

the reader another situation of thought which is not eminently contained in Hegel—which is not there at all—and in which Hegel is visible in a light which he is himself unaware of. Hegel is the only one to think that he has no existence "for others," and that he is in the eyes of others exactly what he knows himself to be. Even if it be admitted that there is progress from them to him, there has been room in such a movement for Descartes' *Meditations* or Plato's dialogues. And there has been room precisely because of the "naïvetés" which still separated these thinkers from Hegelian "truth"—a contact with things and a spark of meaning that one will find in Hegel only on condition of having found them in Plato and Descartes, and that one must always return to, if only to understand Hegel.

Hegel is the Museum. He is if you wish all philosophies, but deprived of their finiteness and power of impact, embalmed, transformed, he believes, into themselves, but really transformed into Hegel. We only have to see how a truth wastes away when it is integrated into different ones (how the Cogito, for example, in going from Descartes to the Cartesians, becomes almost a listlessly repeated ritual) to agree that the synthesis does not effectively contain all past systems of thought, that it is not all that they have been, and finally that it is never a synthesis which is both "in and for itself"—that is, a synthesis which in the same movement is and knows, is what it knows, knows what it is, preserves and suppresses, realizes and destroys. If Hegel means that as the past becomes distant it changes into its meaning, and that we can trace an intelligible history of thought in retrospect, he is right; but on condition that in this synthesis each term remain the whole of the world at the date considered, and that in linking philosophies together we keep them all in their place like so many open significations and let an exchange of anticipations and metamorphoses subsist between them. The meaning of philosophy is the meaning of a genesis. Consequently, it could not possibly be summed up outside of time, and it is still expression.

It is all the more true of non-philosophical writing that the writer can have the feeling of attaining things themselves only by using language and not by going beyond language. Mallarmé himself was well aware that nothing would fall from his pen if he remained absolutely faithful to his vow to say everything without leaving anything unsaid, and that he was able to write minor books only by giving up the Book which would dispense with all the others. The signification without any sign, the thing itself—that height of clarity—would be the disappearance of all clarity. And whatever clarity we can have is not at the beginning of language, like a golden age, but at the end of its effort. Language and the system of truth do displace our life's center of

gravity by suggesting that we cross-check and resume our operations in terms of one another, in such a way that each one shifts into all of them and they seem independent of the step-by-step formulations which we first gave them. They do thereby reduce the other expressive operations to the rank of "mute" and subordinate ones. Yet language and the system of truth are not lacking in reticence, and meaning is not so much designated by them as it is implied by their word structure.

We must therefore say the same thing about language in relation to meaning that Simone de Beauvoir says about the body in relation to mind: it is neither primary nor secondary. No one has ever made the body simply a means or an instrument, or maintained for example that one can love by principles. And since it is no more true that the body loves all by itself, we may say that it does everything and nothing, that it is and is not ourselves. Neither end nor means, always involved in matters which go beyond it, always jealous nevertheless of its autonomy, it is powerful enough to oppose itself to any end which is merely deliberate, but it has none to propose to us if we finally turn toward it and consult it. Sometimes—and then we have the feeling of being ourselves—it lets itself be animated and becomes responsible for a life which is not simply its own. Then it is happy or spontaneous, and we with it. Similarly, language is not meaning's servant, and yet it does not govern meaning. There is no subordination between them. Here no one commands and no one obeys. What we *mean* is not before us, outside all speech, as sheer signification. It is only the excess of what we live over what has already been said. With our apparatus of expression we set ourselves up in a situation the apparatus is sensitive to, we confront it with the situation, and our statements are only the final balance of these exchanges. Political thought itself is of this order. It is always the elucidation of an historical perception in which all our understandings, all our experiences, and all our values simultaneously come into play—and of which our theses are only the schematic formulation. All action and knowledge which do not go through this elaboration, and which seek to set up values which have not been embodied in our individual or collective history (*or*—what comes down to the same thing—which seek to choose means by a calculus and a wholly technical process), fall short of the problems they are trying to solve. Personal life, expression, understanding, and history advance obliquely and not straight towards ends or concepts. What one too deliberately seeks, he does not find; and he who on the contrary has in his meditative life known how to tap its spontaneous source never lacks for ideas and values.

as constituting in respect to the very act through which I constitute him. This difficulty of principle, posited as a limit at the beginning of the fifth *Cartesian Meditation*, is nowhere eliminated. Husserl *disregards* it: since I have the idea of others, it follows that in some way the difficulty mentioned *has in fact been overcome*. But I have been able to overcome it only because he within me who perceives others is capable of ignoring the radical contradiction which makes theoretical conception of others impossible. Or rather (since if he ignored it he would no longer be dealing with others), only because he is able to live that contradiction as the very definition of the presence of others.

