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MONIKA LANGER

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VIOLENCE IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MERLEAU-PONTY

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VIOLENCE IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MERLEAU-PONTY

(Summary)

My concern in this thesis is to show that for Merleau-Ponty, violence is not merely a political matter but rather, that its justification must be sought at the fundamentally deeper level of ontology-aesthetics. I begin by presenting the historical context within which Merleau-Ponty's political thought is situated. Following this, I discuss my reasons for "standing back" from this context and stressing a specifically philosophical approach to Merleau-Ponty's writings for the remainder of the thesis. In chapters three, four and five, I present my argument that violence, for Merleau-Ponty, finds its ultimate justification in the ontological-aesthetic realm.

The argument commences with an examination of the three kinds of violence with which Merleau-Ponty is mainly concerned: the existing violence of the Establishment, whether overt or covert, the political violence employed to change that "system," and the inevitable violence of all human relationships. Since violence is already universally institutionalized, the twin principles of nonviolence and unconditional respect for others are not viable. Choice of action is therefore confined to a choice among different forms of violence. There can be no absolute principles, no rigid ethics; the only honest standpoint is a relative one (I point out how Merleau-Ponty's study of perception prepares the way for this conclusion). However, it becomes apparent that Merleau-Ponty's relativism is not a "vulgar relativism," that the absence of prefabricated principles does not mean the positing of a Heracleitean flux.

Since our choice is limited to different kinds of violence, the crucial question centers on the criterion to be employed in making decisions regarding its use. Merleau-Ponty's response to this question consists of several guidelines—probability; majority opinion; promise of, versus threat to, humanity—and the decisive criterion of "progressiveness" (whether the employment of a particular form of violence tends toward the suspension of violence, whether it is likely to produce a more human society). When confronted with a choice among a variety of actions involving violence, the determining factor in that decision should be which of those actions is most likely to bring about a society which seems most capable of creating human relationships among men. The criterion of progressiveness, therefore, is based on humanism—violence is justified to the extent that it is employed in the service of founding a more human, and correlatively, a less violent, society. It is allowable to sacrifice those who are a threat to humanity and to promote those who offer a promise of humanity.

In having recourse to the criterion of progressiveness, it is vitally necessary to maintain the proper balance between understanding and action, paralysis and recklessness. One must look the victim in the face, one must appreciate what violence means for him. Moreover, one does not kill for merely relative progress. Therefore, if revolutionary violence does not offer hope for absolute progress, one cannot engage in it. One must question one's situation and attempt to respond to its demands. There is neither a priori rationality nor a priori absurdity, neither determinism nor creation ex nihilo; one must "take up and carry forward" those structures which one discerns as promising in "the givens" of one's time. All action is a response

to a factual situation, and each situation has its unique and unforeseen aspects. Consequently, there are no ready-made answers. Since our actions implicate others, it is imperative to consider not only intentions but also consequences. Good intentions are no excuse for faulty judgment, nor does success justify everything. Even disinterested collaborators are guilty; one cannot avoid dirtying one's hands. Furthermore, means and ends are inseparable--revolutionary violence cannot employ barbarism, and can be justified only by the vital needs of a humanity already in view. Merleau-Ponty gradually became convinced that revolutionary violence cannot satisfy the criterion of progressiveness. Consequently, he turned to parliamentary reform as a more promising method of approximating the kind of society which he considered a prerequisite for the development of man's "true humanity."

Humanism, as pointed out, underlies the decisive criterion for the employment of violence. Therefore, I attempt to determine what humanism means for Merleau-Ponty. To this end, I examine Marx and Machiavelli, both of whom very considerably influenced Merleau-Ponty's conception of humanism. This humanism is characterized by concreteness, by a primary concern with concrete flesh-and-blood men. It involves virtù--a real presence to others and to our times. It stresses the need for creating an effective universality among men, the need for genuine dialogue, genuine "openness" to others in the sharing and shaping of a common world. Such humanism unconditionally precludes barbarism. It is a humanism which seeks to establish the sort of society best suited for the development of man's true humanity.

It becomes evident that Marx's Utopia is merely a prerequisite for Merleau-Ponty's "truly human" society; as such, however, Marx's

vision proves crucial for an understanding of that of Merleau-Ponty. For the latter, a truly human society is one in which "true coexistence" replaces exploitation, and community and communication take the place of social hierarchy. There is a living dialogue and a mutual recognition among men. In such a society, relationships are based on what men truly are, rather than on money, power, or prestige. In a truly human society, the causes of war, exploitation, and decadence have disappeared. The inevitable violence of human relationships is transformed into a natural permeability. It is a socialist society, and one in which the violence of the Establishment and the political violence employed against it have been abolished. The absence of violence (except the natural permanent permeability), however, does not by itself guarantee the presence of truly human relationships, of a truly human society. For such a society, genuine dialogue, genuine expression, is needed as an essential aspect of real coexistence. To be truly human, men must have the freedom, and realize that freedom, to express themselves creatively. In thus expressing themselves, they express Being in its Truth. Ultimately, human relations are of value because only in such relationships can "brute Being" emerge and develop in its Truth.

Man's authentic humanity consists in creative expression. His inherence in, and expression of, "brute Being" is what makes him truly human. The existing violence of the Establishment and the violence employed to change it, must be abolished in order for true expression, or true creativity, to be possible. A truly human society is one in which there <u>is</u> genuine expression, genuine dialogue, through which Truth is revealed and created. Violence is justified, therefore, to

the extent that its use brings about a society which is truly human in this sense. The ultimate justification for violence is consequently to be found in the ontological-aesthetic realm--that realm which deals with man's creative expression of Being.

It becomes clear that, for Merleau-Ponty, man is situated within, and is open to, Being; that being-in-truth and being-in-the-world are inseparable; that Being, Truth, and man are primordially interrelated; that Being is the source of man's creative expression; that Being's Truth depends on man's creative expression in order to emerge and develop. The most perfect way of bringing Being to creative expression is to be found in art and philosophy. The latter, however, takes precedence over the former in that language lends itself to sedimentation, to an acquisition to be further developed, far more, for example, than does music or painting. I explain why there must be genuine dialogue between the philosopher and other men if creative expression is to take place, and I show further that there is a reciprocal relationship between creative expression and the everyday world of customs, laws, work and love. It becomes evident that the human moment par excellence is that moment of reflection-expression which is the essence of philosophy. Finally, I point out that Truth is Truth in genesis, and that it consequently calls for a never-ending effort of creative expression on the part of man.

In its most succinct form, then, the argument runs as follows: since violence is already universally institutionalized, it is imperative that there be a criterion whereby a choice can be made among various forms of violence. That criterion is progressiveness. Progressiveness dictates that that action is to be chosen the employment of which will be

most likely to produce a more human society. Consequently, the criterion to be consulted in the use of violence is based on humanism. Humanism (that is, Merleau-Ponty's version of humanism) holds that man's true humanity consists in creatively expressing Being in its Truth. But creative expression and Being belong essentially to the ontological-aesthetic realm; consequently, humanism is grounded in that realm. Since ontology-aesthetics grounds humanism, and since humanism grounds progressiveness, and since progressiveness is the decisive criterion in regard to violence, the ultimate justification of violence lies in the ontological-aesthetic realm.

In the course of presenting this argument, I draw attention to what I consider to be problems and shortcomings in Merleau-Ponty's position. Nevertheless, I conclude that the grounding of violence in ontology-aesthetics constitutes a profound insight, and is an invaluable contribution to the whole question of violence.

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PUBLICATIONS

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VIOLENCE IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MERLEAU-PONTY

by

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Department of Philosophy

A Thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Toronto

PREFACE

To date, the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty have evoked relatively little interest. Those who are acquainted with his work know him primarily as the author of the Phenomenology of Perception, and commentary generally has focused on his relationship with Husserl or Gestalt psychology.

In this thesis, I propose to draw attention to Merleau-Ponty's political thought. It is my contention that this area of his philosophy contains a valuable insight into the problem of violence—a problem which lies at the very heart of political philosophy. Merleau-Ponty's principal contribution to the political debate, I contend, is the realization that violence is not merely a political matter but rather, that its justification must be sought at the fundamentally deeper level of ontology-aesthetics. Merleau-Ponty himself never explicitly formulated this insight. Nowhere did he actually present an argument of the sort I shall investigate, involving the steps: kinds of violence, criterion of progressiveness, humanism, and ontology-aesthetics. Nowhere did he even state explicitly that there is a connection between violence and the question of Being, of creative expression. Nevertheless, I am making it the task of my thesis to show that such an insight and its corresponding argument can—and should—be inferred, or constructed, on the basis of the remarks on violence, humanism, expression, and Being which are to be found in Merleau-Ponty's writings. In my thesis, I shall endeavor to extract this insight from

the historical particularities within which it is embedded in those writings, and to retrace its development in Merleau-Ponty's thought by focusing attention on the timeless questions with which he dwelt en route. I shall contend that Merleau-Ponty's concern with the problem of violence and the questions surrounding it forced him to probe ever more deeply into the realm of ontology-aesthetics. By examining the internal dynamics of his thought, I hope to demonstrate its fundamental coherence, consistency and continuity, and to show that Merleau-Ponty's position regarding political issues occupies a central place within the framework of his whole philosophy.

Merleau-Ponty discussed the problem of violence in response to a concrete historical situation, namely, the experience of the war and the appearance of Koestler's book, Darkness at Noon. Moreover, in his discussion he was concerned to address his fellow countrymen and to reopen the questions which had been raised by the experience of the Occupation and the Resistance. In order to appreciate the full significance which Merleau-Ponty's political writings had for those to whom they were addressed, it is necessary to comprehend the historical context within which they arose. My first chapter, therefore, will be devoted to bringing that context to life for the Anglo-Saxon reader. In chapter two, I shall discuss my reasons for "standing back" from the historical context and stressing a specifically philosophical approach to Merleau-Ponty's writings for the remainder of the thesis. I deem this discussion on methodology to be necessary insofar as a specifically historical approach might well initially appear to be more appropriate to the investigation of violence in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. I shall argue that although a historical approach has

much to recommend it, a specifically philosophical approach will prove more fruitful in this case.

In chapters three, four, and five, I shall present my argument that violence for Merleau-Ponty finds its justification in the realm of ontology-aesthetics. In chapter three, I shall examine the various kinds of violence with which Merleau-Ponty is concerned and the criterion for choice which he proposes. It will become evident that since violence is already universally institutionalized, it is not a matter of choosing between violence and nonviolence but rather, among different forms of violence. I shall explain that the criterion of progressiveness which Merleau-Ponty suggests, stipulates that that violence is to be chosen, the employment of which will be most likely to produce a more human society. It will become clear, therefore, that the criterion of progressiveness is based on the values of humanism.

In chapter four, consequently, I shall turn to the investigation of what humanism signifies for Merleau-Ponty. Whereas chapters one and two draw on Les Aventures de la Dialectique, chapters three and four make intensive use of Humanism and Terror. In the course of the investigation of humanism in chapter four, it will emerge that insofar as man's true humanity consists in creatively expressing Being in its Truth, humanism is grounded in ontology-aesthetics. In chapter five, I shall examine the realm of ontology-aesthetics in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. In the course of that examination, it will become clear that violence is justified to the extent that it is instrumental in establishing a human community in which men have the freedom to express themselves creatively. I shall conclude that despite its shortcomings,

this grounding of violence in ontology-aesthetics constitutes an invaluable contribution to the whole question of violence.

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I

THE CONTEXT OF THE DISCUSSION

Merleau-Ponty was a French intellectual writing for his fellow Frenchmen in postwar France. He and they shared a common heritage marked by such milestones as the French Revolution and the adoption of the Rights of Man. Eric Cahm contends that this heritage contains the roots of problems which continued to plague Frenchmen into the twentieth century. I shall not attempt to substantiate Cahm's interesting claim here. However, on the basis of his historical research, I maintain that Frenchmen in postwar France were confronted with problems which originated in the political and social divisions of the nineteenth century, but were already prefigured in the Ancien Régime.

In addressing his fellow countrymen, Merleau-Ponty was able to presuppose a knowledge of French history, and a remembrance of the violence of its revolutions and the terror of its counter-revolutions. He could take for granted a knowledge of the development of class conflicts and party divisions, of the growth of French communism, of the successes and failures of various United Fronts and coalitions, of the nature of the relationship between different strata in French society. Frenchmen in postwar France were able to recall the impact created by the Spanish Civil War. They knew of France's colonial activities; they knew of her relationships with other European countries. Merleau-Ponty and his fellow Frenchmen had just lived through the horrors and dilemmas of foreign occupation. They had rejoiced in the

victory at Stalingrad. They had witnessed the courageous role of the French Communist Party (P.C.F.) and the non-communist intellectuals in the Resistance Movement, and the cowardly collaboration of the Vichy government with the Nazis. Frenchmen, in short, had lived through a common history. Merleau-Ponty's works were written within the context of that history and presuppose a familiarity with it and with French tradition as a whole.

The non-Frenchman approaching Merleau-Ponty's writings is therefore faced with a rather formidable problem. French history was an intimate part of every Frenchman--a part which he had either experienced personally or acquired by "osmosis," perhaps through hearing it recounted at his mother's knee. That history, for the non-Frenchman, is merely the dry stuff of which textbooks are made. If we are to appreciate the manner in which Merleau-Ponty addressed his countrymen and the sense which his writings carried for them, then we must endeavor to bring French history alive for ourselves. We must retrace the main social and political events in that history. We must familiarize ourselves with its recurrent themes and problems, with its tensions and conflicts, with the roles assumed by the various segments in French society. To this task I propose to turn now, so that the full significance of Merleau-Ponty's writings may be appreciated by the Anglo-Saxon reader.

Several studies have been undertaken emphasizing one or another aspect of French history. In my endeavor to bring that history alive for the Anglo-Saxon reader, I shall have recourse to a number of these studies: Alfred Cobban's A History of Modern France (in three volumes), Eric Cahm's Politics and Society in Contemporary France (1789-1971), Walter Laqueur's Europe Since Hitler, Dorothy Pickles' The Fifth French

Republic, George Lichtheim's Marxism in Modern France, David Caute's Communism and the French Intellectuals 1914-1960, Michel-Antoine Burnier's Choice of Action: The French Existentialists on the Political Front Line, Simone de Beauvoir's The Prime of Life and Force of Circumstance, Charles Micaud's Communism and the French Left, and Edwin Drexel Godfrey's The Fate of the French Non-Communist Left. Instead of undertaking actual historical research myself, as would be required were this a history thesis, I shall base my account on the research done by these historians. I shall apply to their works a process of judicious screening, selecting, synthesizing, and complementing, in order to gain as complete an historical context as possible for the discussion of the concept of violence in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. Cobban and Cohm provide a very helpful general account of French history. Their work is an excellent resource in grasping the main events which occurred in France during the period with which I am concerned. Laqueur's book is useful in situating France within the larger context of Europe as a whole. Pickles, on the other hand, gives us an appreciation of the leading features, peculiarities, and permanent characteristics of the French political system. Lichtheim's book is invaluable for an understanding of the development of socialism in France and for an insight into the manner in which Marxist theory was adapted to French conditions. Micaud and Drexel Godfrey provide an account of the various groups constituting the Left in France. Caute's book focuses on the nature of the relationship between communism and the French intellectuals. It gives an excellent account of the tensions and relaxations in the P.C.F.'s attitude to the intellectuals, and the latter's responses to changes in the party's policies. Caute

investigates the relationship between intellectuals and workers, the impact of Soviet policies on the P.C.F. and on the non-communist Left, and the various attempts which the intellectuals made to group themselves together for political action. Burnier restricts himself to an examination of the role played by the existentialists in postwar France, while Simone de Beauvoir provides an insight into the general climate pervading French social and political life. Each of these studies is useful in illuminating a certain aspect of French history; together, they make possible an appreciation of the context within which Merleau-Ponty wrote.

A) Historical Background

I) The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution

As Eric Cahm points out,[1] the conflict between the principles of the Ancien Régime (namely, authority, hierarchy, and national supremacy) and those of the French Revolution (namely, liberty, equality, and fraternity), "has remained a fundamental feature of the political, social, and economic structure of France."[2]

The overthrow of the Ancien Régime signified liberation from the authority of the monarchy, freedom of belief and expression, and the abolition of feudalism. However, as Cahm explains, there already existed in the French Revolution a division between the wealthiest members of the bourgeoisie and the rest of society—the "peuple." The former claimed to have secured economic freedom for all Frenchmen in the struggle against the monarchy, the nobility, and the Church. In fact, however, the bourgeoisie used the struggle to acquire a monopoly of economic power, which it safeguarded with a new principle stipulating the inviolability of private property.[3] The new "economic freedom" had direct repercussions in the social and political spheres, insofar as it re-asserted the conception of social hierarchy and political inequality—for the wealthy bourgeoisie feared that universal suffrage would threaten its property.

II) The Early Nineteenth Century and the Ensuing Tensions

The ensuing class conflicts were further complicated by the creation of the industrial working class in the nineteenth century, and these tensions were reflected by a party division into Left, Center,

and Right. Since 1815, there have been innumerable further divisions within these three broad groups, but their basic stance has remained essentially unaltered: put in its simplest terms, the Left, in the attempt to establish more democratic political and social structures, has continued to pursue the struggle against authority, hierarchy, and clerical influence; the Center has adhered to the status quo; the Right has represented the forces of reaction and has been for the most part allied with the Catholic Church. By the twentieth century, with the emergence of managerial elites, what was at stake in conflicts "was no longer. . . property as a source of power in society, but power itself, whatever its source."[4]

iii) The Commune

George Lichtheim contends that the historical roots of all later party splits and divergencies go back to the 1871 Commune.[5] He devotes considerable attention to the relationship between Blanqui and Marx, and the difference in their conceptions of what constituted the essence of the Paris Commune. The Commune concretized the gulf between the Blanquist idea of an elitist revolutionary dictatorship and the Marxist conception of a democratic dictatorship consisting of the entire revolutionary class, the proletariat.[6] Lichtheim places the twofold development of democratic reformism and revolutionary syndicalism after 1880, the peculiar features of French communism, the impact of the Russian Revolution, and the practical import of the Leninist version of Marxism in France, within the context of the heritage of 1789 and 1793.[7] The influence of Proudhon, Marx, Blanqui, Bakunin, and Sorel on syndicalism, and the role played by Guesde and

Jaurès in the formation of socialism, is given careful consideration. Similarly, the tensions between Communists and Socialists, the impact of the two World Wars, the significance of Trotsky, the decisive influence of Kojève's lectures on Hegel, and the problems created by Nazism, Stalinism, and Gaullism, are discussed in detail by Lichtheim as heritages of the Commune.

iv) The Development of Socialism from 1879 to World War II

In order to comprehend the kind of situation into which communism inserted itself in France, it is necessary to recall the development of socialism from the formation of the "Fédération des Travailleurs Socialistes" in 1879. In 1883, Jules Guesde, the earliest Marxist leader in France, founded a new "Parti Ouvrier" supported chiefly by the workers of the factories and mines. The following year a law was passed authorizing the formation of trade unions, or "syndicats." These unions were suspicious of politics and were, with a single exception, middle class. However, in 1886, Guesde was instrumental in forming the "Fédération National des Syndicats" for political action. The next several years witnessed strikes, repressions, and the emergence of a nationalism marked by anti-intellectualism, anti-semitism, and enmity to the parliamentary regime. The year 1894 was significant for several reasons. It saw a "rapprochement" with Russia resulting in a Franco-Russian defensive alliance, the gaining of eighteen seats in the Chamber by the four Socialist parties and, most lasting in its repercussions, the Dreyfus affair. This affair revealed the shocking extent of anti-semitism and corruption in the French War Office and, understandably, gave rise to a profound disillusionment and distrust in the functionings of governmental processes.

Four years later, Maurras founded the "Comité de l'Action Française," a conservative, anti-semitic organization whose journal, "Action Française," continued to influence opinion in post-World War II France despite its condemnation by the Pope in 1914.

The years which ushered in the twentieth century were fruitful ones for the arts, letters, and sciences. Cobban points to the achievements of Rodin, Manet, Zola, Proust, Pasteur. He notes further, citing the example of Anatole France, that at this period in French history, literature became politically committed. These years also witnessed the changes arising out of the industrial revolution, Millerand's reforms, Combes' anti-clerical campaign, and the separation—by law—of Church and State. Divisions resulted among Socialists. The policy of the "Confédération Général du Travaille" (C.G.T.) and the liberal idealism of Jaurès, editor of the socialist daily, "L'Humanité," were at odds with the more orthodox Marxism of Guesde.

The central point to be kept in mind through the entire history is that France was simultaneously Left politically and Right socially. Cobban points to the large proportion of small peasants, the small-scale nature of production in industry, the financial and industrial monopolies operating behind the mass of inefficient small employers, the opposition by small businessmen, shopkeepers, and farmers to planning, and the acute class conflicts, in an effort to explain why the social structure of France was unfavorable to economic progress and guaranteed social conservatism and political instability. Cobban contends that governments of the Left could achieve and retain power only on condition of refraining from introducing social reforms.[8] That this problem continued to plague French politics is borne out by

events such as the fall of Léon Blum's government in 1937 and Faure's opposition to the economic and social reforms of Mendès-France in the 1950's.

The upsurge of patriotism accompanying the outbreak of World War I, and the postwar concern with peace, temporarily eclipsed tensions within the French Left which were rooted in "the destructive, yet enduring rifts between Jacobin and socialist, anarchist and Marxist, syndicalist and parliamentarian."[9] In 1919, for example, "Clarté" was founded to group together on an international scale progressive and anti-war intellectuals. However, internal divisions soon surfaced again. The gulf between the Radicals, who believed in reducing government to a minimum, and the Socialists, who regarded the economic functions of government more favorably, was further widened by a decisive event—the formation of the French Communist Party at the 1920 Congress of the Socialist Party at Tours. The new party retained control of "L'Humanité." The leader of the Socialists, Léon Blum, who had opposed the acceptance of Lenin's twenty-one conditions for membership in the Third International, never ceased to regard the Communists as enemies of social and democratic ideals.[10] From 1920 on, there is a French party which stands under the direct impact of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. As a full member of the Third International, the P.C.F. is from this time forward a massive presence in France. Increasingly, leftist thought becomes polarized around the issues raised by the 1917 Revolution. This will be preeminently true of the period we shall be studying closely—the immediate postwar years. Of crucial concern in the twenties and thirties is the relationship between the minority communism of capitalist-democratic France and

the state communism of Russia. In 1921, the P.C.F. opposed Russia's call for a United Front. In 1924, it condemned Trotsky and expelled its most powerful intellectual, Souvarine. This created an anti-intellectual crisis within the party.

These years witnessed the bolshevization of the P.C.F., the purges, the intellectuals' formation of a "Communist Opposition," the Barbusse-Rolland controversy regarding the relative importance of means and ends, the conflicts arising around the issues of nationalism and internationalism on the one hand and idealism and communism on the other, Duhamel's resignation from "Clarté," the Franco-Spanish crushing of the Moroccan Rebellion in 1926 and its repercussions in France (namely, the imprisonment of over one hundred communist militants, and the joining with the P.C.F. of Aragon, Breton, Eluard, and other surrealist writers). The P.C.F.'s stand on colonial questions varied. It was strongly anti-colonialist in the 1920's but maintained a judicious silence between 1934 and the late 1940's, and returned to strongly voiced anti-colonialism thereafter.

The early 1930's saw a general leftward trend among French idealists.[11] There were repercussions in France following the 1930 terror campaign against intellectuals in Russia, and Stalin's declaration that the intelligentsia was incapable of understanding the politics of the working class. However, the installation of Thorez as Secretary-General of the P.C.F. eased the tension, and it was under his leadership that intellectual front organizations became prominent again.[12] The "Committee of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals" (with Rolland and Barbusse), and the "Association des Écrivains et Artistes

Révolutionnaires" (A.E.A.R.—founded in 1932 with such figures as Vaillant-Couturier, Aragon, Nizan, Malraux, Gide, Barbusse, Rolland) were two of the most important of these groups.

