

PREFACE

WHAT is phenomenology? It may seem strange that this question has still to be asked half a century after the first works of Husserl. The fact remains that it has by no means been answered. Phenomenology is the study of essences; and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essences: the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness, for example. But phenomenology is also a philosophy which puts essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their facticity. It is a transcendental philosophy which places in abeyance the assertions arising out of the natural attitude, the better to understand them; but it is also a philosophy for which the world is always 'already there' before reflection begins—as an inalienable presence; and all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status. It is the search for a philosophy which shall be a 'rigorous science', but it also offers an account of space, time and the world as we 'live' them. It 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 scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide. Yet Husserl in his last works mentions a 'genetic phenomenology',¹ and even a 'constructive phenomenology'.² One may try to do away with these contradictions by making a distinction between Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenologies; yet the whole of *Sein und Zeit* springs from an indication given by Husserl and amounts to no more than an explicit account of the 'natürlicher Weltbegriff' or the 'Lebenswelt' which Husserl, towards the end of his life, identified as the central theme of phenomenology, with the result that the contradiction reappears in Husserl's own philosophy. The reader pressed for time will be inclined to give up the idea of covering a doctrine which says everything, and will wonder whether a philosophy which cannot define its scope deserves all the discussion which has gone on around it, and whether he is not faced rather by a myth or a fashion.

¹ *Méditations cartésiennes*, pp. 120 ff.

² See the unpublished *6th Méditation cartésienne*, edited by Eugen Fink, to which G. Berger has kindly referred us.

Even if this were the case, there would still be a need to understand the prestige of the myth and the origin of the fashion, and the opinion of the responsible philosopher must be that *phenomenology can be practised and identified as a manner or style of thinking, that it existed as a movement before arriving at complete awareness of itself as a philosophy*. It has been long on the way, and its adherents have discovered it in every quarter, certainly in Hegel and Kierkegaard, but equally in Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. A purely linguistic examination of the texts in question would yield no proof; we find in texts only what we put into them, and if ever any kind of history has suggested the interpretations which should be put on it, it is the history of philosophy. We shall find in ourselves, and nowhere else, the unity and true meaning of phenomenology. It is less a question of counting up quotations than of determining and expressing in concrete form *this phenomenology for ourselves* which has given a number of present-day readers the impression, on reading Husserl or Heidegger, not so much of encountering a new philosophy as of recognizing what they had been waiting for. Phenomenology is accessible only through a phenomenological method. Let us, therefore, try systematically to bring together the celebrated phenomenological themes as they have grown spontaneously together in life. Perhaps we shall then understand why phenomenology has for so long remained at an initial stage, as a problem to be solved and a hope to be realized.

It is a matter of describing, not of explaining or analysing. Husserl's first directive to phenomenology, in its early stages, to be a 'descriptive psychology', or to return to the 'things themselves', is from the start a rejection of science. I am not the outcome or the meeting-point of numerous causal agencies which determine my bodily or psychological make-up. I cannot conceive myself as nothing but a bit of the world, a mere object of biological, psychological or sociological investigation. I cannot shut myself up within the realm of science. All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. The whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced, and if we want to subject science itself to rigorous scrutiny and arrive at a precise assessment of its meaning and scope, we must begin by reawakening the basic experience of the world of which science is the second-order expression. Science has not and never will have, by its nature, the same significance *qua* form of being as the world which we perceive, for the simple reason that it is a rationale or explanation of that world. I am, not a 'living creature' nor even a 'man', nor again even 'a consciousness' endowed with all

the characteristics which zoology, social anatomy or inductive psychology recognize in these various products of the natural or historical process—I am the absolute source, my existence does not stem from my antecedents, from my physical and social environment; instead it moves out towards them and sustains them, for I alone bring into being for myself (and therefore into being in the only sense that the word can have for me) the tradition which I elect to carry on, or the horizon whose distance from me would be abolished—since that distance is not one of its properties—if I were not there to scan it with my gaze. Scientific points of view, according to which my existence is a moment of the world's, are always both naïve and at the same time dishonest, because they take for granted, without explicitly mentioning it, the other point of view, namely that of consciousness, through which from the outset a world forms itself round me and begins to exist for me. 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 countryside in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is.

This move is absolutely distinct from the idealist return to consciousness, and the demand for a pure description excludes equally the procedure of analytical reflection on the one hand, and that of scientific explanation on the other. Descartes and particularly Kant *detached* the subject, or consciousness, by showing that I could not possibly apprehend anything as existing unless I first of all experienced myself as existing in the act of apprehending it. They presented consciousness, the absolute certainty of my existence for myself, as the condition of there being anything at all; and the act of relating as the basis of relatedness. It is true that the act of relating is nothing if divorced from the spectacle of the world in which relations are found; the unity of consciousness in Kant is achieved simultaneously with that of the world. And in Descartes methodical doubt does not deprive us of anything, since the whole world, at least in so far as we experience it, is reinstated in the *Cogito*, enjoying equal certainty, and simply labelled 'thought of . . .'. But the relations between subject and world are not strictly bilateral: if they were, the certainty of the world would, in Descartes, be immediately given with that of the *Cogito*, and Kant would not have talked about his 'Copernican revolution'. Analytical reflection starts from our experience of the world and goes back to the subject as to a condition of possibility distinct from that experience, revealing the all-embracing synthesis as that without which there would be no world. To this extent it ceases to remain part of our experience and offers, in place of an account, a

reconstruction. It is understandable, in view of this, that Husserl, having accused Kant of adopting a 'faculty psychologism',¹ should have urged, in place of a noetic analysis which bases the world on the synthesizing activity of the subject, his own '*noematic reflection*' which remains within the object and, instead of begetting it, brings to light its fundamental unity.

The world is there before any possible analysis of mine, and it would be artificial to make it the outcome of a series of syntheses which link, in the first place sensations, then aspects of the object corresponding to different perspectives, when both are nothing but products of analysis, with no sort of prior reality. Analytical reflection believes that it can trace back the course followed by a prior constituting act and arrive, in the 'inner man'—to use Saint Augustine's expression—at a constituting power which has always been identical with that inner self. Thus reflection is carried away by itself and installs itself in an impregnable subjectivity, as yet untouched by being and time. But this is very ingenuous, or at least it is an incomplete form of reflection which loses sight of its own beginning. When I begin to reflect, my reflection bears upon an unreflective experience; moreover my reflection cannot be unaware of itself as an event, and so it appears to itself in the light of a truly creative act, of a changed structure of consciousness, and yet it has to recognize, as having priority over its own operations, the world which is given to the subject because the subject is given to himself. The real has to be described, not constructed or formed. Which means that I cannot put perception into the same category as the syntheses represented by judgements, acts or predications. My field of perception is constantly filled with a play of colours, noises and fleeting tactile sensations which I cannot relate precisely to the context of my clearly perceived world, yet which I nevertheless immediately 'place' in the world, without ever confusing them with my daydreams. Equally constantly I weave dreams round things. I imagine people and things whose presence is not incompatible with the context, yet who are not in fact involved in it: they are ahead of reality, in the realm of the imaginary. If the reality of my perception were based solely on the intrinsic coherence of 'representations', it ought to be for ever hesitant and, being wrapped up in my conjectures on probabilities, I ought to be ceaselessly taking apart misleading syntheses, and reinstating in reality stray phenomena which I had excluded in the first place. But this does not happen. The real is a closely woven fabric. It does not await our judgement before incorporating the most surprising phenomena, or before rejecting the most plausible figments of our imagination. Perception is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, a deli-

¹ *Logische Untersuchungen, Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*, p. 93.

berate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out, and is presupposed by them. The world is not an object such that I have in my possession the law of its making; it is the natural setting of, and field for, all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions. Truth does not 'inhabit' only 'the inner man',¹ or more accurately, there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself. When I return to myself from an excursion into the realm of dogmatic common sense or of science, I find, not a source of intrinsic truth, but a subject destined to the world.

All of which reveals the true meaning of the famous phenomenological reduction. There is probably no question over which Husserl spent more time—or to which he more often returned, since the 'problematic of reduction' occupies an important place in his unpublished work. For a long time, and even in recent texts, the reduction is presented as the return to a transcendental consciousness before which the world is spread out and completely transparent, quickened through and through by a series of apperceptions which it is the philosopher's task to reconstitute on the basis of their outcome. Thus my sensation of redness is *perceived as* the manifestation of a certain redness experienced, this in turn as the manifestation of a red surface, which is the manifestation of a piece of red cardboard, and this finally is the manifestation or outline of a red thing, namely this book. We are to understand, then, that it is the apprehension of a certain *hylè*, as indicating a phenomenon of a higher degree, the *Sinngebung*, or active meaning-giving operation which may be said to define consciousness, so that the world is nothing but 'world-as-meaning', and the phenomenological reduction is idealistic, in the sense that there is here a transcendental idealism which treats the world as an indivisible unity of value shared by Peter and Paul, in which their perspectives blend. 'Peter's consciousness' and 'Paul's consciousness' are in communication, the perception of the world 'by Peter' is not Peter's doing any more than its perception 'by Paul' is Paul's doing; in each case it is the doing of pre-personal forms of consciousness, whose communication raises no problem, since it is demanded by the very definition of consciousness, meaning or truth. In so far as I am a consciousness, that is, in so far as something has meaning for me, I am neither here nor there, neither Peter nor Paul; I am in no way distinguishable from an 'other' consciousness, since we are immediately in touch with the world and since the world is, by definition, unique, being the system in which all truths cohere. A logically consistent transcendental idealism rids the world of its

¹ In te redi; in interiore homine habitat veritas (Saint Augustine).

opacity and its transcendence. The world is precisely that thing of which we form a representation, not as men or as empirical subjects, but in so far as we are all one light and participate in the One without destroying its unity. Analytical reflection knows nothing of the problem of other minds, or of that of the world, because it insists that with the first glimmer of consciousness there appears in me theoretically the power of reaching some universal truth, and that the other person, being equally without thisness, location or body, the Alter and the Ego are one and the same in the true world which is the unifier of minds. There is no difficulty in understanding how *I* can conceive the Other, because the *I* and consequently the Other are not conceived as part of the woven stuff of phenomena; they have validity rather than existence. There is nothing hidden behind these faces and gestures, no domain to which I have no access, merely a little shadow which owes its very existence to the light. For Husserl, on the contrary, it is well known that there is a problem of other people, and the *alter ego* is a paradox. If the other is truly for himself alone, beyond his being for me, and if we are for each other and not both for God, we must necessarily have some appearance for each other. He must and I must have an outer appearance, and there must be, besides the perspective of the For Oneself—my view of myself and the other's of himself—a perspective of For Others—my view of others and theirs of me. Of course, these two perspectives, in each one of us, cannot be simply juxtaposed, *for in that case it is not I that the other would see, nor he that I should see*. I must be the exterior that I present to others, and the body of the other must be the other himself. This paradox and the dialectic of the Ego and the Alter are possible only provided that the Ego and the Alter Ego are defined by their situation and are not freed from all inherence; that is, provided that philosophy does not culminate in a return to the self, and that I discover by reflection not only my presence to myself, but also the possibility of an 'outside spectator'; that is, again, provided that at the very moment when I experience my existence—at the ultimate extremity of reflection—I fall short of the ultimate density which would place me outside time, and that I discover within myself a kind of internal weakness standing in the way of my being totally individualized: a weakness which exposes me to the gaze of others as a man among men or at least as a consciousness among consciousnesses. Hitherto the *Cogito* depreciated the perception of others, teaching me as it did that the *I* is accessible only to itself, since it defined *me* as the thought which I have of myself, and which clearly I am alone in having, at least in this ultimate sense. For the 'other' to be more than an empty word, it is necessary that my existence should never be reduced to my bare awareness of existing, but that it

should take in also the awareness that *one* may have of it, and thus include my incarnation in some nature and the possibility, at least, of a historical situation. The *Cogito* must reveal me in a situation, and it is on this condition alone that transcendental subjectivity can, as Husserl puts it,¹ *be an intersubjectivity*. As a meditating Ego, I can clearly distinguish from myself the world and things, since I certainly do not exist in the way in which things exist. I must even set aside from myself my body understood as a thing among things, as a collection of physico-chemical processes. But even if the *cogitatio*, which I thus discover, is without location in objective time and space, it is not without place in the phenomenological world. The world, which I distinguished from myself as the totality of things or of processes linked by causal relationships, I rediscover 'in me' as the permanent horizon of all my *cogitationes* and as a dimension in relation to which I am constantly situating myself. The true *Cogito* does not define the subject's existence in terms of the thought he has of existing, and furthermore does not convert the indubitability of the world into the indubitability of thought about the world, nor finally does it replace the world itself by the world as meaning. On the contrary it recognizes my thought itself as an inalienable fact, and does away with any kind of idealism in revealing me as 'being-in-the-world'.

It is because we are through and through compounded of relationships with the world that for us the only way to become aware of the fact is to suspend the resultant activity, to refuse it our complicity (to look at it *ohne mitzumachen*, as Husserl often says), or yet again, to put it 'out of play'. Not because we reject the certainties of common sense and a natural attitude to things—they are, on the contrary, the constant theme of philosophy—but because, being the presupposed basis of any thought, they are taken for granted, and go unnoticed, and because in order to arouse them and bring them to view, we have to suspend for a moment our recognition of them. The best formulation of the *reduction* is probably that given by Eugen Fink, Husserl's assistant, when he spoke of 'wonder' in the face of the world.² Reflection does not withdraw from the world towards the unity of consciousness as the world's basis; it steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice; it alone is consciousness of the world because it reveals that world as strange and paradoxical. Husserl's transcendental is not Kant's, and Husserl accuses Kant's philosophy of being 'worldly',

¹ *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*, III (unpublished).

² *Die phänomenologische Philosophie Edmund Husserls in der gegenwärtigen Kritik*, pp. 331 and ff.

because it *makes use* of our relation to the world, which is the motive force of the transcendental deduction, and makes the world immanent in the subject, instead of *being filled with wonder* at it and conceiving the subject as a process of transcendence towards the world. All the misunderstandings with his interpreters, with the existentialist 'dissidents' and finally with himself, have arisen from the fact that in order to see the world and grasp it as paradoxical, we must break with our familiar acceptance of it and, also, from the fact that from this break we can learn nothing but the unmotivated upsurge of the world. The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction. This is why Husserl is constantly re-examining the possibility of the reduction. If we were absolute mind, the reduction would present no problem. But since, on the contrary, we are in the world, since indeed our reflections are carried out in the temporal flux on to which we are trying to seize (since they *sich einströmen*, as Husserl says), there is no thought which embraces all our thought. The philosopher, as the unpublished works declare, is a perpetual beginner, which means that he takes for granted nothing that men, learned or otherwise, believe they know. It means also that philosophy itself must not take itself for granted, in so far as it may have managed to say something true; that it is an ever-renewed experiment in making its own beginning; that it consists wholly in the description of this beginning, and finally, that radical reflection amounts to a consciousness of its own dependence on an unreflective life which is its initial situation, unchanging, given once and for all. Far from being, as has been thought, a procedure of idealistic philosophy, phenomenological reduction belongs to existential philosophy: Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world' appears only against the background of the phenomenological reduction.

