CHAPTER - V

CONSCIOUSNESS, LANGUAGE AND MEANING

The fifth chapter of the thesis, attempts to argue that by means of Language, human being articulates a highly differentiated consciousness of his situation. He does not merely respond globally to a situation. Rather, by using words diacritically, he refers to distinct aspects of the situation by name and by using words synthetically he unifies different concepts. In other words, man's languages his creative process. This ability of man's linguistic consciousness to abstract and transcend, sets man off, fundamentally different from animals. As Merleau-Ponty opines, there is a dialectic of language which "constitutes an organic whole developing through history as a living being". According to Merleau-Ponty, the body - subject is a mediation in Language between the word as expressed and the word as perceived, inevitably pointing language as the aspect of communication and thus indicating that language is the medium through which human consciousness expresses itself.

i) CONSCIOUSNESS - A PRELIMINARY UNDERSTANDING

From our daily observation and experience of nature it appears that inorganic matter cannot think or feel. Even in the organic kingdom, the lower plant and animal life may be able to feel and react in a restricted way but it does not seem to have the faculty of volition and intentional action.
Some higher animals seem to show the possession of the faculty of volition but appear to be lacking self-awareness. The story of man is different. The first and foremost thing about man is that he is aware of his existence. In other words, he is a conscious being and has self-consciousness too. That is, he is conscious of his being conscious.

Modern philosophy begins with the valid insight that consciousness is the most certain thing in the world. Descartes admits two distinct and independent substances—mind and matter, of these the mind is the soul. It is active and conscious substance with the quality of thinking. It is conscious, immaterial, simple, indivisible, eternal and entirely different from the material body. Knowing, desiring and feeling and other mental activities have been attributed to the soul. The self is unextended and beyond time and place. It is unique, dynamic and beginningless. It is the substance whose attributes are the different forms of thinking. As indicated by Rene' Descartes, one may doubt and deny the existence of the rest of the world but one cannot doubt or deny one's own existence and the existence of one's thought. Anything else may or may not exist but at least the doubter himself exists and is conscious of his own existence. To doubt the existence of a doubter is a contradiction in terms. Looking back to Descartes Husserl stated that he was like Columbus, who discovered a new world.
without realizing it - the realm of pure - subjectivity.

ii) CONSCIOUSNESS : VARIOUS LEVELS

Thus it appears that consciousness does exist? But what is this something which man certainly has, animals perhaps have and material objects seem to lack? Through introspection and reflection one discovers that consciousness manifests itself through revelation of external objects as well as internal mental phenomena. Consciousness has various levels, but at all levels it takes some or the other form of awareness. At the lowest level of consciousness there is a recognition of stimuli-internal or external, and there may be a reflexive type of response to meet the situation created by the stimulus-response situation. Here one may be tempted to say that the stimulus-response situation has taken place without the involvement of consciousness but a deep analysis of the situation will show that unless the subject was aware of the stimulus in some way or the other he could not have reacted to it. All routine and mechanical actions, which do not demand any thoughtful effort fall under this category. A car driver, for instance, is aware of the red signal otherwise he could not have responded appropriately to the signal.

The next level of consciousness is when one is aware that he is aware of the stimulus to which he is responding. This level of consciousness may be called reflective consciousness. At this level consciousness exhibits duality
of subject and object. In the example already cited above, if the driver, who may be in a hurry to reach his destination becomes aware that he is seeing a red light and that he cannot proceed unless and until there is green signal, then he may be said to be in a state of reflective consciousness. To cite another example, a person may be day-dreaming, but if he becomes aware of the fact that he is day-dreaming, he would be in a state of reflective consciousness.

The highest level of consciousness which is expounded in the Upanishads is that, in which no object or thought is revealed by it. In this state, consciousness transcends both the mental and physical phenomena and reveals itself as pure consciousness. From the above description of consciousness it becomes clear that consciousness is like a light which, while revealing objects, also reveals itself, when it throws light on objects around it, it also illumines itself.

Thus we see that no experience of any kind is possible without consciousness. Without consciousness there will be no revelation and therefore no perception of external objects. Cognition, knowledge, sense-perception, memory, introspection, feelings, sensations, choices, strivings etc. are manifestations of consciousness. In sum, the essential features and capacities of man i.e. rationality, intentionality, contemplative awareness, ability to symbolise from abstraction and use of language are due to
iii) PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND EXISTENTIALIST VIEWS:

The phenomenologists and Existentialists acknowledge the reality of consciousness and recognize that consciousness is and that it plays an important role in human existence. They make consciousness the central fact of human existence in terms of which all patterns of behaviour is to be understood.

