CHAPTER - IV

MERLEAU-PONTY’S CONTRIBUTION TO PHENOMENOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Introduction

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) was a leading phenomenological existential philosopher. He had a profound influence on French philosophy and social theory. He used a psychological theory to explain his philosophical position. He re-interpreted Husserl’s phenomenology into existential phenomenology through his radical description of the perceptual experiences of embodied human existence. His existential phenomenology tries to provide an account of perceptual experience. In doing so, he critically uses the theories of psychology and psychiatry.\(^1\) He acquired a central position in French philosophy for his expanded and vividly elaborated views on human body. Merleau-Ponty proposed that there is no division between ‘body’ and ‘mind’. He challenged the traditional dualist distinctions between mind and body; spirit and matter; man and things. He developed a philosophy that tried to unite these traditionally separated realms of existence in one conceptual whole.

Merleau-Ponty defines phenomenology as the study of essences, including the essence of perception and of consciousness. For him, the study of essence is a means to real end of phenomenology. He qualifies phenomenology as a philosophy that seeks to put these essences back into existence and to understand human beings and their world solely on the basis of their facticity. According to him, phenomenology tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientists, historians or the sociologists may be able to provide. In other words, phenomenology is concerned with providing a direct description of human experience. Perception is the background of experience which guides every conscious action. The world is a phenomenal field for perception. One cannot separate oneself from one’s perceptions of the world. He further holds that

phenomenology is a method of describing the nature of our perceptual contact with the world. Merleau-Ponty has effectively abandoned the idea of phenomenology as a rigorous science, in favour of pure description of our ‘being-in-the-world’.  

Merleau-Ponty differs from Sartre and Heidegger in his emphasis on perception. According to him, perception is the basis of all knowledge and the body is the basis of perception. Gestalt psychology forms the framework for his exploration of perception. He holds perception to be the key to the interplay between human beings and the world. He acknowledges that the concept of the Gestalt as central to the understanding of perception. For Merleau-Ponty, perception is a dialectical relationship between the world and human beings. Through perception the world appear to individual and at the same time that which reveals to individual that he or she is in the world. He emphasizes the body to an extent that surpasses the Gestaltists; one perceives with one’s body, the body is the way through which one enters the world. He agrees with Gestalt theory that we always perceive the world as a figure against a background. Thus it is impossible to determine which direction one’s perception will move. As the ambiguous figures, the Gestalt switches, one’s relationship to the world is equally ambiguous and open. There is always room for multiple interpretations; the world is fundamentally open to human beings and human beings are open to the world. As an individual enters a field of meaning, he or she has the possibility to reinterpret or redefine the meaning given at each given instant, both in the world and in oneself. For Merleau-Ponty, we are condemned to meaning.  

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty explicitly speaks of phenomenological psychology. His phenomenological psychology keeps the body a central force in the perceptual field and experience of human. Experience whether individual or collective, is essentially temporal. It has a direction from the past, through the present to the future. One’s action in the present springs from what one had been in the past and helps to shape one’s future. This along with one’s embodiment inevitably

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3 Ibid., p.239.

4 Ibid., p.xxii.
sets limits to one’s freedom. According to Merleau-Ponty, human behaviour has to be viewed in the context of lived experience. He rejected the view that phenomenological psychology is nothing more than introspective psychology. For him, introspective psychology rests on intuition whereas phenomenological psychology receives its foundations from transcendental phenomenology.\(^5\) According to him, the phenomenal field is not just intuited but explained in its constitution. For him, meaning always originates on a level where the body functions as subject. This meaning is never totally transparent. Thus a transcendental phenomenological reflection must begin by an examination of perception and this examination must include psychological considerations in which our perceptual experiences have already been interpreted.\(^6\) Merleau-Ponty also criticizes eidetic psychology of Husserl. For Merleau-Ponty eidetic psychology is returning back to method of introspection which was rejected by modern schools of psychology in their way to make psychology as science.\(^7\)

For Merleau-Ponty, psychology as a science of man aims towards understanding of man. It must begin with experience and its exploration. He considers that the dominant schools of modern psychology are atomistic, objectivistic and reductionistic. Behaviourism rejected introspection, emphasized on objective methods, quantification, rigorous experimentation and abandonment of consciousness as subject of psychology. Merleau-Ponty aims to understand the relations between consciousness and nature. According to him, nature is causally related whereas consciousness is not subject to causality. For him, behaviour is always structured but the methods used in psychology are inadequate to study it as behaviour. So he envisaged a systematic phenomenology of perception as an appropriate method of study. For him, perception is man’s primordial contact with the world: “it opens a window onto things.”\(^8\) Therefore, for Merleau-Ponty study of perception should be a starting point for the study of man and the world. He wants to explore man’s phenomenal field. This exploration is focused on the body or bodily being and the world as perceived by man and woman.

\(^6\) Ibid., p.139.
Merleau-Ponty’s central concern is to prompt human beings to recognize that objective thought fundamentally distorts the phenomena of one’s lived experience. According to him, the objective thought estranges human beings from their own selves, the world in which they live and other people with whom they interact. According to him, such thinking is not confined to single discipline or to a particular philosophical tradition. On the contrary it is common to science, social science and humanities. He seeks to re-establish our roots in corporeality and the perceptual world, while awakening human beings to an appreciation of the inherent ambiguity of our lived experience.9

**Primacy of Perception**

Perception is mode through which Merleau-Ponty intended to understand the human relation with world. He upholds everyone related to the world in different manner. It is due to the manner each one perceives of the world. Thus one’s perception plays vital role in shaping his behaviour. For Merleau-Ponty, the study of perceptual experience of each individual helps in understanding individual’s behaviour in better manner. He starts his phenomenological way of exploring perception without any preconception. He abandons the sharp distinction of sensation and perception which was found in psychology from the time of Locke. According to traditional psychologists, sensation is a fundamental building-block of perception. They held the view that perception is sum of sensations. For Merleau-Ponty perception is much more than mere bundle of sensation. He further rejects empiricists’ consideration of perception as the causal result of physiological processes provoked by extra-organismic processes and the Intellectualistic psychologists’ standpoint of perception as an incipient science. For Merleau-Ponty, the study of perception is to know the way we relate to the world, it is finally interpreted as an existential act by which we commit ourselves to a certain interpretation of the ‘sense’ of experience as it presents itself to us. He emphasizes the dynamic and active character of perceptual activity, the intentional nature of all perceptual experience, and the idea that all perceptual experience is structural. Though he is not interested in the systematic analysis of perception for the sake of perception but he chooses perception to be the

philosophical foundation to understand essential feature of man. He views the relation between consciousness and reality is dynamic and dialectical that reflects in the perceptual process.\textsuperscript{10} Through perceptual process, Merleau-Ponty wants to explore man’s phenomenal field. This exploration is primarily focused on the body or bodily being and secondly on the world as perceived by man. He tries to show that how the physiological and psychological account of body is inadequate.\textsuperscript{11}