A misunderstanding of a similar kind confuses the notion of the 'essences' in Husserl. Every reduction, says Husserl, as well as being transcendental is necessarily eidetic. That means that we cannot subject our perception of the world to philosophical scrutiny without ceasing to be identified with that act of positing the world, with that interest in it which delimits us, without drawing back from our commitment which is itself thus made to appear as a spectacle, without passing from the *fact* of our existence to its *nature*, from the *Dasein* to the *Wesen*. But it is clear that the essence is here not the end, but a means, that our effective involvement in the world is precisely what has to be understood and made amenable to conceptualization, for it is what polarizes all our conceptual particularizations. The need to proceed by way of essences does not mean that philosophy takes them

as its object, but, on the contrary, that our existence is too tightly held in the world to be able to know itself as such at the moment of its involvement, and that it requires the field of ideality in order to become acquainted with and to prevail over its facticity. The Vienna Circle, as is well known, lays it down categorically that we can enter into relations only with meanings. For example, 'consciousness' is not for the Vienna Circle identifiable with what we are. It is a complex meaning which has developed late in time, which should be handled with care, and only after the many meanings which have contributed, throughout the word's semantic development, to the formation of its present one have been made explicit. Logical positivism of this kind is the antithesis of Husserl's thought. Whatever the subtle changes of meaning which have ultimately brought us, as a linguistic acquisition, the word and concept of consciousness, we enjoy direct access to what it designates. For we have the experience of ourselves, of that consciousness which we are, and it is on the basis of this experience that all linguistic connotations are assessed, and precisely through it that language comes to have any meaning at all for us. 'It is that as yet dumb experience . . . which we are concerned to lead to the pure expression of its own meaning.'¹ Husserl's essences are destined to bring back all the living relationships of experience, as the fisherman's net draws up from the depths of the ocean quivering fish and seaweed. Jean Wahl is therefore wrong in saying that 'Husserl separates essences from existence'.² The separated essences are those of language. It is the office of language to cause essences to exist in a state of separation which is in fact merely apparent, since through language they still rest upon the ante-predicative life of consciousness. 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 round which the acts of naming and expression take shape.

Seeking the essence of consciousness will therefore not consist in developing the *Wortbedeutung* of consciousness and escaping from existence into the universe of things said; it will consist in rediscovering my actual presence to myself, the fact of my consciousness which is in the last resort what the word and the concept of consciousness mean. Looking for the world's essence is not looking for what it is as an idea once it has been reduced to a theme of discourse; it is looking for what it is as a fact for us before any thematization. Sensationalism 'reduces' the world by noticing that after all we never experience anything but states of ourselves. Transcendental idealism too 'reduces' the world since, in so far as it guarantees the world, it does so by regarding it as thought or consciousness of the world, and as the mere

¹ *Méditations cartésiennes*, p. 33.

² *Réalisme, dialectique et mystère*, l'Arbalète, Autumn, 1942, unpaginated.

He can only see for me. But
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correlative of our knowledge, with the result that it becomes immanent in consciousness and the aseity of things is thereby done away with. The eidetic reduction is, on the other hand, the determination to bring the world to light as it is before any falling back on ourselves has occurred, it is the ambition to make reflection emulate the unreflective life of consciousness. I aim at and perceive a world. If I said, as do the sensationalists, that we have here only 'states of consciousness', and if I tried to distinguish my perceptions from my dreams with the aid of 'criteria', I should overlook the phenomenon of the world. For if I am able to talk about 'dreams' and 'reality', to bother my head about the distinction between imaginary and real, and cast doubt upon the 'real', it is because this distinction is already made by me before any analysis; it is because I have an experience of the real as of the imaginary, and the problem then becomes one not of asking how critical thought can provide for itself secondary equivalents of this distinction, but of making explicit our primordial knowledge of the 'real', of describing our perception of the world as that upon which our idea of truth is forever based. We must not, therefore, wonder whether we really perceive a world, we must instead say: the world is what we perceive. In more general terms we must not wonder whether our self-evident truths are real truths, or whether, through some perversity inherent in our minds, that which is self-evident for us might not be illusory in relation to some truth in itself. For in so far as we talk about illusion, it is because we have identified illusions, and done so solely in the light of some perception which at the same time gave assurance of its own truth. It follows that doubt, or the fear of being mistaken, testifies as soon as it arises to our power of unmasking error, and that it could never finally tear us away from truth. We are in the realm of truth and it is 'the experience of truth' which is self-evident.¹ To seek the essence of perception is to declare that perception is, not presumed true, but defined as access to truth. So, if I now wanted, according to idealistic principles, to base this *de facto* self-evident truth, this irresistible belief, on some absolute self-evident truth, that is, on the absolute clarity which my thoughts have for me; if I tried to find in myself a creative thought which bodied forth the framework of the world or illumined it through and through, I should once more prove unfaithful to my experience of the world, and should be looking for what makes that experience possible instead of looking for what it is. The self-evidence of perception is not adequate thought or apodeictic self-evidence.² The world is not what

¹ *Das Erlebnis der Wahrheit (Logische Untersuchungen, Prolegomena zur reinen Logik)* p. 190.

² There is no apodeictic self-evidence, the *Formale und transzendente Logik* (p. 142) says in effect.

I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world, I have no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible. 'There is a world', or rather: 'There is the world'; I can never completely account for this ever-reiterated assertion in my life. This facticity of the world is what constitutes the *Weltlichkeit der Welt*, what causes the world to be the world; just as the facticity of the *cogito* is not an imperfection in itself, but rather what assures me of my existence. The eidetic method is the method of a phenomenological positivism which bases the possible on the real.

We can now consider the notion of intentionality, too often cited as the main discovery of phenomenology, whereas it is understandable only through the reduction. 'All consciousness is consciousness of something'; there is nothing new in that. Kant showed, in the *Refutation of Idealism*, that inner perception is impossible without outer perception, that the world, as a collection of connected phenomena, is anticipated in the consciousness of my unity, and is the means whereby I come into being as a consciousness. What distinguishes intentionality from the Kantian relation to a possible object is that the unity of the world, before being posited by knowledge in a specific act of identification, is 'lived' as ready-made or already there. Kant himself shows in the *Critique of Judgement* that there exists a unity of the imagination and the understanding and a unity of subjects *before the object*, and that, in experiencing the beautiful, for example, I am aware of a harmony between sensation and concept, between myself and others, which is itself without any concept. Here the subject is no longer the universal thinker of a system of objects rigorously interrelated, the positing power who subjects the manifold to the law of the understanding, in so far as he is to be able to put together a world—he discovers and enjoys his own nature as spontaneously in harmony with the law of the understanding. But if the subject has a nature, then the hidden art of the imagination must condition the categorial activity. It is no longer merely the aesthetic judgement, but knowledge too which rests upon this art, an art which forms the basis of the unity of consciousness and of consciousnesses.

Husserl takes up again the *Critique of Judgement* when he talks about a teleology of consciousness. It is not a matter of duplicating human consciousness with some absolute thought which, from outside, is imagined as assigning to it its aims. It is a question of recognizing consciousness itself as a project of the world, meant for a world which it neither embraces nor possesses, but towards which it is perpetually directed—and the world as this pre-objective individual

whose imperious unity decrees what knowledge shall take as its goal. This is why Husserl distinguishes between intentionality of act, which is that of our judgements and of those occasions when we voluntarily take up a position—the only intentionality discussed in the *Critique of Pure Reason*—and operative intentionality (*fungierende Intentionalität*), or that which produces the natural and antepredicative unity of the world and of our life, being apparent in our desires, our evaluations and in the landscape we see, more clearly than in objective knowledge, and furnishing the text which our knowledge tries to translate into precise language. Our relationship to the world, as it is untiringly enunciated within us, is not a thing which can be any further clarified by analysis; philosophy can only place it once more before our eyes and present it for our ratification.

Through this broadened notion of intentionality, phenomenological 'comprehension' is distinguished from traditional 'intellection', which is confined to 'true and immutable natures', and so phenomenology can become a phenomenology of origins. Whether we are concerned with a thing perceived, a historical event or a doctrine, to 'understand' is to take in the total intention—not only what these things are for representation (the 'properties' of the thing perceived, the mass of 'historical facts', the 'ideas' introduced by the doctrine)—but the unique mode of existing expressed in the properties of the pebble, the glass or the piece of wax, in all the events of a revolution, in all the thoughts of a philosopher. It is a matter, in the case of each civilization, of finding the Idea in the Hegelian sense, that is, not a law of the physico-mathematical type, discoverable by objective thought, but that formula which sums up some unique manner of behaviour towards others, towards Nature, time and death: a certain way of patterning the world which the historian should be capable of seizing upon and making his own. These are the *dimensions* of history. In this context there is not a human word, not a gesture, even one which is the outcome of habit or absent-mindedness, which has not some meaning. For example, I may have been under the impression that I lapsed into silence through weariness, or some minister may have thought he had uttered merely an appropriate platitude, yet my silence or his words immediately take on a significance, because my fatigue or his falling back upon a ready-made formula are not accidental, for they express a certain lack of interest, and hence some degree of adoption of a definite position in relation to the situation.

When an event is considered at close quarters, at the moment when it is lived through, everything seems subject to chance: one man's ambition, some lucky encounter, some local circumstance or other appears to have been decisive. But chance happenings offset each other, and facts in their multiplicity coalesce and show up a

certain way of taking a stand in relation to the human situation, reveal in fact an *event* which has its definite outline and about which we can talk. Should the starting-point for the understanding of history be ideology, or politics, or religion, or economics? Should we try to understand a doctrine from its overt content, or from the psychological make-up and the biography of its author? We must seek an understanding from all these angles simultaneously, everything has meaning, and we shall find this same structure of being underlying all relationships. All these views are true provided that they are not isolated, that we delve deeply into history and reach the unique core of existential meaning which emerges in each perspective. It is true, as Marx says, that history does not walk on its head, but it is also true that it does not think with its feet. Or one should say rather that it is neither its 'head' nor its 'feet' that we have to worry about, but its body. All economic and psychological explanations of a doctrine are true, since the thinker never thinks from any starting-point but the one constituted by what he is. Reflection even on a doctrine will be complete only if it succeeds in linking up with the doctrine's history and the extraneous explanations of it, and in putting back the causes and meaning of the doctrine in an existential structure. There is, as Husserl says, a 'genesis of meaning' (*Sinngenesis*),¹ which alone, in the last resort, teaches us what the doctrine 'means.' Like understanding, criticism must be pursued at all levels, and naturally, it will be insufficient, for the refutation of a doctrine, to relate it to some accidental event in the author's life: its significance goes beyond, and there is no pure accident in existence or in co-existence, since both absorb random events and transmute them into the rational.

Finally, as it is indivisible in the present, history is equally so in its sequences. Considered in the light of its fundamental dimensions, all periods of history appear as manifestations of a single existence, or as episodes in a single drama—without our knowing whether it has an ending. Because we are in the world, we are *condemned to meaning*, and we cannot do or say anything without its acquiring a name in history.

Probably the chief gain from phenomenology is to have united extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism in its notion of the world or of rationality. Rationality is precisely measured by the experiences in which it is disclosed. To say that there exists rationality is to say that perspectives blend, perceptions confirm each other, a meaning emerges. But it should not be set in a realm apart, transposed

¹ The usual term in the unpublished writings. The idea is already to be found in the *Formale und transzendente Logik*, pp. 184 and ff.

into absolute Spirit, or into a world in the realist sense. The phenomenological world is not pure being, but the sense which is revealed where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people's intersect and engage each other like gears. It is thus inseparable from subjectivity and intersubjectivity, which find their unity when I either take up my past experiences in those of the present, or other people's in my own. For the first time the philosopher's thinking is sufficiently conscious not to anticipate itself and endow its own results with reified form in the world. The philosopher tries to conceive the world, others and himself and their interrelations. But the meditating Ego, the 'impartial spectator' (*uninteressierter Zuschauer*)¹ do not rediscover an already given rationality, they 'establish themselves',² and establish it, by an act of initiative which has no guarantee in being, its justification resting entirely on the effective power which it confers on us of taking our own history upon ourselves.

The phenomenological world is not the bringing to explicit expression of a pre-existing being, but the laying down of being. Philosophy is not the reflection of a pre-existing truth, but, like art, the act of bringing truth into being. One may well ask how this creation is *possible*, and if it does not recapture in things a pre-existing Reason. The answer is that the only pre-existent Logos is the world itself, and that the philosophy which brings it into visible existence does not begin by being *possible*; it is actual or real like the world of which it is a part, and no explanatory hypothesis is clearer than the act whereby we take up this unfinished world in an effort to complete and conceive it. Rationality is not a *problem*. There is behind it no unknown quantity which has to be determined by deduction, or, beginning with it, demonstrated inductively. We witness every minute the miracle of related experiences, and yet nobody knows better than we do how this miracle is worked, for we are ourselves this network of relationships. The world and reason are not problematical. We may say, if we wish, that they are mysterious, but their mystery defines them: there can be no question of dispelling it by some 'solution', it is on the hither side of all solutions. True philosophy consists in re-learning to look at the world, and in this sense a historical account can give meaning to the world quite as 'deeply' as a philosophical treatise. We take our fate in our hands, we become responsible for our history through reflection, but equally by a decision on which we stake our life, and in both cases what is involved is a violent act which is validated by being performed.

Phenomenology, as a disclosure of the world, rests on itself, or

¹ 6th *Méditation cartésienne* (unpublished).

² Ibid.

rather provides its own foundation.¹ All knowledge is sustained by a 'ground' of postulates and finally by our communication with the world as primary embodiment of rationality. Philosophy, as radical reflection, dispenses in principle with this resource. As, however, it too is in history, it too exploits the world and constituted reason. It must therefore put to itself the question which it puts to all branches of knowledge, and so duplicate itself infinitely, being, as Husserl says, a dialogue or infinite meditation, and, in so far as it remains faithful to its intention, never knowing where it is going. The unfinished nature of phenomenology and the inchoative atmosphere which has surrounded it are not to be taken as a sign of failure, they were inevitable because phenomenology's task was to reveal the mystery of the world and of reason.² If phenomenology was a movement before becoming a doctrine or a philosophical system, this was attributable neither to accident, nor to fraudulent intent. It is as painstaking as the works of Balzac, Proust, Valéry or Cézanne—by reason of the same kind of attentiveness and wonder, the same demand for awareness, the same will to seize the meaning of the world or of history as that meaning comes into being. In this way it merges into the general effort of modern thought.

¹ 'Rückbeziehung der Phänomenologie auf sich selbst,' say the unpublished writings.

² We are indebted for this last expression to G. Gusdorf, who may well have used it in another sense.

I

THE 'SENSATION' AS A UNIT OF EXPERIENCE

AT the outset of the study of perception, we find in language the notion of sensation, which seems immediate and obvious: I have a sensation of redness, of blueness, of hot or cold. It will, however, be seen that nothing could in fact be more confused, and that because they accepted it readily, traditional analyses missed the phenomenon of perception.