Phenomenology holds that any piece of behaviour like discriminative, intelligent and purposive mental behaviour etc is inspired, constituted and attended by consciousness in contrast to the belief of behaviourists that discriminative, intelligent and purposive behaviour is purely a neurophysiological one and is not caused or attended by any nonmaterial phenomenon like consciousness. Husserl holds that human Being live in an inter-personal cultural world, which can only be shared by using concepts, and the meaning of these concepts can only be understood when consciousness constitutes the logical structure of these concepts by intuitively grasping the essence of these concepts. Man not only intuitively knows himself to be conscious, he also understands the various logical structures involved in the use of concepts in inter-personal communication. It is plausible because he is possessed of consciousness which is capable of constituting logic. Husserl hold that consciousness is important in the human
scheme of operations and that possession of self-consciousness makes man a unique kind of being.

Sartre's existentialist thought is greatly influenced by Descartes' cogito. Husserl's phenomenological approach to the problem of experience also influenced Sartre. However, Sartre's interest, unlike Husserl's interest in epistemology, lies in ontology. He is interested in exploring the basic facts that are given in the universe and are found in experience and not in the phenomenon of knowledge. He holds that when we look at experience, two facts emerge, consciousness and that of which there is consciousness. Consciousness is always consciousness of something which appears to consciousness. For him the very nature of consciousness is intentional, it is always directed towards something and it is nothing if it does not reveal that something. According to him consciousness is a function of awareness and as such it is directed towards an object. That is why he called it positional. It can be directed towards an object because it can transcend itself and intend an object. This function of transcendence can be exercised only by being for itself and not by being-in itself.

Sartre in his magnum opus "Being And Nothingness" embarks on an exploration of man's nature and its possibilities. He defines man as the for-itself, which means consciousness. As consciousness coincides with the very
being of man and as it cannot be derived from matter, man is not only self-conscious through and through, he is freedom through and through as well.

Merleau Ponty began his philosophic career with the publication of "The Structure of Behaviour", a work which seems far removed from the phenomenological 're-awakening of the experience of the world." He admits that he has "pretended to know nothing about man through reflection" and that he has limited himself to developing "that which was implicit in the scientific representation of his behaviour". The work deals with some of the most technical aspects of physiological psychology and seems at first glance to be nothing but the critique of a certain branch of science. In reality, it is directly concerned with the understanding of the "consciousness of something" at its most elementary level.

iv) Merleau-Ponty and the Notion of Consciousness

Merleau Ponty places himself in the thick of a historico-intellectual situation which he feels is full of misconceptions and inner contradictions. These contradictions may be found in prevalent opinions on the relation between consciousness and nature (or more specifically between "mind and body") and it is to this relation that the author addresses himself. According to Merleau Ponty the very distinction between the two "realms" is characteristic of the problem. For, despite all efforts
to overcome Cartesian "Metaphysical Dualism" the division remains the same: consciousness is the pure transparency of the cogito to itself, the principle activity of which is judgment, nature, including the body, is that of which we are conscious, "a multiplicity of events which are exterior to one another and joined by relations of causality" a "Material mass partes extra partes". Such, at least, is the situation in philosophy, as for psychology, it simply takes the "Psychic" as a specialized section of the material world which is related to the organism through cause and effect. Consciousness is "distinguished from the beings of nature as one thing is from another thing, by a certain number of characteristics". It is the psychological notion of consciousness which Merleau Ponty takes up in this study. Consciousness is approached from the "outside" as a part of reality, just as it is in the psychology which attempts to be natural science. For purposes of such a treatment the notion of "behaviour" is found useful, since it is neutral in regard to the distinction between the "psychic" and the "physiological". Even the notion of "consciousness" itself is suppressed, as it was by the behaviorists from whom Merleau-Ponty takes the term.

v) CONSCIOUSNESS AND INTENTIONALITY

One of the most communicative concepts which phenomenologists and existentialists have often used in order to characterize primordial directedness of human
consciousness is 'intentionality'. Man is intentional, he is a tendency, a force, a desire to outgrow the given world, a transcendence. Merleau Ponty makes use of this concept when he deliberates on what he calls the 'dialogue' between man and the world. The dialogue takes place, first of all, in the form of sensations and perceptions which are not only the medium of our knowledge of the world but also the fulfillment of our psycho-physical being. Our being in the world is the manifestation of ourselves as 'meaning'. eg, we are in a world where we sense sounds, colours, smells, temperature etc., and appropriate them as a part of our experience. Now unless we pre-suppose that consciousness is intentional in regard to the very fact of its being in the world, we have no ground on which we can explain the inseparability between the psyche and the world with which our life is ever fused. For Merleau-Ponty, intentionality is the very nexus of the dialectical relationship between consciousness and its physical surroundings. He remarks that the subject is not an absolute reality which just 'surveys the world' it is involved in it, it intends to give meaning to it. For him, human consciousness is not, closed' within itself like an object, but is a 'project of the world', a relationship to something other than things and persons, in an infinite number of ways, it is eternally predisposed to reflect upon itself as reaching beyond itself.
vi) HUSSERLIAN APPROACH