According to Merleau-Ponty, the study of perception is a primary act in understanding human beings. His main purpose was not the systematic analysis of perception for the sake, but the derivation of a firm basis for his philosophical synthesis. Perception constitutes the ground level for all knowledge. He also emphasises that the study of perception should precede all other studies such as cultural world and especially the science. His study of perception was a strategy for exploring human experience of the world prior to all scientific interpretation. He has chosen perception to be the philosophical foundation because he wanted to understand essential feature of man, which is in his opinion the dialectic that is dynamic relationship and interchange between consciousness and reality. This dialectic is achieved and reflected in the perceptual process. For him, perception is human privilege to access to the world.\textsuperscript{12} For him, perception is man’s primordial contact with the world: “it opens a window on to things,”\textsuperscript{13} and as such it should be a starting point for the study of man and the world.\textsuperscript{14} In other words, a phenomenological approach to perception requires an individual to start describing perception as he or she actually experiences it without any theoretical prejudices.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., pp.3-5.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., pp.56-66.
Merleau-Ponty states his objective of phenomenology as:

To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the country-side in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is.\(^{16}\)

In other words, ‘return to things themselves’ means a turning from concepts and theories toward the directly presented in its subjective fullness.\(^{17}\) Merleau-Ponty also emphasised the dynamic and active character of perceptual activity, the intentional nature of all perceptual experience, and the idea that all perceptual experience is structural.\(^{18}\) In this way, he rejected the prejudices of classical approach to perception.

According to Merleau-Ponty, the classical analyses of perception have missed the phenomenon of perception. He views both empiricism and intellectualism\(^ {19}\) have approached perception from the objectifying viewpoint of science. From this point of view, perception is seen as the effect of the causal activity of external, independently existing object or rather their determinate qualities on our sense organs, nervous systems and brain or mind. According to him, science is essentially concerned with explaining in terms of causal generalizations how perception can take place for any subject whatsoever, and that seems to require some such general analysis. However, phenomenology of perception would set aside all questions about how we causally explain perception as an objective physiological phenomenon and start from our own subjective experience of

\(^{19}\) Here empiricism and intellectualism are used in broadest sense, which includes philosophical and psychological schools. Empiricism includes: empiricists, behaviourists and experimentalists. Intellectualism includes: rationalists, Kant, Husserl and Gestalt psychologists.
being perceivers. It would describe the experience of our perception of world. In other words, perception would express how we relate to the world.\textsuperscript{20} He states that human perception of a thing takes place in a background only. He rejects an isolated datum of perception as inconceivable.\textsuperscript{21}

Merleau-Ponty further argues that classical studies have attempted to understand perception by adopting an analytical approach which has led to the notion of sensation as fundamental building block of perception. Hence they understand perception as summation of sensations. Merleau-Ponty proposes to examine the structure of actual perception rather than analysing the sensation which may cause things to appear in certain way to the subject, all the more, sensations are not part of the essential qualities of the object. He criticises the empiricist reduction of the natural world to a sum of stimuli and qualities. Ultimately, empiricism distorts experience, makes the cultural world illusion and falsifies natural world.\textsuperscript{22} According to empiricism, the objective world as given must impinge causally on the perceiver. Empiricism further argues that the sense organs are stimulated in such a way as to receive and transmit data which are somehow decoded by the brain so as to reproduce a picture or image of the original external stimulus. Merleau-Ponty has indicated that the world is not mere spectacle spread out before a disembodied mind as empiricism understand but rather the world is an ‘ambiguous domain’ in which incarnate subjects are situated. It is in this domain that perceptual experience can be rediscovered.\textsuperscript{23}

Merleau-Ponty argues that both traditional empiricism and intellectualism are inadequate to describe the phenomenology of perception. Empiricism maintains that experience is the primary source of knowledge, and that knowledge is derived from sensory perceptions. Intellectualism maintains that reason is the primary source of knowledge, and that knowledge does not depend on sensory perceptions. Merleau-Ponty says that traditional Empiricism does not explain how the nature of consciousness

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p.10.
determines our perceptions, while intellectualism does not explain how the nature of our perceptions determines consciousness.24

According to Merleau-Ponty, perception is not purely sensation, nor is it purely interpretation. Perception is not a science of the world, not even an act, a deliberate taking up of a position; it is a background from which all acts stand out, and is presupposed by them.25 Perception may be structured by associative forces, and may be focused by attention. Attention itself does not create any perceptions, but may be directed toward any aspect of a perceptual field. Attention can enable conscious perceptions to be structured by reflecting upon them. Consciousness is a process that includes sensing as well as reasoning.

For Merleau-Ponty, perceptual objects have an inner horizon in consciousness and an outer horizon in the external world. The object-horizon structure enables the individual to distinguish perceptual objects from each other. All objects reflect each other in time and space. Psychological and physiological aspects of perception may overlap and influence each other. The spatiality of the human body, or the ‘human body,’ is an example of how both psychological and physiological factors may influence perception. Perception is a system of meanings by which a phenomenal object is recognized. The intentions of the person who perceives an object are reflected in the field to which the phenomenal object belongs. Merleau-Ponty argues that consciousness is not merely a representative function or a power of signification. Consciousness is a projective activity, which develops sensory data beyond their own specific significance and uses them for the expression of spontaneous action.26

For Merleau-Ponty, a phenomenological description of perceptual experience will reveal “that vital communication with the world which makes it present a familiar setting for our life.”27 In other words, the world of objects is not something apart from the perceiving human body. Merleau-Ponty emphasizes on the inseparability of human body

26 Ibid., p.343.
27 Ibid., p.61.
and the world. According to Merleau-Ponty, perception is not *imposition*, whether of an objective *datum* on a passive subject or a subjective structure on an external object, but rather, perception is pre-reflective communication between the perceived world and the perceiving human body. His phenomenological description of perception emphasizes the phenomenal body’s primordial anchorage in bond with the pre-objective world. In other words, the perceiver is simultaneously part of the perceived world and sufficiently apart from it for dialogue between them to arise.\(^{28}\)

Merleau-Ponty reinterpreted perception in new way that has brought to be a well known in psychology than any other phenomenologists. His phenomenology of perception is more of philosophical than psychological. Perception was to serve as ground level to his philosophy. His ‘return to the phenomena’ is a way out of the old psychological deadlock of perception and sensation. This led to the consideration of the phenomenal field in which the body and the world as perceived are to be explored and described. The study of perception is to know the way we relate to the world, it was finally interpreted as an existential act by which we commit ourselves to a certain interpretation of the ‘sense’ of experience as it presents itself to us.\(^{29}\)

**Life-World as Human Situatedness**

The concept of life-world is commonly used to refer to the total experience of human being in his / her living context. However, the concept did not begin with Merleau-Ponty as such; it was already employed and popularized by Husserl in his writings, particularly in his *Crisis*.\(^{30}\) Husserl uses this term to replace the natural world, and this is further reinforced by the perception of its (life-world’s) historicity and inter-subjectivity. According to Husserl, first of all, that life-world is perceptual, not conceived as a world of objects of determinate qualities, but as what is perceived indeterminately relating to a subject. Secondly, life-world may also be seen as a totality of all other worlds. Thirdly, life world is considered as horizon within which all other worlds are constituted. It is not

world besides other worlds; rather it is a condition for the possibility of them in so far as they are given in it. This life world is not constituted, but given.