I might in the first place understand by sensation the way in which I am affected and the experiencing of a state of myself. The greyness which, when I close my eyes, surrounds me, leaving no distance between me and it, the sounds that encroach on my drowsiness and hum 'in my head' perhaps give some indication of what pure sensation might be. I might be said to have sense-experience (*sentir*) precisely to the extent that I coincide with the sensed, that the latter ceases to have any place in the objective world, and that it signifies nothing for me. This entails recognizing that sensation should be sought on the hither side of any qualified content, since red and blue, in order to be distinguishable as two colours, must already form some picture before me, even though no precise place be assigned to them, and thus cease to be part of myself. Pure sensation will be the experience of an undifferentiated, instantaneous, dotlike impact. It is unnecessary to show, since authors are agreed on it, that this notion corresponds to nothing in our experience, and that the most rudimentary *factual perceptions* that we are acquainted with, in creatures such as the ape or the hen, have a bearing on relationships and not on any absolute terms.¹ But this does not dispose of the question as to why we feel justified *in theory* in distinguishing within experience a layer of 'impressions'. Let us imagine a white patch on a homogeneous background. All the points in the patch have a

¹ See *La Structure du Comportement*, pp. 142 and ff.

certain 'function' in common, that of forming themselves into a 'shape'. The colour of the shape is more intense, and as it were more resistant than that of the background; the edges of the white patch 'belong' to it, and are not part of the background although they adjoin it: the patch appears to be placed on the background and does not break it up. Each part arouses the expectation of more than it contains, and this elementary perception is therefore already charged with a *meaning*. But if the shape and the background, as a whole, are not sensed, they must be sensed, one may object, in each of their points. To say this is to forget that each point in its turn can be perceived only as a figure on a background. When Gestalt theory informs us that a figure on a background is the simplest sense-given available to us, we reply that this is not a contingent characteristic of factual perception, which leaves us free, in an ideal analysis, to bring in the notion of impressions. It is the very definition of the phenomenon of perception, that without which a phenomenon cannot be said to be perception at all. The perceptual 'something' is always in the middle of something else, it always forms part of a 'field'. A really homogeneous area offering *nothing to be* cannot be given to *any perception*. The structure of actual perception alone can teach us what perception is. The pure impression is, therefore, not only undiscoverable, but also imperceptible and so inconceivable as an instant of perception. If it is introduced, it is because instead of attending to the experience of perception, we overlook it in favour of the object perceived. A visual field is not made up of limited views. But an object seen is made up of bits of matter, and spatial points are external to each other. An isolated datum of perception is inconceivable, at least if we do the mental experiment of attempting to perceive such a thing. But in the world there are either isolated objects or a physical void.

I shall therefore give up any attempt to define sensation as pure impression. Rather, to see is to have colours or lights, to hear is to have sounds, to sense (*sentir*) is to have qualities. To know what sense-experience is, then, is it not enough to have seen a red or to have heard an A? But red and green are not sensations, they are the sensed (*sensibles*), and quality is not an element of consciousness, but a property of the object. Instead of providing a simple means of delimiting sensations, if we consider it in the experience itself which evinces it, the quality is as rich and mysterious as the object, or indeed the whole spectacle, perceived. This red patch which I see on the carpet is red only in virtue of a shadow which lies across it, its quality is apparent only in relation to the play of light upon it, and hence as an element in a spatial configuration. Moreover the colour can be said to be there only if it occupies an area of a certain size, too small an area not being describable in these terms. Finally this

red would literally not be the same if it were not the 'woolly red' of a carpet.¹ Analysis, then, discovers in each quality meanings which reside in it. It may be objected that this is true only of the qualities which form part of our actual experience, which are overlaid with a body of knowledge, and that we are still justified in conceiving a 'pure quality' which would set limits to a pure sensation. But as we have just seen, this pure sensation would amount to no sensation, and thus to not feeling at all. The alleged self-evidence of sensation is not based on any testimony of consciousness, but on widely held prejudice. We think we know perfectly well what 'seeing', 'hearing', 'feeling' are, because perception has long provided us with objects which are coloured or which emit sounds. When we try to analyse it, we transpose these objects into consciousness. We commit what psychologists call 'the experience error', which means that what we know to be in things themselves we immediately take as being in our consciousness of them. We make perception out of things perceived. And since perceived things themselves are obviously accessible only through perception, we end by understanding neither. **We are caught up in the world and we do not succeed in extricating ourselves from it in order to achieve consciousness of the world.** If we did we should see that the quality is never experienced immediately, and that all consciousness is consciousness of something. Nor is this 'something' necessarily an identifiable object. There are two ways of being mistaken about quality: one is to make it into an element of consciousness, when in fact it is an object *for* consciousness, to treat it as an incommunicable impression, whereas it always has a meaning; the other is to think that this meaning and this object, at the level of quality, are fully developed and determinate. The second error, like the first, springs from our prejudice about the world. Suppose we construct, by the use of optics and geometry, that bit of the world which can at any moment throw its image on our retina. Everything outside its perimeter, since it does not reflect upon any sensitive area, no more affects our vision than does light falling on our closed eyes. We ought, then, to perceive a segment of the world precisely delimited, surrounded by a zone of blackness, packed full of qualities with no interval between them, held together by definite relationships of size similar to those lying on the retina. The fact is that experience offers nothing like this, and we shall never, using the world as our starting-point, understand what a *field of vision* is. Even if it is possible to trace out a perimeter of vision by gradually approaching the centre of the lateral stimuli, the results of such measurement vary from one moment to another, and one never manages to determine the instant when a stimulus

¹ J. P. Sartre, *L'Imaginaire*, p. 241.

addition of auxiliary lines makes two figures unequal which are objectively equal;¹ a coloured area appears to be the same colour over the whole of its surface, whereas the chromatic thresholds of the different parts of the retina ought to make it red in one place, orange somewhere else, and in certain cases colourless.² Should these cases in which the phenomenon does not correspond to the stimulus be retained within the framework of the law of constancy, and explained by additional factors—attention and judgement—or must the law itself be jettisoned? When red and green, presented together, give the result grey, it is conceded that the central combination of stimuli can immediately give rise to a different sensation from what the objective stimuli would lead us to expect. When the apparent size of an object varies with its apparent distance, or its apparent colour with our recollections of the object, it is recognized that 'the sensory processes are not immune to central influences'.³ In this case, therefore, the 'sensible' cannot be defined as the immediate effect of an external stimulus. Cannot the same conclusion be drawn from the first three examples we have mentioned? If attention, more precise instructions, rest or prolonged practice finally bring perception into line with the law of constancy, this does not prove the law's universal validity, for, in the examples quoted, the first appearance possessed a sensory character just as incontestable as the final results obtained. So the question is whether attentive perception, the subject's concentration on one point of the visual field—for example, the 'analytic perception' of the two main lines in Müller-Lyer's optical illusion—do not, instead of revealing the 'normal sensation', substitute a special set-up for the original phenomenon.⁴ The law of constancy cannot avail itself, against the testimony of consciousness, of any crucial experience in which it is not already implied, and wherever we believe that we are establishing it, it is already presupposed.⁵ If we turn back to the phenomena, they show us that the apprehension of a quality, just as that of size, is bound up with a whole perceptual context, and that the stimuli no longer furnish us with the indirect means we were seeking of isolating a layer of immediate impressions. But when we look for an 'objective' definition of sensation, it is not only the physical stimulus

¹ Koehler, *ibid.*, pp. 57–8, cf. pp. 58–66.

² R. Déjean, *Les Conditions objectives de la Perception visuelle*, pp. 60 and 83.

³ Stumpf, quoted by Koehler, *ibid.*, p. 58.

⁴ Koehler, *ibid.*, pp. 58–63.

⁵ It is only fair to add that this is true of all theories, and that nowhere is there a crucial experience. For the same reason the constancy hypothesis cannot be completely refuted on the basis of induction. It is discredited because it overlooks phenomena and does not permit any understanding of them. To discern them and to pass judgement on the hypothesis, indeed, one must 'suspend' it.

which slips through our fingers. The sensory apparatus, as conceived by modern physiology, is no longer fitted for the rôle of 'transmitter' cast for it by traditional science. Non-cortical lesions of the apparatus of touch no doubt lessen the concentration of points sensitive to heat and cold, or pressure, and diminish the sensitivity of those that remain. But if, to the injured system, a sufficiently extensive stimulus be applied, the specific sensations reappear. The raising of the thresholds is compensated by a more vigorous movement of the hand.¹

One can discern, at the rudimentary stage of sensibility, a working together on the part of partial stimuli and a collaboration of the sensory with the motor system which, in a variable physiological constellation, keeps sensation constant, and rules out any definition of the nervous process as the simple transmission of a given message. The destruction of sight, wherever the injuries be sustained, follows the same law: all colours are affected in the first place,² and lose their saturation. Then the spectrum is simplified, being reduced to four and soon to two colours; finally a grey monochrome stage is reached, although the pathological colour is never identifiable with any normal one. Thus in central as in peripheral lesions 'the loss of nervous substance results not only in a deficiency of certain qualities, but in the change to a less differentiated and more primitive structure'.³ Conversely, normal functioning must be understood as a process of integration in which the text of the external world is not so much copied, as composed. And if we try to seize 'sensation' within the perspective of the bodily phenomena which pave the way to it, we find not a psychic individual, a function of certain known variables, but a formation already bound up with a larger whole, already endowed with a meaning, distinguishable only in degree from the more complex perceptions, and which therefore gets us no further in our attempt to delimit pure sensation. There is no physiological definition of sensation, and more generally there is no physiological psychology which is autonomous, because the physiological event itself obeys biological and psychological laws. For a long time it was thought that peripheral conditioning was the surest method of identifying 'elementary' psychic functions, and of distinguishing them from 'superior' functions less strictly bound up with the bodily substructure. A closer analysis, however, reveals that the two kinds of function overlap. The elementary is no longer that which by addition will cumulatively constitute the whole, nor is it a mere

¹ Stein, *op. cit.*, pp. 357–9.

² Even daltonism does not prove that certain systems are, and are alone in being, entrusted with 'seeing' red and green, since a colour-blind person manages to distinguish red if a large area in that colour is put before him, or if the presentation of the colour is made to last a long time. *Id. ibid.*, p. 365.

³ Weizsäcker, quoted by Stein, *ibid.*, p. 364.

once seen is seen no longer. The region surrounding the visual field is not easy to describe, but what is certain is that it is neither black nor grey. There occurs here an *indeterminate vision*, a *vision of something or other*, and, to take the extreme case, what is behind my back is not without some element of visual presence. The two straight lines in Müller-Lyer's optical illusion (Fig. 1) are neither of equal nor unequal length; it is only in the objective world that this question arises.¹ The visual field is that strange zone in which contradictory notions jostle each other because the objects—the straight lines of Müller-Lyer—are not, in that field, assigned to the realm of being, in which a comparison would be possible, but each is taken in its private

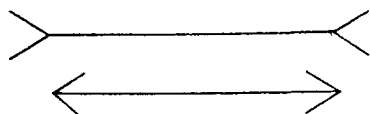


Fig. 1.

context as if it did not belong to the same universe as the other. Psychologists have for a long time taken great care to overlook these phenomena. In the world taken in itself everything is determined. There are many unclear sights, as for example a landscape on a misty day, but then we always say that no real landscape is in itself unclear. It is so only for us. The object, psychologists would assert, is never ambiguous, but becomes so only through our inattention. The bounds of the visual field are not themselves variable, and there is a moment when the approaching object begins absolutely to be seen, but we do not 'notice' it. But the notion of attention, as we shall show more fully, is supported by no evidence provided by consciousness. It is no more than an auxiliary hypothesis, evolved to save the prejudice in favour of an objective world. We must recognize the indeterminate as a positive phenomenon. It is in this atmosphere that quality arises. Its meaning is an equivocal meaning; we are concerned with an expressive value rather than with logical significance. The determinate quality by which empiricism tried to define sensation is an object, not an element, of consciousness, indeed it is the very lately developed object of scientific consciousness. For these two reasons, it conceals rather than reveals subjectivity.

The two definitions of sensation which we have just tried out were only apparently direct. We have seen that they were based on the object perceived. In this they were in agreement with common sense, which also identifies the sensible by the objective conditions which govern it. The visible is what is seized upon *with* the eyes, the sensible

¹ Koffka, *Psychologie*, p. 530.

is what is seized on *by* the senses. Let us follow up the idea of sensation on this basis,¹ and see what becomes of this 'by' and this 'with', and the notion of sense-organ, in the first-order thinking constituted by science. Having shown that there is no experience of sensation, do we at least find, in its causes and objective origins, any reasons for retaining it as an explanatory concept? Physiology, to which the psychologist turns as to a higher court of appeal, is in the same predicament as psychology. It too first situates its object in the world and treats it as a bit of extension. *Behaviour* is thus hidden by the reflex, the elaboration and patterning of stimuli, by a longitudinal theory of nervous functioning, which establishes a theoretical correspondence between each element of the situation and an element of the reaction.² As in the case of the reflex arc theory, physiology of perception begins by recognizing an anatomical path leading from a *receiver* through a definite *transmitter* to a recording station,³ equally specialized. The objective world being given, it is assumed that it passes on to the sense-organs messages which must be registered, then deciphered in such a way as to reproduce in us the original text. Hence we have in principle a point-by-point correspondence and constant connection between the stimulus and the elementary perception. But this 'constancy hypothesis'⁴ conflicts with the data of consciousness, and the very psychologists who accept it recognize its purely theoretical character.⁵ For example, the intensity of a sound under certain circumstances lowers its pitch; the

¹ There is no justification for dodging the issue, as does Jaspers, for example (*Zur Analyse der Trugwahrnehmungen*) by setting up in opposition, on the one hand a descriptive psychology which 'understands' phenomena, and on the other an explanatory psychology, which concerns itself with their origin. The psychologist always sees consciousness as placed in the body in the midst of the world, and for him the series stimulus-impression-perception is a sequence of events at the end of which perception begins. Each consciousness is born in the world and each perception is a new birth of consciousness. In this perspective the 'immediate' data of perception can always be challenged as mere appearances and as complex products of an origin. The descriptive method can acquire a genuine claim only from the transcendental point of view. But, even from this point of view, the problem remains as to how consciousness perceives itself or appears to itself as inserted in a nature. For the philosopher, as for the psychologist, there is therefore always a problem of origins, and the only method possible is to follow, in its scientific development, the causal explanation in order to make its meaning quite clear, and assign to it its proper place in the body of truth. That is why there will be found no *refutation*, but only an effort to understand the difficulties peculiar to causal thinking.

² See *La Structure du Comportement*, Chap. I.

³ We are translating roughly the series 'Empfänger-Übermittler-Empfänger' spoken of by J. Stein, *Über die Veränderung der Sinnesleistungen und die Entstehung von Trugwahrnehmungen*, p. 351.

⁴ Koehler, *Über unbemerkte Empfindungen und Urteilstäuschungen*.