Husserl, the founder of the phenomenological movement is very near to Merleau-Ponty. Husserl tends towards an existential assertion of the fundamental principle of consciousness—particularly in the form of 'pure ego'. Husserl admits that there is, on the final analysis, something about consciousness which cannot be intellectually manipulated. And he confessedly declares "pure I and pure consciousness is the wonder of all wonders".1

In fact, such an admission of the mystery about consciousness need not to be taken to demonstrate in attitude of agnostic negativism in phenomenology. On the contrary Husserl is not even ready to admit that consciousness can be treated as a mere little name for psychical complexes. Negatively considered, consciousness is not to be taken as a nominal or conceptual construction or a derivative concept, for transcendental subjectivity does not signify a product of speculative constructions. But Husserl takes up are unmistakably positive attitude in asserting that 'it is consciousness through and through, the source of all reason and unreason, all right and wrong, all reality and illusion, all value and disvalue, all deed and

Taking into view its fundamentally presuppositional character and at the same time keeping to the typical non-committal attitude of phenomenology, transcendental subjectivity can, after all, be described as 'an absolutely self-subsistent autonomous region of direct experience.

vii) MERLEAU-PONTY AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CONSCIOUSNESS

It is the psychological notion of consciousness which Merleau Ponty takes up in his study. Consciousness is approached from outside as a part of reality. He defines the behaviour of an experiencing consciousness as a 'meaningful structure'. It does not properly belong to the external world, or to the internal world, but is an ambiguous and indeterminable 'act' or 'engagement' with a 'constellation of Data'. In "Sense and Nonsense" he names it "existence" suggesting thereby that there is a certain life cord in experience which has highly nebulous and fleeting content. The reduction of this experience to Psychical and physical events, no doubt, helps towards elucidating its elementary ingredients. But it throws no light on its being 'here' on the fact that, prior to any analysis, it springs up in 'me'

as the Lebenswelt' (life-world) an actus purus. Merleau-Ponty like, Husserl, asserts that a phenomenological understanding of the 'roots' of experience would not require us to comply with the accepted scientific assumption of the subject-object dualism but on the contrary, would compel us to resort to some kind of 'insight' or 'seeing'.

viii) LANGUAGE : TWO APPROACHES

It may be worthwhile here to look into the difference between the existentialist's approach to language and that of the analyst. The analyst is interested in the internal structure of language, its logical syntax. He is interested also in the way language relates to the world, how words 'signify' and 'refer'; how propositions can be meaningful, and what are the conditions that they should be true. The interest of the existentialist on the other hand, is concerned with language as a human phenomenon than with its internal structure or its relation to a referend. Indeed, the existentialist fastens his attention primarily on the spoken word, or speech as a full human phenomenon. The tone of voice, the gesture, the facial expression - these are characteristics that are irrelevant to logic, but they belong to the full reality of language and are lost when the written or printed word is substituted for speech.

The existential or human elements in language are always present, though at some times more obviously than at others. A mathematical formula printed in a text book would
present us with a case where the personal or existential character of language had been dimmed down almost to vanishing point. A political speech, on the other hand, would be a case where the personal aspects of language are evident. But the old-fashioned distinction of language into informative and emotive was for too simple-minded. Most of our language is a very mixed phenomenon, and perhaps no language is entirely impersonal.

ix) LANGUAGE AND HUMAN EXISTENCE

There seem to be at least two ways in which language is inseparably linked to personal existence. First, all language is someone's language. Language does not spring up in a vacuum, it proceeds from homo loquens. In fact, there is nothing more human than language, even where it takes the shape of an abstract formula. Second, all language is addressed to someone (this is true even when one is speaking to oneself) so to say language is to communicate.

We may say then that the existentialist is concerned with the existential dimension of language rather than with its logical analysis. His business is to probe the existential relations that make language possible and that in turn are made possible by language.