Husserl’s conception of the life-world is explored further by Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty has opened up various layers of understanding of the life world in his work *Phenomenology of Perception*. According to Merleau-Ponty, the world that the human actually perceive is not like the ‘objective world’. Instead, it has objects whose properties are not fully determinate or specifiable, but inherently non-determinate and even ambiguous. There is no causal determination between these objects but there are relationships between meanings and the reciprocal expressions. They are not uniquely located in a single spatial framework, but varyingly situated in relation to human agent’s specific field of action. And Merleau-Ponty calls this as ‘lived-through-world, or the ‘lived-world’.

The nature of the world is not determinate as the empiricists would explain nor is it clear and distinct as the idealists would have have it. In fact, the nature of the lived world is non-determinate and ambiguous, says Merleau-Ponty. In order to reinforce his claim, he often invokes two main contrasts between determinate and non-determinate character of object in the objectivist’s universe and the lived world respectively, and between the externally and internally of the relationships which obtain within them. That the nature of objects is not determinate is clear from our experience of the world. For example, one’s visual field can never be precisely specified. There is always an imprecise area at the perimeter where various items are at best only indistinctly perceived. There occurs here an indeterminate vision, a vision of something or other. More significant reason for the indeterminacy of objects for Merleau-Ponty is from the character of their properties. As against the objective thoughts claims of providing a complete description of objects, Merleau-Ponty says that the objects, we encounter in the lived world are rich and complex that they defy a finite enumeration of their properties. Merleau-Ponty also rejects the objectivist’s view that we can provide a clear cut affirmative or negative answer to the question whether an object possesses a particular property or not. Instead, he holds that objects neither has nor does not have a particular property. He also opines
that descriptive terms used in objective thought regarding objects are not always precise in their meaning; for him, they are ‘open ended’.

Drawing upon the above objections raised by Merleau-Ponty, we can say that non-determinacy is primarily a characteristic of what is actually experienced in the world. However, he admits the fact that we need to use language to articulate our experience of the world, but this, once again, is an imprecise exercise as the former is only a representation of the later. However, the focus of attention for Merleau-Ponty is on the nature of the lived world itself and not on language per se. As for instance, he describes a situation of a relationship between two individuals which can be interpreted in many ways. It could be just a human friendship, it could also be for a common purpose, it could be for exploiting the other, and so on. Therefore, there seems to be a co-existence of many layers of meanings in a relationship. So the non-determinate character of object can be extended to human level where multiple meanings co-exist.

The second contrast, Merleau-Ponty draws is between the externality of relationships in the universe and the internality of those in the lived world. A relationship is external, if the related items can be identified without reference to one another, conversely, items are internally related if they cannot thus be independently indentified. For example, for an objectivist the relationship obtained between the various properties of an object cannot be identified, as there is an internal relationship between them. Thus by denying that relationship in the lived world is external, Merleau-Ponty is denying that they are causal or functional. The internal relationships obtained in the lived world for him are ‘meaningful’ or ‘expressive’ in nature. Merleau-Ponty claims:

In our ordinary experience we find a meaningful relationship between the gesture, the smile, and the tone of a speaker… this reciprocal relationship of expression which presents the human body as the outward manifestation of a certain manner of being-in-the-world.31

What is meaningful expression, say in this case a smile, can be robbed of its significance by the causal explanations of empiricism. Even if this psychological explanation is substituted by psychological one it is still treated as external relationship and thereby misrepresents the meaningful. The contrast between the objective thought and the lived world are well expressed by Merleau-Ponty in the following passage:

The notion of universe, that is to say a completed and explicit totality, in which the relationships are those of reciprocal determination, exceeds that of a world or an open and indefinite multiplicity of relationship which are reciprocal implication.  

The point that Merleau-Ponty wants to derive is that there is another way of describing the world other than those governed by both empiricism and idealism and this the phenomenological way which firmly recognizes and faithfully expresses the basic ambiguity of the lived world.

The life-world is the ultimate foundation on which both natural as well as human science is built. But under the overbearing presence of Galilean science and its method what came to be established is only the measured abstractions leaving out the foundation all together. Thus, by hiding the pre-abstractive evidence of the life-world, the naturalistic attitude brings to perfection the passage from concreteness to measured abstraction. In contrast to this, Merleau-Ponty holds that the laws of knowledge find their justifying reason in the disclosure of the pre-conceptual experience of the life world. In life-world ‘to be,’ ‘to think’ and ‘to judge’ are intertwined chaïmsus of primordial interactions. It is here where sense is produced. What Merleau-Ponty does in his phenomenology is to examine the life-world in a non-transcendental way by paying attention to the problem of being. This way leads him directly to the theme of lived body as the subject in a world where there are other embodied subjects.

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32 Ibid., p.82.
Human Body as Subject

According to Merleau-Ponty, the body subject interacts with the world through its habits and not through the intellectual powers. In other words, Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the human body is ‘habitual body’ which consists in a kind of non-cognitive, pre-conceptual ‘motor intentionality.’ It enables the human being as a whole to function effectively. Habit is not a function of reflective thought, nor is it transparently accessible to reflection in pure consciousness, rather it manifests itself in the perceptual body as such: “it is the body that ‘understands’ in the acquisition of habit.” For it is not just that our fingers are only rarely ever in such an awkward inverted position, it is rather that they cannot get themselves there by their own effort: “The synthesis of the object here is thus effected through the synthesis of one’s own body.” Our perception of objects is structured by our body and by what it senses that it can and cannot do. Our primitive understanding of bodies is therefore rooted in our bodily understanding of ourselves: “I can understand the function of the living body only by enacting it myself, and only insofar as I am a body.” The bodies of others, too, are intelligible to an individual not by an analogy that an individual entertains in thought, but through one’s own spontaneous bodily skills. An individual experiences one’s own body as an open system of an infinite number of equivalent positions in the orientation of the other. Merleau-Ponty views: “what we have called the body image is precisely this system of equivalences, this immediately given invariant whereby the different motor tasks are instantaneously transposable.” In copying someone’s gestures, one does not need to think about one’s orientations in space, since one’s body adjusts itself to the other, and to the situation at large, as part of the perceptual background conditions that first make it possible for individual to think about things explicitly at all. The human body is the crux or reference point that establishes a stable perceptual background against which we perceive and respond to changes and movements in my environment, and thereby opens us onto a world of other selves. As Merleau-Ponty would say later, it is the hinge of the for itself and the for the other.