⁵ Stumpf does so explicitly. Cf. Koehler, *ibid.*, p. 54.

addition of auxiliary lines makes two figures unequal which are objectively equal;¹ a coloured area appears to be the same colour over the whole of its surface, whereas the chromatic thresholds of the different parts of the retina ought to make it red in one place, orange somewhere else, and in certain cases colourless.² Should these cases in which the phenomenon does not correspond to the stimulus be retained within the framework of the law of constancy, and explained by additional factors—attention and judgement—or must the law itself be jettisoned? When red and green, presented together, give the result grey, it is conceded that the central combination of stimuli can immediately give rise to a different sensation from what the objective stimuli would lead us to expect. When the apparent size of an object varies with its apparent distance, or its apparent colour with our recollections of the object, it is recognized that 'the sensory processes are not immune to central influences'.³ In this case, therefore, the 'sensible' cannot be defined as the immediate effect of an external stimulus. Cannot the same conclusion be drawn from the first three examples we have mentioned? If attention, more precise instructions, rest or prolonged practice finally bring perception into line with the law of constancy, this does not prove the law's universal validity, for, in the examples quoted, the first appearance possessed a sensory character just as incontestable as the final results obtained. So the question is whether attentive perception, the subject's concentration on one point of the visual field—for example, the 'analytic perception' of the two main lines in Müller-Lyer's optical illusion—do not, instead of revealing the 'normal sensation', substitute a special set-up for the original phenomenon.⁴ The law of constancy cannot avail itself, against the testimony of consciousness, of any crucial experience in which it is not already implied, and wherever we believe that we are establishing it, it is already presupposed.⁵ If we turn back to the phenomena, they show us that the apprehension of a quality, just as that of size, is bound up with a whole perceptual context, and that the stimuli no longer furnish us with the indirect means we were seeking of isolating a layer of immediate impressions. But when we look for an 'objective' definition of sensation, it is not only the physical stimulus

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³ Weizsäcker, quoted by Stein, *ibid.*, p. 364.

occasion for the whole to constitute itself. The elementary event is already invested with meaning, and the higher function will bring into being only a more integrated mode of existence or a more valid adaptation, by using and sublimating the subordinate operations. Conversely, 'the experience of feeling is a vital process, no less than procreation, breathing or growth'.¹ Psychology and physiology are no longer, then, two parallel sciences, but two accounts of behaviour, the first concrete, the second abstract.² We said that when the psychologist asks the physiologist for a definition of sensation 'in causal terms', he encounters once more on this new ground his familiar difficulties, and now we can see why. The physiologist for his part has to rid himself of the realistic prejudice which all the sciences borrow from common sense, and which hampers them in their development. The changed meaning of the terms 'elementary' and 'more advanced' in modern physiology proclaims a changed philosophy.³ The scientist too must learn to criticize the idea of an external world in itself, since the facts themselves prompt him to abandon that of the body as a transmitter of messages. The sensible is what is apprehended *with* the senses, but now we know that this 'with' is not merely instrumental, that the sensory apparatus is not a conductor, that even on the periphery the physiological impression is involved in relations formerly considered central.

Once more, reflection—even the second-order reflection of science—obscures what we thought was clear. We believed we knew what feeling, seeing and hearing were, and now these words raise problems. We are invited to go back to the experiences to which they refer in order to redefine them. The traditional notion of sensation was not a concept born of reflection, but a late product of thought directed towards objects, the last element in the representation of the world, the furthest removed from its original source, and therefore the most unclear. Inevitably science, in its general effort towards objectification, evolved a picture of the human organism as a physical system undergoing stimuli which were themselves identified by their physico-chemical properties, and tried to reconstitute actual perception⁴ on this basis, and to close the circle of scientific knowledge

¹ Weizsäcker, quoted by Stein, *ibid.*, p. 354.

² On all these points see *La Structure du Comportement*, in particular pp. 52 and ff., 65 and ff.

³ Gelb, *Die Farbenkonstanz der Sehdinge*, p. 595.

⁴ 'The sensations are certainly artificial products, but not arbitrary ones, they are the last component wholes into which the natural structures can be decomposed by the "analytical attitude". Seen from this point of view, they contribute to the knowledge of structures, and consequently the results of the study of sensations, correctly interpreted, are an important element in the psychology of perception.' Koffka, *Psychologie*, p. 548.

by discovering the laws governing the production of knowledge itself, by establishing an objective science of subjectivity.¹ But it is also inevitable that this attempt should fail. If we return to the objective investigations themselves, we first of all discover that the conditions external to the sensory field do not govern it part for part, and that they exert an effect only to the extent of making possible a basic pattern—which is what Gestalt theory makes clear. Then we see that within the organism the structure depends on variables such as the biological meaning of the situation, which are no longer physical variables, with the result that the whole eludes the well-known instruments of physico-mathematical analysis, and opens the way to another type of intelligibility.² If we now turn back, as is done here, towards perceptual experience, we notice that science succeeds in constructing only a semblance of subjectivity: it introduces sensations which are things, just where experience shows that there are meaningful patterns; it forces the phenomenal universe into categories which make sense only in the universe of science. It requires that two perceived lines, like two real lines, should be equal or unequal, that a perceived crystal should have a definite number of sides,³ without realizing that the perceived, by its nature, admits of the ambiguous, the shifting, and is shaped by its context. In Müller-Lyer's illusion, one of the lines ceases to be equal to the other without becoming 'unequal': it becomes 'different'. That is to say, an isolated, objective line, and the same line taken in a figure, cease to be, for perception, 'the same'. It is identifiable in these two functions only by analytic perception, which is not natural. In the same way the perceived contains gaps which are not mere 'failures to perceive'. I may, through sight or touch, recognize a crystal as having a 'regular' shape without having, even tacitly, counted its sides. I may be familiar with a face without ever having perceived the colour of the eyes in themselves. The theory of sensation, which builds up all knowledge out of determinate qualities, offers us objects purged of all ambiguity, pure and absolute, the ideal rather than the real themes of knowledge: in short, it is compatible only with the lately developed superstructure of consciousness. That is where 'the idea of sensation is approximately realized'.⁴

The images which instinct projects before it, those which tradition recreates in each generation, or simply dreams, are in the first place presented on an equal footing with genuine perceptions, and gradually, by critical labour, the true, present and explicit perception is

¹ Cf. Guillaume, *L'Objectivité en Psychologie*.

² Cf. *La Structure du Comportement*, Chap. III.

³ Koffka, *Psychologie*, pp. 530 and 549.

⁴ M. Scheler, *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft*, p. 412.

distinguished from phantasms. The word perception indicates a *direction* rather than a primitive function.¹ It is known that the uniformity of apparent size of objects at different distances, or of their colour in different lights, is more perfect in children than in adults.² It follows that perception is more strictly bound up with the local stimulus in its developed than in its undeveloped state, and more in conformity with the theory of sensation in the adult than in the child. It is like a net with its knots showing up more and more clearly.³ 'Primitive thought' has been pictured in a way which can be understood only if the responses of primitive people, their pronouncements and the sociologists' interpretations are related to the fund of perceptual experience which they are all trying to translate.⁴ It is sometimes the adherence of the perceived object to its context, and, as it were, its viscosity, sometimes the presence in it of a positive indeterminate which prevents the spatial, temporal and numerical wholes from becoming articulated into manageable, distinct and identifiable terms. And it is this pre-objective realm that we have to explore in ourselves if we wish to understand sense experience.

¹ M. Scheler, *Die Wissenformen und die Gesellschaft*, p. 397. 'Man approachès ideal and exact images better than the animal, the adult better than the child, men better than women, the individual better than the member of a group, the man who thinks historically and systematically better than the man impelled by tradition, "imprisoned" in it and incapable of objectivizing, by building up recollection, the environment in which he is involved, of localizing it in time and possessing it by setting it away from himself in a past context.'

² Hering, Jaensch.

³ Scheler, *Die Wissenformen und die Gesellschaft*, p. 412.

⁴ Cf. Wertheimer, *Über das Denken der Naturvölker*, in *Drei Abhandlungen zur Gestalttheorie*.

'ASSOCIATION' AND THE 'PROJECTION OF MEMORIES'

ONCE introduced, the notion of sensation distorts any analysis of perception. Already a 'figure' on a 'background' contains, as we have seen, much more than the qualities presented at a given time. It has an 'outline', which does not 'belong' to the background and which 'stands out' from it; it is 'stable' and offers a 'compact' area of colour, the background on the other hand having no bounds, being of indefinite colouring and 'running on' under the figure. The different parts of the whole—for example, the portions of the figure nearest to the background—possess, then, besides a colour and qualities, a particular *significance*. The question is, what makes up this significance, what do the words 'edge' and 'outline' mean, what happens when a collection of qualities is *apprehended* as a figure on a background? But once sensation is introduced as an element of knowledge, we are left no leeway in our reply. A being capable of sense-experience (*sentir*)—in the sense of coinciding absolutely with an impression or a quality—could have no other mode of knowing. That a quality, an area of red should signify something, that it should be, for example, seen as a patch on a background, means that the red is not this warm colour which I feel and live in and lose myself in, but that it announces something else which it does not include, that it exercises a cognitive function, and that its parts together make up a whole to which each is related without leaving its place. Henceforth the red is no longer merely there, it represents something for me, and what it represents is not possessed as a 'real part' of my perception, but only aimed at as an 'intentional part'.¹ My gaze does not merge with the outline or the patch as it does with the redness considered concretely: it ranges over and dominates them. In order

¹ The expression is Husserl's. The idea is taken up with insight by M. Pradines, *Philosophie de la Sensation*, I, particularly on pp. 152 and ff.

4

THE PHENOMENAL FIELD

IT will now be seen in what direction the following chapters will carry their inquiry. 'Sense experience'* has become once more a question for us. Empiricism had emptied it of all mystery by bringing it down to the possession of a quality. This had been possible only at the price of moving far from the ordinary acceptance of the word. Between sense experience and knowing, common experience establishes a difference which is not that between the quality and the concept. This rich notion of sense experience is still to be found in Romantic usage, for example in Herder. It points to an experience in which we are given not 'dead' qualities, but active ones. A wooden wheel placed on the ground is not, *for sight*, the same thing as a wheel bearing a load. A body at rest because no force is being exerted upon it is again for sight not the same thing as a body in which opposing forces are in equilibrium.¹ The light of a candle changes its appearance for a child when, after a burn, it stops attracting the child's hand and becomes literally repulsive.² The vision is already inhabited by a significance which gives it a function in the spectacle of the world and in our existence. The pure *quale* would be given to us only if the world were a spectacle and one's own body a mechanism with which some impartial mind made itself acquainted.³ Sense experience, on the other hand, invests the quality with vital value, grasping it first in its meaning for us, for that heavy mass which is our body, whence it comes about that it always involves a reference to the body. The problem is to understand these strange relationships which are woven between the parts of the landscape, or between it and me as incarnate subject, and through which an object perceived can concentrate in itself a whole scene or become the *imago* of a whole segment of life. Sense experience is that vital communication with the world which makes it present as a

* The original French word is 'le sentir' (Translator's note).

¹ Koffka, *Perception, an Introduction to the Gestalt Theory*, pp. 558-9.

² Id., *Mental Development*, p. 138.

³ Scheler, *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft*, p. 408.

THE PHENOMENAL FIELD

familiar setting of our life. It is to it that the perceived object and the perceiving subject owe their thickness. It is the intentional tissue which the effort to know will try to take apart. With the problem of sense experience, we rediscover that of association and passivity. They have ceased to be problematical because the classical philosophies put themselves either below or above them, giving them everything or nothing: sometimes association was understood as a mere *de facto* co-existence, sometimes derived from an intellectual construction; sometimes passivity was imported from things into the mind, and sometimes analytical reflection would find in it an activity of understanding. Whereas these notions take on their full meaning if sense experience is distinguished from quality: then association, or rather 'affinity', in the Kantian sense, is the central phenomenon of perceptual life, since it is the constitution, without any ideal model, of a significant grouping. The distinction between the perceptual life and the concept, between passivity and spontaneity is no longer abolished by analytical reflection, since we are no longer forced by the atomism of sensation to look to some connecting activity for our principle of all co-ordination. Finally, after sense experience, understanding also needs to be redefined, since the general connective function ultimately attributed to it by Kantianism is now spread over the whole intentional life and no longer suffices to distinguish it. We shall try to bring out in relation to perception, both the instinctive substructure and the superstructures erected upon it by the exercise of intelligence. As Cassirer puts it, by mutilating perception from above, empiricism mutilated it from below too: ¹ the impression is as devoid of instinctive and affective meaning as of ideal significance. One might add that mutilating perception from below, treating it immediately as knowledge and forgetting its existential content, amounts to mutilating it from above, since it involves taking for granted and passing over in silence the decisive moment in perception: the upsurge of a *true* and *accurate* world. Reflection will be sure of having precisely located the centre of the phenomenon if it is equally capable of bringing to light its vital inherence and its rational intention.

So, 'sensation' and 'judgement' have together lost their apparent clearness: we have observed that they were clear only as long as the prejudice in favour of the world was maintained. As soon as one tried by means of them, to picture consciousness in the process of perceiving, to revive the forgotten perceptual experience, and to relate them to it, they were found to be inconceivable. By dint of making these difficulties more explicit, we were drawn implicitly into a new kind of analysis, into a new dimension in which they were

¹ Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, T. III, *Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis*, pp. 77-8.

destined to disappear. The criticism of the constancy hypothesis and more generally the reduction of the idea of 'the world' opened up a *phenomenal field* which now has to be more accurately circumscribed, and suggested the rediscovery of a direct experience which must be, at least provisionally, assigned its place in relation to scientific knowledge, psychological and philosophical reflection.

Science and philosophy have for centuries been sustained by unquestioning faith in perception. Perception opens a window on to things. This means that it is directed, quasi-teleologically, towards a *truth in itself* in which the reason underlying all appearances is to be found. The tacit thesis of perception is that at every instant experience can be co-ordinated with that of the previous instant and that of the following, and my perspective with that of other consciousnesses—that all contradictions can be removed, that monadic and intersubjective experience is one unbroken text—that what is now indeterminate for me could become determinate for a more complete knowledge, which is as it were realized in advance in the thing, or rather which is the thing itself. Science has first been merely the sequel or amplification of the process which constitutes perceived things. Just as the thing is the invariant of all sensory fields and of all individual perceptual fields, so the scientific concept is the means of fixing and objectifying phenomena. Science defined a theoretical state of bodies not subject to the action of any force, and *ipso facto* defined force, reconstituting with the aid of these ideal components the processes actually observed. It established statistically the chemical properties of pure bodies, deducing from these those of empirical bodies, and seeming thus to hold the plan of creation or in any case to have found a reason immanent in the world. The notion of geometrical space, indifferent to its contents, that of pure movement which does not by itself affect the properties of the object, provided phenomena with a setting of inert existence in which each event could be related to physical conditions responsible for the changes occurring, and therefore contributed to this freezing of being which appeared to be the task of physics. In thus developing the concept of the thing, scientific knowledge was not aware that it was working on a presupposition. Precisely because perception, in its vital implications and prior to any theoretical thought, is presented as perception of a being, it was not considered necessary for reflection to undertake a genealogy of being, and it was therefore confined to seeking the conditions which make being possible. Even if one took account of the transformations of determinant consciousness,¹ even if it were conceded that the constitution of the object is never completed, there was nothing to add to what

¹ As L. Brunschvicg does.

science said of it; the natural object remained an ideal unity for us and, in the famous words of Lachelier, a network of general properties. It was no use denying any ontological value to the principles of science and leaving them with only a methodical value,¹ for this reservation made no essential change as far as philosophy was concerned, since the sole conceivable being remained defined by scientific method. The living body, under these circumstances, could not escape the determinations which alone made the object into an object and without which it would have had no place in the system of experience. The value predicates which the reflecting judgement confers upon it had to be sustained, in being, by a foundation of physico-chemical properties. In ordinary experience we find a fittingness and a meaningful relationship between the gesture, the smile and the tone of a speaker. But this reciprocal relationship of expression which presents the human body as the outward manifestation of a certain manner of being-in-the-world, had, for mechanistic physiology, to be resolved into a series of causal relations.