This means that the existentialist studies language primarily in the context of being - with - others. There are some very significant remarks on language on the opening page of Buber's *I and Thou*. He introduces the idea of
'primary words', especially the primary words 'I - Thou' and 'I - It'. We noted already that these primary words are not isolated words, like 'I' and 'It' and 'thou', but combined words that already imply the context of our being-with-others-in-the-world. 'If "Thou" is said, the "I" of the combination "I - Thou" is said along with it'. Here we see the insistence on the personal dimension of language—that it is always communication. 'Primary words do not signify things, but they intimate relations. Primary words do not describe something that might exist independently of them, but being spoken, they bring about existence. These illustrate the existentialist disinterest in referring in favour of what is taken to be the more fundamental function of language, as relating the speaker to the other person, and Buber also seems to assert that speech is not made possible by a pre-existing relation to the other but actually creates this relation. Lastly, Buber makes the point that 'I-thou' language is spoken with the whole being and expresses the whole person, while 'I-It' language never does so. Language is self-involving in various degrees.

Heidegger, however, does hold that some mode of being-with-others precedes language, and he also pays attention to the relation of language to reality. Sartre claims that language is not a phenomenon added on to being-for-others, it is originally being-for-others, that is, it is the fact that at subjectivity experiences itself for another'. He
understands the relation of language to reality in terms of the making unhidden that which is talked about. Language is not a picture of reality, to be judged true if there is a point-to-point correspondence between the picture and the fact it 'represents'. The locus of truth is not in the proposition but rather in the reality itself. Language lets what is talked about stand out and be seen for what it is language successfully communicates when it lights up for two or more people their being-in-the-world and lets each see what the other sees. Such an interpretation of language lays as much stress on the personal integrity of the users of language as on the logical strictness of the language itself.

x) LANGUAGE AND THE HUMAN BODY

A clear understanding of Merleau-Ponty's conception of language and meaning obviate the necessity to reconsider and expound the body as operative subject. The 'body-subject' is not the body described in terms of causal processes, but the field of lived-world experience and interiorly united spheres of meaning. He repeatedly denies the existence of a separate principle in man, distinct from the body. He often distinguishes between "body" and "existence", and even opposes the one to the other. How, then, can we say that he reduces man's entire existence to the body? The reply is that Merleau Ponty uses the term "body" in many senses. There is nothing else in man than the body-subject, and the
body is a subject precisely because it constantly lifts itself up toward a higher formation, because it constantly tends to a higher mode of its own being. He adds that "Language in its turn does not raise any other problem". For this reason precisely the body is a subject and not a thing. It is not a constant repetition of itself but takes itself up again in a transcending way. The body, as subject, is a self-transcending movement. In Merleau-Ponty's work two meaning of the term "body" constantly intermingle. Sometimes he speaks of the body as fixed existence, as "acquisition", as a whole of established forces, as something appearing under a-being-like form, something that lends itself to the formation of laws about itself. His philosophy of language is a crucial chapter of his entire philosophy.

"It is by considering language that we would best see how we are to and how we are not to return to things themselves". Through the vehicle of language, Merleau Ponty explores the structure of a semiotic that casts perception as related to expression as "the speech before speech".

The problem, of language is, if one likes, only a regional problem—that is, if we consider the readymade

6. Ibid., p.201.
language, the secondary and empirical operation of translation, of coding and decoding, the artificial languages, the technical relation between a sound and a meaning which are joined only by express convention and are therefore ideally isolable. But if, on the contrary, we consider the speaking world, the assuming of the conventions of his native language as something natural by him who lives within that language, the folding over within him of the visible and the lived experience, the exchanges between the articulations of his mute language and those of his speech, finally that operative language which has no need to be translated into significations and thoughts, that language-thing which counts as an arm, as action, as offense and as reduction because, it brings to the surface all the deep-rooted relations of the lived experience wherein, it takes from, and which is the language of life and of action but also that of literature and poetry-then this logos is an absolutely universal theme, it is the theme of philosophy. Philosophy itself is language, rests on language; but this does not disqualify it from speaking of language, nor from speaking of the pre-language and of the mute world which doubled them. On the contrary, philosophy is an operating language, that language that can be known only from within, through its exercise, is open upon the things called forth by the voices of silence, and continues an effort of
articulation which is the being of every being.\textsuperscript{7}

The direction of the above quotation should not be misleading, there is no attempt to arrive at "verbalism". The use of verbal language is an agency for knowing existence through essences, not at attempted phenomenalism that views the world as a delimitation of essences. Language should indicate the nature of essences as an existential modality, not the only possible existence of an essential modality.\textsuperscript{8}

\textbf{x1) LANGUAGE AS THE INSTRUMENT AND PRODUCT OF SPEECH}

One must recognize that language is both the instrument and the product of speaking. Language in speaking can be existential by constituting meaning, or language can settle into a sediment after being spoken which is an essential meaning. There is a dialectic of language which "constitutes an organic whole developing through history as a living being".\textsuperscript{9} There is a clear project in Merleau Ponty's scheme of analysis as a result of this approach to language.