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33 Ibid., p.127.
34 Ibid., p.167.
36 Ibid., p.87.
37 Ibid., p.163.
The concept of the human body also sheds light on phantom limb phenomena and related pathologies. For such, syndromes are neither simply false beliefs nor meaningless sensations, rather they point up distortions in the subject’s sense of orientation and bodily possibility: “the awareness of the amputated arm as present, or of the disabled arm as absent, is not on the order of ‘I think that …’.”38 Moreover, the tendency of such conditions to dissipate or correct themselves with the passage of time suggests a kind of recalibration of a long-term with a short-term sense of bodily position and capacity: “our body comprises, as it were, two distinct layers, that of the habitual body and that of the body at this moment.”39 If we have ever stood up and tried to walk on leg that has ‘fallen asleep’ for lack of circulation, we know the sense of disturbance in our ordinary awareness of where our leg is and what it can do. The human body, then, is the bundle of skills and capacities that constitute the body’s precognitive familiarity with itself and the world it inhabits.

According to Merleau-Ponty, the body is not a product but a condition of cognition, for only by being embodied we become subjects in the world and we are conscious of our bodies via the world. He further argues that just as we are conscious of the world through the medium of our bodies. Our bodies are not a mere container or instrument of our agencies rather it comprises stable organs and pre-established circuits that function according to their own logic, as it were, below the threshold of conscious intention. We respond to and anticipate familiar situations as typical instances or ‘stereotypes.’ The human body is therefore “neither the mere copy nor even the global awareness of the existing parts of the body. Rather, it is ‘dynamic,’ that is to say our body appears to us as an attitude with a view to a certain actual or possible task.

38 Ibid., p.94.
39 Ibid., p.95.
Merleau-Ponty further argues:

If I stand in front of my desk and lean on it with both hands, only my hands are stressed and the whole of my body trails behind them like the tail of a comet.\(^{40}\)

It is a practical background familiarity with the world itself that informs our intentional familiarity with our bodies:

I know where my pipe is with absolute certainty, and thereby I know where my hand is and where my body is.\(^{41}\)

For Merleau-Ponty, the body simply is my point of view on the world. The body is not an object of which we have an internal image or internal representation rather it is polarized by its tasks, because it exists toward them, because it gathers itself up to reach its goal therefore body is said to be in the world.\(^{42}\)

The body is a permanent structure of perception. Merleau-Ponty insists that all the senses are spatial, if they are to give us access to some form or other of being, if, that is, they are senses at all.\(^{43}\) Perception is holistic and the body’s background self-awareness is one of its permanent horizons:

External perception and the perception of one’s own body vary in conjunction because they are the two facets of one and the same act.\(^{44}\)

Consequently, every external perception is immediately synonymous with a certain perception of our bodies, just as every perception of our bodies are made explicit in the language of external perception. Unlike pure transcendental consciousness, as Husserl conceives it, the body is not a transparent object rather it is an expressive unity

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\(^{40}\) Ibid., p.114.
\(^{41}\) Ibid., p.115.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., p.115.
\(^{43}\) Ibid., p.252
\(^{44}\) Ibid., p.237.
that we can learn to know only by actively taking it up. In other words, the theory of the body schema is implicitly a theory of perception. For Merleau-Ponty, the body is not a kind of quasi-objective thing with which we identify. For Merleau-Ponty, the body is a primitive constituent of perceptual awareness as such, which in turn forms the permanent background of intentionality at large. The intentional constitution of the body is not the product of a cognitive process. Rather, the body in its perceptual capacity just is. For Merleau-Ponty, then, strictly speaking, we do not have bodies, rather we are our body. In other words, we are in the world through our body, and insofar as we perceive the world with our body. In effect, the body is a natural self and, as it were, the subject of perception.

Merleau-Ponty makes a distinction between the ‘lived body’ and the ‘objective body.’ The lived body is the one that we experience from the ‘inside’ whereas the objective body is a thing that we can locate in space as we do with objects. The lived body is a synergic system of habitual, sensory and motor skills and power with which certain features of the perceived world are strictly correlative.

The bodily skills or powers are both specific and general. The skill one acquires through the performance of one task will help him to repeat not only the same task but also a wide range of similar tasks. (For instance, if one learns the basics of music through the constant practice of the musical notes then he will be able to use not just one system of music but even others as well with a relative ease.) Similarly, the objects apprehended not just as separate individuals but as members of species which would evoke similar bodily response which fits in with certain pattern of skillful activity. The body subject or embodied body therefore, is the natural acquirer and generalizer of habitual and motor-sensory skills. Through the active projection of these bodily skills does one experience the world at its most fundamental level. Therefore, there cannot be an adequate understanding of either the body-subject or the object in isolation from each other; they are correlated. In other words, the subject is ensemble of habitual skills which actively involve him in the world and the structure of the world is the function of the subject’s

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46 Ibid., p.239.
being ‘at home’ in it. This way of understanding human body is central to Merleau-Ponty phenomenology. The lived body is not an object but an ontological subject of the world. There is, therefore, a correlation between body-subject and the structure of perceived world. Thus, an individual’s behaviour is based on his or her mode of understanding the perceived world.

**Human Behaviour as Structure**

Merleau-Ponty aims to analyze behaviour from the perspective of phenomenological psychological approach. He holds that behaviour cannot be equated with pure physiological movements that might be explained with the theory of causality. He was opposing the mechanistic conception of behaviour. He was arguing for the structure or form of behaviour.\(^{47}\) Like Sartre, Merleau-Ponty also argues that the human power to become conscious of one’s situation implies that human behaviour is not mechanically determined. At the same time, Merleau-Ponty’s conception of human being as being-in-the-world implies that there is no absolute freedom.\(^{48}\) His development of human being is more consistent than Sartre’s understanding of human being. Merleau-Ponty was a critique of scientific psychology which was based on the philosophical conception ‘dualism’. He was never completely opposed the ‘scientific psychology’ as such rather he was opposed the dualistic conception which holds that ‘the mental’ and the physiological realities are two different orders of reality that are external to each other and causally connected. He indentifies two types of ‘objective thinking’ to which his phenomenology is opposed: empiricism and intellectualism. According to him, both empiricism and intellectualism adhere to ‘natural tendency’. In other words, both make a strict and rigid distinction between nature and consciousness, the physical and mental and to look for causal relationships between them. Empiricism in particular, attempts to explain phenomena, both external objects and internal states of consciousness or mental acts, in

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\(^{48}\) Ibid., p.21.
terms of sensory qualities or sensory experiences and causal relationships between them. Intellectualism as such, it relates perception to *a priori* forms and categories.\(^{49}\)

Merleau-Ponty's *The Structure of Behaviour* attempts to show the absurdity or inadequacy of answer to the problem of our behaviour by laboratory psychology. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, he also criticises the intellectual psychologists such as rationalists. The distinction between these two works is the type of description.\(^{50}\) Merleau-Ponty rejects a philosophy that discovers relations in phenomena which are intrinsic to thought. For him, life is reducible neither to arrangements of things nor to patterns of thought. This is true generally of biological life and more true of human life. Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that he aims at a positive treatment, not merely a dual attack. He wants to do more than demonstrate the shortcomings of the physically reductive and mentalist views. His aim is to show “the essential features of the phenomenon, the paradox which is constitutive of it: behavior is not a thing, but neither is it an idea.”\(^{51}\) Thus, the formula ‘not thing and not idea’ is more than a dual denial. The formula is constitutive of behavior; it tells what behavior is. According to him:

> Human behaviour is neither a series of blind reactions to external ‘stimuli,’ nor the projection of acts which are motivated by the pure ideas of a disembodied, worldless mind. It is neither exclusively subjective nor exclusively objective, but a dialectical interchange between man and the world, which cannot be adequately expressed in traditional causal terms.\(^{52}\)

For Merleau-Ponty, behaviour is a circular dialectic in which the independent beings of the life field, already selected by the structure of the human body, exert a selective operation on this body’s acts. He further goes on to say:

\(^{51}\) Ibid., p.127.
\(^{52}\) Ibid., p.xiv.
It is out of this dialectical interchange that human meanings emerge. These meanings are neither passively assimilated from an external, cosmic order that is already fixed and established, as the realists have imagined, nor constructed \textit{de novo} by creative mind.\footnote{Ibid., p.xv.}

Merleau-Ponty begins by discussing reflex reaction. He wants to show that even these primitive reactions are not explainable as arrangements of anatomical parts. For instance, conditioning cannot be explained in terms of the cerebral cortex, since such conditioning occurs also in invertebrates. “. . . reactions are not linked to any particular anatomical device . . .”.\footnote{Ibid., p.61.} They cannot be defined simply as locatable parts. Thus Merleau-Ponty was critical of empiricist account of behaviour of John B. Watson and Ivan Pavlov which was a subsequent opening for his notion of behaviour in describing perception. He rejected behavioursitic account of simple and conditioned reflexes. According to him, simple reflex behaviour is an action of defined physical or chemical agent on a locally defined receptor which evokes a defined response by means of a definite pathway. This would mean that the response to be located at the point of contact and the stimulus and response to be distinct. But the research of Gestalt psychology and K. Goldstein had shown that it is not so. A response can also be a stimulus. The response is to a stimulus is a form of behaviour.\footnote{Op. cit., \textit{Contemporary French Philosophy}, p.128.} Pavlov’s conditioned response was introduced to account for complex responses. Such as salivating by a dog, is not in response to the sight of food, but to the sound of a bell. For Pavlov, this is a matter of learning by repetition i.e. food has been followed by the sound of bell, so the dog has been conditioned to learn this attitude. According to Pavlov, this occurs because a particular part of brain is affected. But the researches which had done by Gestalt psychologists, Koehler, Koffka and others like K. Goldstein show that Pavlov was wrong. According to them, learning is not achieved by repetition but by apprehending analogies. Learning is not localized in any particular part of the brain. It is a general aptitude which may be exercised in certain
part of the brain but it affects behaviour as a whole because it interferes with the organization of behaviour, the differentiation and articulation of perception and activity.\textsuperscript{56}

Merleau-Ponty shows through illustration:

the dung beetle, after the amputation of one or several of its phalanges, is capable of continuing its walk immediately. But the movements of the stump which remains, and those of the whole body, are not a simple perseveration of those of normal walking; they represent a new mode of locomotion, a solution of the unexpected problem posed by amputation. Moreover, this reorganization . . . is not produced unless it is rendered necessary by the nature of the surface: on a rough surface where the member, even though shortened, can find points of application, the normal process of walking is conserved.\textsuperscript{57}

Merleau-Ponty offers many examples of this sort, citing aspects of biology and reflex psychology which require functional concepts rather than physicalist-reductive concepts. His examples illustrate and give specificity to his philosophical discussion of reductive and non-reductive concepts. The general points are illustrated in one specific context after another. One major conclusion is that biological reactions are not reducible to structural parts within the organism or to localized origins of stimuli. But neither does Merleau-Ponty permit the introduction of an entelechy, a vitalist principle of some sort. Vitalism is merely the other side of the same error mechanism commits. For Merleau-Ponty, there is no such vital principle. There is only the ‘functional dependence of variables.’ This requires concepts of embodied form rather than brute pieces in need of a superimposed, mythically causal form.

Merleau-Ponty wishes to show the extent to which the biology of the lower forms of life already requires non-reductive concepts. For Merleau-Ponty, the biological is

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., pp.128-129.

already both concreteness and organizing (surpassing). Thereby the creative, organizing, surpassing activity is not made into something separate (a pure form, a pure negativity, Sartre's *pour soi*) but already embedded, embodied, concrete. Merleau-Ponty begins with the lower orders of biology and physics, and views them as already organized, already having a surpassing activity. Hence, when he moves from lower to higher orders of behavior, he is in a position to argue that the higher modes are not explainable as an added-on consciousness or form. The already organized concrete is never left behind. Any further forming reorganizes the whole (already organized) concreteness and is thus embedded in it. The higher orders are, therefore, not explainable wholly by added forms but only by seeing how the whole of the concrete is reorganized. Thus, the higher and lower do not reduce to each other. It is easy to see that the higher cannot be reductively explained by the lower. It is more difficult to see how the lower is also not explained by the higher; or, to put it another way, the further organization does not alone explain.

Since the newly reorganized concrete was already organized and since form exists only as the organization of the concrete now, therefore a new form alone cannot explain the whole which results. It further organizes the already organized with no line to be drawn between what was before and is retained, and what was before and is now changed. Therefore the new form cannot alone explain the new reorganization; and no pure *pour soi* is conceivable as such, or explains anything as such, apart from the way in which it is the pattern of the whole concrete somatic process in man. In man, the somatic processes do not unfold in isolation, but the advent of higher orders give a new significance to the steps which constitute them. In the way, Merleau-Ponty related lower and higher we see one application of the principle ‘not thing and not idea’; form is real only as embedded reorganizing of the concrete. 58

Merleau-Ponty's view of form aims to provide the solution to the antinomy of matter and idea. We will be led to this solution if we ask “in what sense form can be said to exist 'in' the physical world, 'in' the living body.” 59 It is only a caricature of form when it is portrayed as abstract clearly thought laws. The two sides of the artificial split imply

58 Ibid., p.180.
59 Ibid., p.137.
each other. For Merleau-Ponty, whether thing or law is separated out, the splitting off of one implies the splitting off of the other. He defines a specific embodied sense of form as in the concrete, as its functional organization. Even physics, he argues, already requires this embodied sense of form.

For Merleau-Ponty, there is a close crucial relationship between the lived as given and science, which makes it more precise. We want to see what science moves from (the lived) and how it may make more precise without falsely assuming this precision in advance and without fatally distorting or falsifying. Therefore, he is so much concerned with science and applies his concepts to specific scientific discussions. Science makes precise that which is not given precisely. Therefore no causal power can be attributed to laws. They are retrospective thoughts, afterthoughts. Only in thought do laws stand out clearly and independently. Physical systems illustrate what Merleau-Ponty is after how form exists in matter.