During the 1930's, the fascist threat became increasingly ominous. In response, the Socialists and Communists formed a United, or Popular, Front against fascism in 1934, and prominent communists such as Thorez, Vaillant-Couturier, and Duclos made appeals for support to the anti-fascist intellectuals. At this time, the Communists stressed the intellectuals' "mission" to lead the masses. With the prospect of imminent war, writers who were committed to the problem of international relations and peace voiced the need for "a reappraisal of the international situation and, consequently, of the avenues open for effective action."[13] In 1934 Camus, for example, joined the P.C.F., although he left it a year later following the party's modification of its line on the Algerian Moslems. In the early 1920's, Rolland had favored conscientious objectors, Gandhi and the technique of Non-Acceptance. By the early 1930's, he "had travelled a long way from his former semi-pacifist idealism, rejecting Gandhism in the western context and ridiculing the idea of passive resistance to Black Shirts."[14] In a speech delivered on March 15, 1933, Rolland declared that in the face of oppression, neutralism was impossible and choosing to fight with the workers was the only recourse. Shortly thereafter (1935), his book, significantly entitled Par la Révolution la Paix, was published.[15]

The Amsterdam Congress exemplified the extent to which the divergent groups on the Left were willing to unite in the interests of a common cause: Communists, Socialists, Independent Socialists,

Trotskyists, trade unionists, and women's organizations were all present. The Manifesto produced by this Congress denounced aggressive capitalism and pseudo-pacifism, proclaimed the duty of defending Russia, and called for the organization of the masses against the war.[16] The Stavisky scandal (1934) again polarized the various political factions: Radical, Socialist, and Communist Parties, supported by Malraux, Bloch, and many other intellectuals, organized a demonstration in response to the "fascist" riots touched off by the scandal. Paul Langevin, the eminent scientist, urged solidarity between workers and intellectuals, and became co-president of the "Comité de Vigilance des Intellectuels Antifascistes" (C.V.I.A.) which was formed one month later. As Caute points out,[17] the French intellectuals enjoyed tremendous prestige at this time, a prestige which was almost on a par with that of party leaders Thorez, Blum, and Daladier. Shortly after the creation of C.V.I.A., a Popular Front ("Rassemblement populaire") headed by an intellectual, Victor Basch, was founded. In 1935, the first "International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture" brought together such prominent intellectuals as Alain, Barbusse, Rolland, Malraux, Gide, Aragon, Brecht, Tolstoy, Huxley. The same year saw the signing of the Franco-Soviet Pact. The unity of the French intellectual Left was further strengthened by the Spanish Civil War. Russia's unilateral aid to Republican Spain, and the democracies' refusal to intervene, greatly enhanced the prestige of communism. The intellectuals regarded French non-intervention as a betrayal of the Franco-Spanish Treaty (1935) and such prominent figures as Péri, Rolland, Eluard, Aragon, Picasso, Mauriac, Maritain, and Bernanos were unanimous in their

denunciation of the French policy.

However, the unity of the French intellectual Left was severely strained by the impact of the Moscow Trials and the execution of Bukharin. Victor Serge, the moral leader of the French intellectual Opposition, for example, vehemently denounced Stalinism and declared that "ultimately defects in the Marxist dialectic itself had to be faced."[18] In general, the communist intellectuals like Aragon accepted the line that Trotskyists were accomplices of the Gestapo. Some, however, resigned from the party—thus, Arthur Koestler and Charles Rappoport, one of its founders. The non-communist intellectuals, on the other hand, tended to regard the trials as rigged. We shall be returning to this central episode later.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact (1939), supported by the P.C.F., shattered the remaining unity and caused many, like Nizan, to hand in their resignations to Duclos.[19] However, France's entry into the war in 1939, the German Occupation of France in 1940, the formation of French Resistance groups, Hitler's attack on Russia in 1941, and the P.C.F.'s consequent change of attitude toward Germany, all tended to reunite the dissident groups on the Left.

v) The War Years: Occupation and Resistance

In the years preceding the outbreak of World War II (1933-39), the French intellectuals came under the influence of Kojève's lectures on Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind. George Lichtheim gives a fairly good account of Kojève's stress on the humanist dimension of Marxism and the indeterminate character of history. Kojève's audience, which included Merleau-Ponty, retained the important message that the thinking

of the young Marx had been "existentialist" rather than determinist. This reinterpretation of Marx in the light of Hegel made it possible for French intellectuals to confront and dismiss the shortcomings of Leninist orthodoxy, officialized as Soviet Marxism, with the argument that such shortcomings were due to "a Russian importation into Marxism."[20] This determined the nature of many of the criticisms which the non-communist Left levelled at the policies of the P.C.F. in the postwar years.

For many French intellectuals, the war years brought about an awakening of political consciousness. Merleau-Ponty himself admitted that "politics seemed unthinkable" to him before World War II, and that it was only after he "felt the impact of these external absurdities" that he became genuinely politically "engagé."[21] In his foreword to Nizan's Aden, Arabie, Sartre states that as a young man he himself did not feel the need to be involved in politics, and was even pleased that the established order existed so that he "could take pot shots at it with words."[22] In reminiscing about the events of 1939, Sartre writes:

> I was apolitical and reluctant to make any commitment, but my heart was on the Left, of course, like everyone else's. . . . I was discovering the monumental mistake of a whole generation—our generation—that had fallen asleep standing up. We were being pushed toward massacres, through a savage pre-war period, and we thought we were strolling on the lawns of Peace. In Brumath I lived out the days of our immense, anonymous awakening.[23]

Simone de Beauvoir, in her autobiography, The Prime of Life, also describes the impact which the war years made on her life: "History took hold of me, and never let go thereafter."[24] For her, 1939 "marked a watershed": "I renounced my individualistic, antihumanist

way of life"; "I learned about human solidarity, and personal responsibilities, and the fact that it was possible to accept death in order that life might keep its meaning."[25] When violence, injustice, folly and misfortune erupted on such a monumental scale, de Beauvoir personally experienced "the pathetic ambiguity of our human condition, its twin elements of misery and splendor."[26] The years before that "conversion" which turned all her ideas and values upside down and awakened her to "political realities" seem, in retrospect, to have been "wrapped in such layers of ignorance and dishonesty" that they evoke her contempt.[27]

The collapse of France thrust French intellectuals into the foreground of the political arena:

> with the Party leadership working under restrictive conditions, with the trade unions smashed and the working class effectively dispirited by the police and by deportations, the intellectuals, with their ability to move about France and to live independently, at however humble a level, and their willingness to write and agitate regardless of the personal consequences, assumed an importance of the first magnitude.[28]

Several Resistance groups sprang up. Even before Hitler's attack on Russia, the "Free French Movement" under de Gaulle—later called "La France Combattante"—and the communist "Front National" were founded. This Front eventually attracted Catholic writers like Mauriac, as well as communist and socialist intellectuals. Other groups included: "Libération"; "Combat" (which Camus joined in 1942); "Franc-Tireur"; the all-party "Mouvements Unis de Résistance" (M.U.R.); "Mouvement de Libération Nationale" (M.L.R.—this group, which included Pierre Hervé and André Malraux, in 1945 finally split over the issue of fusing with the communist "Front National"); the communist-controlled "Front National des Intellectuels" (which in 1941 already

included Aragon, Triolet, Politzer, Decour, Solomon, Eluard); and, as in the Popular Front period, numerous specialist organizations which grouped the intellectuals into "amicales" (for example, the "Front National Universitaire," the "Comité National des Juristes," the "Front National des Arts"—all supported by clandestine papers). The "Comité National des Écrivains" (C.N.E.), which proved to be the most effective and durable of these front organizations, gathered together most of the writers of the Left (for example, Cassou, Aragon, Eluard, Vercors, Sartre, Camus, Decour, Claudel, Mauriac).[29] However, the Trotskyite intellectuals for the most part remained aloof from both collaboration and resistance, fearing that a German defeat would signify the triumph of Anglo-American imperialism.[30] The military underground was coordinated by the "National Military Committee" which, likewise, involved intellectuals (for example, Professor Marcel Prenant).[31]

Tasks undertaken by the Resistance movements included: manufacturing explosives, assassinating Germans, bombing restaurants and hotels occupied by the Germans (the "Francs-Tireurs," for example, killed 650 Germans and wounded 4,000 others in three months [32]), sabotaging goods destined for Germany, and writing creatively on resistance themes (for instance, Aragon, Eluard, Vercors, Saint-Exupéry, Triolet, Thomas, Aveline). The members of the Resistance paid dearly for these activities. Acts of assassination or sabotage resulted in arrests, tortures, and the systematic execution of hostages. The French Militia, founded in 1943 by Joseph Darnand, undertook such severe repressions that it came to be feared and hated more than Hitler's S.S. troops.[33] Pitard (a communist lawyer), Péri, Maïe and

Georges Politzer, Decour, Hélène and Jacques Solomon, Feldmann (a philosophy professor at Dieppe), Chennevière (a poet), Danielle Casanova, Marie-Claude Vaillant-Couturier, were among the victims. In the Paris area alone, 1,200 communists were arrested immediately following Russia's entry into the war.[34] Paul Colette's attempt to assassinate Laval and Déat failed, and the Germans decreed the death penalty for anyone convicted of disseminating Communist propaganda. The killing of two German officers resulted in the execution of ninety-eight Frenchmen and the internment of twenty-seven others. Shortly thereafter, the Germans announced that reprisals would be extended to the families of terrorists. However, guerrilla activities continued despite severe denunciations by the collaborators. Moreover, close links were forged between the Resistance and London on the one hand, and North Africa on the other. The German effort to form an intellectuals' collaboration movement failed.[35] By the end of the war, approximately half the staff of "L'Humanité" had died, and the P.C.F. was able to refer to itself as "Le Parti des Fusillés."[36]

The moral dilemmas facing Frenchmen during the Occupation were not restricted to the "problems raised by the existence of likeable, anti-Nazi German soldiers."[37] In occupied France, "simply to be alive implied some sort of compromise."[38] As Cobban points out, the period was marked by "the moral ambiguity of divided allegiance":

> Sabotage and rebellion were the needs of patriots, loyalty and obedience the virtues of defeatists and collaborators, murder and torture part of the normal machinery of government, and assassination the method of opposition. On more than one side honour was rooted in dishonour and faith unfaithful kept men falsely true.[39]

The Vichy government took advantage of the German Occupation to crush political opponents, and "Action Française" intensified its anti-semitic campaign. Pétain, Laval, Darlan, Doriot, and Déat collaborated freely with the Germans. Vichy published its own "Jewish statute" in 1940, and in 1941 Doriot and Déat founded the "Rassemblement National Populaire" to cooperate with the Nazis in creating the new European order.[40] Simone de Beauvoir gives a very illuminating account of the persecutions of the Jews in France.[41]

It is important to note a few points about the Resistance Movement. First of all, there is a distinction between the activities of individual communists and the attitude of the P.C.F. during the first year of the Occupation. David Caute's study examines the militant activities of certain communist intellectuals in the face of the party's equivocal position. Caute explains those aspects of the Resistance which caused numerous Frenchmen to join the P.C.F. (for example, Eluard, Picasso, Jourdain, Joliot-Curie, Langevin), as well as those policies which drove members from the party (for instance, the tendency to regard escapees such as Pastor and Sartre as collaborators).[42] He points out, further, that Stalingrad was interpreted as "washing out" or "justifying" the "crimes" of the past, including those connected with the Moscow Trials. The 1937-1938 purges were now regarded as a "timely liquidation of inefficient and traitorous elements," and "the rapid construction of Russian heavy industry. . . was equated with the moral victory of Marx's communism."[43] Bloch's regular radio broadcasts from Moscow did much to confirm the importance attached to the Resistance in Russia, and enhanced the emotional appeal generated by the U.S.S.R.'s war effort.[44]

Secondly, the precise nature of the role played by the French intellectual Left in the Resistance must be defined. Simone de Beauvoir's recollections recounted in The Prime of Life prove invaluable in this regard. She conveys superbly the intellectual and emotional climate of those difficult years preceding liberation. De Beauvoir describes in detail Sartre's extensive efforts to organize a resistance movement during the Occupation. She relates the general tenor of the meetings which gathered together, besides Sartre and herself, such intellectuals as Merleau-Ponty, Cuzin, Desanti, Bost, and Poullion. Although Desanti proposed organizing attacks on individuals such as Déat, the others did not feel qualified to engage in guerrilla activities. It was decided, therefore, to confine the group's activities for the time being to recruiting support, collecting information for circulation, boycotting Occupied Zone papers, and preparing—through research and discussion—a new program for the Left to be put into effect in the event that the democracies should be victorious. This resistance group called itself "Socialism and Liberty." Sartre tried to establish contacts between the movement and certain people in the Free Zone. To this end, he made a trip to see Gide and Malraux. However, the former declared himself incapable of seeing what he could do himself, and the latter regarded action of any sort quite useless for the time being, since he relied on the Americans and Russians to win the war.[45] Sartre's hope that "Socialism and Liberty" would attach itself to a large central body, failed to materialize. De Beauvoir observes that politically, the group found itself "reduced to a condition of total impotence,"[46] and concludes that "Socialism and

Liberty" and other similar movements were ineffectual because

> they had come into being through individual initiative, and consisted mainly of middle-class intellectuals without any experience of underground action—or indeed of action in any form.[47]

Unlike such groups, which lacked experience and cohesion, the Communists

> were well organized, well disciplined, and possessed an excellent administrative machine, with the result that from the moment they decided to intervene they obtained spectacular results.[48]

Sartre therefore favored a "rapprochement" with the P.C.F. However, his attempt to establish a common front was not, initially at least, welcomed by the Communists, who distrusted groups of "petit-bourgeois intellectuals" formed outside the auspices of the party.[49]

The Gestapo arrested several members of other Resistance movements, among them Sartre's boyhood friend, Péron, and one of de Beauvoir's former philosophy students, Yvonne Picard. Sartre, seeing what risks the continued existence of "Socialism and Liberty" would have meant for his friends, and discouraged by the group's ineffectuality, decided to disband the movement.[50] He then threw himself into the writing of plays, by which he could appeal to those sharing a common predicament. By writing plays which were technically beyond reproach but transparent in their implications (for example, The Flies), he sought to counter German and Vichy propaganda by reminding his countrymen of rebellion and freedom.[51] In 1943, Sartre was invited by the communist intelligentsia to join the "Comité National des Écrivains" (C.N.E.). The following year witnessed the liberation of France. Just prior to this event, the Germans engaged

in wide-scale atrocities on the civilian population. Children were burned alive or suspended from butcher hooks, and housewives were shot down in the streets of Paris.[52]

vi) The French Left in the Immediate Postwar Years

The German Occupation and the Resistance which it called forth did much to unite the various elements constituting the French Left. Communists, Socialists, Syndicalists, and others worked side by side in the effort to overcome Nazism. The Communist Party played a very decisive role in the struggle and, as a result, gained strong support. The extent of that support became evident in the 1945-1946 elections, in which the P.C.F. became for the first time the largest parliamentary party. As Cobban points out, the P.C.F. was the only party "that had retained its identity and its cadres intact throughout the underground struggle."[53] The Center had been discredited, and the Right was politically annihilated with its leaders in prison or disenfranchised. However, despite its advantageous position, the P.C.F. failed to seize power. Instead, Thorez endorsed the dissolution of the armed Resistance units. This caused resentment within the party. Many communists, like Pierre Hervé, felt that Thorez and Duclos had wasted "the revolutionary potential of the Resistance" and betrayed the liberation. The "maquis" and the Liberation Committees had been opposed to reviving the system of electoral democracy but, in the interests of solidarity among all Left groups, had refrained from proposing a "recipe" for a new democracy. Now, faced with a tripartite government and Gaullist paternalism—a paternalism disguised with talk of "socialism"—they were understandably bitter.[54]

With the defeat of the common enemy, the old cleavages into Right and Left reappeared.[55] Inflation, food shortage, and a resulting rash of riots and strikes gripped France in the immediate postwar period. The P.C.F., although part of the government, supported the May 1947 strikes and, consequently, the Communist ministers were dismissed from office by the Socialist Premier, Ramadier. The "Ramadier affair" marked the beginning of open hostility between the Communists, and the Socialists and M.R.P.[56] The Marshall Plan, announced in the same year, was denounced by the Communists but supported by the Socialists. The "Kravchenko affair" (Kravchenko, a Russian official who had defected to America in 1944), which also occurred in 1947, rallied the French intellectuals and induced them to reaffirm, albeit within certain limits, their faith in Russia.[57] Earlier in that year, de Gaulle had created the "Rassemblement du Peuple Français" (R.P.F.), which was to be "a party against parties." However, the combination of progressive and conservative elements undercut its unity.[58] The same year saw the failure of the communist-led strikes of November and December, and the revolt in Madagascar.

In my discussion of the development of Merleau-Ponty's political position, I shall have occasion to consider the Left's response to the events which followed 1947. First, however, I wish to investigate the role of the "Temps Modernes" group in postwar France.

B) The "Temps Modernes" Group

The review, "Les Temps Modernes," which was founded in 1945 by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, occupies a central place in our investigation. The review sought "to clarify a general policy" on the political and social problems of the times. Its editorial staff consisted of: Raymond Aron, Simone de Beauvoir, Michel Leiris, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Albert Olivier, Jean Paulhan, and Jean-Paul Sartre—André Malraux refused to join, and Albert Camus was too busy with "Combat" to become a member. However, the latter frequently wrote articles for the review. Michel-Antoine Burnier has studied the various installments of the journal in an attempt to determine and summarize the stand which its editors took on the various issues which arose in postwar France.

As Burnier points out, the journal form was particularly well-suited for the editors' endeavor of "hunting" meaning and "unmasking" events, policies, and actions, in order to bring about change. While in touch with passing events, the review could "be detached enough to reflect on them" and engage in dialogue and criticism.[59] In the "manifesto" of "Les Temps Modernes," Sartre and Merleau-Ponty proclaimed the journal's general political intentions and sought to define the role of the intellectual on the new Left. They declared their intention of fighting apathy and ignorance, and of demonstrating that the world is not divided neatly "into two empires of good and evil."[60] They contended, further, that thought need not weaken action, that good intentions do not justify everything, and that it is quite possible to discern "a clear enough course of action" if one endeavors

to remain informed. Merleau-Ponty, who assumed responsibility for the political direction of the review, announced the editors' hope of rediscovering "Marxism on the road of present-day truth and in the analyses of [their] times."[61] Briefly, the aim was to understand history in clarifying actual historical situations, to "unmask" with a view to contributing to the developing of collective revolutionary praxis—in short, to understand history and to change it. In his introduction to the first issue of "Les Temps Modernes" (1945), Sartre stressed the very real responsibility of the writer by drawing attention to the political consequences of his actions as a writer: since "the writer is <u>situated</u> in his time," since every word and every silence has consequences, "since we act on our time by our very existence," it is imperative that we make this action deliberate and that the writer "tightly. . . embrace his time."[62] In his introduction, Sartre emphasized that the editors' aim was to address their contemporaries and thereby "to participate in bringing forth certain changes in [their] society"—changes in "both the social condition of man and his conception of himself."[63] Finally, Sartre informed the readers that the review would not serve any party, but would, "à propos of the coming social and political events, . . . take a stand in each case."[64] It is worth noting that in 1947 Sartre expounded the same theme of responsibility in <u>What Is Literature?</u>: "The 'committed' writer is aware of the identity of word and action; he knows that the act of unmasking brings about change and that one only acts in this way in order to change things."[65] In his autobiography on the other hand, Sartre admitted, much later (1964), that for a long time he treated his pen as a sword, but that he had finally come to realize how helpless

the writer is.[66]

Burnier traces the political development of "Les Temps Modernes" beginning with the journal's initial problems and hesitations. At first, though solidly opposed to exploitation, colonialism, war, and the regimes engendering these evils, it "had difficulty in justifying its position and relating ontological analyses to political positions."[67] It criticized all existing parties and from the beginning adopted a political line with its unequivocal condemnation of de Gaulle's policies. Its opposition to the General was to be one of the journal's steadfast themes for the next several years.

As already pointed out, World War II had a strong impact on the French intellectuals. In his article, "The War Has Taken Place," which was published in "Les Temps Modernes" in June 1945, Merleau-Ponty remarks that before 1939 they "separated their personal fate from European history."[68] He observes that the Occupation wrought a fundamental change insofar as it taught them that "their former freedom had been sustained by the freedom of others and that one is not free alone."[69] The experience of the Occupation brought Merleau-Ponty to the realization that "the wish to be free on the fringe of the world" would end in their not being free at all, since one's "freedom is interwoven with that of others by way of the world."[70] He learned that it is necessary to assume responsibility not only for one's intentions, but also for the "external consequences" of one's actions, for their meaning "in a historical context."[71]

During the war, Merleau-Ponty had been a lieutenant in the army and lived "face to face with cruelty and death."[72] Thereafter, he found it impossible to disregard violence in any of its forms.

"The war has so drained everyone," he wrote, ". . . that men no longer have the energy even to look violence in the face, to see it at its source."[73] Consequently, he made it one of his tasks to persuade men that violence must be confronted openly not only in time of war but at all times, for the Occupation had taught him that "there can be no room for neutral or indifferent actions."[74] The journal form was ideally suited for this task of "unmasking" and confronting violence in an effort to persuade others to do the same. The bulk of Humanism and Terror, for example, in which Merleau-Ponty confronts the question of the Moscow Trials by placing those Trials within the larger context of the different forms of violence, appeared serially in "Les Temps Modernes." Through this journal, Merleau-Ponty sought to exert political influence—not in the sense of persuading others to vote for a particular party, for instance, but rather in encouraging them to take a critical and honest approach to the socio-political problems of the times. In this way, he hoped "to push things forward in the direction of effective liberty."[75] In his view, "this political task [was] not incompatible with any cultural value or literary task," because he considered literature and culture to be "the progressive awareness of our multiple relationships with other people and the world."[76]

Sartre was in full agreement with this view of the journal's political task. As I pointed out earlier, he, too, had "learned history" through the experience of the war years. Before the war, he had spent a year in Berlin and had thereby become acquainted with the philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger. For the next years, his interests were primarily phenomenological-ontological in character,

as he attempted to formulate his own position against the background of the German philosophers. The basic orientation in works like The Transcendence of the Ego and Being and Nothingness (written in 1936-7 and 1943 respectively) was one of idealism. In 1938, his first novel, Nausea, appeared. It, too, was a phenomenological-ontological study, taking a highly individualistic approach. In both Being and Nothingness and Nausea, Sartre was interested in an analysis of the "human reality" which is man. Consequently, his lengthy discussions of action, decision and freedom remained on the level of the individual. There was little, if any, consideration of collective action. Freedom was a matter of accepting the anguish of radical contingency and the responsibility for continually realizing freedom anew through the creative project. The relationship between individuals was described as one of conflict.

The war and the Occupation, however, were instrumental in bringing about a shift of emphasis, a reorientation, in Sartre's philosophy. For the first time, he realized the need to take an interest in history and politics. It became clear to him that the course of events and the decisions of statesmen could radically curtail individual freedom. Sartre became increasingly aware that genuine freedom for the individual required more than an attitude of "good faith" on the part of that individual. He began to realize that individual freedom could be brought about only through collective action and social change. The full implications of these realizations were not developed and articulated until 1960 with the Critique de la Raison Dialectique. In his book, Choice of Action, Burnier examines at length the successive stages by which Sartre's change of orientation gradually clarified

itself.[77] He captures remarkably well the ambivalence of Sartre's position in the early 1940's, at a time when Sartre was trying to organize the Resistance movement, "Socialism and Liberty," and then writing for the underground paper, "Combat." The plight of Orestes in The Flies, which he wrote during this time, reflects the fact that "Sartre conceived action as individual although in History. . . . [and that] the idea of praxis [remained] unclear."[78] As Burnier points out,

> Orestes dreams of liberating his country. . . . He finds that an abstract freedom without real choices is mere deception, that History is corporeal and weighs on one, that blood is frequently the price of progress. He can no longer feel himself apart from men and their History. . . . Orestes kills the tyrant and his accomplice and delivers his people, but instead of remaining to work with others to rebuild the country. . . he flees to solitude.[79]

In his trilogy, Roads to Freedom, published between 1945 and 1949, Sartre again confirms his gradual awakening to a full appreciation of the importance of history and of revolutionary praxis. In the first volume the hero, Mathieu, is essentially apolitical and individualistic—as was Sartre prior to the war. He is concerned with freedom, but purely on an individualistic level. He regards his actions as having no irrevocable consequences. By the third volume, Mathieu is learning to face reality, to take history seriously, to criticize himself for his previous apolitical attitude and to recognize that it did not absolve him from responsibility. He realizes that genuine freedom can be realized only through collective praxis, and he commits himself irrevocably to political action.[80] It is worth noting that his article, "Materialism and Revolution," which was published in the journal in 1946, is an excellent illustration of the extent to which the war years

had transformed Sartre's position.

In Being and Nothingness, Sartre had regarded revolutionaries as being in "bad faith": "Revolutionaries are serious. . . . they wish to change this world. . . . it is a dismissal of human reality in favor of the world. . . . it is obvious that the serious man. . . is in bad faith. . . ."[81] By 1946, Sartre was prepared to admit that "the revolutionary act. . . . calls for a new philosophy, with a different view of man's relations with the world."[82] He now realized that the revolutionary act, which is "the free act par excellence," is "not free in an anarchist and individualist way at all," but "from the beginning, . . . places itself on the level of solidarity."[83] The revolutionary's "freedom resides in the act by which he demands the liberation of his whole class and, more generally, of all men."[84] Since he had become aware that "other people's freedoms can render [one's] situation unbearable," Sartre now appreciated the need to align himself with others in struggling for a "total liberation." He now condemned idealism and attempted, through the vehicle of the journal, to formulate the "new philosophy" to transcend both materialism and idealism. This "new philosophy" was to throw light on the whole problem of violence, in keeping with his realization that "the revolutionary attitude demands a theory of violence as an answer to oppression."[85] Class consciousness also demanded a "new humanism, above and beyond the rational organization of the community."[86] The formulation of this "new humanism" was to be one of the prime tasks of "Les Temps Modernes."