To reflect on language is, rather, to recover an experience which is anterior to the objectivizing of language and certainly anterior to the scientific observation of it. In this experience

\textsuperscript{8} Merleau Ponty, Primacy, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{9} George Gusdorf, Speaking, p. 31.
the subject, who speaks and writes, passes beyond language only by exercising it and taking it over.\textsuperscript{10} This return to the speaking subject is what Husserl referred to as "the phenomenology of language". But Merleau Ponty goes beyond this level to the primordial phenomenology of speaking that precedes that of language, "we must study the subject who is actually speaking, to the linguistic of language we must add the linguistic of the word".

He wants to show the unbreakable interconnection between thinking and speaking, because such an interconnection reveals the bodily character of thought. Thought seems to be universal and eternal, while language has an historical and changing character. Thought seeks the word as its own completion.\textsuperscript{11} To know something means that we are able to express it in words.\textsuperscript{12} He appeals also to primitive consciousness, which attributes to speech the power to evoke the matter expressed.\textsuperscript{13} This consciousness continues to be alive in certain cases.

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
Merleau Ponty makes a distinction between the "spoken word" and "speaking word". The "spoken word" is the expression which, once created, has become a common possession. It is the meaning, laid down in a word, which is passed on from individual to individual and even from generation to generation. But that which is repeated must once have been spoken for the first time. Therefore, the "spoken word" refers to the "speaking word" as its origin. This "speaking word" is the original speech which gives meaning to words and makes them say what they have never yet said. It goes without saying that according to Merleau Ponty the "speaking word" is more original a phenomenon and that is manifests the inner character of speech more clearly. For the "spoken word" easily becomes "obvious" in man's social intercourse, so that the meaning existing in it is readily considered to be a natural meaning because the word's origin has been lost sight of. In such a case one may think that our speech expresses given reality as it is itself. In this way, there arises the idea that truth is eternal i.e., prior to man and merely expressed by speech. Thus speech, which is really the soil in which meaning germinates, comes to be considered as an accidental form of expression. In the "speaking word", on the other hand, the proper nature of speech reveals itself. Thought is not independent of speech. On the contrary, thought becomes
thought in speaking. This assertion applies, only to thought insofar as it comes to existence in the word. Merleau Ponty knows also a so-called "preverbal thought", e.g., a thought existing in action, which he indicates by the term "practognosis". The acting body understands its world as well as its own possibilities. This understanding is truly a form of knowledge, but this knowledge is still wholly immersed in the action itself. In walking, e.g., we take into account the condition of the ground, for we do not walk in the same way through a forest and over a smooth road. This "understanding", however, of the world is not distinct from our walking itself. In many realms, says Merleau Ponty, we acquire habits only when our body begins to understand something i.e., when it is capable of manipulating the objects of a particular realm. One knows really how to play the organ well when the body finds its way from the reading of the notes to the correct keys without any conscious aid of the intellect. One who types well no longer needs to let his mind seek the exact location of the letters but knows it with his hands. Accordingly, there is also a preverbal kind of thought, and this thought is, not dependent on the word. In the word, however, thought comes to exist in a new way and, in this new way of existing, thought depends on the

word. To know something here means to be able to indicate it in a coherent succession of words. Knowledge cannot be divorced here from the words.

xiii) **MAN AS A SPEAKING SUBJECT**

Merleau-Ponty affirms that man is a "speaking subject". What he means is, first of all that man's subjectivity, is seeking light and creating meaning, is present in speech. In other words, speech is not a natural event, running its course according to blind laws, but speech itself is a subjective event. The connection of words is a connection for and through the subject. Secondly, Merleau-Ponty wants to express that the subject exists in speech, finds itself in speech, we may even say, comes to existence in speech. The human subject is not a subject beyond and above language, a subject which views the plurality of words, as it were, from an absolute standpoint and chooses the correct words from this absolute standpoint. The subject does not lie outside speech but lives in speech. Speaking is more than a natural event, because it is permeated with human subjectivity, and the subject is not an absolute point, because it exists in speech.