It was necessary to link to centripetal conditions the centrifugal phenomenon of expression, reduce to third person processes that particular way of dealing with the world which we know as behaviour, bring experience down to the level of physical nature and convert the living body into an interiorless thing. The emotional and practical attitudes of the living subject in relation to the world were, then, incorporated into a psycho-physiological mechanism. Every evaluation had to be the outcome of a transfer whereby complex situations became capable of awakening elementary impressions of pleasure and pain, impressions bound up, in turn, with nervous processes. The impelling intentions of the living creature were converted into objective movements: to the will only an instantaneous fiat was allowed, the execution of the act being entirely given over to a nervous mechanism. Sense experience, thus detached from the affective and motor functions, became the mere reception of a quality, and physiologists thought they could follow, from the point of reception to the nervous centres, the projection of the external world in the living body. The latter, thus transformed, ceased to be my body, the visible expression of a concrete Ego, and became one object among all others. Conversely, the body of another person could not appear to me as encasing another Ego. It was merely a machine, and the perception of the other could not really be *of the other*, since it resulted from an inference and therefore placed behind the automaton no more than a consciousness in general, a transcendent cause and not an inhabitant of his movements. So we no longer had a grouping of factors constituting the self co-existing

¹ Cf. for example, *L'Expérience humaine et la Causalité physique*, p. 536.

in a world. The whole concrete content of 'psychic states' resulting, according to the laws of psychophysiology and psychology, from a universal determinism, was integrated into the *in-itself*. There was no longer any real *for-itself* other than the thought of the scientist which perceives the system and which alone ceases to occupy any place in it. Thus, while the living body became an exterior without interior, subjectivity became an interior without exterior, an impartial spectator. The naturalism of science and the spiritualism of the universal constituting subject, to which reflection on science led, had this in common, that they levelled out experience: in face of the constituting I, the empirical selves are objects. The empirical Self is a hybrid notion, a mixture of *in-itself* and *for-itself*, to which reflective philosophy could give no status. In so far as it has a concrete content it is inserted in the system of experience and is therefore not a subject; in so far as it *is* a subject, it is empty and resolves itself into the transcendental subject. The ideality of the object, the objectification of the living body, the placing of spirit in an axiological dimension having no common measure with nature, such is the transparent philosophy arrived at by pushing further along the route of knowledge opened up by perception. It could be held that perception is an incipient science, science a methodical and complete perception,¹ since science was merely following uncritically the ideal of knowledge set up by the perceived thing.

Now this philosophy is collapsing before our eyes. The natural object was the first to disappear and physics has itself recognized the limits of its categories by demanding a recasting and blending of the pure concepts which it had adopted. For its part the organism presents physico-chemical analysis not with the practical difficulties of a complex object, but with the theoretical difficulty of a meaningful being.² In more general terms the idea of a universe of thought or a universe of values, in which all thinking lives come into contact and are reconciled, is called into question. Nature is *not* in itself geometrical, and it appears so only to a careful observer who contents himself with macrocosmic data. Human society is *not* a community of reasonable minds, and only in fortunate countries where a biological and economic balance has locally and temporarily been struck has such a conception of it been possible. The experience of chaos, both on the speculative and the other level, prompts us to see rationalism in a historical perspective which it set itself on principle to avoid, to seek a philosophy which explains the upsurge of reason in a world not of its making and to prepare the substructure of

¹ Cf. for example Alain, *Quatre-vingt-un chapitres sur l'Esprit et les Passions*, p. 19, and Brunschvicg, *L'Expérience humaine et la causalité physique*, p. 468.

² Cf. *La Structure du Comportement*, and below, First Part.

living experience without which reason and liberty are emptied of their content and wither away. We shall no longer hold that perception is incipient science, but conversely that classical science is a form of perception which loses sight of its origins and believes itself complete. The first philosophical act would appear to be to return to the world of actual experience which is prior to the objective world, since it is in it that we shall be able to grasp the theoretical basis no less than the limits of that objective world, restore to things their concrete physiognomy, to organisms their individual ways of dealing with the world, and to subjectivity its inherence in history. Our task will be, moreover, to rediscover phenomena, the layer of living experience through which other people and things are first given to us, the system 'Self-others-things' as it comes into being; to reawaken perception and foil its trick of allowing us to forget it as a fact and as perception in the interest of the object which it presents to us and of the rational tradition to which it gives rise.

This phenomenal field is not an 'inner world', the 'phenomenon' is not a 'state of consciousness', or a 'mental fact', and the experience of phenomena is not an act of introspection or an intuition in Bergson's sense. It has long been the practice to define the object of psychology by saying that it was 'without extension' and 'accessible to one person only', with the result that this peculiar object could be grasped only by means of a special kind of act, 'internal perception' or introspection, in which subject and object were mingled and knowledge achieved by an act of coinciding. The return to the 'immediate data of consciousness' became therefore a hopeless enterprise since the philosophical scrutiny was trying to *be* what it could not, in principle, *see*. The difficulty was not only to destroy the prejudice of the exterior, as all philosophies urge the beginner to do, or to describe the mind in a language made for representing things. It was much more fundamental, since interiority, defined by the impression, by its nature evaded every attempt to express it. It was not only the imparting of philosophical intuitions to others which became difficult—or rather reduced itself to a sort of incantation designed to induce in them experiences comparable to the philosopher's—but the philosopher himself could not be clearly aware of *what* he saw in the instant, since he would have had to think it, that is fix and distort it. The immediate was therefore a lonely, blind and mute life. The return to the phenomenal presents none of these peculiarities. The sensible configuration of an object or a gesture, which the criticism of the constancy hypothesis brings before our eyes, is not grasped in some inexpressible coincidence, it 'is understood' through a sort of act of appropriation which we all experience when we say that we have 'found' the rabbit in the foliage

of a puzzle, or that we have 'caught' a slight gesture. Once the prejudice of sensation has been banished, a face, a signature, a form of behaviour cease to be mere 'visual data' whose psychological meaning is to be sought in our inner experience, and the mental life of others becomes an immediate object, a whole charged with immanent meaning. More generally it is the very notion of the immediate which is transformed: henceforth the immediate is no longer the impression, the object which is one with the subject, but the meaning, the structure, the spontaneous arrangement of parts. My own 'mental life' is given to me in precisely the same way, since the criticism of the constancy hypothesis teaches me to recognize the articulation and melodic unity of my behaviour as original data of inner experience, and since introspection, when brought down to its positive content, consists equally in making the immanent meaning of any behaviour explicit.¹ Thus what we discover by going beyond the prejudice of the objective world is not an occult inner world. Nor is this world of living experience completely closed to naïve consciousness, as is Bergson's interiority. In criticizing the constancy hypothesis and in laying bare phenomena, the psychologist, it is true, runs counter to the natural direction of the process of knowing, which goes blindly through the operations of perception straight on to their teleological results. Nothing is more difficult than to know precisely *what we see*. 'There is in natural intuition a sort of "cryptomechanism" which we have to break in order to reach phenomenal being'² or again a dialectic whereby perception hides itself from itself. But although it is of the essence of consciousness to forget its own phenomena thus enabling 'things' to be constituted, this forgetfulness is not mere absence, it is the absence of something which consciousness could bring into its presence: in other words consciousness can forget phenomena only because it can recall them, it neglects them in favour of things only because they are the cradle of things. For example they are never completely unknown to scientific consciousness, which borrows all its models from the structures of living experience; it simply does not 'thematize' them, or make explicit the horizons of perceptual consciousness surrounding it to whose concrete relationships it tries to give objective expression. Experience of phenomena is not, then, like Bergsonian intuition, that of a reality of which we are ignorant and leading to which there is no methodical bridge—it is the making explicit or bringing to light of the prescientific life of consciousness which alone

¹ We shall, consequently, in the following chapters, resort indifferently to the internal experience of our perception and to the 'external' experience of perceiving subjects.

² Scheler, *Idole der Selbsterkenntnis*, p. 106.

endows scientific operations with meaning and to which these latter always refer back. It is not an irrational conversion, but an intentional analysis.

If, as we see, phenomenological psychology is distinguished in all its characteristics from introspective psychology, it is because it is different in basic principle. Introspective psychology detected, on the perimeter of the physical world, a zone of consciousness in which physical concepts are no longer valid, but the psychologist still believed consciousness to be no more than a sector of being, and he decided to explore this sector as the physicist explores his. He tried to describe the givens of consciousness but without putting into question the absolute existence of the world surrounding it. In company with the scientist and common sense, he presupposed the objective world as the logical framework of all his descriptions, and as the setting of his thought. He was unaware that this presupposition dominated the meaning given to the word 'being', forcing it to bring consciousness into existence under the name of 'psychic fact', and thus diverting it from a true grasp of consciousness or from truly immediate experience, and stultifying the many precautions taken to avoid distorting the 'interior'. This is what happened to empiricism when it replaced the physical world by a world of inner events. It is again what happens to Bergson precisely when he contrasts 'multiplicity of fusion' and 'multiplicity of juxtaposition'. For it is here still a question of two modes of being. All that has happened is that mechanical energy has been replaced by spiritual, the discontinuous being of empiricism by being of a fluid kind, but of which we can say that *it* flows, describing it in the third person. By taking the *Gestalt* as the theme of his reflection, the psychologist breaks with psychologism, since the meaning, connection and 'truth' of the percept no longer arise from the fortuitous coming together of our sensations as they are given to us by our psycho-physiological nature, but determine the spatial and qualitative values of these sensations, and *are* their irreducible configuration.¹ It follows that the transcendental attitude is already implied in the descriptions of the psychologist, in so far as they are faithful ones. Consciousness as an object of study presents the peculiarity of not being analysable, even naïvely, without carrying us beyond common sense postulates. If, for example, we set out to create a positive psychology of perception, while still allowing consciousness to be enclosed in the body, and through it suffer the action of a world in itself, we are led to describe the object and the world as they appear to consciousness, and in this way to inquire whether this immediately present world, the only one we know, may not also be the only one of which there is reason to

¹ Cf. *La Structure du Comportement*, pp. 106-19 and 261.

speak. A psychology is always brought face to face with the problem of the constitution of the world.

Psychological reflection, once begun, then, outruns itself through its own momentum. Having recognized the originality of phenomena in relation to the objective world, since it is through them that the objective world is known to us, it is led to integrate with them every possible object and to try to find out how that object is constituted through them. At the same time the phenomenal field becomes a transcendental field. Since it is now the universal focus of knowledge, consciousness definitely ceases to be a particular region of being, a certain collection of 'mental' contents; it no longer resides or is no longer confined within the domain of 'forms' which psychological reflection had first recognized, but the forms, like all things, exist for it. It can no longer be a question of describing the world of living experience which it carries within itself like some opaque datum, it has to be constituted. The process of making explicit, which had laid bare the 'lived-through' world which is prior to the objective one, is put into operation upon the 'lived-through' world itself, thus revealing, prior to the phenomenal field, the transcendental field. The system 'self-others-world' is in its turn taken as an object of analysis and it is now a matter of awakening the thoughts which constitute other people, myself as individual subject and the world as a pole of my perception. This new 'reduction' would then recognize only one true subject, the thinking Ego. This move from *naturata* to *naturans*, from constituted to constituting, would complete the thematizing begun by psychology and would leave nothing implicit or tacitly accepted in my knowledge. It would enable me to take complete possession of my experience, thus equating thinking and thought. Such is the ordinary perspective of a transcendental philosophy, and also, to all appearances at least, the programme of a transcendental phenomenology.¹ Now the phenomenal field as we have revealed it in this chapter, places a fundamental difficulty in the way of any attempt to make experience directly and totally explicit. It is true that psychologism has been left behind, that the meaning and structure of the percept are for us no longer the mere outcome of psycho-physiological events, that rationality is no longer a fortunate accident bringing together dispersed sensations, and that the Gestalt is recognized as primary. But although the Gestalt may be expressible in terms of some internal law, this law must not be considered as a model on which the phenomena of structure are built up. Their appearance is not the external unfolding of a pre-existing reason. It is not *because* the

¹ It is set forth in these terms in most of Husserl's works, even in those published during his last period.

'form' produces a certain state of equilibrium, solving a problem of maximum coherence and, in the Kantian sense, making a world possible, that it enjoys a privileged place in our perception; it is the very appearance of the world and not the condition of its possibility; it is the birth of a norm and is not realized according to a norm; it is the identity of the external and the internal and not the projection of the internal in the external. Although, then, it is not the outcome of some circulation of mental states in themselves, neither is it an idea. The Gestalt of a circle is not its mathematical law but its physiognomy. The recognition of phenomena as an original order is a condemnation of empiricism as an *explanation* of order and reason in terms of a coming together of facts and of natural accidents, but it leaves reason and order themselves with the character of facticity. If a universal constituting consciousness were possible, the opacity of the fact would disappear. If then we want reflection to maintain, in the object on which it bears, its descriptive characteristics, and thoroughly to understand that object, we must not consider it as a mere return to a universal reason and see it as anticipated in unreflective experience, we must regard it as a creative operation which itself participates in the facticity of that experience. That is why phenomenology, alone of all philosophies, talks about a transcendental *field*. This word indicates that reflection never holds, arrayed and objectified before its gaze, the whole world and the plurality of monads, and that its view is never other than partial and of limited power. It is also why phenomenology is phenomenology, that is, a study of the *advent* of being to consciousness, instead of presuming its possibility as given in advance. It is striking how transcendental philosophies of the classical type never question the possibility of effecting the complete disclosure which they always assume *done somewhere*. It is enough for them that it should be necessary, and in this way they judge what is by what ought to be, by what the idea of knowledge requires. In fact, the thinking Ego can never abolish its inherence in an individual subject, which knows all things in a particular perspective. Reflection can never make me stop seeing the sun two hundred yards away on a misty day, or seeing it 'rise' and 'set', or thinking with the cultural apparatus with which my education, my previous efforts, my personal history, have provided me. I never actually collect together, or call up simultaneously, all the primary thoughts which contribute to my perception or to my present conviction. A critical philosophy attaches in the last analysis no importance to this resistance offered by passivity, as if it were not necessary to become the transcendental subject in order to have the right to affirm it. It tacitly assumes, consequently, that the philosopher's thinking is not conditioned by any situation.