When the old cleavages into Right and Left reappeared early in 1946, Aron and Olivier left the review. In December 1946, "Les Temps Modernes" was the first to come out with a sharp and unequivocal

condemnation of the war in Indochina, and a demand for immediate independence.[87] This war was much discussed in the review. (In March 1947, for example, Merleau-Ponty wrote an article "On Indo-China" in the review.) Colonialism became, and remained, one of the key themes with which the journal concerned itself. In the years which followed, the editors continued to take a clear stand on the issues which concerned French political life (that is, they did so with the exception of the early 1950's when, at Merleau-Ponty's insistence, they "underplayed politics"[88]). They endeavored to "unearth" the meaning of these events and to transmit that meaning to the French public. The Marshall Plan was discussed at great length, as were the Washington purges, the Algerian War, the Stalinist camps, the campaign against Tito, the colonial policy in Tunisia, the massacres in Madagascar, the Hungarian Revolution, the Suez Affair, and so on. In general, "Les Temps Modernes" sought "to define the framework for a politics of coexistence" between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.[89] It rejected power politics and the Cold War, and replaced these with "a politics of peace" aimed at the establishment of a socialist and neutral Europe.[90]

As Sartre points out, Camus was an indispensable part of the cultural domain of France at the time:

> Camus could never cease to be one of the principal forces in our cultural domain, nor to represent, in his own way, the history of France and of this century.[91]

Unlike his friends, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, Camus came from a poverty-stricken home. His father was a poor agricultural worker; his mother worked as a charwoman following her husband's death. Camus' studies in philosophy at the University of Algiers were cut short

abruptly by severe attacks of tuberculosis. The first of these attacks came when he was only seventeen, and forced Camus to support himself by a variety of jobs (for example, selling spare parts for cars). For a brief period (1934-1935), he was a member of the Algerian Communist Party. Just prior to World War II, he became rédacteur-reporter for "Alger-Républicain," a left-wing paper which was anti-colonialist and supported the Popular Front. During the war, he was active in the Resistance Movement as editor of the underground paper, "Combat."[92]

In 1942, The Outsider and The Myth of Sisyphus were published by Gallimard, and shortly after the liberation, the plays, Cross Purpose and Caligula, appeared. In these works, Camus stripped the familiar world of its illusions in order to explore the fundamental absurdity of the human condition. He sought "to be logical to the bitter end," to determine whether there is "a logic to the point of death."[93] With pitiless clarity and unflinching perseverance, he described the irreconcilable contradiction between man's "appetite for the absolute and for unity and the impossibility of reducing this world to a rational and reasonable principle."[94] Unsparingly, Camus rejected determinism, explanatory schemata, and absolute truth, in favor of the ever-renewed, conscious "confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world."[95] Integrity forbade his "masking the evidence" or "suppressing the absurd" by denying one of the terms in that confrontation.[96] He was firmly convinced that "everything begins with consciousness and [that] nothing is worth anything except through it."[97] Camus called for a lucid reason which

notes its limits, for "a constant awareness, ever revived, ever alert."[98] In his view, man's grandeur consists in his lucidity and his revolt against a life which is utterly "without appeal."[99] Such a revolt "gives life its value. . . . [and] restores its majesty to that life."[100] "The certainty of a crushing fate" (that is, death) does not imply nihilism or despair, but rather offers "a lucid invitation to live and to create, in the very midst of the desert."[101] For the lucid man, the absurd becomes a "harrowing" passion which simultaneously "burns" and "exalts" the heart. His is a "desperate joy," "a will to live without rejecting anything of life."[102] Meursault, the hero of The Outsider, is such a man—a man of utter honesty, who lives "without hope, without illusion, and without resignation," who gives himself fully to each successive present.[103]

In the 1940's Camus was, for his friends, "the admirable conjunction of a person, an action, and a work."[104] His earlier struggles against dire poverty and illness, his "flirtation" with the Communist Party, his work on "Alger-Républicain," his intellectual honesty and passion for clarity, went hand in hand at this time with the concrete commitment to a common social-political cause—namely, the Resistance Movement. In the years following the liberation, however, Camus became increasingly estranged from his friends on the non-communist Left. This estrangement was largely due to his refusal to speak out clearly and publicly against the tortures perpetrated by the French on the Algerians during the Algerian War. Other contributing factors were: his decision to sign a petition requesting clemency for Brasillach, his concern with moral issues at the expense of political ones, his growing anti-communism, and his criticism of Merleau-Ponty's position

regarding the Moscow Trials.[105]

Camus' novel, The Plague, which appeared in 1947, used a natural calamity to symbolize the Occupation, thereby tacitly equating the two. To his friends, this seemed to be "merely another means of escaping from History and the real problems."[106] The decisive break between Sartre and Camus followed the publication of Camus' Rebel in 1951. In this work, Camus rejected political revolution, and opted for a rebellion which stressed the notion of limits. The rebel, contended Camus, must pay for murder with his own life.[107] Camus insisted on certainty regarding the outcome of violence:

> A revolution is not worth dying for unless it assures the immediate suppression of the death penalty. . . . When the end is absolute, historically speaking, and when it is believed certain of realization, it is possible to go so far as to sacrifice others. When it is not, only oneself can be sacrificed, in the hazards of a struggle for the common dignity of man.[108]

Sartre felt constrained to criticize Camus' "antihistoricism," his idealism, his bourgeois moralism, his refusal "to leave the sure ground of morality, and to engage upon the uncertain paths of the practical."[109] Sartre was penetrating enough to discern the roots of Camus' antihistoricism in the basic ontological position formulated in The Myth of Sisyphus. In Sartre's view, Camus' concern with man's struggle against nature blinded him to man's struggle against social conditions. He contends that for Camus, the Nazis were "accomplices of the blind forces of the universe."[110] Sartre tells him,

> you were fortunate in that the common fight against the Germans symbolized, in your eyes and ours, the union of all men against inhuman fatalities.[111]

In Sartre's view, therefore, Camus' basic adherence to the status quo was obscured for a short while by his participation in the Resistance:

> Thus, a concurrence of circumstances, . . . allowed you to conceal from yourself the fact that man's struggle against Nature is, at the same time the cause and effect of another struggle, equally old and pitiless, man's struggle against man. You revolted against death, but in the iron belts which surround cities, other men revolted against social conditions which raised the toll of mortality. Should a child die, you accused the absurdity of the world. . . . But the child's father, if he were a laid-off worker or unskilled laborer, accused men. . . . You wanted to realize within yourself, by yourself, the happiness of all through a moral tension. . . .[112]

It seems to me that Sartre was fundamentally correct in stating that Camus' notion of rebellion must be understood in reference to the position which he presented in The Myth of Sisyphus. I shall return to this point presently, for it lies at the core of the difference between Merleau-Ponty's criterion of progressiveness and Camus' notion of limits. First, however, I propose to consider the role which the works of Arthur Koestler played during these years.

C) Koestler and Merleau-Ponty

Earlier, I mentioned that the Moscow Trials and the execution of Bukharin severely strained the unity of the French intellectual Left and led some intellectuals, like Koestler, to leave the party. However, on the intellectual extreme-Left doubts were, to a large extent, suppressed. The result was that at the time, the Trials did not produce as great ruptures as, for example, did the anti-Titoist Trials of the late forties.[113] Yet there is no doubt that the Moscow Trials created a grave problem for French intellectuals "who regarded a socialist state as the least likely of all to permit injustices on a massive and planned scale."[114] Since there was no obvious single explanation of how the confessions were obtained, it seemed feasible to consider them genuine. Some surmised that the Old Bolsheviks confessed because "they were caught red-handed and there was no way out." Others (for example, Henri Guilbeaux) argued that the accused had confessed in the hope of gaining pardon and later overthrowing Stalin and restoring Leninism. Still others (for instance, Krivitsky and Koestler) reasoned that they had confessed as a last service to the party.[115] The hard-core Stalinist intellectuals, such as Aragon, Wurmser, and Cogniot, adopted the familiar "for us or against us" principle and silenced all doubts with the reasoning that "whoever protected the accused at the Moscow trial rendered himself an accomplice of all the attacks which are hurled by fascism at the present time against peace and against the existence of the workers of the whole world."[116] Those intellectuals who questioned the Trials were labelled "advocates of Hitler and the Gestapo."[117] The dilemma of the "pro-Soviet idealists," who were caught between the Stalinist and Oppositionist intellectuals, can therefore be

appreciated.[118] To outline completely the context within which Darkness at Noon appeared, it should also be recalled that, for many Left intellectuals, the victory at Stalingrad "washed away" or vindicated the Trials.

Koestler's Darkness at Noon, a novel dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Moscow Trials, attempted to reexamine the issue. When it was published in England in 1940, its impact was minimal. However, its appearance in France (under the title Le Zero et l'Infini) after the war created a sensation. In the book, Koestler portrays the lengthy dialogues between the Stalinist interrogators (Ivanov and Gletkin) and Rubashov, the accused Old Bolshevik, as well as the internal discussion of Rubashov with himself. Rubashov readily admits that Stalin "conceivably might be in the right," that there is no certainty, and that the only appeal is to "that mocking oracle. . . called History."[119] He realizes that for the party, death is "the logical solution to political divergencies" because errors have future consequences and are therefore "crimes" against future generations.[120]

Though innocent of the charges brought against him, Rubashov, the ex-Commissar of the People, is aware of "the higher interests which are really at stake."[121] He himself had earlier found it "right and necessary" to have counter-revolutionaries shot, and had condemned comrades who dared to criticize the party.[122] At that time, Rubashov had declared that individuals might be wrong, but that "'the Party can never be mistaken'."[123] He had stressed the need for "absolute faith in History" and in the party as "the embodiment of the revolutionary idea in history."[124] Now he felt himself constrained to put the party "in question" and to wonder how it was that "right principles" had produced

"wrong results." Rubashov reasons that "If the Party embodied the will of history, then history itself was defective."[125] Gletkin points out that, instead of world revolution, a wave of reaction had followed the Russian Revolution, and that the party had seen fit to subordinate the policy of the international to national policy.[126] In Rubashov's view, at critical turning points in history, the only possible rule is that which states that the end justifies the means. All that matters is "who is objectively in the right."[127] "The question of subjective good faith is of no interest. He who is in the wrong must pay; he who is in the right will be absolved."[128] In fact, Rubashov points out that "history has taught us that often lies serve better than the truth."[129] Yet he realizes the problem involved here—namely, that only "axiomatic faith in the rightness of one's own reasoning" can decide in the present what will be judged truth in the future.[130] Rubashov no longer believes in his own infallibility.[131] He is forced to reconsider the costs which the Revolution has exacted so far, and to ask whether or not "humanism and politics, respect for the individual and social progress, are incompatible."[132] His probings lead him to formulate the "law of the relative maturity of the masses."[133] He confesses that "humanitarian weakness and liberal democracy, when the masses are not mature, is suicide for the Revolution," and that his demand for a placing of the idea of man above the idea of mankind, for a broader democracy, for a looser party organization, and for abolition of the terror, were objectively counter-revolutionary at that point in history.[134] Under pressure from Gletkin, he relinquishes the distinction between objective and subjective guilt. He grapples with the problem of terror in an effort to determine whether there is an important distinction to be made between mass action

leading to civil war, and individual acts of terrorism. Since he realizes that Russia is backward, and since he sees the need for party unity, Rubashov agrees to confess to the charges of sabotage and espionage as a last service for the party (to forestall further defections from the party line by acting as a scapegoat). However, having confessed, Rubashov admits to himself his own disillusionment with the party. He surmises that "perhaps the Revolution had come too early," and that perhaps he had been mistaken in thinking that the end justifies the means and that the objective must be placed above the subjective."[135]

After writing Darkness at Noon, Koestler returned several times to the question of means and ends. In The Yogi and the Commissar (1945), he condemns the view that the end justifies the means; yet, in Thieves in the Night (1946) and Promise and Fulfilment (1949), he argues that the use of violence is justifiable in the struggle for the Zionist cause.[136] In his Drinkers of Infinity, Koestler attempts to meet some of the objections raised by readers of Darkness at Noon (for example, Strachey's contention that the book was subversive of present-day communism and was a reaction against rationalism and empiricism).[137] Koestler's recurrent thesis is that the intellectual has failed in his attempts to change society, because he "has started from the belief in the basic political sanity and rationality of man."[138] In exploring the element of irrationality in political action, Koestler focuses attention on what he considers to be the two basic drives; namely, "the self-transcending" and "self-assertive" tendencies.[139]

In The Yogi and the Commissar, Koestler argues that Yogi and Commissar stand at opposite ends of the spectrum of human attitudes to life. "The Commissar believes in Change from without."[140] He

regards revolution as the only possible cure for social ills. In his view, the end which revolution sets itself (namely, the "radical reorganization of the system of production and distribution of goods"[141]) justifies all means.[142] The Commissar believes in absolute determinism. The Yogi, on the other hand, "believes that the End is unpredictable and that the means alone count. He rejects violence under any circumstances."[143] Unlike the Commissar, he believes in individual "Change from Within." Whereas the Commissar concentrates all effort on the relationship between the individual and society, the Yogi focuses his attention exclusively on the relation between the individual and the Absolute (that is, "Truth," "the universe"). Koestler calls for a synthesis between Yogi (saint) and Commissar (revolutionary). However, he is aware of the problems encountered in such a synthesis, since "apparently, the two elements do not mix."[144] He is doubtful, therefore, whether such a synthesis can be achieved.[145] Koestler analyzes each of the elements in an effort to account for their past failures. He concludes that the Commissar comes to grief through either "the Antinomy of the Serpentine" or "the Antinomy of the Slopes." The former, in turn, involves either of two alternatives: the revolutionary momentum causes the masses to divert the leader from his Utopian ideals and follow him to destruction, or the momentum "fades out" and degenerates into the Trade Unionist movement.[146] The "Antinomy of the Slopes," on the other hand, suffers through the dilemma of ends and means. As an example, Koestler cites the "slope" leading from the "'Healer's Knife'" to the Moscow Purges.[147] Koestler contends that the Yogi slides down a similar slope. As Koestler sees it, "either the Means are subordinated to the End, or vice versa. . . . if burdened with responsibility, and confronted

with a practical decision to be taken, you have to choose one way or the other. Once you have chosen you are on the slope."[148] As an example of the "slope" created by the Yogi's subordination of end to means, Koestler points to Gandhi's "slide" from nonviolence to nonresistance to Japanese aggression. Both "Machiavellianism" and "inverted Machiavellianism" are thus doomed to failure.[149]

Koestler is convinced that the Commissar "pays" for "amputating" his subconscious. When faced with "the crisis of his life," he realizes that "the Man-Universe connection has to be re-established."[150] Rubashov, in Darkness at Noon, is a prime example. Koestler claims that "since Rosa Luxemburg there has arisen no man or woman endowed with both the Oceanic feeling and the momentum of action."[151] He criticizes the Marxist interpretation of history for neglecting the "'subjective factor'" in history.[152] (Merleau-Ponty considered this to be a misinterpretation of Marxism on Koestler's part. According to Merleau-Ponty, "Koestler could have learned from Hegel and Marx. . . that quality is irreducible to quantity, that the whole is irreducible to its parts in virtue of its own law of intrinsic organization, and that there is an a priori or inner structure of life and history of which empirical events are the unfolding and of which. . . man is the agency."[153])

Koestler points out what he considers to be fatal weaknesses in both "Commissar-Ethics" and "Yogi-Ethics." The Commissar's tenet that "the End justifies the Means," implies that social developments are rigidly predictable—which Koestler dismisses as "crassly fallacious."[154] Moreover, "Commissar-Ethics," as a system based on quantitative criteria, has no way of determining the point at which quantity changes into quality.

How is the Commissar to determine, for example, the precise point at which someone who disagrees with him becomes a traitor? "Yogi-Ethics," for its part, undertakes the "extremely difficult" task of transferring the values derived from passive contemplation into practical action. The dangers here, according to Koestler, are quietism, escapism, default, and "fanatic enthusiasm."[155] These dangers notwithstanding, Koestler claims that "contemplation still remains the only source of guidance in ethical dilemmas where the rule-of-thumb criteria of social utility fail."[156] The basic paradox of man's condition, in Koestler's view, is the conflict between freedom and determinism. (Koestler discusses five types of reductionist ethical systems in this context.) The only way of resolving this conflict is to "remain constantly aware of the vertical dimension," "while thinking and acting on the horizontal plane of our existence."[157] Koestler is firmly convinced that "neither the saint nor the revolutionary can save us; only the synthesis of the two."[158]

As I pointed out earlier, Darkness at Noon had a tremendous impact in France. Kanapa and Garaudy criticized Koestler on the grounds that there had been no fifth column in Russia during the war and that, therefore, the Trials and Purges had been just and efficacious--a non-sequitur. Claude Morgan took the line that Stalingrad showed that the liquidated opposition would have been very dangerous in the war—another non-sequitur.[159] The communists in general regarded Koestler's book as subversive of present communist policy, and not only tried to intimidate the publishers, but also directed vicious ad hominem arguments against Koestler. Nevertheless, Darkness at Noon was instrumental in turning several young intellectuals toward communism—although it helped to turn others away.[160]

Merleau-Ponty was convinced that Koestler's book had not been "properly read" and therefore had been poorly understood.[161] He felt that Darkness at Noon raised "the problem of our times," but that it had failed to pose the question properly. It had led both to exalted sympathy and to undue condemnation of the Soviet system. Consequently, Merleau-Ponty saw the need to take up the problem and to set the question within "the historical totality to which it belongs."[162] In short, he felt that Koestler had been wrong to discuss communist violence in abstraction from the violence of liberal democracy. To remedy this error, and thereby to reopen and clarify the important questions raised by Koestler, Merleau-Ponty undertook to write Humanism and Terror. Later, he was to criticize Rousset for presenting an unbalanced view by refusing to investigate violence in the liberal democracies and the colonies while calling for an investigation of the Stalinist camps. This was the kind of balance which Merleau-Ponty already found lacking in Koestler's novel.

Earlier, I discussed the impact which Kojève's lectures had on Merleau-Ponty and other French intellectuals. This influence is discernible in the creative interpretation of Marxism which Merleau-Ponty undertakes in Humanism and Terror to counter the account of Marxist dogma presented by Koestler's Commissar.[163] He criticizes Koestler for presenting "sociological scientism" (that is, a mechanistic philosophy of history) rather than "the existential logic of history described by Marx," and takes him to task for failing to see "that Marxism has actually transcended the alternatives in which Rubashov loses himself."[164] Rubashov regards history as entirely objective and determinate.[165] Merleau-Ponty contends that "in Koestler's version of communism, history

is no longer what it was for Marx: the manifestation of human values through a process which might involve dialectical detours but at least could not entirely ignore human purposes."[166] He argues that Koestler and Marx differ in their interpretation of Hegel's famous dictum that "the real is the rational and the rational is the real." Koestler's Rubashov "has no conception of the wisdom of Marxism." In short, Koestler's understanding of Marxism is scant.[167] Merleau-Ponty maintains that Koestler poses the problems in pre-Marxist terms in supposing that Marxism negates subjectivity and human action in favor of scientific materialism. Rather, Merleau-Ponty reminds Koestler, Marxism is "a theory of concrete subjectivity and concrete action—of subjectivity and action committed within a historical situation."[168] In short, Merleau-Ponty regarded Koestler's account as "inadequate." He criticizes Koestler for reducing Rubashov's conflict to a choice between ethics (conscience) and discipline (the party). Merleau-Ponty reiterates that unlike Rubashov, Bukharin defended his revolutionary honor and rejected the charge of espionage and sabotage. Whereas Rubashov confessed in obedience to the party, Bukharin did so because he recognized "an inevitable ambiguity" in his past conduct. Merleau-Ponty draws on the personal experiences of the French intellectuals during the war, in an effort to understand Bukharin.[169]

Merleau-Ponty contends that "Koestler is a mediocre Marxist."[170] Yet, as a communist, he is not alone in regarding history as "an unfathomable God," in overlooking the individual, and in failing to appreciate "the permutation of subjective and objective factors which is the key to the great Marxists."[171] In Merleau-Ponty's view the question remains whether modern communism and the majority of communists deny subjectivity in theory and practice.[172] In Humanism and Terror, Merleau-Ponty set himself to reopen the following questions:

> Is there in reality any alternative between efficacy and humanity, between historical action and morality? Is it true that we have to choose between being a Commissar—working for men from the outside, treating them as instruments—or being a Yogi—that is, calling men to a completely inward reform? Is it true that revolutionary power negates the individual. . . ? Is it true that. . . there are only two possible positions: absolute docility or treason? Is it true, finally, that. . . politics is the modern tragedy in which the truth of the individual confronts the demands of the collectivity. . . ?[173]

The central question however is one which, according to Merleau-Ponty, Koestler never really formulates. Namely:

> Can the Revolution emerge from Terror? Does the proletariat have an historical mission which is simultaneously the dynamic force of the new society and the vehicle of human values? Or, on the contrary, is the Revolution inevitably an altogether arbitrary enterprise directed by leaders and a controlling group to which the rest submit?[174]

Ironically enough, Humanism and Terror was in turn misread and misunderstood by both communists and non-communists. Pro-Stalinist intellectuals regarded it as anti-communist and pro-fascist, while "liberal" intellectuals (for example, Camus) took it to be "an apologia for the Soviet Union and the Moscow Trials."[175] Needless to say, it was neither. In his article on Merleau-Ponty, Sartre declares that Humanism and Terror created "a scandal" everywhere, particularly by its contention that men are responsible not only for their intentions but also for their actions and for the involuntary results of those actions; and that, in certain situations, the opponent becomes a traitor.[176] Sartre remarks that this contention "had everyone screaming," but "is now [1961] accepted by everyone as a basic truth, universally valid even beyond the limits intended by the author."[177] Sartre confides that this book was decisive in his own political development—that it made him discover "the reality of the event" and released him from his immobility and his individualism.[178]

Humanism and Terror did not confine itself to Darkness at Noon

in its criticism of Koestler, however. It also responded to The Yogi and the Commissar. Merleau-Ponty contends that Koestler has failed to grasp "the dialectic between subjective and objective factors in Marxist politics."[179] He rejects as artificial the dichotomy between "Commissar-Ethics" and "Yogi-Ethics." Instead of "a series of alternations between the inward and the external, subjectivity and objectivity, or judgment and its means," Merleau-Ponty puts "a dialectical relation, that is to say, a contradiction founded in truth."[180] Koestler's discussion of freedom and necessity is "wrong-headed," according to Merleau-Ponty, because Koestler dismisses the dialectic and therefore fails to grasp that actions are neither "necessary in the sense of natural necessity nor free in the sense of a decision ex nihilo."[181] Koestler has failed to appreciate "the real tragedy of historical contingency," which rests on the fact that "a dialectic whose course is not entirely foreseeable can transform a man's intentions into their opposite and yet one has to take sides from the very start."[182] Koestler does not appreciate the fundamental ambiguity of history which underlies the dialectical relationship between intention and action, means and end—between what a man is in his own eyes and what he is for others. For Koestler, the Moscow Trials portrayed the drama of "the Yogi at grips with the Commissar—moral conscience at grips with political ruthlessness, the oceanic feeling at grips with action, the heart at grips with logic, the man without roots at grips with tradition."[183] However, Merleau-Ponty argues that this view misses the real tragedy of the revolutionary who thinks that the revolution is moving in the wrong direction, who witnesses the transformation of his action "into things which it cannot recognize as its own product and yet cannot disavow without contradiction."[184]

Unlike Koestler's Rubashov, the historical Bukharin appreciates this inevitable ambiguity and consequently is able to adopt history's viewpoint on his actions while defending his revolutionary honor. The split is not, as Koestler would have us believe, between man and the world, but between man and his historical role.[185] In proclaiming, in fact, "abstract humanism, the purity of means, and the oceanic feeling," Koestler "[makes] it impossible to define a political position in the world as it is."[186] Koestler has lost "the sense of the concrete."[187]

D) The Development of Merleau-Ponty's Political Position

The years following the war were turbulent ones. These years saw the emergence of the Cold War, the gradual shift to communism in eastern Europe from 1946 to 1948, the Czech coup of 1948, and the Anglo-American intervention in Greece. The issues which came to the fore in the 1948-49 period again raised questions about Soviet communism and led to strained relationships both within the P.C.F. and between the Communists and the non-communist Left. The Cominform campaign against Tito forced Yugoslavia out of the Soviet bloc, caused divisions between pro-Tito and pro-Stalin elements within the party, and alienated the non-communist Left. Some (for example, Kanapa, Wurmser, Baby, Courtade, Hervé) regarded Tito as an American agent or a tool of Britain, and denounced his police, his prisons, and his concentration camps. Others (for example, Sartre, Cassou, Aveline) saw him as the builder of a "true socialism" and claimed that he was the victim of Soviet imperialism or great-power chauvinism.[188] Similar splits were created by the Rajk-Kostov trials and the subsequent execution of both Rajk, the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Kostov, the Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister.