Here we may have to explain, as Merleau-Ponty did, the difference between language as the actual speaking event, and language as the actual deposit of those meanings that come to expression in that event. Here one has to take account of the situation in which speech is born, namely a
situation of "wanting to say something" of having "a significative intention" described by Merleau Ponty as a kind of "lack that tries to get filled", a "determined emptiness" that can only be filled by speaking. To transform this significant, delimited emptiness into verbal gesturing is to express what the intention was pressing toward, so to say, the sense of the intention as a determinate thrust. Merleau Ponty calls this event "speech as speaking". Thus speech is concretized and given a certain explicitness in speech is constituted as linguistic meaning. Yet this very action has an effect beyond itself. Once the act of expression is done, a word remains as an acquisition. This acquisition, then is "speech as the spoken". We have here, in sum, no more than the difference between speaking as an act and the language which is its result and within which it carries on. Speaking adapts available linguistic gestures to its own direction of significance, transforming and carrying them forward to become expression of new sense. To quote Merleau-Ponty

"speech, then, is that paradoxical operation in which, by means of words of a given sense and already available meanings, we try to catch up with an intention which in principle goes beyond it and, in the last analysis, itself modifies and fixes the sense of the words by which it is transmitted".15

The possibility of communication, according to Merleau Ponty results from the meaning which is already contained in the word as a true gesture. But this is not sufficient. When I communicate, I actually come to an encounter with another whose personal being endorses a certain view of the world, just as much as I endorse the view of my world.

xiv) COMMUNICATION WITHOUT WORDS

Through the body expression without word is another and more primitive form of communication - as well as more direct way of reaching the other or or manifesting ourselves. Psychologically, it is proven that the witness to an expressive gesture is not first concerned with what the gesture would mean in his own case. Gesture reveals meaning directly. I read anger directly, and not as a psychological meaning behind the gesture. That is, when I see an angry gesture I do not "think" of anger, I see it.  

xv) GESTURES : NATURAL OR CONVENTIONAL SIGNS

Merleau-Ponty admits that there is a difference between gesture and word, even though both are direct means of communication; gesture, of the two, is the least conventional - although some gestures develop in the context of a culture only. However, both expressions have their own inner meaning. This must be admitted specially in the case of

a developed language or one would not even understand the possibility of language itself. Further, while gesture is limited to indicated a certain relation of man to the world and to other men, language has a more enlarged purpose: its communicative aim is cultural in addition to being a spontaneous exchange between men.

Merleau-Ponty maintains that it is plain nonsense to speak about natural and conventional signs, to him no sign is purely natural and no signification purely conventional. Man as a purely natural being does not exist, he is always influenced by interaction with the world and with other men, so that no purely natural sign can come from him, one could speak of 'natural signs' only to given 'states of consciousness' the anatomical organisation of our body were to cause corresponding definite gestures.

Merleau-Ponty's investigation of language is taken up again in the article "The phenomenology of language" though not the taking of a new position, his discussion reveals more directly the concern with phenomenological assessment of the same problem— from Husserl's viewpoint also. Merleau Ponty's intention is to re-examine the phenomenology of language and then the notions of inter-subjectivity, rationality, and the philosophy implied by phenomenology. Much of his discussion is a return to the topics already taken up in the Phenomenology of Perception. He then examines the possibility of an history of language and the
likelihood of a development of new forms of expression chiefly as a result of usage\textsuperscript{17}; the theme of his philosophy is clearly seen in his contention that in language, as in all of the dialectical relations of man with the world and with others there is much ambiguity. Language is always full of latent possibilities, hence never composed of absolutely univocal significations completely transparent to consciousness. Hence language is never a system of manners of significations clearly articulated one over the other, nor an edifice of ideas linguistically constructed according to a rigorous plan, but an ensemble of linguistic convergent gestures of which each will be defined less by a signification than by its use-value\textsuperscript{18}.

Language does not presuppose its table of correspondence, it divulges his own secrets, it reveals itself to each infant which comes, into this world, it is entirely 'demonstration'. Its opacity, it obstinate reference to itself, its turning and coiling upon itself are precisely that which makes of it a spiritual power: for it becomes in its turn something like a universe, capable of containing in itself the things themselves - after having changed their meaning\textsuperscript{19}. As in painting, the work of a master, the special movement by which he achieves a certain

\textsuperscript{17} Problems — p.94-95.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p.95.

result, could have been made only by him\textsuperscript{20}, so in language, a certain expression could have come to be only by a certain word - always speaking of authentic language\textsuperscript{21}.

