also an opportunity for the bourgeoisie to discard a particular image of itself - heroic and nationalist, but also anti-Petainist and anti-fascist - which de Gaulle and Gaulism embodied, if not, strictly speaking, Pompidou. Chaban's electoral failure signed the death warrant of this pompous and rather grotesque heroic image

(1) The current fad for the recent past, this hearing-back to the thirties and forties, etc, has come to be known in France as 'a mode retro'. (trans.)