The same strain which was evident within the P.C.F. also emerged in Merleau-Ponty's writings during this time. Nevertheless, until 1950 Merleau-Ponty, although always critical of some aspects of Marx's thought and highly critical of what he considered to be inadequate interpretations of that thought by some of his Marxist contemporaries, adopted Marx's theory of revolution as embodied in his theory of the proletariat. Thereafter, he apparently became increasingly disillusioned with even

the basic tenets of Marxism and rather reluctantly turned to parliamentary reform as a more promising method of approximating the sort of society which he considered to be a prerequisite for the development of man's "true humanity" (I shall discuss what Merleau-Ponty means by this, later).

i) The Articles for "Les Temps Modernes"

In his article entitled "Concerning Marxism," which he wrote in August 1945, Merleau-Ponty warns that criticizing mechanistic interpretations of certain Marxist formulas "does not authorize us to transcend or 'go beyond' economic analysis or to drop the guideline of the class struggle."[189] At this period, Merleau-Ponty, who was writing in the midst of the chaos wrought by World War II, saw a proletarian revolution as a necessary precondition for reconstructing a society which would be such that "human" relationships and values could flourish. His position here is definitely not one of naive optimism—he does not regard the workers' expropriation of the property-holders as being the "cure all" for society's ills. He simply holds that it is a necessary, though not necessarily sufficient, condition for the creation of a more human society. He recognizes that it is vital for the liberation of the proletariat to be a process of self-liberation: "If one's goal is to liberate the proletariat, it is <u>historically</u> ridiculous to try to attain that goal by nonproletarian means. . . ."[190] The concluding paragraph of the article sums up most aptly the nature of Merleau-Ponty's adherence to Marxism in this period. It conveys the anguish of a man who, having just lived through the horror of war, patiently tries to discern the lessons to be gleaned from that collective experience:

> The only thing certain is that, having seen history multiply its diversions, we can no longer assert that it will not keep on inventing others until the world sinks into chaos, and consequently we can no longer count on an immanent force in things guiding them toward an equilibrium which is more probable than chaos. We are sure that the world will not become organized, will not stop rending itself, will not extricate itself from precarious compromises or rediscover beliefs and values unless the men who are least involved with the special interests of imperialisms regain possession of the economic apparatus. We know neither whether this necessary condition will be realized nor whether it is a sufficient condition, and consequently we do not know what is the correct value to assign to these pauses, these instants of peace which may be procured through capitalist compromise. It is up to us to observe the world during these years when it begins to breathe again. . . .[191]

Although he regarded a revolution in the Marxist sense as necessary and Marxism as "the only universal and human politics,"[192] Merleau-Ponty even at this time saw grave difficulties with this and other aspects of Marx's teachings. He agreed with Marx that only a proletarian revolution can purify traditional values (Merleau-Ponty mentions work, family and country), that only a classless society can lay the foundations of a "renewed culture." However, he felt the need to renew Marxist theory regarding the "Lumpenproletariat" and extend it to cover "broad social strata" which at one time would have been capable of revolutionary action but were no longer so, having become "corrupted, morally ruined, and politically annulled."[193] Merleau-Ponty conceded that that state of the proletariat "may make it unlikely that a revolutionary consciousness will be formed in the immediate future,"[194] yet at this time he believed that such a consciousness could well reappear at a somewhat later date.

Nevertheless, he was clearly even here aware of what he termed the "central difficulty" of Marxism; namely, the Marxist contention that "history is both logical and contingent." If history is truly

contingent, then Marxist explanatory schemata inevitably become confused through unforeseen events with the result that Marxist analysis "loses its way in cross-phenomena and unexpected reactions, runs after events without catching up to them, or in any case without ever getting ahead of them"; and generally "is weak when faced with concrete events taken moment by moment."[195] Although he hastened to add that "we are perhaps misled by the importance we inevitably assign to the present in which we live,"[196] Merleau-Ponty was honest enough to question the basic theses of Marxism in view of this problem: since contingency implies the continual possibility of error or failure and the ever-present elements of chance and risk, the revolution loses the character of a necessary future and "the logic of history becomes nothing more than one possibility among others"—for example, it becomes quite possible that effective history will for centuries consist of a series of accidents or diversions.[197] In view of this, he asks: ". . . doesn't the revolution cease to be the fundamental dimension of history?" and "Isn't the person who judges everything from the angle of the class struggle putting things into an arbitrary perspective?"[198] The point is that

> it no longer makes any sense to treat the class struggle as an <u>essential</u> fact if we are not sure that effective history will remain true to its 'essence' and that its texture will not be the product of accidents for a long time or forever.[199]

And yet, at the writing of this article, Merleau-Ponty still believed that there was a possibility and even a probability that the class struggle would reappear "tomorrow" and become once more the "motivating force of history."[200]

In his article "For the Sake of Truth," written three months later (Nov. 1945), he observes that revolution is in a state of

stagnation throughout the world and that in Russia revolutionary themes have turned into "a collection of a posteriori justifications."[201] In his August article (discussed above) he had written that a universal socialist production was a necessary condition for the overcoming of the internal contradictions of the world economy but that he did not know whether this was also a sufficient condition. By November, he saw more clearly that socialist production per se would not necessarily eliminate certain problems:

> Today. . . a State has socialized production but regulates its relations with other States along the lines of traditional diplomacy and strategy and does not openly seek to unite the scattered proletariats against capitalism.[202]

By this time he was more pessimistic about the reappearance of the class struggle and the possibility of a Marxist revolution:

> We said that today the class struggle is masked. This does not mean that it continues unchangingly along the lines laid down in Marxism's classical works and is simply veiled by words. Marx thought the class struggle could not bring about revolution as long as it was unaware of what it was; he also thought that no predetermined process makes such awareness inevitable, and he feared that for a want of understanding its own history, the world may rot and dissolve into barbarism. It may be that we have reached this very point. The proletariat is too weakened as a class to remain an autonomous factor of history at present. . . . Proletariats are divided among themselves and are more or less won over to class collaboration. . . .[203]

Merleau-Ponty now also voiced increasing fears that even if a revolution were to occur, it might no longer be of the nature envisaged by Marx; namely, a process in which destruction stands in a dialectical relationship to reconstruction:

> There is always the possibility of an immense compromise, of a historical decay where the class struggle, although strong enough to destroy, would not be sufficiently powerful to construct and where the dominant lines of history, as indicated in the Communist Manifesto, would be erased. Are we not, to all appearances, at this point now?[204]

He was forced to admit that a proletarian Marxist politics along classical lines was no longer viable because it had "lost its grip on the facts," thereby becoming "abstract and arbitrary."[205] Nevertheless, although he now "put a question mark next to Marxism," he did not revert to "some conservative philosophy of history which would be even more abstract."[206] Rather, he felt that since he and his fellow Frenchmen did not know how the situation really was in the U.S.S.R. or the U.S.A. or Great Britain, since they knew very little about how a state socialism in Europe would really look under Russia's influence, and as they could not be sure which of the "big powers"—if any—would be willing and able to undertake the task of reconstructing Europe and at what cost to individual liberty, the only recourse was a reading of the present which was as full and as faithful as possible and which did not prejudice its meaning.[207] Merleau-Ponty hoped here that new "information and facts" would resolve some of these ambiguities and bring the "waiting game" to an end. Meanwhile, his advice to his countrymen was: "Pursue what is, in effect, the policy of the Communist Party. Reconstruct with the proletariat: for the moment there is nothing else to do."[208] In practical terms, this meant supporting strikers in the event of strikes, and workers in the event of civil war; and striving to avoid confrontations between the U.S.A. and Russia. It meant maintaining political balance. As we have seen, Merleau-Ponty devoted himself to the restoration of such balance in Humanism and Terror (1947). We shall study this work more closely in subsequent chapters.

By 1948, Merleau-Ponty had become more aware of the fact that in Russia itself exploitative relationships existed which were established

on the basis of collective production. Some information regarding the concentration camps and the police system had filtered through to France and this made it increasingly difficult to regard Russia as a transitional stage on the road to socialism.[209] French intellectuals endeavored to collect evidence on the camps. David Rousset showed that a Special Board (O.S.S.O.) of the N.K.V.D. had received power, in 1934, to sentence "socially dangerous" persons to forced labor up to five years. Caute gives a good account[210] of the divisions which this discovery created in the non-communist intellectual Left. Some, like Camus, openly condemned the camps, while others initially maintained silence. In 1949, Rousset appealed to all former political deportees to support a commission of inquiry into the camps. This appeal provoked angry denials from the P.C.F. and induced some intellectuals on the Left (such as Sartre and Merleau-Ponty) to speak out. Pierre Daix met Rousset's appeal with the retort that there existed only very short-term corrective labor inflicted by an elected tribunal. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty responded (in 1950) by declaring that, contrary to Daix's statement, between ten and fifteen million Soviet citizens had been deported with neither trial nor time limit. However, they criticized Rousset for failing to provide political balance in refusing simultaneous investigations into the conditions in Spain, Greece, and the colonies.[211] Merleau-Ponty was shocked by the extent of repression which Rousset's discovery indicated, and felt that it called for a complete reevaluation not only of communism but also of Marxist doctrine. Was the oppressive bureaucracy of the Stalinist system an unfortunate accident due to the weakness of the Russian proletariat, or was it perhaps already foreshadowed or pre-formed in the Bolshevist organization of the party?

If the latter were really the case, what measures, if any, could be taken to prevent its happening again?[212] These were the sort of questions which Merleau-Ponty now felt compelled to pose, and they reaffirmed his contention that there was a real and pressing need "to map out in spite of everything a path leading to a humanism for all men."[213]

Merleau-Ponty's discovery concerning the extent of the Stalinist camps did not, however, immediately drive him to support American liberal democracy, for he did not allow the horrors in Russia to blind him to those of the United States—"forced labor in colonies, colonial wars, the condition of American Negroes."[214] He still held that whatever the nature of Stalinist Russia, the U.S.S.R. was, on the whole, "situated, in the balance of powers, on the side of those who are struggling against the forms of exploitation known to us."[215] The Stalinist camps did not, in his view, either render free enterprise desirable or Marxist criticism, in general, null and void. Consequently, although he did not condone present Soviet policies, he refused to "make a pact" with the adversaries of communism. While conceding that the degradation of Marxist values such as the recognition of man by man, internationalism, and classless society was inevitable in Russia itself, Merleau-Ponty pointed out that "to the extent we draw away geographically and politically from the U.S.S.R., we find Communists who are increasingly men like us, and a Communist movement which is sound."[216] He stresses at this time (1950) the need to criticize exploitation and oppression both inside and outside Russia, and to "maintain at least a few islets where men love and practise liberty in some other way than in opposition to the Communists."[217] He does not elaborate what he means by such "islets" or such an "other way"; presumably, communism far removed from Russia—for example, the

Martiniquan communism which he mentions in passing—or a non-communist Left might be what he has in mind here.

ii) The Silent Perception of Events

The Korean War created new dilemmas, when intellectuals on the Left realized that the North had attacked first. In his essay on Merleau-Ponty, Sartre tells us that "for Merleau-Ponty, as for many others, 1950 was the crucial year." Convinced that socialist society had engendered imperialism, Merleau-Ponty could now no longer accord the Soviet Union a privileged status. He elected to remain silent, to refuse complicity.[218] Although he maintained that silence on political issues for the next five years, he kept informed about events. His perception of these events reinforced his growing disillusionment with Marxism. The "Henri Martin affair" (1950), the anti-Ridgway demonstrations (1952), and the arrest of Stil and Duclos, called forth protests from both communists (Picasso, Aragon, Triolet, Eluard, Vaillant) and non-communists. The Left also regained a measure of unity in the anti-Americanism springing from McCarthyism, the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the American support of South Korea and Nationalist China, and the 1954 American intervention in Guatemala. During these years, the problem of the Americanization of the French cultural scene became prominent. Intellectuals on the Left feared that the Marshall Plan would lead to economic, political, and cultural domination by the U.S.A. On the other hand, the Slansky trial and the case of the nine Russian doctors (1952-53) revealed the practice of anti-semitism under Stalin. The death of Stalin and Khrushchev's denunciation at the Twentieth Party Congress (1956) helped to improve the relations between the French Left and the U.S.S.R.

The Algerian War (1954) revived the tensions between communist

and non-communist elements in France. Although left-wing intellectuals had devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the cause of Algerian independence ("Les Temps Modernes," "Esprit," "France-Observateur," and "L'Express" published articles in support of Algeria), the P.C.F. avoided committing itself outright until 1957.

iii) The Adventures of the Dialectic

By 1955, we find Merleau-Ponty questioning the very idea of revolution as such. This is in a major work, Les Aventures de la Dialectique, which is of interest to us for two principal reasons: it represents the definitive break with Marxism and the definitive break with Sartre. We shall look here at the relationship with Marxism. In regard to revolution, Merleau-Ponty now writes:

> Mais la question est de savoir. . . si la révolution ne fait pas par principe le contraire de ce qu'elle veut et ne met pas en place une nouvelle élite, fût-ce sous le nom de révolution permanente.[219]
>
> But the question is to know. . . whether the revolution doesn't in principle accomplish the opposite of what it wants, and doesn't establish a new élite, be it in the name of permanent revolution.

He now warns that concentrating all negativity and all sense of history in the proletariat means giving those who represent them in power "a blank cheque." In order to prevent the separation of action from truth there must be not only actors but also spectators who point out the truth of their actions to them and can replace them in power. Merleau-Ponty now goes so far as to say that there can be no dialectic without opposition and freedom, and that revolution does not tolerate any opposition for long.[220] Thus, presumably, he now sees revolution and dialectic as being mutually exclusive; indeed, he writes that the interior of revolutionary thought is equivocal rather than dialectical.[221]

It is not an accident that all known revolutions degenerate; they degenerate because they cannot be the same as movement and as regime. As movements they are true; as regimes they are false—the essence of revolution lies in the interval in which the vanquished class no longer rules and the conquerors do not yet rule. Accordingly, Merleau-Ponty queries whether there might not be more future in a regime which does not claim to remake history from the bottom up, but only to change it. He indicates that we ought to look for and support such a regime instead of becoming entangled in revolution.[222]

Merleau-Ponty now also sees the need to criticize Marx's conception of the proletariat: perhaps seeing the proletariat as the final class involves an arbitrary closure of history (or pre-history) or amounts to a mystification or a "projection of present disgust."[223] He now regards the idea that the dictatorship of the proletariat is the answer to society's problems as a "dream" and contends that such an idea merely expresses our wish to find a ready-made solution to the horrors of history within history. It can offer no solution because revolution inevitably fails.[224] Even permanent revolution provides no answer because it always carries with it permanent decadence. The proletariat as a ruling class would not be immune to decadence either, for power is always ambiguous. To locate all movement in the proletariat and all inertia in the bourgeoisie is to fail to understand that both movement and inertia belong to history's structure.[225] Consequently, Merleau-Ponty now finds that he can no longer believe in the revolution of the proletariat: to believe in it is to affirm arbitrarily that history contains its own remedy, and such an affirmation "disregards the facts."[226]

Since he cannot regard the revolution as offering hope for absolute progress, he now feels that he must renounce it because revolution involves bloodshed and one does not kill for merely relative progress. Although one can sympathize with revolutions and even be associated with them, one cannot make them—that is, one cannot be a revolutionary if one thinks that revolutions can accomplish only relative progress.[227] Moreover, Merleau-Ponty questions whether, for the proletariat, communism is worth the cost. Consequently, he stresses the need for a non-communist Left which confronts and criticizes both capitalism and communism by posing the problems of Marx in modern terms. Such a Left, he contends, would be a new liberalism which would not be a compromise between the two ideologies.[228] He no longer thinks that the social problem can be solved by the power of the proletarian class or by its representatives. He now believes that progress can be made only by enlightened action which confronts itself with the judgment of an opposition. A non-communist Left would refuse both the dictatorship of the proletariat and free enterprise.

Merleau-Ponty now supports a parliamentary democracy on the grounds that parliament is the only known institution which guarantees a minimum of opposition and truth. Yet he also sees the dangers of such a system—for example, parliamentary democracy often does not pose the real questions, or poses them too late.[229] He is aware that parliamentary democracy is no real solution either, but points out that social problems do not admit of solutions in the way that arithmetic problems do. There is no freedom without dialectic, and capitalism can be dialectical if it stops being a rigid system and admits a politics other than its own. Merleau-Ponty still thinks that a politics founded

on anti-communism is a politics of aggression, but he now sees that there are many fruitful ways of being non-communist.[230]

The Korean War and the situation in Czechoslovakia had made sympathy without adhesion no longer possible, and indicated that to wait for a reappearance of Marxism was to dream. As he tells us in The Adventures, the Korean War reminded Merleau-Ponty of the identity of theory and practice. He could no longer regard Marxism as remaining true as a critique or negation but false as positive action. To do so would be to put himself outside history and outside Marxism, and to justify it for non-Marxist reasons.[231] He now believed that the failures in Marxist action must be foreshadowed within the critique itself.[232] Marxist critique therefore must be reexamined. Revolution, Merleau-Ponty now realized, does not put an end to misery; and the Marxist conception of revolution as absolute action is a Kantian a priori.[233] The certainty of judging history in the name of history via ideas of preexisting relations in things makes Marxism into dogmatism by preventing self-criticism. Merleau-Ponty therefore now replaced the idea of revolution with the idea of responsible reform.

iv) Later Essays and Interviews

The Russian intervention in Hungary had tremendous repercussions in the French Left, as Burnier's study shows.[234] In general, the non-communist Left regarded the Russian intervention as a reversion to Stalinism, while the Communists claimed that it was the only effective shield against fascism and western military intervention. However, communists like Aragon, and non-communists like Sartre, who were members of the Directing Committee of the C.N.E., publicly called on Kádár to protect the Hungarian writers. In response to the outbreak of the

Korean War, Sartre had advocated alignment with the Soviets, whereas Merleau-Ponty had declared that only silence remained, since "brute force" would decide the outcome.[235] In 1952, Sartre had identified himself unreservedly with the P.C.F. and had denounced both the moderate Left and the neutralist extreme Left. In 1956, however, both he and Merleau-Ponty were driven to speak out sharply against the Russian intervention and the P.C.F.'s stance on the issue. Sartre saw fit to break off all relations with the party:

> . . . we have engaged in dialogue with the Communists for twelve years. At first fiercely and then in friendship. But our aim has always been the same: to collaborate as much as possible in establishing unity among leftist groups which alone can save our country. Today we return to the opposition for the simple reason that there is no other alternative. Alliance with the Communist Party as it is and intends to remain can have no other effect than compromising the last chances for a common front.[236]

Both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty felt that the P.C.F. had become "frozen" and cut off from the masses. In his article entitled "On De-Stalinization" (1956), Merleau-Ponty wrote that the Hungarian intellectuals' appeal pointed to "a crisis of communism which goes to the heart of the system"—"a crisis in which everything is in question."[237] In Merleau-Ponty's view, the Hungarian communists' insurrection signified that Stalinism had "reached the socialist essence of the régime," and that de-Stalinization was not a minor alteration or a limited reform, but rather a radical transformation of the system.[238] The crisis of communism, he maintained, involved two fundamental principles—the dictatorship of the proletariat and authoritarian planning. Communist ideology had degenerated and become inefficient. The proletariat could no longer recognize itself in the party, whose action had become insignificant. Authoritarian planning no longer sufficed to manage the economy. Merleau-Ponty therefore

concluded that communism should be seen "relatively as a fact without any special privilege."[239] He noted that Khrushchev said that the Revolution did "not necessarily require insurrection or civil war—not necessarily violence"; that the parliamentary way could also be used to move to socialism.[240] Mikoyan, too, spoke of a peaceful Revolution, "detouring by way of a parliamentary majority." However, Merleau-Ponty was quick to point out that both Khrushchev and Mikoyan had failed to confront a fundamental problem: once the working class had obtained a parliamentary majority and "taken power in hand," would that same majority check that power? And what would happen to the minority?[241] In order to come to terms with such problems and to grasp the significance of de-Stalinization, Merleau-Ponty went on to evaluate the break which Hervé himself made with Stalinism. According to Hervé, a policy of conscious and active coexistence does not postpone or suppress the Revolution, but changes its character. Hervé proposed a reconsideration of such ideas as reform, planning, nationalization, and State capitalism. He further urged communism to relativize itself—that is, to regard itself as a party like the other parties, instead of insisting that it had special rights by virtue of its role as interpreter of the historical mission of the proletariat. Without such relativism, reciprocity would be impossible.[242]

Merleau-Ponty found it necessary to examine the notion of a Popular Front proposed by Sartre and Hervé. Such a Front could not be analogous to the 1936 sit-down strikes in factories. Nor could it be "the Popular Front according to Thorez, which puts an end to strikes but fulfills the Party's responsibility by force of verbal violence."[243] The postwar tripartism climaxed by the "Ramadier affair" was obviously

not a model for uniting the Left either. The proposed Popular Front could not be based on Blum's conception, for such a Front was "a Janus" presented simultaneously as reform and as revolution and failing on both levels.[244] Merleau-Ponty concluded, therefore, that

> a Popular Front can be spoken about seriously. . . only by defining an action which will effectively go beyond capitalist anarchy without being the beginning of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is called reform. The truth is that reform. . . alone is the order of the day.[245]

In his view, the immediate situation called for innovations which would 'come to grips' with "the problem of man's effective management of the economy." A farmer-labor party and a "demand for a real, manifest, verifiable policy" would transform the Socialist and Communist Parties and constitute steps on the road to a renewed Left—a Left whose criterion would be the genuine desire for "a de-Stalinization which is unchecked, consequential, and extended beyond the frontiers of communism."[246]

In the final years of the Algerian war, as Caute points out, the French intellectual Left began to replace the "myth" of the proletariat with the concept of the "Third World," "of a revolutionary black and brown peasantry creating values of its own amid the debris of imperialism."[247] Sartre's manifold activities on behalf of the F.L.N. in Algeria, as well as his staunch support of the Cuban Revolution, his many discussions with Castro, and his numerous lecture tours bear this out. Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, placed far less faith in the revolutionary élan of the "Third World." It becomes evident in his interview, "On Madagascar" (1958), that he considered the "Third World" to be "very far from being ready for a possible revolution," and that he was opposed to immediate and unconditional independence for Algeria,

Black Africa, and Madagascar.[248] Merleau-Ponty feared that political independence, while failing to solve the problems of underdevelopment, "would aggravate the tension between the U.S.S.R. and America."[249]

During these years, Merleau-Ponty became increasingly preoccupied with the problem of Gaullism. His discussions of de Gaulle are found in his essay "On May 13, 1958," and his interview, "Tomorrow" (1958). Sartre, too, was vehemently anti-Gaullist, but as Burnier points out, he and Merleau-Ponty "fought the same battle in different ways."[250] The latter, convinced that "the real questions can be asked only outside the Right and the Communist Party," and that the only possible solution to France's problems "is a liberal one,"[251] supported Mendès-France and his "Committee for Democratic Action"(C.A.D.). Along with Hyppolite, he joined the "Union des Forces Démocratiques" (U.F.D.). Sartre, on the other hand, favored a renewal of the Communist Party, such that democracy would be established within communism.[252] In the late 1950's, he attempted a political "rapprochement" with the Communists, and in the following years, he participated with members of the party in various common endeavors directed against Gaullism and colonialism (for example, the "Ligue d'Action Pour Le Rassemblement Antifasciste" founded in 1961; the F.A.C.). Sartre also made contact with communists in other countries (Poland, Russia, Italy).[253] Ultimately, Sartre's hope for a renewal within communism, and Merleau-Ponty's commitment to a "third way" consisting of liberal reform, must both be seen in the larger context of Sartre's growing affinity with Marxism and the Communist Party on the one hand, and Merleau-Ponty's increasing disillusionment with the same, on the other. An appreciation of the "distance" between the two positions is to be had by comparing Sartre's

The Communists and Peace and Critique de la Raison Dialectique (especially its section, "Questions de Méthode") with Merleau-Ponty's Les Aventures de la Dialectique. I shall undertake such a comparison in the next chapter.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER I

[1]Eric Cahm, Politics and Society in Contemporary France (1789-1971), pp. 5, 9.

[2]Cahm, p. 9.

[3]Cahm, pp. 7, 8.

[4]Cahm, pp. 380, 9.

[5]George Lichtheim, Marxism in Modern France, pp. 8 ff., 69 ff.

[6]Lichtheim, p. 8.

[7]Lichtheim, pp. 68 ff.

[8]Alfred Cobban, A History of Modern France, III, 70 ff., 157, 247.

[9]David Caute, Communism and the French Intellectuals 1914-1960, p. 16.

[10]Cobban, III, 129, 136.

[11]Caute, pp. 106 ff.

[12]Caute, pp. 25 f., 43.

[13]Caute, p. 104.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Caute, p. 107.

[17]Caute, p. 114.

[18]Caute, pp. 135, 136.

[19]Caute, pp. 137, 139.

[20]Lichtheim, pp. 84 ff., 105 ff.

[21]Merleau-Ponty, Sense and Non-Sense, p. 145.

[22]Paul Nizan, Aden, Arabie, p. 22.

[23]Aden, Arabie, pp. 51-52.

[24]Simone de Beauvoir, The Prime of Life, p. 433.

Footnotes for Chapter I (Continued)

[25]*The Prime of Life*, pp. 433, 659.

[26]*The Prime of Life*, p. 732.

[27]*The Prime of Life*, pp. 446, 438.

[28]Caute, p. 149.

[29]Caute, pp. 149 ff.

[30]*The Prime of Life*, p. 646.