Starting from the spectacle of the world, which is that of a nature open to a plurality of thinking subjects, it looks for the conditions which make possible this unique world presented to a number of empirical selves, and finds it in a transcendental ego in which they participate without dividing it up, because it is not a Being, but a Unity or a Value. This is why the problem of the knowledge of other people is never posed in Kantian philosophy: the transcendental ego which it discusses is just as much other people's as mine, analysis is from the start located outside me, and has nothing to do but to determine the general conditions which make possible a world for an ego—myself or others equally—and so it never comes up against the question: *who is thinking?* If on the other hand contemporary philosophy takes this as its main theme, and if other people become a problem for it, it is because it is trying to achieve a more radical self-discovery. Reflection cannot be thorough-going, or bring a complete elucidation of its object, if it does not arrive at awareness of itself as well as of its results. We must not only adopt a reflective attitude, in an impregnable *Cogito*, but furthermore reflect on this reflection, understand the natural situation which it is conscious of succeeding and which is therefore part of its definition; not merely practise philosophy, but realize the transformation which it brings with it in the spectacle of the world and in our existence. Only on this condition can philosophical knowledge become absolute knowledge, and cease to be a speciality or a technique. So there will be no assertion of an absolute Unity, all the less doubtful for not having to come into Being. The core of philosophy is no longer an autonomous transcendental subjectivity, to be found everywhere and nowhere: it lies in the perpetual beginning of reflection, at the point where an individual life begins to reflect on itself. Reflection is truly reflection only if it is not carried outside itself, only if it knows itself as reflection-on-an-unreflective-experience, and consequently as a change in structure of our existence. We earlier attacked Bergsonian intuitionism and introspection for seeking to know by coinciding. But at the opposite extremity of philosophy, in the notion of a universal constituting consciousness, we encounter an exactly corresponding mistake. Bergson's mistake consists in believing that the thinking subject can become fused with the object thought about, and that knowledge can swell and be incorporated into being. The mistake of reflective philosophies is to believe that the thinking subject can absorb into its thinking or appropriate without remainder the object of its thought, that our being can be brought down to our knowledge. As thinking subject we are never the unreflective subject that we seek to know; but neither can we become wholly consciousness, or make ourselves into the transcendental consciousness. If we were

consciousness, we would have to have before us the world, our history and perceived objects in their uniqueness as systems of transparent relationships. Now even when we are not dealing with psychology, when we try to comprehend, in direct reflection and without the help of the varied associations of inductive thought, what a perceived movement, or a circle, are, we can elucidate this singular fact only by varying it somewhat through the agency of imagination, and then fastening our thought upon the invariable element of this mental experience. We can get through to the individual only by the hybrid procedure of finding an *example*, that is, by stripping it of its facticity. Thus it is questionable whether thought can ever quite cease to be inductive, and whether it can assimilate any experience to the point of taking up and appropriating its whole texture. A philosophy becomes transcendental, or radical, not by taking its place in absolute consciousness without mentioning the ways by which this is reached, but by considering itself as a problem; not by postulating a knowledge rendered totally explicit, but by recognizing as the fundamental philosophic problem this *presumption* on reason's part.

That is why we had to begin our examination of perception with psychological considerations. If we had not done so, we would not have understood the whole meaning of the transcendental problem, since we would not, starting from the natural attitude, have methodically followed the procedures which lead to it. We had to frequent the phenomenal field and become acquainted, through psychological descriptions, with the subject of phenomena, if we were to avoid placing ourselves from the start, as does reflexive philosophy, in a transcendental dimension assumed to be eternally given, thus by-passing the whole problem of constitution. We could not begin, however, our psychological description without suggesting that once purged of all psychologism it can become a philosophical method. In order to revive perceptual experience buried under its own results, it would not have been enough to present descriptions of them which might possibly not have been understood, we had to establish by philosophical references and anticipations the point of view from which they might appear true. Thus we could begin neither without psychology nor with psychology alone. Experience anticipates a philosophy and philosophy is merely an elucidated experience. But now that the phenomenal field has been sufficiently circumscribed, let us enter this ambiguous domain and let us make sure of our first steps as far as the psychologist is concerned, until the psychologist's self-scrutiny leads us, by way of a second-order reflection, to the phenomenon of the phenomenon, and decisively transforms the phenomenal field into a transcendental one.

Experience and objective thought. The problem of the body

Our perception ends in objects, and the object once constituted, appears as the reason for all the experiences of it which we have had or could have. For example, I see the next-door house from a certain angle, but it would be seen differently from the right bank of the Seine, or from the inside, or again from an aeroplane: the house *itself* is none of these appearances; it is, as Leibnitz said, the flat projection of these perspectives and of all possible perspectives, that is, the perspectiveless position from which all can be derived, the house seen from nowhere. But what do these words mean? Is not to see always to see from somewhere? To say that the house itself is seen from nowhere is surely to say that it is invisible! Yet when I say that I see the house with my own eyes, I am saying something that cannot be challenged: I do not mean that my retina and crystalline lens, my eyes as material organs, go into action and cause me to see it: with only myself to consult, I can know nothing about this. I am trying to express in this way a certain manner of approaching the object, the 'gaze' in short, which is as indubitable as my own thought, as directly known by me. We must try to understand how vision can be brought into being from somewhere without being enclosed in its perspective.

To see an object is either to have it on the fringe of the visual field and be able to concentrate on it, or else respond to this summons by actually concentrating upon it. When I do concentrate my eyes on it, I become anchored in it, but this coming to rest of the gaze is merely a modality of its movement: I continue inside one object the exploration which earlier hovered over them all, and in one movement I close up the landscape and open the object. The two operations do not fortuitously coincide: it is not the contingent aspects of my bodily make-up, for example the retinal structure, which force me to see my surroundings vaguely if I want to see the object clearly. Even if I knew nothing of rods and cones, I should realize that it is necessary to put the surroundings in abeyance the better to see the object, and to lose in background what one gains in focal figure, because to look at the object is to plunge oneself into it, and because

objects form a system in which one cannot show itself without concealing others. More precisely, the inner horizon of an object cannot become an object without the surrounding objects' becoming a horizon, and so vision is an act with two facets. For I do not identify the detailed object which I now have with that over which my gaze ran a few minutes ago, by expressly comparing these details with a memory of my first general view. When, in a film, the camera is trained on an object and moves nearer to it to give a close-up view, we can *remember* that we are being shown the ash tray or an actor's hand, we do not actually identify it. This is because the screen has no horizons. In normal vision, on the other hand, I direct my gaze upon a sector of the landscape, which comes to life and is disclosed, while the other objects recede into the periphery and become dormant, while, however, not ceasing to be there. Now, with them, I have at my disposal their horizons, in which there is implied, as a marginal view, the object on which my eyes at present fall. The horizon, then, is what guarantees the identity of the object throughout the exploration; it is the correlative of the impending power which my gaze retains over the objects which it has just surveyed, and which it already has over the fresh details which it is about to discover. No distinct memory and no explicit conjecture could fill this rôle: they would give only a probable synthesis, whereas my perception presents itself as actual. The object-horizon structure, or the perspective, is no obstacle to me when I want to see the object: for just as it is the means whereby objects are distinguished from each other, it is also the means whereby they are disclosed. To see is to enter a universe of beings which *display themselves*, and they would not do this if they could not be hidden behind each other or behind me. In other words: to look at an object is to inhabit it, and from this habitation to grasp all things in terms of the aspect which they present to it. But in so far as I see those things too, they remain abodes open to my gaze, and, being potentially lodged in them, I already perceive from various angles the central object of my present vision. Thus every object is the mirror of all others. When I look at the lamp on my table, I attribute to it not only the qualities visible from where I am, but also those which the chimney, the walls, the table can 'see'; but back of my lamp is nothing but the face which it 'shows' to the chimney. I can therefore see an object in so far as objects form a system or a world, and in so far as each one treats the others round it as spectators of its hidden aspects and as guarantee of the permanence of those aspects. Any seeing of an object by me is instantaneously reiterated among all those objects in the world which are apprehended as co-existent, because each of them is all that the others 'see' of it. Our previous formula must

therefore be modified; the house itself is not the house seen from nowhere, but the house seen from everywhere. The completed object is translucent, being shot through from all sides by an infinite number of present scrutinies which intersect in its depths leaving nothing hidden.

What we have just said about the spatial perspective could equally be said about the temporal. If I contemplate the house attentively and with no thought in my mind, it has something eternal about it, and an atmosphere of torpor seems to be generated by it. It is true that I see it from a certain point in my 'duration', but it is the same house that I saw yesterday when it was a day younger; it is the same house that either an old man or a child might behold. It is true, moreover, that age and change affect it, but even if it should collapse tomorrow, it will remain for ever true that it existed today: each moment of time calls all the others to witness; it shows by its advent 'how things were meant to turn out' and 'how it will all finish'; each present permanently underpins a point of time which calls for recognition from all the others, so that the object is seen at all times as it is seen from all directions and by the same means, namely the structure imposed by a horizon. The present still holds on to the immediate past without positing it as an object, and since the immediate past similarly holds its immediate predecessor, past time is wholly collected up and grasped in the present. The same is true of the imminent future which will also have its horizon of imminence. But with my immediate past I have also the horizon of futurity which surrounded it, and thus I have my actual present seen as the future of that past. With the imminent future, I have the horizon of past which will surround it, and therefore my actual present as the past of that future. Thus, through the double horizon of retention and protention, my present may cease to be a factual present quickly carried away and abolished by the flow of duration, and become a fixed and identifiable point in objective time.

But, once more, my human gaze never *posits* more than one facet of the object, even though by means of horizons it is directed towards all the others. It can never come up against previous appearances or those presented to other people otherwise than through the intermediary of time and language. If I conceive in the image of my own gaze those others which, converging from all directions, explore every corner of the house and define it, I have still only a harmonious and indefinite set of views of the object, but not the object in its plenitude. In the same way, although my present draws into itself time past and time to come, it possesses them only in intention, and even if, for example, the consciousness of my past which I now have seems to me to cover exactly the past as it was, the past which I claim

to recapture is not the real past, but my past as I now see it, perhaps after altering it. Similarly in the future I may have a mistaken idea about the present which I now experience. Thus the synthesis of horizons is no more than a presumptive synthesis, operating with certainty and precision only in the immediate vicinity of the object. The remoter surrounding is no longer within my grasp; it is no longer composed of still discernible objects or memories; it is an anonymous horizon now incapable of bringing any precise testimony, and leaving the object as incomplete and open as it is indeed, in perceptual experience. Through this opening, indeed, the substantiality of the object slips away. If it is to reach perfect density, in other words if there is to be an absolute object, it will have to consist of an infinite number of different perspectives compressed into a strict co-existence, and to be presented as it were to a host of eyes all engaged in one concerted act of seeing. The house *has its* water pipes, *its* floor, perhaps its cracks which are insidiously spreading in the thickness of its ceilings. We never see them, but it *has them* along with its chimneys and windows which we can see. We shall forget our present perception of the house: every time we are able to compare our memories with the objects to which they refer, we are surprised, even allowing for other sources of error, at the changes which they owe to their own duration. But we still believe that there is a truth about the past; we base our memory on the world's vast Memory, in which the house has its place as it really was on that day, and which guarantees its *being* at this moment. Taken in itself—and as an object it demands to be taken thus—the object has nothing cryptic about it; it is completely displayed and its parts co-exist while our gaze runs from one to another, its present does not cancel its past, nor will its future cancel its present. The positing of the object, therefore makes us go beyond the limits of our actual experience which is brought up against and halted by an alien being, with the result that finally experience believes that it extracts all its own teaching from the object. It is this *ek-stase** of experience which causes all perception to be perception of something.

Obsessed with being, and forgetful of the perspectivism of my experience, I henceforth treat it as an object and deduce it from a relationship between objects. I regard my body, which is my point of view upon the world, as one of the objects of that world. My recent awareness of my gaze as a means of knowledge I now repress, and treat my eyes as bits of matter. They then take their place in the same objective space in which I am trying to situate the external object and

* Active transcendence of the subject in relation to the world. The author uses either the French word *extase*, or Heidegger's form *ek-stase*. The latter is the one used throughout this translation (Translator's note).

I believe that I am producing the perceived perspective by the projection of the objects on my retina. In the same way I treat my own perceptual history as a result of my relationships with the objective world; my present, which is my point of view on time, becomes one moment of time among all the others, my duration a reflection or abstract aspect of universal time, as my body is a mode of objective space. In the same way, finally, if the objects which surround the house or which are found in it remained what they are in perceptual experience, that is, acts of seeing conditioned by a certain perspective, the house would not be posited as an autonomous being. Thus the positing of one single object, in the full sense, demands the composite bringing into being of all these experiences in one act of manifold creation. Therein it exceeds perceptual experience and the synthesis of horizons—as the notion of a *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 relationships which are of reciprocal implication.¹ I detach myself from my experience and pass to the *idea*. Like the object, the idea purports to be the same for everybody, valid in all times and places, and the individuation of an object in an objective point of time and space finally appears as the expression of a universal positing power.² I am no longer concerned with my body, nor with time, nor with the world, as I experience them in antepredicative knowledge, in the inner communion that I have with them. I now refer to my body only as an idea, to the universe as idea, to the idea of space and the idea of time. Thus 'objective' thought (in Kierkegaard's sense) is formed—being that of common sense and of science—which finally causes us to lose contact with perceptual experience, of which it is nevertheless the outcome and the natural sequel. The whole life of consciousness is characterized by the tendency to posit objects, since it is consciousness, that is to say self-knowledge, only in so far as it takes hold of itself and draws itself together in an identifiable object. And yet the absolute positing of a single object is the death of consciousness, since it congeals the whole of existence, as a crystal placed in a solution suddenly crystallizes it.

We cannot remain in this dilemma of having to fail to understand either the subject or the object. We must discover the origin of the object at the very centre of our experience; we must describe the emergence of being and we must understand how, paradoxically, there is *for us* an *in-itself*. In order not to prejudge the issue, we shall

¹ Husserl, *Umsturz der kopernikanischen Lehre: die Erde als Ur-Arche bewegt sich nicht* (unpublished).

² 'I understand by the sole power of judging, which resides in my mind, what I thought I saw with my eyes.' *2nd Meditation*, AT, IX, p. 25.

take objective thought on its own terms and not ask it any questions which it does not ask itself. If we are led to rediscover experience behind it, this shift of ground will be attributable only to the difficulties which objective thought itself raises. Let us consider it then at work in the constitution of our body as object, since this is a crucial moment in the genesis of the objective world. It will be seen that one's own body evades, even within science itself, the treatment to which it is intended to subject it. And since the genesis of the objective body is only a moment in the constitution of the object, the body, by withdrawing from the objective world, will carry with it the intentional threads linking it to its surrounding and finally reveal to us the perceiving subject as the perceived world.