This subject which experiences itself as constituted at the moment it functions as constituting is my body. We remember that Husserl ended up basing my perception of a way of behaving (*Gebaren*) which appears in the space surrounding me upon what he calls the "mating phenomenon" and "intentional transgression." It happens that my gaze stumbles against certain sights (those of other human and, by extension, animal bodies) and is thwarted by them. I am invested by them just when I thought I was investing them, and I see a form sketched out in space that arouses and convokes the possibilities of my own body as if it were a matter of my own gestures or behavior. Everything happens as if the functions of intentionality and the intentional object were paradoxically interchanged. The scene invites me to become its adequate viewer, as if a different mind than my own suddenly came to dwell in my body, or rather as if my mind were drawn out there and emigrated into the scene it was in the process of setting for itself. I am snapped up by a second myself outside me; I perceive an other.

Now speech is evidently an eminent case of these "ways of behaving" [*conduites*] which reverse my ordinary relationship to objects and give certain ones of them the value of subjects. And if objectification makes no sense in respect to the living body (mine or another's), the incarnation of what I call its thinking in its total speech must also be considered an ultimate phenomenon. If phenomenology did not really already involve our conception of being and our philosophy, when we arrived at the philosophical problem we would find ourselves confronted again with the very difficulties which gave rise to phenomenology to begin with.

In a sense, phenomenology is all or nothing. That order of instructive spontaneity—the body's "I am able to," the "intentional transgression" which gives us others, the "speech" which gives us the idea of an ideal or absolute signification—cannot be subsequently placed under the jurisdiction of an cosmic and a pancosmic consciousness

without becoming meaningless again. It must teach me to comprehend what no constituting consciousness can know—my involvement in a "pre-constituted" world. But how, people will object, can the body and speech give me more than I have put into them? It is clearly not my body as organism which teaches me to see the emergence of *another myself* in a way of behaving [*conduite*] that I witness; as such it could at best only be reflected and recognize itself in *another organism*. In order for the alter ego and the thought of others to appear to me, I must be the I of *this* body of mine, *this* incarnate life's thought. The subject who effects the intentional transgression could not possibly do so except insofar as he is situated. The experience of others is possible to the exact degree that the situation is part of the Cogito.

But then we must take with equal strictness what phenomenology has taught us about the relationship between the signifying and the signified. If the central phenomenon of language is in fact *the common act of the signifying and the signified*, we would deprive it of its distinctive characteristic by realizing the result of expressive operations in advance in a heaven of ideas; we would lose sight of the *leap* these operations take from already available significations to those we are in the process of constructing and acquiring. And the intelligible substitute we would try to base them on would not exempt us from understanding how our knowing apparatus expands to the point of understanding what it does not contain. We would not husband our transcendence by prescribing it to a factual transcendent. In any case the place of truth would still be that anticipation (*Vorhabe*) through which each spoken word or acquired truth opens a field of understanding, and the symmetrical recovery (*Nachvollzug*) through which we bring this advent of understanding or this commerce with others to a conclusion and contract them into a new view.

Our present expressive operations, instead of driving the preceding ones away—simply succeeding and annulling them—salvage, preserve, and (insofar as they contain some truth) take them up again; and the same phenomenon is produced in respect to others' expressive operations, whether they be past or contemporary. Our present keeps the promises of our past; we keep others' promises. Each act of philosophical or literary expression contributes to fulfilling the vow to retrieve the world taken with the first appearance of a language, that is, with the first appearance of a finite system of signs which claimed to be capable in principle of winning by a sort of ruse any being which might present itself. Each act of expression realizes for its own part a portion of this project, and by opening a new field of truths, further extends the contract which has just expired. This is possible only through the