[31]Caute, pp. 149 ff.

[32]Caute, p. 151.

[33]Cobban, III, 196.

[34]*The Prime of Life*, p. 582.

[35]*The Prime of Life*, pp. 600, 618, 631, 632.

[36]Caute, pp. 159 ff.

[37]Caute, p. 158.

[38]*The Prime of Life*, p. 578.

[39]Cobban, III, 199-200.

[40]Cobban, III, 184 ff.

[41]*The Prime of Life*, p. 617.

[42]Caute, pp. 147 ff.

[43]Caute, p. 155.

[44]Caute, pp. 155, 156.

[45]*The Prime of Life*, pp. 580 ff., 596.

[46]*The Prime of Life*, p. 601.

[47]*Ibid*.

[48]*The Prime of Life*, p. 602.

[49]*Ibid*.

[50]*The Prime of Life*, pp. 602-603.

Footnotes for Chapter I (Continued)

[51]The Prime of Life, pp. 585, 603, 620.

[52]The Prime of Life, pp. 707, 715.

[53]Cobban, III, 202 ff.

[54]Caute, pp. 164, 165.

[55]Burnier, Choice of Action, p. 30.

[56]Cobban, III, 212.

[57]Caute, pp. 168-169.

[58]Cobban, III, 210, 211.

[59]Burnier, pp. 19, 20.

[60]Quoted in Burnier, p. 26.

[61]Burnier, pp. 26, 27.

[62]Les Temps Modernes, I, 1, pp. 433, 434 (hereafter, "T.M.").

[63]T.M., 434, 435 (1, 1).

[64]Ibid.

[65]Sartre, What Is Literature?, pp. 123 ff.

[66]Sartre, Words, p. 157.

[67]Burnier, p. 25.

[68]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 140.

[69]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 142.

[70]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 147.

[71]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 145.

[72]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 139.

[73]Merleau-Ponty, Humanism and Terror, p. 8.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 152.

Footnotes for Chapter I (Continued)

[76]Ibid.

[77]Burnier, pp. 11 ff., 73 ff.

[78]Burnier, p. 12.

[79]Burnier, p. 11.

[80]Sartre, The Age of Reason, pp. 299, 300; Iron in the Soul, pp. 87, 88, 178, 203, 217, 225.

[81]Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 711.

[82]Sartre, Literary and Philosophical Essays, p. 251.

[83]Literary and Philosophical Essays, pp. 249-250.

[84]Literary and Philosophical Essays, p. 250.

[85]Literary and Philosophical Essays, pp. 251, 250.

[86]Literary and Philosophical Essays, p. 245.

[87]Burnier, p. 31.

[88]Sartre, Situations, p. 195.

[89]Burnier, p. 33.

[90]Burnier, pp. 33, 150.

[91]"Albert Camus," Situations, p. 80.

[92]Cited in introduction to Albert Camus, Caligula and Cross Purpose, pp. 7 ff.

[93]Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 7.

[94]Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 38.

[95]The Myth of Sisyphus, pp. 15, 16, 21.

[96]The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 37.

[97]The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 10.

[98]The Myth of Sisyphus, pp. 36, 38.

[99]The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 39.

Footnotes for Chapter I (Continued)

[100]*The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 40.

[101]*The Myth of Sisyphus*, pp. 40, v.

[102]*The Myth of Sisyphus*, pp. 17, 19, 145.

[103]*Literary and Philosophical Essays*, p. 29.

[104]*Situations*, p. 68.

[105]Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, p. 116.

[106]*Force of Circumstance*, p. 138.

[107]Camus, *The Rebel*, p. 292.

[108]*The Rebel*, p. 292.

[109]*Situations*, p. 80.

[110]*Situations*, p. 71.

[111]*Situations*, p. 72.

[112]*Situations*, p. 73.

[113]Caute, p. 127.

[114]Caute, p. 129.

[115]Caute, p. 128.

[116]Cogniot, cited in Caute, p. 130.

[117]Aragon, quoted in Caute, p. 130.

[118]Caute, p. 131.

[119]Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, p. 18.

[120]*Darkness at Noon*, pp. 65, 83.

[121]*Darkness at Noon*, p. 27.

[122]*Darkness at Noon*, p. 50.

[123]*Darkness at Noon*, p. 40.

[124]*Darkness at Noon*, p. 41.

Footnotes for Chapter I (Continued)

[125]Darkness at Noon, p. 52.

[126]Darkness at Noon, p. 189.

[127]Darkness at Noon, pp. 81, 82.

[128]Darkness at Noon, p. 82.

[129]Ibid.

[130]Darkness at Noon, p. 83.

[131]Darkness at Noon, p. 84.

[132]Darkness at Noon, pp. 128 ff.

[133]Darkness at Noon, pp. 135 ff.

[134]Darkness at Noon, p. 153.

[135]Darkness at Noon, pp. 205 ff.

[136]Wolfe Mays, Arthur Koestler, p. 11.

[137]Mays, pp. 19, 20.

[138]Mays, p. 24.

[139]Mays, p. 27.

[140]Koestler, The Yogi and the Commissar, p. 9.

[141]Ibid.

[142]Ibid.

[143]The Yogi and the Commissar, p. 10.

[144]The Yogi and the Commissar, p. 11.

[145]The Yogi and the Commissar, p. 256.

[146]The Yogi and the Commissar, p. 11.

[147]The Yogi and the Commissar, p. 12.

[148]The Yogi and the Commissar, pp. 11-12.

[149]The Yogi and the Commissar, p. 12.

Footnotes for Chapter I (Continued)

[150]The Yogi and the Commissar, p. 15.

[151]The Yogi and the Commissar, p. 16.

[152]The Yogi and the Commissar, pp. 16, 19, 20.

[153]Humanism and Terror, p. 162.

[154]The Yogi and the Commissar, pp. 252, 253.

[155]The Yogi and the Commissar, pp. 252, 253, 254.

[156]The Yogi and the Commissar, p. 254.

[157]The Yogi and the Commissar, p. 255.

[158]The Yogi and the Commissar, p. 256.

[159]Caute, p. 132.

[160]Caute, pp. 186, 132.

[161]Humanism and Terror, p. 2.

[162]Humanism and Terror, pp. 1, 2.

[163]Humanism and Terror, pp. x, xi.

[164]Humanism and Terror, pp. 14, 15.

[165]Humanism and Terror, pp. 19, 20.

[166]Humanism and Terror, p. 16.

[167]Humanism and Terror, pp. 16, 18, 20.

[168]Humanism and Terror, p. 22.

[169]Humanism and Terror, pp. xv, xvi.

[170]Humanism and Terror, p. 23.

[171]Ibid.

[172]Humanism and Terror, p. 24.

[173]Ibid.

[174]Humanism and Terror, p. 149.

[175]Humanism and Terror, pp. xi, xxx, xxxiii.

Footnotes for Chapter I (Continued)

[176]Situations, p. 174.

[177]Situations, p. 175.

[178]Situations, pp. 174 ff.

[179]Humanism and Terror, p. 68.

[180]Humanism and Terror, p. 63.

[181]Humanism and Terror, p. 166.

[182]Humanism and Terror, p. 64.

[183]Humanism and Terror, p. 62.

[184]Humanism and Terror, p. 66.

[185]Humanism and Terror, pp. 63, 60, 66.

[186]Humanism and Terror, pp. 174, 163.

[187]Humanism and Terror, p. 169.

[188]Caute, pp. 177 ff.

[189]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 108.

[190]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 116.

[191]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 124.

[192]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 122.

[193]Sense and Non-Sense, pp. 118, 117.

[194]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 118.

[195]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 123.

[196]Ibid.

[197]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 121.

[198]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 120.

[199]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 121.

[200]Sense and Non-Sense, pp. 123, 124.

Footnotes for Chapter I (Continued)

[201] Sense and Non-Sense, pp. 155, 156.

[202] Sense and Non-Sense, p. 162.

[203] Ibid.

[204] Sense and Non-Sense, p. 166.

[205] Sense and Non-Sense, pp. 169, 167.

[206] Sense and Non-Sense, p. 170.

[207] Sense and Non-Sense, pp. 170, 169.

[208] Sense and Non-Sense, pp. 170-171.

[209] Signs, p. 260.

[210] Caute, pp. 182 ff.

[211] Caute, 182, 183.

[212] Merleau-Ponty, Signs, p. 265.

[213] Signs, p. 260.

[214] Signs, p. 271.

[215] Signs, p. 269.

[216] Ibid.

[217] Signs, p. 271.

[218] Situations, p. 190.

[219] Les Aventures de la Dialectique, p. 278.

[220] Les Aventures de la Dialectique, pp. 278, 279.

[221] Les Aventures de la Dialectique, p. 279.

[222] Les Aventures de la Dialectique, pp. 279, 281.

[223] Les Aventures de la Dialectique, p. 283.

[224] Les Aventures de la Dialectique, pp. 293, 294.

[225] Les Aventures de la Dialectique, p. 296.

Footnotes for Chapter I (Continued)

[226]Les Aventures de la Dialectique, pp. 297, 293.

[227]Les Aventures de la Dialectique, p. 298.

[228]Les Aventures de la Dialectique, pp. 302, 303.

[229]Les Aventures de la Dialectique, pp. 303, 304.

[230]Les Aventures de la Dialectique, pp. 305, 309.

[231]Les Aventures de la Dialectique, pp. 309, 310.

[232]Les Aventures de la Dialectique, p. 311.

[233]Les Aventures de la Dialectique, pp. 312, 313, 311.

[234]Burnier, pp. 104 ff.

[235]Burnier, pp. 70, 71; Sartre, Situations, pp. 189, 190.

[236]"Le Fantôme de Staline," Les Temps Modernes, Nos. 129-131, pp. 577-696 (1956-57).

[237]Signs, pp. 293, 294.

[238]Signs, p. 294.

[239]Signs, pp. 295, 296, 303.

[240]Signs, p. 303.

[241]Signs, pp. 303, 304.

[242]Signs, pp. 304 ff.

[243]Signs, p. 306.

[244]Signs, pp. 306, 307.

[245]Signs, p. 307.

[246]Signs, pp. 307, 308.

[247]Caute, p. 212.

[248]Signs, pp. 330, 332 ff.

[249]Signs, p. 335.

[250]Burnier, p. 119.

Footnotes for Chapter I (Concluded)

[251] Signs, p. 348.

[252] Burnier, p. 116.

[253] Burnier, pp. 137 ff.

II

METHODOLOGY

I have attempted to situate Merleau-Ponty's thought within its historical context. Since it has not, as yet, been made the subject of a major study on anyone's part, I have devoted considerable attention to this context. Now, however, I propose to "stand back" from it in order to focus on the specifically philosophical dimension of Merleau-Ponty's writings. That is to say, I wish to adopt an interpretative approach which is not a "historical" one but rather a "philosophical" one. In this chapter I shall present a number of considerations which recommend this approach.

1) Variations Among Intellectuals

In his study, Communism and the French Intellectuals, Caute points out that "the intellectual in search of an allegiance is certainly confronted by a social situation which will shape his thinking, but the nature of his knowledge and the breadth of his perspective render him and his choices relatively free."[1] Caute, who has undertaken brief case studies of Gide, Malraux, and Sartre, stresses that, although these intellectuals and others like them were of similar backgrounds, similar intelligence, similar learning, and shared a common historical context, "yet their reactions to any single historical event or situation were rarely identical."[2] He contends that, for

example, "Malraux's Gaullism was the outcome of a clearly defined shift, or development, of philosophical position."[3] Again, "Sartre's philosophical deviations from Marxist determinism, and his views on function in literature, were the condition of, or restriction on, his activity as a politically conscious intellectual enjoying a sudden and enormous prestige in post-war France."[4] Similarly, I would argue that the nature of Merleau-Ponty's dynamic relationship with communism must be understood on the basis of his philosophical outlook. Merleau-Ponty consciously seeks to apply philosophical principles to politics. Therefore, consideration of his unique <u>philosophic</u> position is absolutely vital.

ii) Timeless Meanings

In his introduction to "Les Temps Modernes," Sartre stated that the editors intended to deal with the specific social and political problems of postwar France. Merleau-Ponty likewise wrote: "Like everyone else we know that our future depends upon world politics. . . . But we are in France and we cannot confound our future either with that of the U.S.S.R. or the American empire."[5] Sartre specified that the editors wished to address their fellow Frenchmen. Yet, while announcing his and Merleau-Ponty's intention of taking a stand on the social and political problems of the day, he declared:

> However, we do not think of setting up a literary relativism. We care little about the purely historical. Besides, does the purely historical exist. . . ? Each time discovers an aspect of human fate; in each time man chooses himself when confronted with others, with love, death, the world; . . . Thus, by taking sides in the singularity of our time, we finally reach eternity, and it is our duty as writers to make one aware of the eternal values implied in these social and political debates. But we do not want to look for them in an intelligible heaven. . . .[6]

Similarly, in his "Reply to Albert Camus," Sartre wrote:

> . . . And this contradiction is essential to man: he makes himself historical in order to undertake the eternal, and discovers universal values in the concrete action that he undertakes in view of a specific result.[7]

Like Sartre, Merleau-Ponty maintained that social and political debates raise universal questions; that concrete situations offer timeless meanings which the philosopher must endeavor to bring to light. Merleau-Ponty's retrospective view of the Resistance is very illuminating in this regard. In his article, "The War Has Taken Place" (June 1945), Merleau-Ponty describes the Resistance as a rare phenomenon which overcame that "dilemma of being and doing" which plagues all intellectuals faced with action. He realizes that "this balance between civic and personal life was intimately bound up with the conditions of wartime actions and could not survive it."[8] The "time of institutions" is bound to follow and, with it, the philosopher's task of extracting what that situation had contained of "durable truth."[9]

Here it is necessary to ask, however, just what makes a truth durable—what it means for something to be "universal," "timeless." Truth, for Merleau-Ponty (and I am in fundamental agreement with his view), is not a pre-existent Absolute set in a realm apart. The universal does not consist of a set of "prefabricated," or a priori, principles prior to and separated from human experience. Nor is truth a comprehensive "system" in the Hegelian sense. In Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, the universal does not indicate absolute knowledge or an "absolute standpoint." Indeed, knowledge is always perspectival, incomplete, "situated."[10] Truth, in Merleau-Ponty's view, cannot be a totality which is coherent, complete, and explicit: "There is not one

rational truth which does not retain its coefficient of facticity," because "'being-in-truth' is indistinguishable from being in the world."[11] Merleau-Ponty insists that our idea of truth is based upon our perception of the world: "Perception is . . . access to truth" but cannot yield a completed Truth because "the world . . . is inexhaustible."[12] Merleau-Ponty defines "a truth in the situation," and points out that "whatever truth we may have is to be attained not in spite of but through our historical inherence."[13] In short, "the point of origin of all truth" is to be found in our contact with the social in the finitude of our situation.[14]

Although our situation cannot offer absolute knowledge, it can make us aware of absolute, or universal, values and thereby render us capable of making unconditional judgments. These timeless values are the values of concrete humanism. (I shall discuss this, as well as the important distinction between knowledge and judgment, in my chapter on "Humanism.") The German occupation of France, for example, in providing "the prototype of an inhuman situation,"[15] induced Merleau-Ponty to probe more deeply into timeless questions--questions concerning what it means for man and society to be "truly human." "Durable truth," or the timeless, resides in the most fundamental human experience; and it is through concrete, particular situations that various aspects of this universal experience are revealed to us. The historical approach, in focusing attention on the particularity of situations, easily loses sight of the (universal) truth which is revealed through that particularity. In the chapter on "Ontology-Aesthetics," I shall discuss at length the primordial interrelatedness of man, Truth, and Being. In doing so, I shall explain why the universal must inhere in

the particular. In order to clarify the meaning of "durable truth," of universality, of timelessness, however, it will suffice here to state themes which will be developed in a later chapter.

Truth, for Merleau-Ponty, is not to be encompassed or exhausted by the mind. Rather, Truth "envelops" man. By the mere fact of existing as incarnate subjectivity, man is already in primordial contact with Truth. Truth is Being as Logos; but since Being and world are coextensive, Truth resides in the world rather than in some transcendent "heaven." Logos is expression, dialogue. Since expression is by its [illegible] and incomplete, there can be no complete or "final" Truth. Rather, Truth is Truth in genesis, and demands a continual effort of creative expression on man's part. Man can embark on a dynamic dialogue with Being only through the concrete meaning-structures of his situation. The dialogue takes place in the perceived world. The universal is that which touches the most basic human experience--namely, the experience of man's "envelopment" in and by Being, through the immediacy of his particular situation. It is the task of the philosopher to grasp and articulate this most fundamental, and hence universal, contact of man with Being. If the philosopher is to express man's inherence in, and "envelopment" by, Being, he cannot turn away from the world in which man is rooted to Being. He will fail to articulate "the ties of truth which bind him to the world and history," if he severs those ties.[16] The philosopher can respond to life's most general solicitations and grasp its most basic meaning-structures only on condition that he refuse to ignore or negate life. Through the concreteness of his own inherence in history, the philosopher can grasp

universal, timeless, truths applicable to all human situations insofar as they concern that which makes man to be human.

Among other things, Merleau-Ponty's remarks on truth and history afford a sense of how he conceived his own work. They offer a direction, therefore, on how he wished them to be read. Hence it is incumbent on the reader to read them according to their proper sense—as articulations of meanings which, while embodied in occasions, are nevertheless also eternal.

iii) Idealism?

By taking a specifically philosophical approach, however, one runs the risk of being accused of turning an existentialist philosopher into an idealist. Such an accusation, I maintain, rests on a failure to grasp the role of the philosopher as described by Merleau-Ponty. For Merleau-Ponty, as I have indicated, the philosopher addresses himself to timeless questions—namely, those dealing with man's most fundamental experience—through the particular situations to which he responds. The philosopher neither turns aside from concrete situations nor denies history; yet he endeavors to express and elucidate the most universal structures of experience through his inherence in the concrete context of a concrete situation. It is the universal which ultimately interests the philosopher and renders his thought relevant long after the particular circumstances which evoked it have changed. Philosophy therefore enjoys a rather peculiar autonomy vis-à-vis history: though rooted in a particular historical context, it grasps and expresses truths applicable to men in any historical context. Merleau-Ponty regarded this as philosophy's peculiar privilege. He declared, in his

preface to Signs, that:

> The relationship between philosophy and history is less simple than was believed. It is in a strict sense an action at a distance. . . . Above all, we have not yet learned a philosophy which is all the less tied down by political responsibilities to the extent it has its own, and all the more free to enter everywhere to the extent it does not take anyone's place. . . but discloses exactly the Being we inhabit.[17]

"Action at a distance" does not signify "a philosophy of God-like survey." Rather, for Merleau-Ponty, philosophy "plunges into the perceptible, into time and history, toward their articulations." Though immersed thus in the world, philosophy "surpasses" the perceptible, time, and history "in their meaning."[18] That is, it articulates the fundamental meaning-structures inherent in the concrete data. Philosophy, therefore, "is not defined by a peculiar domain of its own" "which shelters it from life's contagion"; but it does have "a dimension of its own, the dimension of coexistence."[19] Philosophy does not "assimilate any experience to the point of taking up and appropriating its whole texture."[20] The task of philosophy, rather, is to "reveal to us. . . the movement by which lives become truths"--that is, to illuminate the timeless inherent in the temporal.[21]

It is understandable that a specifically historical approach to Merleau-Ponty's political writings should seem more appropriate, at least initially, than the philosophical approach which I have adopted. Merleau-Ponty was an existentialist who stressed the need to be "engagé"--and what could be more "engagé" than violence? Moreover, his political writings were largely "occasional" pieces. It is true that these political works were concrete responses to certain historical situations and would never have been written in the absence of those

situations. Humanism and Terror, for example, would never have been written if the Moscow Trials had not in fact occurred; "The U.S.S.R. and the Camps" would never have appeared if the camps had been non-existent, and so on. Merleau-Ponty himself was also the first to acknowledge that these political situations lent a particular urgency to his philosophical investigations. After all, "the social struggle's imminent re-emergence. . . gains in interest for men who do not have a hundred years to live and who would have had to spend perhaps fifty years under Fascist oppression."[22] Nevertheless, it is my contention that there is a certain universal, timeless dimension to these "occasional" pieces. This dimension transcends the particular historical situations which evoked those writings, and renders them [illegible] interesting. The philosophical approach, in abstracting from the detailed particularities of those situations, seems to me to be best suited for the task of extracting the timeless dimension of these writings.

iv) Historical Relativism

To date, Merleau-Ponty's political writings have been very much neglected. Interest has been focused almost exclusively on his phenomenology and its relationship to the positions of Husserl and of Gestalt psychology. It seems to me that the general lack of interest shown for Merleau-Ponty's political writings is due in large measure to the fact that they have been judged to be dated and inapplicable. This in turn rests, I would argue, on the fact that those few who have devoted even scant attention to this aspect of Merleau-Ponty's thought have tended to regard it from an historical

perspective and have succumbed to historical relativism. As a result, these writers have missed the universality which constitutes the truly philosophical dimension of Merleau-Ponty's political writings. The relativism of the commentators reveals itself as an assumption which is not dictated by the materials or facts with which we are dealing—the assumption of historicism.

From my presentation of the historical context, it will be evident that the French political "scene" is, in many respects, unique. I am referring to the proliferation of parties, the history of the Popular Front Movements, the relationship of the Communist Party with the Labor Movement and with the non-communist Left, the nature of the problems perpetually plaguing the economy, and so on. There is, here, nothing which parallels American or Canadian politics, for example. Furthermore, the situations and events to which Merleau-Ponty responded, the particular political problems with which he dealt, are now obsolete or no longer acute. As a matter of fact, this was already very much the case during the years in which Merleau-Ponty was writing. His article, "For the Sake of Truth," for example, was written at a time—November 1945—when Russian pressure on Yugoslavia was "less domineering or less known in France" and when, in general, it seemed possible to "save" both socialism and liberty. With the U.S.S.R.'s return "to pessimism, pure authority, and ultimatums," the attitude expressed in this article became impossible. Merleau-Ponty realized that he could no longer urge his fellow Frenchmen to "pursue what is, in effect, the policy of the Communist Party."[23] I have discussed at some length the main political issues with which Merleau-Ponty and Sartre were concerned during these years—the Moscow Trials, the campaign against Tito, the

Stalinist camps, the Algerian War, the massacres in Madagascar, the Hungarian Revolution, and so on. During the years in which Merleau-Ponty was writing, the relationship between Russia and the U.S.A. was one of confrontation rather than cooperation. Since that time, the Cold War has thawed, the "Third World" has gained prominence, and China has emerged as a force to be contended with. In short, the political scene has undergone dramatic changes on a global scale. Consequently, if Merleau-Ponty's political writings are considered from a historical perspective—a perspective which discusses in detail the particular events which preoccupied postwar France--there is a very real danger that those writings will strike one as dated and inapplicable. The problems of the Cold War lie in the past. Why, then, should we concern ourselves with Merleau-Ponty's responses to those problems? Furthermore, it might be thought that since Merleau-Ponty was not a historian, an economist, or a politician, his attempt to "come to grips" with the political issues of his time would be inadequate and uninteresting. Merleau-Ponty himself seems to indicate as much in his discussion of the problems of Gaullism:

> . . . Who can describe the comedy of the Socialist Party, . . . But after all, many people know this better than I do. . . . Who am I to speak at such length about it? The officers prophesy; the professors sharpen their pens. Where are the counselors of the people, and have they nothing they can offer us but their regrets?[24]

Yet I contend that Merleau-Ponty's political writings (for example, Humanism and Terror, Les Aventures de la Dialectique, various articles) are not of interest for us today merely as "museum pieces." Despite the fact that our political milieu differs radically from that of postwar France, Merleau-Ponty's responses to the particular problems

of his time remain of interest. This is so, I maintain, because, in addressing himself as a philosopher to those problems, he invested his responses with a timeless dimension. His political writings, therefore, contain a universality which renders them of enduring relevance. I am convinced that by focusing attention on the historical context within which these writings arose, one obscures that universal dimension. I would argue that this dimension is the philosopher's chief concern and his unique contribution to the political debate.

v) The Role of Ontological Principles in Political Thought

It may be argued that a study of Merleau-Ponty's political philosophy should give careful consideration to the writings of his contemporaries. This argument rests on the assumption that Merleau-Ponty's political thought was influenced considerably by that of his contemporaries. However, it should be pointed out that in fact, Merleau-Ponty always "kept his distance," and that "the studied wall of solitude he built about him made it hard for even intimates to know him."[25] Very little is known about his personal life. It is conceivable that he was greatly influenced by persons, books, and events of which we know nothing. It could well be the case that he was shaped to a far greater extent by his own readings than by any discussions with his contemporaries. Sartre himself, who as co-editor of "Les Temps Modernes" worked most closely with Merleau-Ponty, tells us that "basically, he was only interested in developing from within, and discussions distracted him."[26] This admission leads one to question the desirability of a lengthy investigation into the political thought of Merleau-Ponty's contemporaries here.