In physical systems, each local change will be translated by a redistribution of forces so that the system remains in equilibrium, and it is this internal circulation which is the system as a physical reality. Embodied form is really functional interdependence of variables. He further illustrates:

in a soap bubble as in an organism, what happens at each point is determined by what happens at all the others. But this is the definition of order. There is, therefore, no reason whatsoever for refusing objective value to this category in the study of the phenomena of life, since it has its place in the definition of physical systems.

The chief point here is not a preference for holistic conceptions. The point is not merely that the whole informs the parts. Especially, the point is not the Gestaltist argument that because physics is structurally organized, therefore so is perception. Merleau-Ponty criticizes the Gestalt theorists for deriving the perceptual behavioral from

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60 Ibid., p.219.
61 Ibid., p.131.
the physical forms of a holistically viewed physical environment. It is useless to argue that because the physical environment requires holistic conceptions, therefore perception and behavior must be viewed as responses to holistic conditions. Behavior is not a function only of the physical environment, however conceived. The character of an external event to which an animal reacts is already a function of its own kind of process of living. As we said, a reorganization of everything occurs at each level. In moving from physics to biology, the actions of living beings present the peculiarity of having behaviour, which is to say that their actions are not comprehensible as functions of the physical milieu. While a physical system equilibrates itself in respect of the given forces of the milieu the animal organism constructs a stable milieu for itself corresponding to the monotonous a priori of need and instinct.

He further contrast the human is then seen as a further reorganizing of these embedded patterns of need and instinct. “Behavior . . . is related to . . . the geographical environment . . . only by the intermediary of the environment proper to each species and to each individual.” This ‘environment proper to’ is not the geographical environment; but rather it is this environment reorganized, significant as a function of that animal’s particular biological organization, not simply caused by geographical parts, or a geographical whole, conceived no matter how holistically.

The main feature of Merleau-Ponty’s embodied form is not its wholistic aspect. This philosophy is not generated only by a preference for Gestaltist assumptions or generally by a dialectical preference for wholes that infuse every part. No doubt Merleau-Ponty prefers, accepts, and employs dialectical and wholistic modes of thinking rather than analytic, reductive, and constructive modes. This is a conceptual assumption which ‘makes precise’ as science does. However, it is important to see how his philosophy is not at all merely (or even mainly) derived from this preference for wholistic conceptions. Not the wholistic aspect of form but the embodied aspect of form is his concern. He argues that Gestalt, in preferring the whole, misses the reorganizing aspect of embodied

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62 Ibid., p.159.
63 Ibid., p.162.
64 Ibid., p.133.
form. Gestalt would transpose directly from the whole as given geographically to the whole as perceived.

In moving to the human order, Merleau-Ponty follows Hegel and Heidegger in making use their basics. However, the means-ends relation which seems implicit in use is secondary. One can look at human work and think about the purposive relationships to ends which seem to explain activities. But that does not rightly explain human behavior; it is an afterthought and artificially pure *pour soi*. Human behavior is the concrete creation of new structures and the capacity of going beyond the created structures in order to create others. Human activity creates use-objects and thereby also “has as its meaning to reject and surpass (given) use-objects.”

Freud’s psychological determinism and Marx’s historical determinism cite are only given complexes and given circumstances concerning means. These have deterministic force only to the extent that the human individual does not succeed in reforming the given, reorganizing it, endowing it with a new significance. They explain man only to the extent he often fails at being properly human. Human surpassing does not always and necessarily happen. We may be determined by the Freudian complexes and their force of ‘monotonous need and instinct.’

Hence Merleau-Ponty assigns these complexes a considerable role, the role of that already organized concrete which is then further organized.

In denying that given psychological or historical patterns have (the properly human) causal force, Merleau-Ponty differs from Sartre’s acceptance of historical determinism. Sartre accepts as given the currently posed historical factors which Marx outlined. For Merleau-Ponty such factors are posed by and for our creative surpassing, and this means that properly human living would reject and reorganize this seeming historical determinacy. Though it is posed to us, to the extent we fail at the properly human, it may determine us. On the other hand, the properly human will be to reorganize the concrete even though it is historically given. What was said of biological or physical laws is as true of psychological and historical laws. For Merleau-Ponty, they are

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65 Ibid., pp.175-176.
66 Ibid., p.179.
disembodied afterthoughts, the temporary products of human living, not its explanatory causes.

Like Sartre, Merleau-Ponty also holds that the lived experience ‘exceeds the representative consciousness;’ that is to say, there is a process of thought and activity. This activity is prior to and wider than thought; it is “this sensible mass in which I live.”67 The lived activity is wider than any datum or ‘what’ is known or perceived. Hence it is also wider and prior to any inward datum of feeling or perception. From Husserl through Heidegger and Sartre, the point has been made that phenomenology does not consider experiences as inward subjective data. They can be viewed this way only by artificial effort. The world is not a spectacle of data. Behavior is not “something spread out in front of me.”68 The felt living activity is always ‘in the world’; feelings are out being affected in it. For Merleau-Ponty, this process occurs in animals as well as humans, and it is observable externally. He says:

Spinoza would not have spent so much time considering a drowning fly if this behaviour had not offered to the eye something other than a fragment of extension. . . . The structure of behaviour as it presents itself to perceptual experience is neither thing nor consciousness.69

Humans, animal behavior are neither pure brute things nor perfectly analytic logics of defined ideas. To say they are ‘not fully analytic and yet organized’. Yet, it seems true and obvious to say that living things, especially human behaviour are neither brute chaos nor analytic systems. Then what is this crucial ‘experience of behaviour’? It is opaque to the mind because it is neither thing nor consciousness. It is concrete and individual. It is an individual consciousness and not the consciousness in general.70

Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological focus emphasizes the prereflective awareness as an intentionally unified field. He establishes the fact that physiology and experimental

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67 Ibid., p.211.
68 Ibid., p.126.
69 Ibid., p.127.
70 Ibid., p.211.
psychology distort behaviour that nature and consciousness reinterpreted can be understood in terms of one another instead of in opposition to one another and that these scientific treatment of behaviour demand a phenomenology of perception which as such can reawaken the experience of the world which because it is overlooked in ordinary experience needs to be rediscovered in reflection. For Merleau-Ponty, the notion of structure is a means of understanding meaning in lived experience or phenomenal being in a way that overcomes the notion of the in-itself without reverting to idealism or to a phenomenalism. He holds that the character of meaningful experience is inseparable from the structure of human behaviour. He holds that any adequate articulation of the structure of human behaviour must begin with and elucidate the irreducible features of its phenomenologically grasped dimensions. For him, human perception is inextricably linked to human action which as anticipatory in its receptivity of things perceived in the world, has the capacity of orienting oneself in relation to the possible to the mediate. Thus he distinguishes human actions from animals in their limitations to their immediate milieu. For Merleau-Ponty, primacy of perception means perception is irreducible in that it must be accounted for holistically as vital intentionality bringing to life a world of meaning within interactive experience rather than explained via reductionistic accounts. With this thesis, he attempts to deal with the perceiving mind, by reestablishing its roots in its body and in its world at the human level of behaviour.\(^\text{71}\)