\textbf{xvi) MERLEAU PONTY AND THE NOTION OF SOCIAL WORLD}

Merleau-Ponty's first approach to the social world was by way of \textit{phenomenology of perception}, beginning with the perception of our own body. This body, as Merleau Ponty interpreted it, is primarily a focus of varying perspectives of the world. But each perspective refers to other possible perspectives. And these perspectives dovetail with the perspectives of other human being of which were are aware in seeing their bodies. "It is precisely my body which perceives the other's body and finds there something like a miraculous prolongation of our own intentions. Henceforth, just as the parts of my body, jointly form a system, the other's body and mine are a single whole, the face and reverse of one sole phenomenon".\textsuperscript{22}

Cultural phenomena are at least as important bridges as the body. Most important among these is language. Merleau-Ponty paid increasing attention to its phenomena based on

\begin{itemize}
\item[20.] Merleau Ponty, Sense and Nonsense, trans., Hubert L. Dryfus and patricia A Drefus, Evanston : Northwestern University Press, 1964, p. 15-44.
\item[22.] Ibid., p. 406.
\end{itemize}
the work of such linguists as Ferdinand de Saussure. Seen from the social angle, language occurs primarily in the form of the dialogue. Here my thought and that of the other "insert" each other into a common ground, or, as Merleau-Ponty expresses it in his paper "on the phenomenology of language" (1951):

When I speak or when I understand, I experience the presence of others in myself and of myself in others, a presence which is the cornerstone of the theory of intersubjectivity and I finally understand the enigmatic saying of Husserl. "The transcendental subjectivity in intersubjectivity". To the extent that what I say makes sense, I am for myself when I am speaking a different "other" and to the extent that I understand I no longer know who is speaking and who is listening.

The fundamental inter-subjectivity of the body-subject prompts Merleau-Ponty to confirm Heidegger's equation of Truth and language. "When I speak", he notes in "signs", "I experience the presence of others in myself and of myself in others". While this phenomenon of intersubjective reciprocity was first described in the phenomenology of perception, it was in his subsequent works-most notably signs (1960) and Sense and Non-sense (1948) that Merleau Ponty fully explored the implications of a dialectical interpretation of language, and by extension, of culture and art.

The later phenomenology of signs and symbols extends rather than excludes the earlier phenomenology of
perception. Perception is never, for Merleau Ponty, simply a neutral intuition of factual data 'Perception already stylizes', he insists.

**xvii) BODY SUBJECT AND THE MODE OF SIGNIFICATION**

The perceptual intentionality of the body-subject is itself a mode of signifying. To perceive the world is already to make sense of it, to transform it into signs by expressing an intentional project of meaning. Our carnal interrelationship with others is therefore indicative of an intentional 'signification' even it remains at the level of bodily gestures not yet articulated in words. In an essay in *signs* entitled 'Indirect language and the voices of Silence', Merleau Ponty offers the following example of how such a 'body language' operates: A woman passing by is not first and foremost a coloured mannequin or a spectacle, she is an individual, sentimental, sexual expression. She is a certain manner of being flesh which is given entirely in her walk or even in the simple shock of her heel on the ground - as the tension of the bow is present in each fibre of wood - a very noticeable variation of the norm of walking, looking, touching, and speaking that I possess in my self-awareness because I am incarnate.

The perceptions of the body-subject, Merleau-Ponty Pursues are never simply empirical given. We do wrong to consider them as objective data to which imaginary and signifying projects are subsequently added like decorative
clothing on a naked body. From the outset, each of our perceptions is involved in a symbolising signification which expresses, in however inchoate or tentative a manner, a particular project of being - in - the - world. Not surprisingly, therefore, we find Merleau Ponty endorsing Heidegger's view that language can be pre-linguistic. Language includes silence as a listening to others or as a style of behavioural gesture. These 'styles' - and every human being is marked by a particular style just as he is marked by a particular fingerprint - already, function as 'Signs'. They constitute a 'mute' language from which all 'spoken' language ultimately derives. In sum, language as gesture precedes languages as word.

Merleau-Ponty makes an important distinction here between what he terms 'the primary expression' of our aesthetic experience (in the broad sense of the stylising perceptions of the body - subject) and the 'secondary expression' of conceptual assertion (which reaches its most abstract and exact formulation in logical and Scientific language). The 'objective' statements of our reflective judgments are thus shown to presuppose the pre objective expressiveness of our carnal inter subjectivity. In short, thought is a translation of language, and language, as verbal expression, is itself a translation of the 'silent or indirect voices' of our gestures and styles as body - subjects. Since the most primary mode of expression is
located in the stylising projects of our perceptions, which already transmute the apparent chaos of events into patterns of meaning, Merleau - Ponty argues that artistic forms such as painting, music and poetry provide a privileged access to the hidden workings of language. Behind the transparency of secondary expression, art reveals the indirect voices of primary expression.

xviii) LANGUAGE AND COGNITION

We may say then that the central purpose of Merleau - Ponty's phenomenology of language is that meaning first arises in the implicit form of corporeal signs and only subsequently takes on the explicit form of abstract cognition. The logic of science presupposes the logos of the cultural world - what Merleau Ponty refers to as 'wild order of carnal signification'. This formulation of priorities reverses the traditional tendency to distrust symbolic expression as a lesser form of thought, a derived order of expression which alienates or adulterates the 'pure and distinct' ideas of the mind.