Earlier, I noted that, although Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Camus, Gide, and Malraux wrote from within the same historical context, their political positions differed significantly. I indicated that these divergencies were attributable to fundamental philosophical differences. Now I propose to examine those philosophical differences in reference to Camus, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. My purpose in undertaking these comparisons is threefold. First of all, I believe that this discussion will substantiate my claim that political thought is indeed rooted in ontological principles. Secondly, such comparisons strike me as fruitful for eliciting the specific philosophical foundation of Merleau-Ponty's own political position. Finally, by illuminating the deep ontological differences which are at stake, I hope to justify my decision to explore Merleau-Ponty's views on violence in the remaining chapters of my thesis without reference to the theories of violence propounded by his contemporaries. It is my contention that the basic philosophical orientation of Merleau-Ponty is so different from that of his contemporaries, that a more extensive investigation of the latter's theories on violence would not further enhance our understanding of Merleau-Ponty's own conception.

In chapter one, I stated that the difference between Camus' and Merleau-Ponty's positions on violence rests on a fundamental philosophical divergency. At that time, I also noted Sartre's contention that Camus' view in The Rebel is based on the position propounded in The Myth of Sisyphus. Camus' thesis that rebellion must "pay for a life with a life,"[27] seems to me to be indeed rooted in the individualistic philosophy of The Myth of Sisyphus. Similarly, his notion of "limits," of "a dignity, and a beauty common to all men," rests, I submit, on the view of Promethean

man expounded so eloquently in The Myth of Sisyphus. Further, Camus' notion of "limits" is inseparable from the attitude to nature and to history presented in his earlier works. In The Rebel, Camus declares that the "rule" of limits is needed "to balance the insanity of history," and that "the historical revolution is always obliged to act in the hope, which is invariably disappointed, of one day really existing."[28] In The Myth of Sisyphus, Camus had stressed "the primitive hostility of the world," the "unintelligible and limited universe," the world as "but a vast irrational."[29] Man and the world confront each other, "betray against" each other, in "opposition, laceration, and divorce."[30] In The Myth of Sisyphus and in The Plague, Camus stressed that this basic struggle between man and the world "implies a total absence of hope," implies "the certainty of a crushing fate."[31] Dignity and greatness are to be found in "the human revolt against the irremediable," in man's consent to "live without appeal."[32] The emphasis is on contemplation and acceptance; rather than action and change: "living an experience, a particular fate, is accepting it fully. . . . Living is keeping the absurd alive. Keeping it alive is, above all, contemplating it."[33] Maximum awareness is maximum living.[34] The maintaining of awareness is a "solitary effort" of "defiance."[35] Furthermore, Camus in these writings stresses the lucid man's profound "indifference to the future."[36] He notes approvingly Abbé Galiani's declaration that "the important thing. . . is not to be cured, but to live with one's ailments."[37] In view of this position (the hostility and irrationality of the world; the chaos of history; the absence of hope; the stress on contemplation and acceptance), Camus' rejection of revolution in favor of rebellion becomes very understandable. It seems to me that Camus' position, as

summarized here, differs so fundamentally from that of Merleau-Ponty, that a more detailed examination of the former would not enhance our understanding of Merleau-Ponty's notion of violence. (Merleau-Ponty's stress on intersubjectivity, meaning, harmony, and so on, strikes me as utterly irreconcilable with Camus' emphasis on individual lucidity, confrontation, chaos, hostility, and so on.) Rather, there is the very real danger that a study dealing with both Camus and Merleau-Ponty would become terribly fragmented through lack of a genuine common basis.

I would maintain that one encounters similar problems in Sartre's [illegible]. It seems to me that here, too, an understanding of what violence means for Sartre is not to be attained by studying any one of his works alone, but is only to be had from an investigation of the whole body of his writings. Here again, I would maintain that there is such a basic irreconcilability between the philosophy of Sartre and that of Merleau-Ponty, that a more lengthy explanation than that which I shall undertake here, would not deepen our understanding of Merleau-Ponty's position on violence. Once again, it would be very difficult to avoid fragmentation as a result.

A substantial part of Merleau-Ponty's Les Aventures de la Dialectique is devoted to a criticism of Sartre's position as expressed in The Communists and Peace. It is perhaps convenient at this point to study these works in some detail. As mentioned in chapter one, the Adventures is notable not only for its break with Marx, but also for its break with Sartre.

Sartre's The Communists and Peace appeared in several installments in "Les Temps Modernes" beginning in July 1952. In this work, Sartre criticized the moderate Left, analyzed the significance of the May 28th

demonstration and the June 4th strike, and discussed the alliance of the proletariat with the Communist Party.

Sartre was well aware of "the four inevitable stages" traversed by so many left-wing men and newspapers: the conviction that the Communist Party is mistaken but that one cannot abandon the proletariat; the criticism of the proletariat; the loss of interest in the proletariat following its toleration of the Soviet camps; and the alignment with the United States, destruction of Russia, and construction of "the true socialism, international, democratic, and reformist."[38] Because he opposed this attitude, Sartre was concerned to demonstrate "to what extent the C.P. is the necessary expression of the working class, and to what extent it is the exact expression."[39] Sartre discusses the essential ambiguity of democratic centralization and explains why "the revolutionary who lives in our epoch, and whose task is to prepare for the Revolution with the means at hand and in his historical situation, . . . must indissolubly associate the Soviet cause with that of the proletariat."[40] Sartre points to the U.S.A.'s "show of force," declaring it to be "violent in itself" insofar as it serves to break the will of the colonized peoples by terror. He states that, unlike the U.S.A., "the Soviet Union wants peace and proves it daily."[41]

In his discussion of the May 28th demonstration, Sartre declares that this demonstration "was a supreme effort toward peace," that "it was acting out the deep-seated pacifism of the masses," and that the recourse to violence must be understood in the perspective of the "climate of pessimism."[42] He criticizes "reformism" on the grounds that the confinement to elementary demands involves, de facto, a rejection of the Revolution, the resignation of the worker to his fate, and the

betrayal of the working class.[43] He points, moreover, to the inefficacy of the communist vote and the impotence of communists in the Assembly. He draws attention to the violence hidden in bourgeois legality.[44]

Sartre discusses the relationship between "interiorized" and "exteriorized" violence, and stresses that the violence exercised by the worker is in fact humanism:[45] "From the point of view of a future society which will be born thanks to his efforts, his violence is a positive humanism"—"Not a means of achieving humanism. Not even a necessary condition. But the humanism itself, insofar as it asserts itself against 'reification'."[46]

Sartre claims that "on June 4th. . . there wasn't any working class."[47] The proletariat, in his view, is not synonymous with a great number of individuals, or even with "the great majority of the workers."[48] The worker no longer sees the relationship between his immediate struggles and "the destiny of the proletariat."[49] Sartre recalls Marx's contention that "'the proletariat can act as a class only by shaping itself into a distinct political party'," and concludes that "if the working class wants to detach itself from the Party, it has only one means at its disposal: to crumble into dust."[50] An opposition between the working class and the party is "not even conceivable," according to Sartre.[51] The class is characterized by the unity of the workers, and this unity is not possible in the absence of the party. Sartre argues that "the class makes and remakes itself continuously": "The proletariat forms itself by its day-to-day action. It exists only by acting. It is action. If it ceases to act, it decomposes."[52] In Sartre's analysis of class, "class is a system in motion" which prevents the individuals from reverting to inertia and isolation.[53] He stresses

the need for the authority of the party and the obedience of the members. In "A Reply to Claude Lefort," Sartre elaborates this view of the nature of the relationship between party and class. "The Party," he writes, "is a force of mediation between men," permitting them to act and think collectively.[54] Sartre's analysis of the party is based on his conviction that one can get out of a "sérial" only via a previously constituted group that is capable of "de-serializing" it.[55] In his Critique de la Raison Dialectique written several years later (1960), Sartre formulated and elaborated the notions of dialectic, praxis, seriality, group formation and so on, in terms of which his analysis of the relationship between the working class and the party is to be understood. The theory of being and doing, the project, the Other, the "us-object," and "my fellowman," which he had originally developed in Being and Nothingness underlies the analysis. For example, the thesis that the class must continuously [illegible], that it is its action, should be considered in connection with Sartre's declaration in Being et Nothingness, that "for human reality to be is to act, and to cease to act is to cease to be."[56]

In having recourse to the Critique de la Raison Dialectique to illuminate Sartre's discussion of violence and of the relationship between party and class, one must not lose sight of the fact that Sartre's position did not remain static in the intervening years. By 1960, he was prepared to argue that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is impossible. At this time, he held that the very idea of such a "dictatorship" is based on a misunderstanding of the laws of dialectical reason. In fact, the group can never become in any form a hyperorganism. Though organized in freedom, the group inevitably becomes institutionalized,

"inert," and its members have no real freedom—since they have relinquished this in favor of security by joining the group:

> Cela signifie que la "dictature du prolétariat" était une notion optimiste et forgée trop hâtivement par méconnaissance des lois formelles de la Raison dialectique. . . . Et la raison qui fait que la dictature du prolétariat n'est à aucun moment réalisée. . . , c'est que l'idée même en est absurde, comme compromis bâtard entre le groupe actif et souverain et la sérialité passive. L'expérience historique a révélé indéniablement que le premier moment de la société socialiste en construction ne pouvait être . . . que l'indissoluble agrégation de la bureaucratie, de la Terreur et du culte de la personnalité. . . . De notre point de vue, l'impossibilité pour le prolétariat d'exercer une dictature est formellement démontrée par l'impossibilité que le groupe sous n'importe quelle forme, se constitue en hyperorganisme. . . .[57]

However, despite the evolution in Sartre's thought, I would contend that a full understanding of his position in The Communists and Peace demands recourse to the Critique de la Raison Dialectique. Such a recourse, moreover, will illuminate the extent of the incompatibility between Sartre's position and that of Merleau-Ponty. Here, in lieu of the detailed study required by a "comparative" approach, I shall confine myself to a brief summary of Sartre's main argument in the Critique.

Sartre argues that the situation in which man in our world from the beginning of history right up to the present finds himself, is one of scarcity, experienced by man as "need." Man coexists with other men in a world where there is a lack—nature does not have enough for everyone. Through his need, man finds himself necessarily related to nature. In this field of scarcity, each man regards his fellowmen as a threat, as "anti-men" ("contre-hommes"), since it is only the presence of these others which prevents there being enough for himself. Each man would like to eliminate his rivals, and yet each knows that

he himself is one of the "others," a rival, for every other man and therefore that those others would like to eliminate him. Under this threat of suffering death at the others' hands, each individual is powerless to satisfy his need, and the only feasible solution is to compromise. Each, prompted by fear of the others, agrees to surrender part of his freedom on condition that all the others do the same. This mutual limitation of freedom removes the immediate threat of death, but does not remove the mutual hostility. However, all now agree to collaborate in working for a common goal--namely, the overcoming of scarcity and the satisfaction of all. This cooperation is paradoxical, insofar as it involves the collaboration of rivals who make such collaboration necessary in the first place.

For Sartre, the world is the world of the "practico-inert." It is both the world of nature, characterized as passive and inert, upon which man must work, which [illegible], from which he must wrest his living, and the world that has been and is being made by man's action, or "praxis." In order to overcome scarcity and satisfy his needs, man must act. In acting, however, man inevitably starts a process whose consequences he cannot foresee.[58] In short, his action, though freely embarked upon by man, initiates a "chain reaction" over which he has no control and which strikes back at him as an "alien" force, an "enemy." This reaction which comes in the wake of man's action, Sartre calls "counterfinality."

Sartre regards scarcity as the origin of all social organization. He distinguishes two basic forms of social structure, the "series" or "collective," and the group. The series is an aggregate of individuals who are united only by external proximity and by some object or collective

entity, and who all have the same purpose but do not have a common or collective purpose. These individuals do not consider themselves as a "whole" engaged in the pursuit of a common aim. The series is an unorganized, "loose," aggregate of individuals. Each man regards the others as "others," and himself as "other" for them. The series is "a unity in flight"—it is a seriality only insofar as it is not a unity of individuals working together. Sartre regards bourgeois society as a series of series, a "false" totality. The series is impotent, passive, inert. In order to get anything done—most immediately, to eliminate scarcity—the series must become a group. Unlike a seriality, a group is structured and hierarchal. Individuals therefore commit themselves to work together as a group—that is, to live by working together rather than to die by fighting each other. To assure each one that the others will also voluntarily limit their freedom in the pursuit of a common aim, an oath or pledge must be given by each member to the effect that he will not betray the group. However, a pledge is useless unless it is enforced, and it can only be enforced by terror. The group is in constant danger of relapsing into seriality. Each man is kept in the group through fear of the violence which will be dealt him if he breaks his oath. Terror ensures each member of the group that none of the other members will practice violence against him, that all will continue to work together. Terror, therefore, is the threat of violence which is necessary to prevent a dissolution of the group into enemies who destroy each other. Since someone must be authorized to exercise this terror, the group inevitably becomes "ossified" or institutionalized, and this institutionalization is the basis of sovereignty. The state is the most important example of a group. Through his pledge, each man authorizes the sovereign to exercise violence against him if he breaks

his pledge. Consequently, in obeying the sovereign, each man is merely obeying himself, and any violence which the sovereign uses is ultimately one's own violence against oneself. (The similarity between this position and that of Hobbes is striking.) Terror is liberty, insofar as it is freely consented to via one's pledge, and frees one from the danger of destruction by others. Violence, therefore, is the basis of the group. Insofar as different individuals or different groups pursue different aims, their actions "escape them"; they "intermesh" with other actions and consequently produce unforeseeable and unintended results which strike back at man and therefore appear to him to be alien forces, processes, or economic laws.

On the basis of this analysis of man's situation, the series, the group, and the role of violence, Sartre presents a detailed study of bourgeois society and of the working class. For example, Sartre describes the capitalist class as a seriality, a collective, and explains that money must be seen as a "mediating-material" and as "other." He presents the circulation of money as a reinforced seriality, capitalism as a "flight"; accumulation as "profound alterelity," "infinite seriality," "false totalization." He explains at length that the capitalists are unified into a group by fear and hate in times of threat.[59] Similarly, Sartre presents the worker as a powerless member of a series, who is exploited because he is isolated. He explains how the class, as series, can give rise to groups such as syndicates which, once formed, escape the workers. He dwells again and again[60] on the inevitable ossification and institutionalization of the group, and on its suppression of individual freedom. Revolutionary action, on this account, is the action of a group "in fusion" (that is, in the process

of coming to establish itself as a group; for only at this "formative" moment is action via a group possible). Such action inevitably ossifies into the passivity and inertia of a bureaucracy as soon as the group "members" disperse.

From this perspective, Sartre's discussion in The Communists and Peace becomes more comprehensible. It can now be understood, for example, why Sartre insisted on the need for, and submission to, the party authority; why he regarded the proletariat as utterly impotent unless unified by the party; why he declared that the working class continually remakes itself and exists only by acting. Moreover, it seems to me that the fundamental irreconcilability between Sartre's position and that of Merleau-Ponty is sharply thrown into relief by the investigation of the Critique. The opposition between the two philosophers hinges on the basic difference in their view of the relationship between man and his fellowmen, and between man and nature. I would maintain that Sartre's notion of men as rivals who cooperate only through the threat of violence and terror, or his description of man's [illegible] scarcity, the "practico-inert," stands at the opposite pole from Merleau-Ponty's conception of intersubjectivity as based on pre-reflective solidarity, or reciprocity; and his view of the "flesh" of the world.

The basic difference in orientation between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty is already evident, however, in the latter's criticism of the former in Les Aventures de la Dialectique (1955). There, Merleau-Ponty described Sartre as an "ultra bolshevist." He was especially disturbed by Sartre's emphasis on the proletariat's need for submission to party authority, and his declaration that the party was the "necessary" and "exact" expression of the working class. Nevertheless, the main thrust

of his criticism was directed against those aspects of Sartre's philosophy which, in his view, had always been at odds with his own position: for example, the old pour soi/en soi dualism, the lack of an authentic intersubjectivity, the absence of a genuine dialectic, the preoccupation with the "look," the notion of action and of nothingness, and so on. Merleau-Ponty declared that instead of a genuine intersubjectivity, Sartre had only a plurality of subjects: "Il y a chez Sartre une pluralité de sujets, il n'y a pas d'intersujectivité."[61] Ultimately, the only relationship between these subjects was that of the "look":

> S'il fallait approcher la divergence philosophique et fondamentale, on dirait que, pour Sartre, les rapports des classes, les rapports intérieurs au prolétariat et finalement ceux de l'histoire tout entière ne sont pas des rapports articulés, qui comportent tension et détente, mais les rapports immédiats ou magiques du regard.[62]

Merleau-Ponty argued that the social world was basically non-existent in Sartre's philosophy, or that the social dimension presented [illegible] "a scandal" for the Cogito: "La socialité donnée est un scandale pour le je pense"; ". . . il n'y a pas de charnière, de jointure ou de médiation entre moi et autrui, je me sens immédiatement regardé. . . ."[63] By reducing everything to a constituting activity of a pure consciousness, Sartre had negated the "interworld" and denied the dialectic and the ambiguity of history: "Tous les prétendus êtres qui voltigent dans l'entre-deux, . . . ne sont que du constitué"; "C'est par le front que l'homme est attaché à l'histoire."[64] In short, "la question est de savoir si, comme le dit Sartre, il n'y a que des <u>hommes</u> et des <u>choses</u>, ou bien aussi cet intermonde que nous appelons histoire, symbolisme, vérité à faire."[65]

In her article, "Merleau-Ponty et le Pseudo-Sartrisme,"[66]

Simone de Beauvoir severely took Merleau-Ponty to task for his criticism of Sartre. She charged that Merleau-Ponty had falsified Sartre's thought and had presented a "pseudo Sartre." By presenting carefully selected passages from Sartre's various works, she sought to refute each of Merleau-Ponty's criticisms in turn and to demonstrate that "à vrai dire, toute l'ontologie de Sartre contredit celle que lui attribue Merleau-Ponty."[67] She declared that Merleau-Ponty had never understood Sartre, that he had linked together Sartre's political thought with his ontology in a purely arbitrary fashion, and that he had traversed a path directly opposed to that of Sartre.[68] She accused Merleau-Ponty of neglecting: Sartre's theory of facticity; the rich description of the "other" given in St. Genet; the insistence on the insertion of consciousness and of action in history, as evident in Sartre's "Reply to Albert Camus"; the emphasis on the "weight" and ambiguity of history, which Sartre reiterated in his criticisms of the Trotskyites [illegible] of Claude Lefort.[69] De Beauvoir insisted, briefly, that:

> . . . à travers le développement de son oeuvre Sartre a insisté de plus en plus sur le caractère engagé de la liberté, sur la facticité du monde, l'incarnation de la conscience, la continuité du temps vécu, le caractère totalitaire de toute vie.[70]

In her defence of Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir reminded Merleau-Ponty that Sartre was presently working on an opus which would rectify many of the problems remaining in his position. It is true that in this work, the Critique de la Raison Dialectique, Sartre did in fact "take to heart" many of Merleau-Ponty's criticisms. This is evident from the lengthy discussion of the dialectic, the description of the mediation between man and nature, and the insistence on inertia and ambiguity. There is some truth in de Beauvoir's claim that Sartre insisted increasingly on

"engagement," on facticity, on incarnation, and so on. It seems to me that Sartre struggled valiantly in his efforts to overcome idealism and Cartesian dualism—one need only recall his detailed explication of "process," or "practico-inert," of "counterfinality," and his reiteration that "l'homme est 'médié' par les choses dans la mesure même où les choses sont 'médiées' par l'homme."[71] Nevertheless, despite his increased preoccupation with the social world, with matter, with dialectic, and with the Marxist conception of history, I would argue that Sartre has ultimately failed to achieve a genuine intersubjectivity. The primordial relationship between men remains one of confrontation, hostility, and conflict. There can be cooperation of course, but such collaboration continually deteriorates, and must be constantly recreated, and violently enforced.

I would maintain, therefore, that there is indeed a fundamental irreconcilability between the philosophies of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. For the latter, there is a primordial, genuine, pre-reflective, lived, intersubjectivity; and all conflict arises on the ground of such intersubjectivity. For Sartre, the inverse is the case: all solidarity arises on the ground of conflict. Consequently, I contend that a fuller study of Sartre's philosophy would not contribute further to an understanding of the notion of violence in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. Rather, the basic divergency of position would make for fragmentation and obscurity. This long discussion has afforded a further insight into the Adventures. It has, so it seems to me, substantiated the claim that political thought is rooted in ontological principles, and that, consequently, the political variations among Merleau-Ponty and his

contemporaries do stem from deep philosophical divergencies. It has elicited the specific philosophical foundation of Merleau-Ponty's political position by drawing attention to his emphasis on meaning, on harmony, on the "flesh" of the world, and on the pre-reflective solidarity which characterizes intersubjectivity. The discussion has, I think, justified my decision to refrain from a further investigation of the various theories of violence in subsequent chapters. The investigation which I have undertaken here has succeeded in eliciting the philosophical basis of Merleau-Ponty's political position; a more detailed study could not add to this, and would run the risk of obscuring the issues.

vi) Conclusion

It is my contention that there is a universality which permeates Merleau-Ponty's discussion of violence. As previously pointed out, Merleau-Ponty's personal experiences during World War II prompted him to turn his attention to the problem of violence. The war had taught him "the incredible power of history" and the untenability of a "rigid ethics."[72] The Occupation showed him that

> there are occasions where to obey is to accept and to despise is to refuse, when a life which is in part a double life ceases to be possible, and there is no longer any distinction between exterior and interior. Then we must enter the world's folly, and we need a rule for such a moment.[73]

The attempt to find such a rule induced Merleau-Ponty to devote considerable thought to the whole question of violence. Since such a "rule" was to be universally applicable, Merleau-Ponty's consideration of violence centered around timeless questions such as what it means to be human, and what is involved in interpersonal relationships. The preoccupation with these questions led him to indicate and formulate

truths which are universal and therefore of interest and relevance even today.

The most interesting and significant of these truths, I would argue, is one which he never formulated explicitly but which lies implicit in his writings. I am referring to the claim that violence finds its ultimate justification in the realm of ontology-aesthetics. I have made it my task in this thesis, to extract (and thereby illuminate) this timeless claim from the historical particularities within which it is embedded in Merleau-Ponty's writings. I have undertaken to retrace the development of this claim in Merleau-Ponty's thought by focusing attention on the timeless questions with which he dealt en route. Thereby, I have endeavored to draw attention to the continuity and unity of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy--a unity which has generally not been recognized, but to which Sartre himself referred in his article on Merleau-Ponty.[74]

In order to focus on those elements which are of enduring relevance in Merleau-Ponty's consideration of violence, and to show the fundamental coherence, consistency and continuity of his thought, I have chosen a specifically philosophical approach. It is my conviction that this approach is least likely to obscure the <u>philosophical</u> dimension in Merleau-Ponty's political writings. As my point of departure, I have taken the consideration of what Merleau-Ponty means by violence; I have laid aside all questions of a sociological nature (for example, the question as to <u>why</u> he came to hold the particular views on violence which he in fact held). It is my aim to examine the internal dynamics of Merleau-Ponty's thought and in doing so, to demonstrate

that his position regarding political issues occupies a crucial place within the framework of his whole philosophy. I hope to show, furthermore, that Merleau-Ponty has a profound insight to contribute to the question of violence. I maintain that Merleau-Ponty's concern with the problem of violence forced him to deepen his thought and to probe ever further into the realm of ontology-aesthetics. It is my contention that his preoccupation with ontology-aesthetics did not indicate a disillusionment with politics and political life, but rather a concern to answer those same timeless questions which had been the focus of his attention throughout his life—that is, the question of what makes man truly human, what constitutes the nature of a truly human society, what characterizes interpersonal relations, and, in general, what it means to be an incarnate subjectivity.

Before launching my investigation, I propose to summarize very briefly the main line of my argument, so as to [illegible] of my contentions. The aim of my thesis is to demonstrate that violence, for Merleau-Ponty, finds its ultimate justification in the realm of ontology-aesthetics. The thesis examines the various kinds of violence with which Merleau-Ponty is concerned, and the criterion for choice which he proposes. Following this, the thesis traces the criterion through humanism to its foundation in ontology-aesthetics.

It becomes clear that Merleau-Ponty is chiefly concerned with three kinds of violence: the existing violence of the Establishment, the political violence employed to change that "system," and the inevitable violence of all human relationships. Since violence is already universally institutionalized, it is imperative that there be a criterion whereby a choice can be made among various forms of violence.

That criterion is "progressiveness." Progressiveness dictates that that action is to be chosen, the employment of which will be most likely to produce a more human society. Consequently, the criterion to be consulted in the use of violence is based on humanism.

Humanism (that is, Merleau-Ponty's version of humanism) holds that man's true humanity consists in creatively expressing Being in its Truth. Since creative expression and Being belong essentially to the ontological-aesthetic realm, humanism is grounded in ontology-aesthetics. Ontology-aesthetics grounds humanism; humanism grounds progressiveness; and progressiveness is the decisive criterion in regard to violence. Consequently, the ultimate justification of violence is to be found in the ontological-aesthetic realm. I shall now, therefore, turn my attention to the substantiating of my claim that for Merleau-Ponty the problem of violence must be seen as an ontological-

aesthetic proble

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER II

[1]Caute, p. 17.