According to Merleau-Ponty, experienced behaviour and lived perception are reducible neither to things nor to idea patterns. Behaviour is rather always structured but the methods used in psychology are inadequate to study it as behaviour. So he saw a systematic phenomenology of perception as an appropriate method of study. He held a view that human behaviour consists of three levels: the physical, the vital (biological), and the human (psychic). Each possesses it own dynamic form. The highest and most specifically human is the third level, which is however, is dependent in its emergence on the integration of the two lower levels. He avoids both Lockean and Cartesian extremes

\(^{71}\) Ibid., pp.221-222.
of conception of man’s mental life, by upholding that mind is neither reducible to physical reality nor entirely cut off from it.\(^\text{72}\)

**Merleau-Ponty’s Notion of Freedom**

According to Merleau-Ponty, “my actual freedom is not on the hither side of my being, but before me, in things.”\(^\text{73}\) In other words, for Merleau-Ponty, freedom is realized through his commitment in the world. He accepts that human beings are free like Sartre. According to Sartre, if there is any possibility of freedom it must be absolute. Stephen Priest states that Sartre is being misunderstood for in his lecture on *Existentialism and Humanism* claims that there is no determinism, we are free, we are freedom, we are condemned to be free, and we are not free not to be free. But he draws a crucial distinction in his *Being and Nothingness* between freedom and power. Therefore he holds, although my freedom is my power may be severely constrained. There is no situation in which one do not have a choice, no matter how unpleasant it may be.\(^\text{74}\) Merleau-Ponty also holds that freedom is possible but it is relative and the actions of the human body in an indeterminate world are the basis of freedom. According to him, “to be born is both to be born of the world and to be born into the world.”\(^\text{75}\) He further argues:

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\text{I am free to posit as another consciousness even if I have a nature of handsome or ugly etc... it is I who make another to be for me and makes each of us as human beings.}\(^\text{76}\)
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A person as individual he is absolutely free to think but when he is in the society, he is not absolutely free to put his views into practice. Therefore a question arises whether a person can live as individual with no dependency or relation to others. The answer would be ‘No.’ Therefore; does freedom mean choice alone or action also to be considered? The choice is between scientism’s conception of causality and absolute

\(^{76}\) Ibid., p.505.
freedom, directed from outside. There is free choice of freedom comes into play in its decision and posits the situation chooses as a situation of freedom. The real choice is that of whole character and our manner of being in the world. Freedom is not to be confused with those abstract decisions of will at grips with motive or passions. The choice is mental whereas action is external, the manner of being in the world. So we discuss here how Merleau-Ponty portrays his views by way of criticising empiricists and intellectualists account (objectivistic account) of freedom to bring forth his own standpoint of freedom.

Merleau-Ponty tries to put forth his view through three steps as below: first, he refutes those who would deny freedom: the proponents of empiricism. According to them world is predetermined so there is no possibility of freedom. He wants to resist those who argue that the human activity is casually determined by objective features of the world, such as biological or environmental ones. Second, he objects to what he regards as false conceptions of freedom. The principal target here is the intellectualists who respond against determinism: they claim that there is absolute freedom. This absolute freedom, the unrestricted power to initiate new actions in the world despite any causal processes that happen to be around, is seen by its advocates either as fundamental features of all human beings as understood by Sartre, or as a condition of possibility of any kind of moral evaluation as understood by Kant. But both the existentialists are against Kantian kind of freedom as moral bases. Merleau-Ponty holds that there is no absolute freedom. As a third step, he denies the dilemma that either human action is completely causally determined or it is absolutely free. So he says that the denial of determination does not mean one upholds absolute freedom. He comes up with the mid-path that freedom is relative. There can be degrees of freedom: some actions and some people are freer than others because the choice which we make of our life is always based on certain givenness. Our freedom does not destroy our situation but gears itself to it. It has opening as well as powerless. History by itself has no significance but only that conferred upon it by our will. So to support his views, he brings out characterization of freedom as

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77 Ibid., pp.507-509.
79 Ibid., pp.236-237.
embodied action in the world. Through which he assert that he takes the stand in between empiricists and intellectualists’ position or determinism and indeterminism.\textsuperscript{80}

According to Empiricism, all human actions are causally determined: that there objectively identifiable phenomenon (causal conditions) standing in law –like regularities with other objectively identifiable phenomena (including all aspects of human action). It is an essential presupposition of the thesis of causal determinism that the causal conditions regulate the human actions. Therefore freedom is not possible. The question which arises is that whether human acts can be said to be determined by mere cause and effect relation alone. So Merleau-Ponty starts his discussion on freedom in *Phenomenology of Perception*. According to him, there no causal relationship is conceivable between the subject and his body, his world or his society. He further argues that consciousness can never objectify itself into invalid-consciousness or cripple-consciousness.\textsuperscript{81}

He goes on arguing that causal explanations to human actions would misrepresent those actions. If we try to show the relationship between a subject and the world or society as a causal one, we need to take the help of third person’s point of view of the subject; and this will misrepresent how the person concerned experiences his own activity. Each individual is unique with freedom to think and act differently. A person with consciousness which is intentional can never be causally determined. Merleau-Ponty remarks that we are not things of the world to be determined:

In order to be determined …by an external factor, it is necessary that I should be a thing.\textsuperscript{82}

The causal explanation ignores the subject’s experiences of reality but misrepresent the factors they take to be causes. In doing so, it treats the subject as a thing. Treating someone as a thing involves precisely ignoring those aspects of them and their circumstances which are seen only from one’s own point of view. A causal explanation

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., p.237.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., pp.237-238.
presents factors in one’s environment or in one’s background as external; whereas Merleau-Ponty tries to show that in causal explanation the intentional relationship to the subject is not taken into consideration because he strongly believe that the external cannot produce anything meaningful of human behaviour. That is to say, the conscious activity of a human body cannot be produced in this manner of cause effect relation.  

Here it would be appropriate to take the psychological example of inferiority complex to make vivid about Empiricists position. The empiricists would say that such persons will behave in certain pattern in a given situation and their reasons would be that his relations with parents or continuous failures have determined such behaviour. But Merleau-Ponty would hold that the correct description is the role of human body interaction with what he perceives at the given situation. So there is can be no determinism which plays any role in freedom as far as human being is concern. The contention of impossibility of freedom is rejected.  

The intellectualists claim that there is freedom and that freedom is absolute. Merleau-Ponty agrees with the first part but rejects the second. Freedom for intellectualist is that human action is free because it results from acts of constituting consciousness-intentions or acts of will. The rejection of determinism of human activity means that all human actions are entirely constituted by consciousness. So intellectualists view is that either all actions are free or none of them are free. Merleau-Ponty calls this as:  

The rationalist’s dilemma: either the free act is possible, or it is not—either the event originates in me or is imposed on me from outside.  