I

THE BODY AS OBJECT AND MECHANISTIC PHYSIOLOGY

THE definition of the object is, as we have seen, that it exists *partes extra partes*, and that consequently it acknowledges between its parts, or between itself and other objects only external and mechanical relationships, whether in the narrow sense of motion received and transmitted, or in the wider sense of the relation of function to variable. Where it was desired to insert the organism in the universe of objects and thereby close off that universe, it was necessary to translate the functioning of the body into the language of the *in-itself* and discover, beneath behaviour, the linear dependence of stimulus and receptor, receptor and *Empfinder*.¹ It was of course realized that in the circuit of behaviour new particular forms emerge, and the theory of specific nervous energy, for example, certainly endowed the organism with the power of transforming the physical world. But in fact it attributed to the nervous systems the occult power of creating the different structures of our experience, and whereas sight, touch and hearing are so many ways of gaining access to the object, these structures found themselves transformed into compact qualities derived from the local distinction between the organs used. Thus the relationship between stimulus and perception could remain clear and objective, and the psycho-physical event was of the same kind as the causal relations obtaining 'in the world'. Modern physiology no longer has recourse to these pretences. It no longer links the different qualities of one and the same sense, and the data of different senses, to distinct material instruments. In reality injuries to centres and even to conductors are not translated into the loss of certain qualities of sensation or of certain sensory data, but into loss of differentiation in the function. We have already discussed this: wherever the seat of the injury in the sensory routes

¹ Cf. *La Structure du Comportement*, Chap. I and II.

to limit it, by concentrating our gaze on a part of the spectacle and devoting the whole of the perceptual field to it. We must not, as we have seen, suppose that the determinate forms reached through the critical attitude are realized in the primordial experience, or, in consequence, talk about a synthesis which is present, so long as the manifold is as yet undissociated. Must we then reject the idea of synthesis and of a stuff of knowledge? Are we to say that perception reveals objects as a light illuminates them in the night, are we to adopt for our own purposes that realism which, according to Malebranche, leads us to imagine the soul issuing through the eyes and exploring objects in the world? That would not rid us of even the idea of synthesis since, in order to perceive a surface, for example, it is not enough to explore it, we must keep in mind the moments of our exploratory journey and relate the points on the surface to each other. But we have seen that primary perception is a non-thetic,* pre-objective and pre-conscious experience. Let us therefore say *provisionally* that there is a merely possible stuff of knowledge. From every point of the primordial field intentions move outwards, vacant and yet determinate; in realizing these intentions, analysis will arrive at the object of science, at sensation as a private phenomenon, and at the pure subject which posits both. These three terminal concepts are no nearer than on the horizon of primordial experience. It is in the experience of the thing that the reflective ideal of positing thought will have its basis. Hence reflection does not itself grasp its full significance unless it refers to the unreflective fund of experience which it presupposes, upon which it draws, and which constitutes for it a kind of original past, a past which has never been a present.

* I.e. non-positing (Translator's note).

2

SPACE

WE have just recognized that analysis has no justification for *positing* any stuff of knowledge as an ideally separable 'moment' and that this stuff, when brought into being by an act of reflection, already relates to the world. Reflection does not follow in the reverse direction a path already traced by the constitutive act, and the natural reference of the stuff to the world leads us to a new conception of intentionality, since the classical conception,¹ which treats the experience of the world as a pure act of constituting consciousness, manages to do so only in so far as it defines consciousness as absolute non-being, and correspondingly consigns its contents to a 'hyletic layer' which belongs to opaque being. We must now approach this new intentionality in a more direct way by examining the symmetrical notion of a form of perception, and in particular the notion of space. Kant tried to draw a strict demarcation line between space as the form of external experience and the things given within that experience. There is naturally no question of a relationship of container to content, since this relationship exists only between objects, nor even a relationship of logical inclusion, like the one existing between the individual and the class, since space is anterior to its alleged parts, which are always carved out of it. Space is not the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the means whereby the positing of things becomes possible. This means that instead of imagining it as a sort of ether in which all things float, or conceiving it abstractly as a characteristic that they have in common, we must think of it as the universal power enabling them to be connected. Therefore, either I do not reflect, but live among things and vaguely regard space at one moment as the setting for things, at another as their common attribute—or else I do reflect: I catch space at its source, and now think

¹ By this we understand either that of a Kantian like P. Lachièze-Rey (*L'Idéalisme kantien*), or that of Husserl in the second period of his philosophy (the period of the *Ideen*).

the relationships which underlie this word, realizing then that they live only through the medium of a subject who describes and sustains them; and pass from spatialized to spatializing space. In the first case, my body and things, their concrete relationships expressed in such terms as top and bottom, right and left, near and far, may appear to me as an irreducibly manifold variety, whereas in the second case I discover a single and indivisible ability to describe space. In the first case, I am concerned with physical space, with its regions of varied quality; in the second with geometrical space having interchangeable dimensions, homogeneous and isotropic, and here I can at least think of a pure change of place which would leave the moving body unchanged, and consequently a pure *position* distinct from the *situation* of the object in its concrete context. We know how this distinction is blurred in modern conceptions of space, even at the level of scientific knowledge. Here we want to confront it, not with the technical instruments which modern physics has acquired, but with our experience of space, the ultimate court of appeal, according to Kant himself, of all knowledge connected with space. Is it true that we are faced with the alternative either of perceiving things in space, or (if we reflect and try to discover the significance of our own experiences) of conceiving space as the indivisible system governing the acts of unification performed by a constituting mind? Does not the experience of space provide a basis for its unity by means of an entirely different kind of synthesis?

Let us consider it before any theoretical elaboration has taken place. Take, for instance, our experience of 'top' and 'bottom'. We cannot catch it in the ordinary run of living, because it is then hidden under its own acquisitions. We must examine some exceptional case in which it disintegrates and re-forms before our eyes, for example, in cases of vision without retinal inversion. If a subject is made to wear glasses which correct the retinal images, the whole landscape at first appears unreal and upside down; on the second day of the experiment normal perception begins to reassert itself, except that the subject has the feeling that his own body is upside down.¹ In the course of a second set of experiments² lasting a week, objects at first appear inverted, but less unreal than the first time. On the second day the landscape is no longer inverted, but the body is felt to be in an abnormal position. From the third to the seventh day, the body progressively rights itself, and finally seems to occupy a normal position, particularly when the subject is active. When he is lying motionless on a couch, the body still presents itself against the

¹ Stratton, *Some preliminary experiments on vision without inversion of the retinal image*.

² Stratton, *Vision without inversion of the retinal image*.

background of the former space, and, as far as the unseen parts of the body are concerned, right and left preserve their former localization to the end of the experiment. External objects increasingly have a look of 'reality'. From the fifth day, actions which were at first liable to be misled by the new mode of vision and had to be corrected in the light of the general visual upheaval, now go infallibly to their objective. The new visual appearances which, at the beginning, stood out against a background of previous space, develop round themselves, at first (third day) only through a great effort of will, later (seventh day) with no effort at all, a horizon with a general orientation corresponding to their own. On the seventh day, the placing of sounds is correct so long as the sounding object is seen as well as heard. It remains unreliable, and with a double, or even inaccurate, representation, if the source of the sound does not appear in the visual field. At the end of the experiment, when the glasses are removed, objects appear not inverted, it is true, but 'queer', and motor reactions are reversed: the subject reaches out his right hand when it should be his left. The psychologist is at first tempted to say¹ that after the glasses have been put on, the visual world is given to the subject exactly as if it had been turned through 180°, and *consequently* is upside down for him. As the illustrations in a book appear upside down to us if someone has played the trick of placing it 'top to bottom' while we were looking away, the mass of sensations which make up the panorama has been turned round, and similarly placed 'top to bottom'. That other mass of sensations which is the world of touch has meanwhile stayed 'the right way'; it can no longer coincide with the visual world so that the subject has two irreconcilable representations of his body, one given to him by his tactile sensations and by those 'visual images' which he has managed to retain from the period preceding the experiment; the other, that of his present vision which shows him his body 'head downwards'. This conflict of images can end only if one of the two contestants withdraws. Finding out how a normal situation is restored amounts then to finding out how the new image of the world and one's own body can cause the other to 'pale',² or 'displace' it.³ It is noticeable that the normal situation is the more successfully achieved in proportion as the subject is more active; for example, as early as the second day when he washes his hands.⁴ It would appear then that it is the experience of movement guided by sight which teaches the subject to harmonize the visual and tactile data: he becomes aware,

¹ This is, at least implicitly, Stratton's interpretation.

² Stratton, *Vision without inversion*, p. 350.

³ *Some preliminary experiments*, p. 617.

⁴ *Vision without inversion*, p. 346.

for instance, that the movement needed to reach his legs, hitherto a movement 'downwards', makes its appearance in the new visual spectacle as one which was previously 'upwards'. Observations of this kind enable inappropriate gestures to be corrected in the early stages by taking visual data as simply signs to be decoded and by translating them into the language of the former space. Once they have become 'habitual',¹ they set up between the old and the new directions, stable 'associations'² which do away with the former in favour of the latter, these being dominant by reason of their visual origin. The 'top' of the visual field, where the legs at first appear, having been frequently identified with what is 'down' for the touch, soon the subject has no further need of the mediation of calculated movements to pass from one system to the other; his legs settle down at what he used to call the 'top' of the visual field; not only does he 'see' them there, he also 'feels' them there³ and eventually 'what had previously been "the top" of the visual field begins to give an impression similar to that which belonged to the "bottom", and *vice versa*'.⁴ As soon as the tactile body links up with the visual one, that region of the visual field in which the subject's feet appeared stops being described as 'the top'. This designation is transferred to the region in which the head appears, and that containing the feet once more becomes the bottom.

But this interpretation is unintelligible. The inversion of the landscape, followed by the return to normal vision, are explained by supposing that the top and bottom are turned topsyturvy and made variable with the apparent direction of head and feet *as given in the image*, that they are, so to speak, marked out in the sensory field by the actual distribution of sensations. But in no case—either at the beginning of the experiment, when the world is 'turned upside down', or at the end when it 'rights itself'—can the orientation of the field be given by these contents of head and feet which appear in it. For these contents would themselves have to have a direction, in order to pass it on to the field. 'Inverted' or 'upright', in themselves, obviously have no meaning. The reply will run: after putting on the glasses the visual field appears inverted in relation to the tactile and bodily field, or the ordinary visual field, which, by nominal definition, we say are 'upright'. But the same question arises concerning these fields which we take as standard: their mere presence is not enough to provide any direction whatsoever. Among things, two points are enough to establish a direction. But we are not

¹ Stratton, *The Spatial Harmony of Touch and Sight*, pp. 492–505.

² Ibid.

³ Stratton, *Some preliminary experiments*, p. 614.

⁴ Stratton, *Vision without inversion*, p. 350.

among things, we have as yet only sensory fields which are not collections of sensations placed before us, sometimes 'head to the top', sometimes 'head downwards', but systems of appearances varyingly orientated during the course of the experiment, even where no change occurs in the grouping of *stimuli*. So it is precisely a matter of finding out what happens when these floating appearances are suddenly anchored and take up a position in relation to 'up' and 'down', whether at the beginning of the experiment, when the tactile and bodily field seems 'upright' and the visual field 'inverted', or subsequently when the first turns upside down while the second rights itself, or finally at the conclusion of the experiment when both are more or less 'straight'. One cannot take the world and orientated space as given along with the contents of sense experience or with the body in itself, since experience in fact shows that the same contents can be successively orientated in one direction or another, and that objective relationships as registered on the retina through the position of the physical image do not govern our experience of 'up' and 'down'. What we want to know is how an object can appear to us as 'the right way up' or 'inverted', and what these words mean.

The question is applicable not only to an empiricist psychology which treats the perception of space as the reception, within ourselves, of a real space, and the phenomenal orientation of objects as reflecting their orientation in the world. It is equally relevant to intellectualist psychology in which the 'upright' and the 'inverted' are relationships dependent upon the fixed points chosen. As the axis of co-ordinates selected, whatever it may be, is as yet situated in space only in relation to another guide-post, and so on, so the task of taking the world's bearings is indefinitely postponed. 'Up' and 'down' lose any specific meaning they might have, unless, by an impossible contradiction, we recognize certain contents as having the power to take up a position in space, which brings back empiricism and its difficulties. It is easy to show that there can be a direction only for a subject who describes it, and a constituting mind is eminently able to trace out all directions in space, but has at any moment no direction, and consequently no space, without an actual starting-point, an absolute 'here' which can gradually confer a significance on all spatial determinations. Intellectualism as well as empiricism remains anterior to the problem of orientated space, because it cannot even begin to ask the question. In the case of empiricism, the question was how the image of the world which, in itself, is inverted, can right itself for me. Intellectualism cannot even concede that the image of the world, after the glasses are put on, *is* inverted. For there is nothing, for a constituting mind, to distinguish the experience before from the experience after putting on the glasses, or even

anything to make the visual experience of the 'inverted' body incompatible with the tactile experience of the 'upright' body, since it does not view the spectacle *from anywhere*, and since all the objective relations between the body and its environment are preserved in the new spectacle. We can therefore see what the question involves; empiricism would willingly take the actual orientation of my bodily experience as the fixed point we need if we are to understand that there are directions for us,—but both experience and reflection demonstrate that no content is in itself orientated. Intellectualism starts from this relativity of up and down, but cannot stand outside it in order to account for an actual perception of space. We cannot understand, therefore, the experience of space either in terms of the consideration of contents or of that of some pure unifying activity; we are confronted with that third spatiality towards which we pointed a little while ago, which is neither that of things in space, nor that of spatializing space, and which, on this account, evades the Kantian analysis and is presupposed by it. We need an absolute within the sphere of the relative, a space which does not skate over appearances, which indeed takes root in them and is dependent upon them, yet which is nevertheless not given along with them in any realist way, and can, as Stratton's experiment shows, survive their complete disorganization. We have to look for the first-hand experience of space on the hither side of the distinction between form and content.