[2]Caute, pp. 17, 242.

[3]Caute, pp. 242 ff., 247.

[4]Caute, p. 249.

[5]Humanism and Terror, pp. xxix-xxx.

[6]Les Temps Modernes, 1, 1 (Oct. 1945), p. 435.

[7]Situations, p. 7.

[8]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 151.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, pp. viii, 61.

[11]Phenomenology of Perception, pp. 394, 395.

[12]Phenomenology of Perception, pp. xvi, xvii.

[13]Signs, p. [illegible].

[14]Ibid.

[15]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 143.

[16]Merleau-Ponty, In Praise of Philosophy, p. 63.

[17]Signs, p. 13.

[18]Signs, p. 21.

[19]Signs, pp. 110, 130, 113.

[20]Phenomenology of Perception, p. 63.

[21]Signs, p. 113.

[22]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 149.

[23]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 171 (text and footnote).

[24]Signs, p. 350.

[25]Preface to Signs, p. ix.

Footnotes for Chapter II (Continued)

[26]Situations, p. 159.

[27]Camus, The Rebel, p. 173.

[28]The Rebel, p. 251 (my underlining).

[29]The Myth of Sisyphus, pp. 11, 16, 20.

[30]The Myth of Sisyphus, pp. 23, 26, 30.

[31]The Myth of Sisyphus, pp. 23, 40.

[32]The Myth of Sisyphus, pp. 19, 39 (my underlining).

[33]The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 40.

[34]The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 46.

[35]The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 41.

[36]The Myth of Sisyphus, pp. 42, 44, 47.

[37]The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 29.

[38]Sartre, The Communists and Peace, p. 4.

[39] [illegible], p. 9.

[40]The Communists and Peace, pp. 10, 12.

[41]The Communists and Peace, p. 15.

[42]The Communists and Peace, pp. 23, 24.

[43]The Communists and Peace, p. 34.

[44]The Communists and Peace, pp. 42 ff., 50 ff.

[45]The Communists and Peace, pp. 53 ff.

[46]The Communists and Peace, p. 55 (text and footnote).

[47]The Communists and Peace, p. 67.

[48]The Communists and Peace, p. 76.

[49]The Communists and Peace, p. 87.

[50]The Communists and Peace, p. 88.

Footnotes for Chapter II (Concluded)

[51] The Communists and Peace, p. 89.

[52] The Communists and Peace, p. 97.

[53] The Communists and Peace, p. 98.

[54] The Communists and Peace, p. 236.

[55] Burnier, p. 84.

[56] Being and Nothingness, p. 583.

[57] Sartre, Critique de la Raison Dialectique, pp. 629 ff.

[58] Critique de la Raison Dialectique, p. 749.

[59] Critique de la Raison Dialectique, pp. 695 ff., 706 ff.

[60] Critique de la Raison Dialectique, pp. 629 ff.

[61] Merleau-Ponty, Les Aventures de la Dialectique, p. 275.

[62] Les Aventures de la Dialectique, pp. 206, 207.

[63] Les Aventures de la Dialectique, pp. 208, 191.

[64] Les Aventures de la Dialectique, pp. 191, 213.

[65] Les Aventures de la Dialectique, p. 269.

[66] Les Temps Modernes, 10^2, 1955, pp. 2072 ff.

[67] Les Temps Modernes, 10^2, 1955, p. 2084.

[68] Les Temps Modernes, 10^2, 1955, pp. 2121, 2102, 2121.

[69] Les Temps Modernes, 10^2, 1955, pp. 2074, 2084, 2088, 2090.

[70] Les Temps Modernes, 10^2, 1955, p. 2122.

[71] Sartre, Critique de la Raison Dialectique, p. 165.

[72] Sense and Non-Sense, p. 151; Humanism and Terror, p. xiiii.

[73] Signs, p. 205.

[74] Situations, p. 209.

III

THE KINDS OF VIOLENCE AND THE CRITERION OF PROGRESSIVENESS

A) The Kinds of Violence

Violence, for Merleau-Ponty, is not restricted to physical coercion. In his view, there are essentially three sorts of violence: the existing violence of the Establishment, whether masked or unmasked, the political violence employed to change this "system," and the inevitable violence of all human relationships.

1) The Violence of the Establishment

Merleau-Ponty regards all law as violence, and contends that all regimes which have ever existed have been either overtly or covertly violent. He is especially concerned, however, to investigate the violence of communism and of liberal democracy in order to arrive at a politically balanced view of these two types of regimes. The course of events later induced him to modify his view of both regimes; however, in his initial investigations he declared that

> Within the U.S.S.R. violence and deception have official status while humanity is to be found in daily life. On the contrary, in democracies the principles are humane but deception and violence rule in daily life.[1]

a) The Violence of Liberal Democracy

Violence in the liberal state manifests itself in colonization, unemployment, and low wages. In such a system, relationships are based on force, but that force is masked by formal equality of rights and

political liberty, such as freedom of the press—a freedom which the powerful use "to stir up currents of opinion and manifestations which paralyze a parliamentary majority."[2] Merleau-Ponty warns that the tacit force underlying freedom, and the system of checks and balances, can serve to perpetuate tyranny. Such veiled force can be enormously effective. Instead of coercing or persuading, it thwarts; and, as Merleau-Ponty notes, "we are better able to thwart by appealing to freedom than by terrorizing."[3] This thwarting involves:

> diluting contradictions; putting problems obliquely; stifling action in procedures. . . taking the edge off majorities themselves, when they do not behave properly, and leading them where they do not want to go; and manipulating minds without moving them—in a word, a juridical and artful form of violence.[4]

Liberal democracy employs a diplomacy in which tension and repression alternate with relaxation and legality—but in "a sugar-coated form."[5]

b) The Violence of Communism

In communism, the same fundamental situation of force is disguised in "the dictatorship of objective truth." The Communist Party formulates this "objective truth" and punishes deviators with death, as in the Moscow Purges. However, as Merleau-Ponty points out, "purging is rarely sheer repression."[6] Unlike the "system" of liberal democracy, the communist regime is not a mere Establishment. In communism, established violence and revolutionary violence are both ambiguously present.

In Humanism and Terror, Merleau-Ponty notes that communism as practised in the Soviet Union has become revisionist. Privilege has been instituted, traditional norms have been reimposed, and "people's commissars" have been replaced by "Ministers."[7] Soviet communism has

hardened into a regime with an established violence. It "maintains and aggravates the dictatorial apparatus while renouncing the revolutionary liberty of the proletariat in the Soviets and its Party and abandoning the humane control of the state."[8] The dogmatism of the party élite replaces the dictatorship of the proletariat;[9] dialogue between the party and the proletarians has ceased. Insofar as it imposes a dogmatic view of history on its citizens, "dresses up" their political differences as crimes against common law,[10] and suppresses their criticisms through purges, communism has become a regime with an established violence. Nevertheless, to the extent that it is employed in the interests of creating a classless, genuinely human society, the established violence of communism is in fact simultaneously a revolutionary violence. This ambiguity is manifest in the Moscow Purges. These purges inflicted terror on communists whose interpretation of history differed from that of the party. The liquidation of Bukharin and the others was an act of established violence because it was committed by a party élite who made themselves the official spokesmen of history's course. On the other hand, it was an act of revolutionary violence insofar as it removed opponents whose activities obstructed or threatened the creation of a new humanity. The ambiguity cannot be dispelled, because it cannot be proven that the purges were in fact necessary to the attainment of such a humanity.

ii) Violence Employed for Change

Merleau-Ponty contends that all regimes which have ever existed have been violent. However, this does not mean that they must continue to be so. The violence stemming from existing regimes can be decreased

or irradicated. Until the 1950's, Merleau-Ponty maintained that the violence of the existing Establishments could be overcome only through revolutionary violence: ". . . historical restorations are impossible and violence can only be transcended in the violent creation of a new order."[11] In the case of liberal democracies, this meant the initiating of a proletarian revolution. For communism, it signified the abandoning of party dogmatism. However, as his disillusionment with both Marxism and Russian communism grew, he discarded the idea of revolutionary violence in favor of parliamentary reform.[12] The latter, too, is violence insofar as it involves the conflict of opinions and/or the overruling of a minority.

At this point it is perhaps convenient to inquire why Merleau-Ponty was so concerned, in Humanism and Terror, to present a politically balanced view of communist violence; why he was even interested in the Soviet Union. As a Frenchman, Merleau-Ponty was primarily interested in the political life of France. However, he regarded Russia as being on the road to a truly human society, and therefore felt that it was vitally important to watch her progress closely. At that time, Merleau-Ponty thought that a proletarian revolution on a world-wide scale was still a possibility. He considered such a revolution to be necessary for the formation of a genuinely human society in France. French politics was nominally humanist (insofar as it paid lip service to the Rights of Man) but practised repression both at home and abroad (in its colonial policies and its class conflicts). The French Left had attempted to institute reforms, but such reforms had been slow to come about because of the strength of the opposition (Right and Center) parties. Merleau-Ponty held that there was a real possibility that a proletarian

revolution would occur in France. Although poorly represented in the Assembly, the P.C.F. was very strongly supported by the working class. France had a revolutionary tradition. Frenchmen recalled the French Revolution with pride as a glorious event which had wrought several lasting changes in French social and political life. Frenchmen were therefore more likely than Englishmen, for example, to place hope in revolution and to regard it as a viable vehicle for change. Only deep disillusionment with Soviet communism and with Marxist theory itself, eventually induced Merleau-Ponty to replace the idea of revolution with that of reform.

iii) The Inevitable Violence of Human Relationships

Although violence takes different forms in communism and in democracy, it rests in both cases on a more fundamental kind of violence. The latter is an inevitable element of the human situation. Unlike the violence of existing regimes, this fundamental form of violence cannot be eliminated. There is, Merleau-Ponty contends, an inevitable violence in all human relationships. This rather striking contention must be set within the context of Merleau-Ponty's general phenomenological position in order to be understood.

For Merleau-Ponty, the world is an intersubjective "horizon of horizons" in which each person's perspective encroaches on another's field. In short, there is already an unavoidable sort of "invasion" at the level of perception. The importance of this will be evident if it is remembered that, for Merleau-Ponty, the perceptual realm is of prime importance, since all other forms of coexistence are based upon it. In his Phenomenology of Perception, he had stressed the harmony among incarnate beings: what is given is a being with others, not a

being opposed to others. Just as, in the perception of objects, their perspectives are not independent of each other but "slip into" each other and are brought together in the thing, so the perspective of one incarnate being and those of others "slip into" each other and are brought together in a single world. Incarnate beings form a system of openings onto a common world; their perspectives merge, complementing each other. Nevertheless, although he emphasizes the "internal relationship," the lived presence of incarnate beingsto each other, Merleau-Ponty's description of incarnate subjectivity as "the junction of the for itself and the in itself"[13] provides an ontological basis for a comprehensive theory of violence.

Because he is incarnate, man is nottransparent to himself; he finds in himself a "pre-personal subject" along with the perceiving subject. Underlying his explicitly conscious acts, there is a "generality" which involves an element of impersonality and is "part of the human lot." There is a fundamental ambiguity in being in the world as incarnate subject. Such a subject is not transparent to himself nor is the world transparent to him. He has "historical density"; he finds himself situated in a social world and in a prepersonal tradition which lends an "atmosphere of ambiguity" to his existence. This fundamental generality, this ambiguity, gives an element of opacity and inertia to his choices and actions. It renders him incapable of foreseeing consequences in their totality both for himself and for others. His actions, therefore, can and do impinge on the lives of others despite the fact that he does not will this to be so.

However, it is not merely a matter of individual projects which may "clash" with each other. Since incarnate beings inhabit an

intersubjective world, "a single common situation," their projects may "link up" with those of others in such a way as to form common projects which have an aspect of strangeness or anonymity insofar as they transcend the individual intentions upon which they are based. A number of different projects can interact to produce unintended and unforeseen results; the "movement" which joins incarnate subjects is "inevitably imperfect."[14] Violence is not rooted only in the ambiguity and generality of the individual, therefore, but also in the very fact of intersubjectivity—the fact that incarnate beings are "open" to each other in their engagement in a common history. Intersubjectivity, while permitting complementary or enriched perspectives, at the same time makes it inevitable that subjects encroach upon each other. To deny this would be to falsify the relationship between the self and others.[15] What is meant here is not the extreme antagonism and objectification of Sartre's "look," but rather a diversity of outlooks and modes of self-expression which cannot always harmonize, because no unique self is a carbon copy of any other self. Insofar as incarnate subjects inevitably encroach upon each other, their relationships are marked by an element of violence.

Merleau-Ponty's contention that there is already an element of violence at the most fundamental level of human coexistence, constitutes a valuable insight. It rules out any facile solution to the problem of violence, and does away with all Utopias which promise eternal harmony. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty's view makes it impossible to pride oneself on one's innocence; it reveals the basic hypocrisy of those who claim to have "clean hands."

B) The Universality of Violence

There is both a factual and an ontological universality of violence. The former refers to the fact that violence is already universally institutionalized. This means that as a matter of fact, all regimes which history has ever known have been violent. It means, moreover, that all existing regimes are violent. However, as I pointed out earlier, the factual universality of violence carries no necessity—the fact that all regimes have been violent and are still violent does not imply that they must continue to be so. The change from a violent regime to a nonviolent regime can be effected through revolutionary violence or through parliamentary reform. (I noted earlier that Merleau-Ponty advocated the former until the 1950's.) The ontological universality of violence, on the other hand, cannot be eliminated. It refers to the fact that there is a violence which is an inevitable aspect of all human relationships.

Since violence is already universally institutionalized, and since it is a fundamental part of the human condition, we cannot avoid becoming allied with some form of it. Although we have no choice with regard to that violence which is our lot as incarnate beings, we do have a choice as to whether to endorse and perpetuate the existing violence of the Establishment or whether to decrease and eliminate it. With regard to the latter case, we have a further choice concerning the means to be adopted for changing a violent regime into a nonviolent one. Merleau-Ponty's justification of the use of violence against a violent system, and his invocation of a criterion for the exercise of that violence, must therefore be considered. Before discussing that criterion, however, I shall consider the problems created in this respect

by the factual and ontological universality of violence.

The twin principles of unconditional respect for others and absolute nonviolence are not open for consideration, since they presuppose a given humanity and a world "well and truly made."[16] However, the world in its present state is not by any means "well and truly made"—it is quite unacceptable. It is a world filled with open and disguised forms of violence, a world in which humanity is not, for the most part, good-natured. No one can claim innocence and purity: "In a world of struggle no one can flatter himself that he has clean hands."[17] Everyone not only engages and makes use of others in his actions, but may even be guilty of violence by default; for "to abstain from violence toward the violent is to become their accomplice."[18] To practise absolute nonviolence or unconditional respect for others is therefore 'self-subverting' or downright impossible. Unconditional respect for the oppressors excludes unconditional respect for the oppressed, and vice versa; moreover, nonviolence toward the former is violence by acquiescence or by proxy. Since, like those before him, modern man is born into a violent world—for history has not yet known a nonviolent world—his choice is confined to different kinds of violence:

> He who condemns all violence puts himself outside the domain to which justice and injustice belong. He puts a curse upon the world and humanity—a hypocritical curse, since he who utters it has already accepted the rules of the game from the moment that he has begun to live.[19]

Given this situation, however, Merleau-Ponty is acutely aware of the fact that it is difficult to mark the limits of legitimacy in the employment of violence against violent regimes. In the area of "human affairs," as in the realm of visual perception, an absolute standpoint

is ruled out—it is the standpoint of a god, not of a man. The only standpoint from which there can be human discussion is the relativist one.[20] In his discussion of perception, Merleau-Ponty had explained that the perceiver cannot survey the world as spread out before him from a point outside it because he is himself involved in that world which he is perceiving. The perceiver, being situated in the world, is limited to a single perspective at any one time and cannot enjoy a comprehensive grasp of the whole. Temporality is an essential dimension which renders the world not transparent, but opaque, ambiguous, and open-ended. Every act of perception involves elements of faith and risk since it affirms more than is actually perceived in the present act. For example, we see steep projections in the landscape and conclude that these are mountains, although we have neither touched them nor viewed them from the back. Acts of perception, therefore, can carry a greater or lesser degree of certainty, but can never be absolute—they carry no guarantee against error and they cannot free themselves from the dual limitations of perception—the perspectival limitations of the perceiver and the "thickness" or ambiguity of the world.

Similarly, in the sphere of political life, there can be no absolute standpoint—the only honest one is a relative one which here also involves both faith and risk. There can be no rigid ethics, no set of abstract principles. In political action, as in visual perception, man is not a spectator surveying the world, but an actor situated within it. His world is not transparent or perfect, but opaque and violent; the course of events and the consequences of actions are never entirely foreseeable. Each man's judgment concerning human affairs is but a perspective based on his perception of events and this perception, like

purely visual perception, has severe inherent limitations. Man cannot escape the confines of his situation—he finds himself situated in a violent world; therefore, it is useless and hypocritical to base his actions on the assumption that the world is essentially peaceful and "good." The risks involved in political action are tremendous but unavoidable—political actions, unlike a simple act of touching or seeing, are often irreparable. Moreover, as I pointed out earlier, since political man acts in an intersubjective world, his actions may conflict with or be diverted by those of others and result in absolutely unexpected consequences. No man can have an all-embracing grasp of historical events. How, then, is one to decide on a matter of such urgency as that concerning which forms of violence to endorse? "Vulgar relativism" or irrationalism are no solution; as Merleau-Ponty points out, strict "irrationalism is indefensible for the decisive reason that no one lives it, not even he who professes it."[21] Yet neither is there recourse to a set of prefabricated principles: "To the very extent that a man. . . lacks gravity and, in our terms, true morality, he reserves in the depths of himself a sanctuary of principles. . . ."[22] It should be noted here that the rejection of an absolute standpoint does not imply the denial of absolute values. This will become evident in chapter four.

How is one to arrive at a judgment of the situation and a decision regarding violence? It is of crucial importance to keep in mind the general coordinates underlying all particular situations: the fact that the future is open, that we have the capacity for action, that we are already involved in an intersubjective world by being alive, and that the world can be changed. Since the future is open, and the

outcome of any course of action is never determined and therefore never entirely foreseeable, our decisions regarding action can only be made on the basis of factual trends or probabilities:

> Thus, as long as there are men, the future will be open and there will only be a probabilistic calculation and no absolute knowledge.[23]

> Since, in respect of the future, we have no other criterion than probability, the difference between a greater or lesser probability suffices as the basis of a political decision. . . .[24]

Moreover, there is a constant subtle interplay of perception, judgment and decision: "Our standpoint, and the 'only possible solution' seen from it, express a decision that has already been made, just as our decisions translate the style of the historical landscape around us."[25] In other words, "every outline of the possibilities, even if it is justified by a great number of facts, is nevertheless a choice."[26] In history there is no absolute neutrality or objectivity, and what appears to be an existential judgment already contains a value judgment. Our perception influences our decision and vice versa; and what we call the course of events is never anything but their course as we see it. Moreover, our evaluation of the present also operates through our project for the future and vice versa:

> The contingency of history is only a shadow at the edge of a view of the future from which we can no more refrain than we can from breathing. The way we perceive depends upon our wishes and our values, but the reverse is also true. . . .[27]

Since there is nothing but a set of probabilities to help us in making decisions, our decisions are always prone to error, deviation, or even chaos.[28] There can never be deductive certainty; there is therefore always risk of failure:

> There are perspectives, but, as the word implies, this involves only a horizon of probabilities, comparable to our perceptual horizon which can, as we approach it and it becomes present to us, reveal itself to be quite different from what we were expecting. Only certain possibilities are excluded.[29]

In evaluating a situation with a view to deciding on a certain course of action, it is also essential to be aware that decision-making is not a private matter. Since we live in an intersubjective world, our decisions are likely to influence other people; therefore, it does not suffice to affirm spontaneously those values which we favor—rather, we must question our situation in the world with the utmost care and attempt to respond to its demands. Although the future course of events can never be more than probable, we are not thereby condemned to choose our actions blindly. There is, to some extent, a structure of the event which makes possible a variety of interpretations—we must decide which is the most meaningful.[30] Our history is not an individual adventure upon which we embark without guiding principles, and yet every historical undertaking <u>is</u> "something of an adventure." It always involves a utilization of chances insofar as "objective history" can provide only "a certain convergence of facts" without guaranteeing the outcome by any absolutely rational structure of things. And yet, even though the future is only probable, it is not an empty zone in which we can construct "gratuitous projects"; nor can history be seen as the confrontation of choices that cannot be justified.[31]

As in his discussion of visual perception, so also here, Merleau-Ponty sees the relationship between the subjective and the objective not as one of creation <u>ex nihilo</u> or as one in which the subjective is totally determined by the objective, but rather as a "taking

up and carrying forward":

> The decisive moment comes when a man takes up and carries forward the course of things which he thinks he reads in objective history. And in the last analysis at that moment all he has to guide him is his own view of events.[32]

However, although he speaks of the subjective and the objective, Merleau-Ponty strongly rejects the subject/object dichotomy. Consequently, it is not possible to refuse all interpretations of events, all perspectives, and insist on basing our decisions only on the "bare facts":

> Shouldn't politics abandon the idea of basing itself on a philosophy of history and, taking the world as it is no matter what our wishes, dreams, or judgments may be, define its ends and its means by what the facts authorize? But one cannot do without a perspective, and, whether we like it or not, we are condemned to wishes, value judgments, and even a philosophy of history.[33]

It is not a question of either a priori rationality or a priori absurdity; rather, both sense and non-sense are essential ingredients of history: there would be no history if everything made sense and if the world's development were predetermined; neither would there be history if everything were absurd or if the course of events were dominated by a few massive and unalterable facts.[34] History, consequently, "is there where there is a logic within contingence, a reason within unreason," and

> our only recourse is a reading of the present which is as full and as faithful as possible, which does not prejudice its meaning, which even recognizes chaos and non-sense where they exist, but which does not refuse to discern a direction and an idea in events where they appear.[35]

Since we are caught up in a common or intersubjective world, such a "direction" emerges through the interplay of subjective and objective on the one hand, and that of a plurality of subjectivities

on the other. It is a fruitless endeavor to try to isolate any one of these components and determine its precise influence. We can only, therefore, recognize that our decisions and actions interconnect with, and sometimes intercept other projects, both past and present, and attempt to take into account as best we can, on the basis of past experience, the broader implications of such an interplay in advance. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

> Why ask if history is made by men or by things, since it is obvious that human initiatives do not annul the weight of things, and the "force of things" always acts through men? . . . There is no "last analysis," because there is a flesh of history in which (as in our body) everything counts and has a bearing—the infrastructure, our idea of it, and above all the perpetual exchanges between the two in which the weight of things becomes a sign as well, thoughts become forces, and the balance of the two becomes events. . . . Everywhere there are meanings, dimensions, and forms in excess of what each "consciousness" could have produced; and yet it is men who speak and think and see. We are in the field of history as we are in the field of language or existence.[36]

As I explained earlier, in the field of history, precisely because it is an intersubjective field, there is always risk, for commitment assumes that one's affirmation surpasses one's knowledge; however, commitment, although going beyond reason, should never go contrary to it.[37] Even the intellectual must thus commit himself; since he, too, is in history rather than above it, he can never attain a comprehensive grasp of all possible perspectives simultaneously. "The intellectual who refuses his commitments on the pretext that his function is to see all sides is in fact contriving to live a pleasant life under the guise of obeying a vocation."[38] Merleau-Ponty realizes that in every person there is a tension between understanding and action—neither can be eliminated; they must be properly balanced.