And he tries to show that it cannot be applied to our relations with the world and with our past. For intellectualists, an action is free, absolutely free, when a subject performs free actions, whether these are all its actions or only some of them but the subject is absolutely free. There are no limitations on freedom. Human freedom is not

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84 Ibid., pp.239-240.  
85 Ibid., p.240.  
dependant on and so not limited by any state of the world. Freedom admits of no degree: human subjects cannot be more or less free. Intellectualists argue that human subjects who are responsible for making sense of the world, so the thesis as freedom is determination cannot be accepted.\(^{87}\)

Any causal relation in the objective world is due to the activities of the subject but not the other way round. It is meaningless to say that activities are causally determined. So the sense giving actions of the subject can neither be partially nor universally determined by the causal relations. Hence all human actions of free, a free subject is the one who makes sense of the world. The activity is not dependent on any state of the world. So free subject is not depend on any other than itself, hence its freedom cannot be limited by anything outside itself. This is to say that its freedom is unlimited.\(^{88}\)

Merleau-Ponty argues that since the subject is free prior to any actions and actions cannot be free. For instance, we take again the example of a person with the inferiority complex to make his point obvious. Absolute freedom holders would have two claims whether the person acts in accordance with complex or not in accordance with complex in both the case the person is free. The person may try to stop to be inferior, whether he or she succeeds or not, the person is still free. Merleau-Ponty would say that such actions not free, actions free only if the person cease to be inferior. That means the person is free only if it is actually possible for him or her to cease to be inferior. Intellectualists’ position is that possibility dependent on the conscious deliberative activities of the subject so freedom is dependent on deliberation. Merleau-Ponty argues that it is wrong to say that one makes decision and at the same time one cannot guarantee the success would mean that absolute freedom is of intention but not of action. Whereas according to Merleau-Ponty intention and action both are different. For intellectualists, deliberative intentions are the sources of freedom and deliberative intention is need not to be in accordance with action. For intellectualists, Action is not considered to be relevant in freedom whereas for Merleau-Ponty freedom must be seen in action. The second criticism against Intellectualists is that one does not intent first to change ones behaviour


\(^{88}\) Ibid., p.241.
and second decides to change and finally changes but one discourse that one has decided through having changed and then one deliberates about this changes.\textsuperscript{89}

Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the natural and social situation as part of the subject’s being in the world. And he links this to freedom to state that all human beings are free to the extent to which they are open to different possibilities. There is openness in any existential project. The project cannot be fixed in advance; and indeed the only way a project can be fixed is retrospectively, when one has achieved this goal or abandoned the project. This much is Sartrean, and it suggests that freedom is a capacity of any being capable of projects or capable of perception. All human beings are free in virtue of their capacity to structure their world. However Merleau-Ponty differs from Sartre in regarding this openness to possibility as being manifested differently in various modes of being in the world. Sedimentation is both the root and route of freedom; as was clear in the case of the intellectual. But it is also a factor which makes some people less free than the others. Some people are more weighed down by their sedimentation than others. Hence Merleau-Ponty says that people who live a very sedimented life, they find it very difficult to shake up their sediment, are none the less free to the extent that they act in and perceive the world.\textsuperscript{90}

Merleau-Ponty prefer to stand with the philosophers who does not give clear yes or no answer to the questions of metaphysical issue of free-will and determinism. But they answer in piece-meal analyses of different cases in which one might say that some cases it is clear that one is free but not in some other. Therefore the philosophical speculations of freedom can be too abstract; freedom should really be of concern only in action. In action one sees freedom’s real roots in social and personal history in relation to futures which are never firmly fixed.\textsuperscript{91}

To conclude Merleau-Ponty’s understanding, ‘to be free’ means in two ways, one is to be born of the world. In this state one is passive and just accepts one’s facticity situation where one is born. And other is to be born into the world that means one is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{89} Ibid., p.242.
\item \textsuperscript{90} Ibid., p.246.
\item \textsuperscript{91} Ibid., p.246.
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active and initiates action, gives new meaning and being open to possibilities. Sartre and Heidegger accept the second mode of freedom whereas Merleau-Ponty accepts both the modes of freedom, accepting both modes of being implies that one is conscious of the situation. Since one is in a situation there cannot be absolute freedom. According to him, one’s freedom means one’s commitment. He expresses as:

Our commitments sustain our power and there is no freedom without some power. Our freedom, it is said, is either total or non-existent. This dilemma belongs to objective thought and its stable-companion, analytical reflection. If indeed we place ourselves within being, then it must be necessary the case that our actions must have their origin outside us, and if we revert to constituting consciousness, they must originate within. But we know since we are in the world.”

So there is no complete freedom. Freedom is the combination of outer and inner dimensions. As Merleau-Ponty’s view is cited in *Phenomenology of Perception*:

Freedom is always a meeting of inner and outer… As Husserl says that there is on the one hand ‘a field of freedom’ and on the other a ‘conditioned freedom;’ not that the freedom is absolute within the limits of this field and non-existent outside it (like the perceptual field, this one has no traceable boundaries), but because I enjoy immediate and remote possibilities.

Human are physical and historical structure. Freedom is realized only through motives, inclinations and deliberation. Freedom is not in the absences of naturalistic

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93 Ibid., p.528.
94 Ibid., p.528.
world, social situation; etc. Freedom is realized in the contexts of life but not among the theoretical concepts.

Merleau-Ponty sums up his discussion on freedom as “we choose our world and the world chooses us.” 95 According to him, the actual freedom is not hither side of the being, but before oneself in things. Consciousness holds itself responsible for everything and takes everything upon itself but it has nothing of its own and makes its life in the world. The world is already constituted but never completely constituted. In the first case one acts upon, in the second is open to an infinite number of possibilities. But this analysis is still abstract, because one exists in both ways at once. Therefore there is never determinism and never absolute choice, a person can without consciousness. In fact, even our own pieces of initiative, even the situations which we have chosen, bear us on, once they have been entered upon by virtue of a state rather than an act. Man is said to be a network of relationships hence he cannot escape the situation. 96

The psychoanalytical treatment does not cure patient by knowing direct past of him, instead making a new existential relationships and trying to interpret the past in present significance, where the patient sees his past with the co-existent of his doctor, but this complex is not dissolved by a non-instrumental freedom, but rather displaced by a new pulsation of time with its own supports and motives. The same applies in all cases of coming awareness: they are real only if they are sustained by a new commitment. The commitments also are entered into sphere of the implicit, and are therefore valid only for a certain temporal cycle.

For Merleau-Ponty, subject and world determine each other reciprocally. He holds that the world has meaning even before any choice is made but it may change or may not be ignored. According to him, we never start with zero. It is necessary that one must exist in certain incarnation. So the existence is along with essence. 97 According to Merleau-Ponty, though human beings are free. They are found in network of relationship with world. As embodied human beings, they are correlated to the structure of perceived

95 Ibid., p.528.
96 Ibid., pp.526-530.
world. The behaviour is a structure or form which cannot be understood without reference to an individual’s commitment to world and his or her perception of the lived world as an embodied human subject in the world. Thus the phenomenological psychology is very much indebted to Merleau-Ponty.