If we so contrive it that a subject sees the room in which he is, only through a mirror which reflects it at an angle at 45° to the vertical, the subject at first sees the room 'slantwise'. A man walking about in it seems to lean to one side as he goes. A piece of cardboard falling down the door-frame looks to be falling obliquely. The general effect is 'queer'. After a few minutes a sudden change occurs: the walls, the man walking about the room, and the line in which the cardboard falls become vertical.¹ This experiment, analogous to Stratton's, has the advantage of throwing into relief an instantaneous redistribution of high and low, without any motor exploration. We were already aware that it is meaningless to say that the oblique (or inverted) image brings with it a repositioning of high and low which we come to identify by a motor exploration of the new spectacle. But now we see that this exploration is not even necessary, and that consequently bearings are taken by a comprehensive act on the part of the perceiving subject. Let us say that perception before the experiment recognizes a certain *spatial level*, in relation to which the spectacle provided in the experiment first of all appears oblique, and that during the experiment this spectacle induces another level in relation to which the whole of the visual field can once more seem

¹ Wertheimer, *Experimentelle Studien über das Sehen von Bewegung*, p. 258.

straight. It is as if certain objects (walls, doors and the body of the man in the room), having been seen aslant in relation to a given level, then take it upon themselves to provide the cardinal directions, attracting to themselves the vertical, acting as 'anchoring points',¹ and causing the previously established horizontal to tilt sideways. We are not falling here into the realistic mistake of using the visual spectacle as a source of directions in space, since the spectacle experimentally provided is turned (obliquely) for us only in relation to a certain level, and since, therefore, it does not give us by itself the new up-and-down axis. It remains to be seen what precisely is this level which is always ahead of itself, since every constitution of a level presupposes a different, pre-established level—how the 'anchoring points', working from within a certain space from which they derive their stability, suggest to us the constitution of a fresh one, what 'top' and 'bottom' really are, unless they are merely names applicable to an orientation in itself of the contents of sense experience. We hold that the 'spatial level' is not confused with the orientation of one's own body. In so far as consciousness of one's own body indubitably contributes to the constitution of level (a subject tilting his head on one side holds a stick obliquely, when he is asked to hold it vertically)² it is, in this function, in competition with the other sectors of experience, and the vertical tends to follow the direction of the head only if the visual field is empty, and if the 'anchoring points' are lacking, for example when one is working in the dark. As a mass of tactile, labyrinthine and kinaesthetic data, the body has no more definite orientation than the other contents of experience, and it too receives this orientation from the general level of experience. Wertheimer's observation serves to show how the visual field can impose an orientation which is not that of the body. But although the body, as a mosaic of given sensations, has no specific direction, nevertheless, as an agent, it plays an essential part in the establishment of a level. Variations in muscular tonicity, even with a full visual field, so modify the apparent vertical that the subject leans his head on one side in order to place it parallel to this deflected vertical.³ One might be tempted to say that the vertical is the direction represented by the symmetry axis of our body as a synergic system. My body can, however, move without drawing along with it the directions of upward and downward, as when I lie down on the ground, and Wertheimer's experiment shows that the objective direction of my body can form an appreciable angle with the apparent vertical of the spectacle. What counts for the orientation of the

¹ Wertheimer, *Experimentelle Studien über das Sehen von Bewegung*, p. 253.

² Nagel, quoted by Wertheimer, *ibid.*, p. 257.

³ *La Structure du Comportement*, p. 199.

spectacle is not my body as it in fact is, as a thing in objective space, but as a system of possible actions, a virtual body with its phenomenal 'place' defined by its task and situation. My body is wherever there is something to be done. As soon as Wertheimer's subject takes his place in the experimental situation prepared for him, the area of his possible actions—such as walking, opening a cupboard, using a table, sitting down—outlines in front of him, even if he has his eyes shut, a possible habitat. At first the mirror image presents him with a room differently canted, which means that the subject is not at home with the utensils it contains, he does not inhabit it, and does not share it with the man he sees walking to and fro. After a few minutes, provided that he does not strengthen his initial anchorage by glancing away from the mirror, the reflected room miraculously calls up a subject capable of living in it. This virtual body ousts the real one to such an extent that the subject no longer has the feeling of being in the world where he actually is, and that instead of his real legs and arms, he feels that he has the legs and arms he would need to walk and act in the reflected room: he inhabits the spectacle. The spatial level tilts and takes up its new position. It is, then, a certain possession of the world by my body, a certain gearing of my body to the world. Being projected, in the absence of anchoring points, by the attitude of my body alone, as in Nagel's experiments—specified, when the body is inert, through the demands of the spectacle alone, as in Wertheimer's experiment—it normally makes its appearance where my motor intentions and my perceptual field join forces, when my actual body is at one with the virtual body required by the spectacle, and the actual spectacle with the setting which my body throws round it. It comes to rest when, between my body as the potentiality for certain movements, as the demand for certain preferential planes, and the spectacle perceived as an invitation to the same movements and the scene of the same actions, a pact is concluded which gives me the enjoyment of space and gives to things their direct power over my body. The constitution of a spatial level is simply one means of constituting an integrated world: my body is geared onto the world when my perception presents me with a spectacle as varied and as clearly articulated as possible, and when my motor intentions, as they unfold, receive the responses they expect from the world. This maximum sharpness of perception and action points clearly to a perceptual *ground*, a basis of my life, a general setting in which my body can co-exist with the world. With the notion of a spatial level, and of the body as the subject of space, we begin to understand the phenomena described by Stratton but left unexplained by him. If the 'correction' of the field were the outcome of a set of associations between the new

positions and the old, how could the operation convey the general effect of being systematic, and how could whole sections of the perceptual horizon suddenly fall into line with already 'corrected' objects? If, on the other hand, the new orientation sprang from a process of thought, and consisted of a change of co-ordinates, how could the auditory or tactile field resist transposition? The constituting subject would, *per impossibile*, have to be cut off from himself and able to overlook in one place what he was doing in another.¹ In so far as the transposition is systematic, and yet piece-meal and progressive, it is because I go from one system of positions to the other without having the key to each, and in the way that a man sings, in another key, a tune he has heard, though he has no knowledge of music. The possession of a body implies the ability to change levels and to 'understand' space, just as the possession of a voice implies the ability to change key. The perceptual field corrects itself and at the conclusion of the experiment I identify it without any concept because I live in it, because I am borne wholly into the new spectacle and, so to speak, transfer my centre of gravity into it.² At the beginning of the experiment, the visual field appears both inverted and *unreal* because the subject does not live in it and is not geared to it. In the course of the experiment, we notice an intermediate phase in which the tactile body seems to be inverted and the landscape upright because, since I already live in the landscape, I see it accordingly as upright, the disturbance brought about by the experiment being concentrated in my own body, which thus becomes, not a mass of affective sensations, but the body which is needed to perceive a given spectacle. Everything throws us back on to the organic relations between subject and space, to that gearing of the subject onto his world which is the origin of space.

But one may wish to go further into the analysis. Why, it may be asked, are clear perception and assured action possible only in a phenomenal space which is orientated? This is obvious only if we suppose the subject of perception and action faced with a world

¹ Change of direction in acoustic phenomena is extremely difficult to bring about. If we arrange, with the aid of a pseudophone, for sounds coming from the left to reach the right ear before they strike the left, we get an inversion of the auditory field comparable to the inversion of the visual field in Stratton's experiment. Now even with long practice people do not manage to 'correct' the auditory field. The placing of sounds by hearing alone remains incorrect to the end. It is correct, and the sound seems to come from the object on the left only if the object is seen at the same time as it is heard. P. T. Young, *Auditory localization with acoustical transposition of the ears*.

² The subject can, in experiments on auditory inversion, produce the illusion of correct localization when he sees the source of sound, because he inhibits his auditory phenomena and 'lives' in the visual. P. T. Young, *ibid*.

where there are already absolute directions, so that he has to adjust the dimensions of his behaviour to those of the world. But we are now placing ourselves inside perception, and we are puzzled to know precisely how it can come by absolute directions, and so we cannot suppose them to be given at the source of our spatial experience. The objection amounts to saying what we have been saying from the start: that the constitution of a level always presupposes another given level, that space always precedes itself. But this remark is not a mere admission of defeat. It enlightens us concerning the essence of space and the only method which enables us to understand it. It is of the essence of space to be always 'already constituted', and we shall never come to understand it by withdrawing into a worldless perception. We must not wonder why being is orientated, why existence is spatial, why, using the expression we used a little while ago, our body is not geared to the world in all its positions, and why its co-existence with the world magnetizes experience and induces a direction in it. The question could be asked only if the facts were fortuitous happenings to a subject and an object indifferent to space, whereas perceptual experience shows that they are presupposed in our primordial encounter with being, and that being is synonymous with being situated. For the thinking subject a face seen 'the right way up' and the same face seen 'upside down' are indistinguishable. For the subject of perception the face seen 'upside down' is unrecognizable. If someone is lying on a bed, and I look at him from the head of the bed, the face is for a moment normal. It is true that the features are in a way disarranged, and I have some difficulty in realizing that the smile is a smile, but I feel that I could, if I wanted, walk round the bed, and I seem to see through the eyes of a spectator standing at the foot of the bed. If the spectacle is protracted, it suddenly changes its appearance: the face takes on an utterly unnatural aspect, its expressions become terrifying, and the eyelashes and eyebrows assume an air of materiality such as I have never seen in them. For the first time I really see the inverted face as if this were its 'natural' position: in front of me I have a pointed, hairless head with a red, teeth-filled orifice in the forehead and, where the mouth ought to be, two moving orbs edged with glistening hairs and underlined with stiff brushes. It will probably be said that the face seen the 'right way up' is, among all the possible aspects of a face, the one which is most frequently given to me, and that the inverted face startles me because I see it only rarely. But faces are not often presented in a strictly vertical position, the 'upright' face enjoys no statistical preponderance, and the question is why, this being the case, it is given to me more often than any other. If it be conceded that my perception makes it a standard and refers to it as to a norm for reasons of symmetry, the

question arises why, beyond a certain angle, the 'correction' does not operate. We must conclude that my gaze which moves over the face, and in doing so favours certain directions, does not recognize the face unless it comes up against its details in a certain irreversible order, and that the very significance of the object—here the face and its expressions—must be linked to its orientation, as indeed is indicated by the double usage of the French word *sens*.^{*} To invert an object is to deprive it of its significance. Its being as an object is, therefore, not a being-for-the-thinking subject, but a being-for-the-gaze which meets it at a certain angle, and otherwise fails to recognize it. This is why each object has its 'top' and its 'bottom' which indicate, for a given level, its 'natural' position, the one which it 'should' occupy. To see a face is not to conceive the idea of a certain law of constitution to which the object invariably conforms throughout all its possible orientations, it is to take a certain hold upon it, to be able to follow on its surface a certain perceptual route with its ups and downs, and one just as unrecognizable taken in reverse as the mountain up which I was so recently toiling, and down which I am now striding my way. Generally speaking, our perception would not comprise either outlines, figures, backgrounds or objects, and would consequently not be perception of anything, or indeed exist at all, if the subject of perception were not this gaze which takes a grip upon things only in so far as they have a general direction; and this general direction in space is not a contingent characteristic of the object, it is the means whereby I recognize it and am conscious of it as of an object. It is true that I can be conscious of the same object variously orientated, and, as we have said, I can even recognize an inverted face. But it is always provided that mentally we take up position in front of it, and sometimes we even do so physically, as when we tilt our head to look at a photograph held in front of him by a person at our side. Thus, since every conceivable being is related either directly or indirectly to the perceived world, and since the perceived world is grasped only in terms of direction, we cannot dissociate being from orientated being, and there is no occasion to 'find a basis for space or to ask what is the level of all levels. The primordial level is on the horizon of all our perceptions, but it is a horizon which cannot in principle ever be reached and thematized in our express perception. Each of the levels in which we successively live makes its appearance when we cast anchor in some 'setting' which is offered to us. This setting itself is spatially particularized only for a previously given level. Thus each of the whole succession of our experiences, including the first, passes on an already acquired spatiality. The condition of our first perception's being spatial is that it should

^{*} 'sense, significance, direction' (Translator's note).

have referred to some orientation which preceded it. It must, then, have found us already at work in a world. Yet this cannot be a *certain* world, a *certain* spectacle, since we have put ourselves at the origin of all of them. The first spatial level cannot find its anchorage *anywhere*, since this anchorage would need a level anterior to the first level in order to be particularized in space. And since it cannot be orientated 'in itself', my first perception and my first hold upon the world must appear to me as action in accordance with an earlier agreement reached between *x* and the world in general, my history must be the continuation of a prehistory and must utilize the latter's acquired results. My personal existence must be the resumption of a prepersonal tradition. There is, therefore, another subject beneath me, for whom a world exists before I am here, and who marks out my place in it. This captive or natural spirit is my body, not that momentary body which is the instrument of my personal choices and which fastens upon this or that world, but the system of anonymous 'functions' which draw every particular focus into a general project. Nor does this blind adherence to the world, this prejudice in favour of being, occur only at the beginning of my life. It endows every subsequent perception, of space with its meaning, and it is resumed at every instant. Space and perception generally represent, at the core of the subject, the fact of his birth, the perpetual contribution of his bodily being, a communication with the world more ancient than thought. That is why they saturate consciousness and are impenetrable to reflection. The instability of levels produces not only the intellectual experience of disorder, but the vital experience of giddiness and nausea,¹ which is the awareness of our contingency, and the horror with which it fills us. The positing of a level means losing sight of this contingency; space has its basis in our facticity. It is neither an object, nor an act of unification on the subject's part; it can neither be observed, since it is presupposed in every observation, nor seen to emerge from a constituting operation, since it is of its essence that it be already constituted, for thus it can, by its magic, confer its own spatial particularizations upon the landscape without ever appearing itself.

Traditional ideas of perception are at one in denying that depth is visible. Berkeley shows that it could not be given to sight in the absence of any means of recording it, since our retinas receive only

¹ Stratton, *Vision without Inversion*, first day of the experiment. Wertheimer talks about a 'visual vertigo' (*Experimentelle Studien*, pp. 257-9). We remain physically upright not through the mechanism of the skeleton or even through the nervous regulation of muscular tone, but because we are caught up in a world. If this involvement is seriously weakened, the body collapses and becomes once more an object.

a manifestly flat projection of the spectacle. If one retorted that after the criticism of the 'constancy hypothesis' we cannot judge what we see by what is pictured on our retinas, Berkeley would probably reply that, whatever may be true of the retinal image, depth cannot be seen because it is not spread out before our eyes, but appears to them only in foreshortened form. In analytical reflection, it is for theoretical reasons that depth is to be judged invisible: even if it could be registered by our eyes, the sensory impression would present only a multiplicity in itself, which would have to be ranged over, so that distance, like all other spatial relations, exists only for a subject who synthesizes it and embraces it in thought. Though diametrically opposed to each other, the two doctrines presuppose the same repression of our affective experience. In both cases depth is tacitly equated with *breadth seen from the side*, and this is what makes it invisible. Berkeley's argument, made quite explicit, runs roughly like this. What I call depth is in reality a juxtaposition of points, making it comparable to breadth. I am simply badly placed to see it. I should see it if I were in the position of a spectator looking on from the side, who can take in at a glance the series of objects spread out in front of me, whereas for me they conceal each other—or see the distance from my body to the first object, whereas for me this distance is compressed into a point. What makes depth invisible for me is precisely what makes it visible for the spectator as breadth: the juxtaposition of simultaneous points in one direction which is that of my gaze. The depth which is declared invisible is, therefore, a depth already identified with breadth and, this being the case, the argument would lack even a semblance of consistency. In the same way, intellectualism can bring to light, in the experience of depth, a thinking subject who synthesizes that experience, only because it reflects on the basis of a depth already in existence, on a juxtaposition of simultaneous points which is not depth as it is presented to me, but as it is presented to a spectator standing at the side, in short as breadth.¹ By assimilating one to the other from the very outset, the two philosophies take for granted the result of a constitutive process the stages of which we must, in fact, trace back. In order to treat depth as breadth viewed in profile, in order to arrive at a uniform space, the subject must leave his place, abandon his point of view on the world, and think himself into a sort of ubiquity. For God, who is everywhere, breadth is immediately equivalent to depth. Intellectualism and empiricism do not give us any account of the human experience of the world; they tell us what God might think about it.

¹ The distinction between the depth of things in relation to me, and the distance between two objects, is made by Paliard, *L'Illusion de Sinnsteden et le problème de l'implication perceptive*, p. 400, and by E. Straus, *Vom Sinn der Sinne*, pp. 267-9.