Consciousness of language is no longer the separated foundation of a language, which is secondary to it and derived. To know what language is, it is necessary first of all to speak. It no longer suffices to reflect on the language lying before us in historical documents of the past. It is necessary to take them over, to live with them, to speak them. It is only by making contract with this
speaking subject that I can get a sense of what other languages are and can move around in them.

Thus, language makes one enter into the realm of the Lebenswelt or life-world. It is the creation of values by speaking that leads Merleau Ponty to focus his attention on language and speaking as a means to existential phenomenology.

In order to fully realize what Merleau-Ponty intends by language, its counterpart in the dialectic of speaking should be examined. This is to say that 'silence' is the paired concept with language in the dialectic of immanence and transcendence which is articulated meaning.

xix) SILENCE

Just as absolute emptiness is perceived only at the moment when it is filled with experience, language as expression allows the awareness of silence. Merleau-Ponty has defined silence as the absence of sounds which therefore "keeps us in contact with the being of sound".\(^{23}\) This is to say that as "all absence is merely the obverse of a presence, silence is a modality of the being of sound".\(^{24}\) Just as depth in perception is a dialectic presence,


\(^{24}\) Ibid., p. 364.
speaking is the dialectic result of language and silence.\textsuperscript{25} Silence is that private awareness of world by objectifying the lived experience in speaking a language that at once is public and open to encounter.

The world of silence is the perceived world that is the non-language significations surrounding speech and thus allowing the emergence of meaning.\textsuperscript{26} It is in this sense that Merlean Ponty speaks of the "silence of perception which is "silent speech, without signification and yet rich in meaning". Thus, in the silence of primary consciousness can be seen appearing not only what words mean, but also what things mean: the core of primary meaning in which the acts of signification and expression take shape. In one's involvement with the world and others, we come to practice a hyper-reflection which is precisely the lived-body experience. One must determine, therefore, "what in its silence it means to say"\textsuperscript{27} Silence is not simply the inability to speak. Rather, it is the determinate choice of commitment that become obvious when one has the potential to speak, but does not: "one keeps silence only when one can

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p. 268, see Phenomenology, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p. 39.
In this sense, there is a primordial silence that is the possibility of speech and which signifies meanings because of this possibility. When one comes to speak about things or people it is because what one expresses is anticipated and prefigured, although not entirely accomplished, in the silence we share. This concept is particularly important with respect to the difference between existential speaking and sedimented speech. Silence is thus the immediate dialectic element that allows for the meaning in speech. Hence, silence is the frontier that is transgressed by speaking yet silence is the perceived boundary established by the word said - the limit where actuality meets potentiality.

It may be apparent that the silence that embodies speech is the lived body. The body in its perceptive power is a modality of the potential, a claim to immediacy that waits for its manifestation. The lived - body is a "pre-meaning, a silent knowing" that becomes manifest in spoken language. Silence can become that true commitment which develops beyond all argument and motive as the expressed value contained in the privacy of the lived body and which is not open to public perception through articulation. Silence, becomes the risked commitment and "to be silent is not the same as to say why one does not wish to choose".

Merleau-Ponty's development of silence does not evolve a solipsistic point of view inasmuch as being silent always presumes a community of men endowed with speech and by choosing to be silent one addresses himself to that community. This is to say "the refusal to communicate, however, is still a form of communication". Solipsism is avoided because "solitude and communication cannot be the two horns of a dilemma, but two 'moments' of one phenomenon, since in fact other people do exist for me".29

Merleau-Ponty conceives of the act of speaking as an intentional history of the individual that comes to be the dialectic of being and other being. "He does not speak only of himself, of his own perspective, and for himself, he speaks for all"30. The act of speaking becomes the ontological genesis that envelops the for-itself and for-the-other in a dialectic system of four terms : "my being for me, my being for the other, the for itself of another, and his being for me"31. The fundamental proposition that these four terms demonstrate is "that it is being that speaks within us and not we who speak of being"32.

31. Ibid., p.80.
32. Ibid., p.194.