C) The Criterion for Choice

In view of the fact that political action always involves risk because decisions must be made on the basis of probability rather than certainty, are there any guidelines for judgment and decision? Merleau-Ponty postulates majority opinion:

> The majority is not always right, but in the long run no one can be right in opposition to it; and if someone evades the test indefinitely, it means that he is wrong. Here we touch rock-bottom. Not that the majority is oracular, but because it is the only check.[39]

Yet he admits that such checks may serve to perpetuate tyranny, and that, if opinions are consulted, there will never be revolution.[40]

It would be incorrect to suppose, however, that the judgment or evaluation of a situation is a purely intellectual matter and that the relationship between judgment and decision or between decision and action is a simple temporal sequence. Judgments, decisions and actions cannot be separated, for they grow out of a lived situation--in fact, "the revolutionary project is not the result of a deliberate judgment, or the explicit positing of an end"; "the intellectual project and the positing of ends are merely the bringing to completion of an existential project."[41] Since judgments and decisions are not simply intellectual exercises, there can be no theoretical reply to questions such as whether one should renounce one's liberty in order to save liberty. Questions like these do not come <u>ex nihilo</u>, but arise out of a situation, and it is the situation which must be understood before an answer can be attempted, since "the very decisions which transform us are always made in reference to a factual situation."[42] Although we are free to accept or refuse life, if we accept it, we "take the factual situations. . .

upon ourselves; we accept our responsibilities; we sign a contract with the world and with men."[43] Ultimately, all that can be offered on the theoretical plane are a few guidelines; the onus of the decision is the lot of the situated individual. In Merleau-Ponty's view, the man who clearly sees, consciously accepts, and courageously lives the burden of such decision and commitment is a hero, and "what is required here is silence, for only the hero lives out his relation to men and the world."[44]

The relationship between intention and action has long been the object of philosophical debates. When, as in the case of revolutionary violence, the consequences are irrevocable, such debates acquire particular intensity. To what extent is political man responsible for the consequences of his actions? What weight should be accord the anticipated consequences in deciding which course of action to adopt? As Kant saw it, the sole factor in evaluating actions or in deciding upon a line of action is the intention. A human action is morally good because it is done for the sake of duty; and

> an action done from duty has its moral worth, <u>not in the purpose</u> to be attained by it, but in the maxim in accordance with which it is decided upon; it depends therefore, not on the realization of the object of the action, but solely on the <u>principle of volition</u> in accordance with which . . . the action has been performed.[45]

For Kant, then,

> the moral worth of an action does not depend on the result expected from it, and so too does not depend on any principle of action that needs to borrow its motive from this expected result.[46]

Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, holds that genuine morality requires that we gravely consider the probable consequences of our actions and assume responsibility for them. The weight of consideration

lies with the action and its consequences rather than with the intention—although the latter is not to be ignored in evaluations. Moreover, politics cannot be reduced to morality, and in political life the need to consider the consequences of decisions and actions is of even greater importance than in private life. Merleau-Ponty states clearly that "politics is not the contrary of morality, but it is never reduced to morality."[47] He takes direct issue with Kant:

> We can no longer have a Kantian system of politics, because such a system is not concerned with consequences, whereas when we act it is indeed to produce external results, not just to make a gesture and ease our conscience.[48]

Since "others are the permanent coordinates of our lives," we cannot ignore the effects which our actions have on them; "true morality is not concerned with what we think or what we want but obliges us to take an historical view of ourselves."[49] If our actions were either totally conditioned or absolutely free, they would lack any intrinsic or objective value; however, neither is the case, because "all action is a response to a factual situation which we have not completely chosen and for which, in this sense, we are not absolutely responsible."[50]

Merleau-Ponty calls attention[51] to the Philosophy of Right in which Hegel rejects attempts to judge action solely by either its intention or its results:

> Der Grundsatz: bei den Handlungen die Konsequenzen verachten, und der andere: die Handlungen aus den Folgen beurteilen, und sie zum Maassstabe dessen, was recht und gut sey, zu machen—ist Beides gleich abstrakter Verstand. Die Folgen, als die eigene immanente Gestaltung der Handlung, manifestiren nur deren Natur und sind nichts Anderes als sie selbst; die Handlung kann sie daher nicht verläugnen and verachten. . . .[52]
>
> The principle: neglect the consequences in acting, and the other: judge actions by their consequences and make them the measure of what is right and good, belong both alike to the abstract understanding. The consequences, as the action's own

> immanent structure, merely manifest its nature and are nothing but that action itself; the action, therefore, cannot disown and scorn them. . . .

Merleau-Ponty is in fundamental agreement with Hegel's suggestion that what should be judged is the attempt, the undertaking, or the work--"not a judgment of the intention or the consequences only, but of the use which we have made of our good will, and of the way in which we have evaluated the factual situation."[53] Political man must recognize and accept the fact that political action is intrinsically "impure"; he cannot plead this as an excuse for inaction. In Merleau-Ponty's view,

> the curse of politics is precisely that it must translate values into the order of facts. . . . A policy therefore cannot be grounded in principle, it must also comprehend the facts of the situation.[54]

Moreover,

> the politician cannot excuse himself for what he has not foreseen. Yet, there is always the unforeseeable. There is the tragedy. . . . there are no innocents in politics.[55]

Merleau-Ponty is not advocating nihilism; he is not saying that politics must ignore values. Rather, his point is that politics is a realm in which theorizing per se is insufficient. Situations arise which urgently demand decisions and actions, and these often have an impact on thousands of persons. Political man must investigate each new situation very carefully and critically with a view to deciding how best to realize, in that particular situation, those values which he regards as basic. Each situation or crisis has its unique and unforeseen aspects; consequently, there can be no ready-made answers instructing him as to what to do. Because there is so much at stake in political decisions and actions, errors in judgment are often catastrophic and

irremediable. Consequently, the man whose intentions are impeccable but whose judgment is faulty or whose policy fails cannot justify himself by appealing to the nobility of his intentions:

> We said that a policy cannot be justified by its good intentions. . . . We said that in order to be good a policy must succeed. We have never said that success justifies everything. We said that failure is a fault and in politics one does not have the right to make errors.[56]

The world, unfortunately, is not "the happy universe of liberalism where one knows what one is doing and where, at least, one always keeps his conscience."[57]

It is childish to imagine that our lives can be separated from the lives of others, that our responsibility is limited to what we ourselves have done, and that there is a clear-cut, objective division between good and evil. Rather, we must realize that we are "mingled" with the world, that our actions compromise and implicate other people, that we incur guilt by taking the role of disinterested collaborators to others' actions,[58] that the world is always fraught with ambiguity. Consequently, whatever our good will, we must engage in action without being able to appreciate exactly either its objective sense or its outcome and without a set of guiding principles by which to determine unequivocally good and evil. Moreover, even the success of a policy does not enable us to dismiss our doubts about the wisdom of our choosing that particular policy in preference to alternative possibilities because

> a social reality. . . does not offer one unique possibility at each moment, as if God had already fixed the future from behind the world scene. Even the success of a policy does not prove that it was the only successful possibility.[59]

We can never have the security of an absolute guarantee that our decision

or action was indeed the best possible one in that specific situation, for decision-making is not simply a Sunday-school exercise in telling the truth or "following our conscience." "To tell the truth and to act out of conscience," says Merleau-Ponty, "are nothing but alibis of a false morality."[60]

The most important issue, perhaps, in any discussion concerning the use of violence, is the relationship between the means employed and the end envisaged. This, of course, is closely linked to the problem of specifying the criterion to be invoked in making decisions concerning the use of violence. Merleau-Ponty makes some general remarks regarding any means/ends question, in addition to establishing the more specific criterion concerning the justification of violence. In regard to the former, he adopts what he considers to be the Marxist standpoint; in the latter, his eventual disillusionment with Marxism becomes evident.

Basically, Merleau-Ponty's position is that "ends and means can only be distinguished in intellectual conceptions, not on the terrain of history."[61] The basis for this reasoning is to be found in the Marxist conception of history as a dialectical movement; according to this view, there is a dialectical interdependence of means and ends. To illustrate the point, it might be useful to recall Hegel's notion of history as a circle in which the beginning is also the end. For Hegel, history is the process of self-realization of Spirit ("Geist") in which the means of self-realization, the world, is Spirit objectified, or "An-sich," while the end is the coinciding of subjective and objective Spirit; that is, Spirit which is both "An-und-für-sich." Spirit in its self-manifestation is one and the same Spirit as Spirit returned into itself, even though Spirit externalized as World is less fully developed

than Spirit in which World has been "aufgehoben." In other words, Spirit, through its process of self-realization, goes beyond its manifestation as objective Spirit or World, while at the same time retaining that stage of its self-development as an essential moment.

It would be misleading to carry the example too far, for it must not be forgotten that Merleau-Ponty, like Marx, rejected the Hegelian conception of history as the "becoming" or "self-realization" of Spirit. Nevertheless, both retained the notion of history as dialectical process or movement and, consequently, the Hegelian idea that means and end are dialectically interdependent. This dialectical interdependence means that end and means are reversible because the means is nothing but the end in its historical form. Whereas for Hegel end and means is Spirit at different stages of self-development, for Marx end and means is the power of the proletariat.[62] Marxism's refusal to locate ends in a transcendent future is due to its contention that "one can only validly think what one has in some way lived, the rest being nothing but imagination."[63] In lieu of the sort of transcendent end(s) envisaged by various sorts of Utopianisms, Marxism offers a perspective which is gained by extending the lines of the revolutionary process, that is, the lines of proletarian development, beyond the present stage into the future.[64] Instead of the Hegelian self-development of Spirit, what is at stake here is the self-liberation of the proletariat. Merleau-Ponty is in fundamental agreement with Marxism's general position on the means/ends question; and his summary of that position is so concentrated that it is well worth citing <u>in toto</u>:

> . . . the categories of "ends" and "means" are entirely alien to Marxism. An end is a result to come which one proposes for oneself and seeks to realize. It ought to be superfluous

> to recall that Marxism very consciously distinguishes itself from utopianism by defining revolutionary action not as the adoption of a certain number of ends through reasoning and will, but as the simple extrapolation of a praxis already at work in history, or a reality that is already committed, namely, the proletariat. It is not a question of representing a "society of the future". Rather than the awareness of a goal, there is the espousal of an impossibility, in which the present world is grasped in contradiction and decomposition. . . there is the creative decision to pass beyond this chaos through the universal class which will relay the foundations of human history.[65]

Since Merleau-Ponty, following the Marxist standpoint, patently refuses to separate means and ends, one cannot expect him to provide a facile solution to the problem of violence such as, for example, a comprehensive list specifying which means are justifiably employed in the pursuit of which ends. However, in chapter two, I noted that Merleau-Ponty does attempt to formulate a guiding "rule" for "entering the world's folly." Since "entering the world's folly" means making decisions and taking actions, and since, as I pointed out earlier, all decisions and actions involve inflicting some sort of violence, the "rule" for "entering the world's folly" which Merleau-Ponty formulates is a criterion to help us determine which of the different forms of violence to adopt. I shall now turn to an examination of this criterion.

It will be recalled that Merleau-Ponty rejected Kant's position on the relative importance of intentions and consequences. However, he follows Kant in advocating humanism as the ultimate value in the criterion for action. Kant's criterion, the categorical imperative, is well-known: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end."[66] For Kant, then, humanity is an end in itself.[67] I showed earlier that Merleau-Ponty

rejects the principle of unconditional respect for other people, and that, until the 1950's, he believed that the violence of the existing Establishment(s) could be overcome only through revolutionary violence: one can either engage in revolution and handle all that it involves, or one can attempt to treat every person as an end in himself at every moment, and then one does nothing.[68] It might be added that one's apparent inaction in supposed deference to the principle of absolute respect for others is in reality a violence by acquiescence or by proxy and thereby violates the very principle of unconditional respect which one believed oneself to be following. Nevertheless, although he repudiates the principle of absolute respect for other people, Merleau-Ponty still adopts humanism as the value which ultimately grounds his criterion.

"Progressiveness" is that criterion which Merleau-Ponty suggests we use in making a decision regarding the choice of violence. Violence is progressive if it tends towards its own suspension; that is, if it is "a violence which recedes with the approach of man's future"; it is "regressive" if it tends towards self-perpetuation.[69] Merleau-Ponty maintains that we ought to prefer progressive kinds of violence. Until the 1950's he held that revolutionary violence was progressive and that, therefore, it was preferable to the regressive violence of the existing regime. A question at once springs to mind regarding the meaning of a violence which "tends towards its own suspension" or "tends towards self-perpetuation." For Merleau-Ponty, it seems to mean that the employment of a certain kind of violence may produce a society in which there is less violence—that is, less overt and covert violence, or less overt violence without any corresponding increase in covert violence, or less covert violence without any increase in overt violence. Conversely,

the employment of a certain sort of violence may produce a society in which there is covert and/or overt violence. Merleau-Ponty states that "we ought to prefer revolutionary violence because it has a future of humanism"; that "the question is not to know whether one accepts or rejects violence, but whether the violence with which one is allied is 'progressive' and tends toward its own suspension or toward self-perpetuation;" and further that.

> violence, deception, terror, compromise. . . find their limit in that they are involved in the service of a human society, namely, proletarian society. . . and more profound than all that, in the idea of true coexistence. . . .[70]

It seems to me, therefore, that in Merleau-Ponty's view the less violent a society is, the more "human" it is. Consequently, his position would seem to be that one's choice of violence ought to be decided by asking oneself which of various possible kinds of violence is most likely to produce a more human society; that is, which seems most "capable of creating human relations between men."[71] Humanism, therefore, is the value upon which the criterion is based. Since the use of violence invariably involves harming people directly or indirectly—whether that harm be physical, psychological, or emotional—it must somehow be decided on which persons harm is to be inflicted. Again, Merleau-Ponty suggests a guiding criterion:

> . . . it is inevitable that one has to choose—it is allowable to sacrifice those who according to the logic of their situation are a threat and to promote those who offer a promise of humanity.[72]

It should be noted here that the criterion of progressiveness absolutely rules out barbarism and dehumanization. Violence finds its limit in humanism—that is, violence is justifiably employed to the extent that it contributes to the creation of a genuinely human society.

Since barbarism and dehumanization, by their very nature, cannot contribute to humanism, they are absolutely condemned. I shall take up the discussion of barbarism and dehumanization in subsequent chapters. Here, it suffices to point out that Merleau-Ponty's criterion justifies his use of the term "barbarism," but presents a problem with regard to the notion of dehumanization.

D) Critical Comments

1) The Kinds of Violence

There is a fundamental problem with regard to Merleau-Ponty's whole discussion of violence. His use of the term itself is too indiscriminate. He has, on the whole, failed to make a clear distinction between physical, political, psychological or emotional, perceptual, and ontological kinds of "violence," with the result that the term itself becomes overextended and, consequently, devalued. This devaluation is all the more deplorable in that it obscures the valuable insight upon which it rests—the realization that damage and intrusion are not restricted to the sphere of physical violence, but pervade totally unexpected areas of our coexistence. There is one passage in particular which is an excellent example of the sort of indiscriminateness and confusion with which I am concerned:

> We do not have a choice between purity and violence but between different kinds of violence. Inasmuch as we are incarnate beings, violence is our lot. There is no persuasion even without seduction, or in the last analysis, contempt. Violence is the common origin of all régimes. Life, discussion, and political choice occur only against a background of violence. What matters and what we have to discuss is not violence but its sense or its future. It is a law of human action that the present encroaches upon the future, the self upon other people. This intrusion is not only a fact of political life it also happens in private life. . . .[73]

The "violence" which is our lot as incarnate beings, I shall call "ontological encroachment," or "ontological permeability." It involves "perceptual intrusion" and provides the background for "life, discussion, and political choice." Ontological encroachment can give rise to other kinds of violence, such as "psychological violence" and/or "emotional violence." The violence which Merleau-Ponty declares to be "the common origin of all régimes," I shall call "political violence." This is an extremely broad term covering a variety of phenomena which I shall attempt to distinguish. The fact that these sorts of "violence" have been manifest throughout history up to the present time is not the main issue. The crucial point is to employ "violence for humanist aims"[74]—to detect which sort of violence is "progressive" (that is, which tends towards its own suspension so that ontological permeability alone remains). Since ontological permeability is a necessary prerequisite for the very possibility of intersubjectivity, it remains part of man in a truly human society.

There is a statement in the above citation which, as it stands, is most disconcerting—namely, that even persuasion necessarily involves seduction and contempt. This contention will perhaps seem less of a gross exaggeration if taken in connection with Merleau-Ponty's remark that "if I wish freedom for another person it is inevitable that even this wish will be seen by him as an alien law; and so liberalism turns into violence."[75] The point seems to be that any influencing of another person's life "does violence," insofar as that life subsequently takes a course which it might not have taken if that person had been left strictly to his own devices. This is, I suggest, a form of what might be called "psychological intrusion." It is the sort of psychological

and/or emotional "violence" which is involved in our "role-play" with those to whom we are attached "in love, in affection, or in friendship." I cannot, at every moment, respect the absolute individuality of those beingsqualified as "my son," "my wife," or "my friend," because they and I stand to each other in a role relationship involving certain reciprocal rights and duties which accrue to each of us not as a unique person, but as the occupant of a particular role.[76] Merleau-Ponty here merely glimpses a state of affairs which others--like R. D. Laing--have since examined much more fully. In The Politics of the Family and The Politics of Experience, for example, Laing explains what constitutes the psychological and emotional violence wrought by the role-play structure within the family and in society at large. He examines the tremendous impact that others can and do have on the development of the individual and on his way of seeing himself and his situation. Laing makes it clear that self-deception is rooted in "role-play" and is reinforced both by the family and by society at large.

In Laing's analysis of conformity to a dysfunctional society, it becomes understandable that persuasion--in such a society--does indeed involve seduction and contempt to the extent that there are socially introjected inhibitions against certain insights. Persuasion, whether by an individual or a group, here involves causing a person to act in a desired manner and, simultaneously, making him believe that such action is what he really wants.[77] In fact, that person might very well choose quite differently if society had not suppressed and fragmented his "authentic self." Persuasion, in Laing's analysis, involves contempt for the person's authentic selfhood. (The current film, Wednesday's Child, is an excellent portrayal of this very point:

Jan's mother tells her that, although Jan thinks she wants to keep her baby, that is not <u>really</u> what she—Jan—wants, and that her mother knows better what Jan really wants because Jan is her <u>daughter</u>, flesh of her flesh.)

In Laing's terms, wishing freedom for someone would similarly involve psychological violence, since, in a dysfunctional society—and present liberal society would fall under that term—such freedom is only granted on the condition that the individual has sufficiently introjected society's standards—that is, that he "freely" chooses to act as society wants him to act. An analysis of the sort offered by Laing, or some alternative analysis, is totally lacking in Merleau-Ponty's work. Consequently, such statements as the ones concerning persuasion and freedom seem grossly overstated. Neither does Merleau-Ponty make any attempt to distinguish this sort of psychological violence from other kinds of psychological violence such as, for example, that resulting from the inflicting of physical violence on another human being.

Just as he fails to distinguish between different forms of psychological violence, so Merleau-Ponty fails to distinguish psychological violence from political violence (psychological violence is also one form of political violence) and one sort of political violence from another. The main forms of political violence (Merleau-Ponty uses the term himself on occasion[78]) seem, to me, to be the following: those involving physical violence, those involving psychological and emotional violence, and those involving ontological violence. These

broad categories cover a variety of phenomena with which Merleau-Ponty deals, and which ought to be distinguished; namely: war, revolution, terror, torture, terrorism, oppression, exploitation, intervention, conflicts of opinion, and juridical violence. Some of the above phenomena should again be subjected to further distinctions, as I shall now attempt to show.

It will be recalled that according to Merleau-Ponty, violence is the common origin of all regimes. What seems to be involved here is a Hobbesean view of the "state of nature"; yet Merleau-Ponty continually stresses the pre-reflective, lived, level of experience as an essentially harmonious interacting of subjects in a common world. (I submit that there is an unresolved tension between harmony and conflict in Merleau-Ponty's conception of the "Lebenswelt." This tension is rooted in his analysis of perception as simultaneously enrichment and encroachment. The incarnate subject enjoys "perspectival multiplicity" insofar as his perspective "slips into" that of others in the sharing of a common world. The views of others enrich his own in that their lacunae do not coincide with his. Yet violence is necessary to make others see his view--persuasion involves seduction and contempt.) Nevertheless, he does claim that each man holds "terror" for every other man, and that, when the traditional ground of a society crumbles, the liberty of each is a threat to all. The violence which lies at the origin of regimes seems to be a power struggle involving passion and at least the threat of physical violence.[79] There is, in my view, much confusion in Merleau-Ponty's general remarks about regimes. For example, he claims that "all régimes are criminal" and that "all law is violence."[80] Nevertheless, he declares that he is not

in favor of anarchism; that it is in times of crisis that each freedom encroaches on the freedom of others; and that "historical periods," unlike "epochs," are times in which a regime or an established law is administered, and in which "one can hope for a history without violence."[81] There is a failure here to distinguish between historical instances of regimes and regimes as such, between how regimes have been up to the present and how they could be in a truly human society. Such a society would presumably still have some sort of "regime," since anarchism is ruled out. Although regimes up to the present time have been "criminal," they need not remain so; otherwise, there would be no point to Merleau-Ponty's efforts to help bring about a truly human society. Moreover, there is a failure to distinguish between different senses of violence in reference to the enforcement of law; otherwise, how could there be "a history without violence" which nevertheless enforces laws? Laws can be violent in that they involve the sort of "persuasion" and influence discussed above; they can be violent in that they call for extremely repressive measures (state censorship suppressing freedom of speech and of the press, for example); they can be violent in that they involve extreme injustices (segregation laws serve as an instance); they can be violent in that they apply to a minority which did not endorse them. These are surely different kinds of "violence," and should be distinguished as such.

Similarly, Merleau-Ponty fails to differentiate between different senses of "terror." For example, there is the unavoidable "terror" of human relationships;[82] this sort of "terror" is, I submit, an ontological encroachment or permeability. There is also a "basic Terror in each of us which comes from the awareness of his historical

responsibility."[83] This form of psychological or ontological (depending on its intensity) anxiety should be distinguished from the "terror," mentioned earlier, which each man holds for all in times of crisis. History, too, is "terror," because, by always offering more than one possibility, it forces man to take his bearings at every moment. However, this "terror" should not be confused with that "terror" which "forces history's hand," or with the sort of "violence" done to history by the program of forced industrialization and collectivization in Russia.[84] Furthermore, that kind of violent intervention in history should be distinguished from the "violent intervention" involved in colonialism. The former is sometimes necessary, the latter is not.[85] These senses of "terror" must also be distinguished from that "terror" which is "pure" violence, which is the "terror" of government in a period of revolutionary tension or external threat, when "humanism is suspended."[86]

Just as the different sorts of violence involved in regimes must be distinguished from one another, so, too, the various kinds of political violence employed to effect change should be differentiated. Revolutionary violence involving sufferings and bloodshed should be distinguished from the conflict of opinions involved in parliamentary reform. The latter, again, ought to be differentiated from the juridical violence which consists, for example, in paralyzing a parliamentary majority.[87]

At its extreme ends, as when it is used to designate ways of speaking and, simultaneously, ways of oppressing in unemployment, low wages, and colonization,[88] the term "violence" becomes strained beyond repair. It cannot do justice to phenomena which differ so essentially.

ii) The Criterion Itself

It will be recalled that Merleau-Ponty declared that "It is allowable to sacrifice those who according to the logic of their situation are a threat and to promote those who offer a promise of humanity."[89] This criterion, as it stands, is fraught with difficulties. It is not clear, for example, how one is to determine what "the logic" of a situation is—whether there are, for instance, universally discernible features or characteristics whose presence would constitute such a logic. Even if it were established that there are such features, it would still need to be specified whether these are common or rather situation-specific; that is, whether there is a logic of situations in general. There is a further problem insofar as Merleau-Ponty fails to consider who would determine what constitutes the logic of a given situation, and what would be done in the event of disagreement—whether there are, for example, principles or standards which could be invoked to settle the dispute. Again, it would be necessary to indicate what these would be and who would determine them. The notion of threat also involves difficulties—if a threat to humanism or to a truly human society is meant, one is faced with the problem of who is to determine what is meant by these. Merleau-Ponty himself notes that "opposition in the name of humanism can be counterrevolutionary."[90] Presumably then, humanism can and does mean different things to different people and, consequently, the question arises regarding the basis for claiming the superiority of one's own conception. It should be remembered that this question of superiority is not an academic one—people are sacrificed in its name. Therefore, it is extremely important

to know how much of a threat a person would need to be in order to be justifiably sacrificed; yet Merleau-Ponty does not clarify what constitutes a threat, or whether there are quantitatively or qualitatively different kinds of threat which could be determined or measured in some objective way. It thus remains unclear how one is to decide in a given situation whether a particular individual poses a threat such that one would be justified in sacrificing him. Merleau-Ponty does not raise the question of who would be authorized to make a decision of such gravity and who would carry it out. Furthermore, he does not specify what he means by sacrifice—whether, for example, he has in mind demotion in position (since the second part of the sentence speaks of promoting those who "offer a promise of humanity"), deprivation of legal and political rights, imprisonment, or death. Similarly, he fails to specify what would constitute "a promise of humanity," who would decide this, and by what criterion.

Merleau-Ponty is acutely aware of the gravity of what violence can mean—he, like so many others, was profoundly shaken by the direct and indirect violence which he witnessed at first hand during World War II. He stresses the importance of "looking violence in the face" and seeing it for what it is; he warns the revolutionary not to make an abstraction of revolutionary violence. To a revolutionary, a man's death is all too often merely a statistic, "an agency which cancels itself out."[91] Rather, the revolutionary must realize that a person's death is "the end of a world"—presumably, Merleau-Ponty's meaning here is that, for the victim of revolutionary violence, the world has come to an end, has ceased to exist, insofar as he himself is no longer engaged in it. One could and, I suggest, should, add here that for

everyone except the victim, the latter's death spells the loss of an irreplaceable individual, whose unique perspective and power of expression (the significance of this power of expression will become clear later) is forever silenced. The term "political violence" should not be used as a cloak to disguise the anguish involved—"political violence means arrests, and what happens when he who is arrested defends himself?"[92] Furthermore:

> In reality the most serious threat to civilization is not to kill a man because of his ideas (this has often been done in wartime), but to do so without recognizing it or saying so, and to hide revolutionary justice behind the mask of the penal code. For, by hiding violence one grows accustomed to it and makes an institution of it. On the other hand, if one gives violence its name and if one uses it. . . without pleasure, there remains a chance of driving it out of history.[93]

There is here a very delicate balance which has to be maintained. On the one hand, by recognizing violence for what it is—by seeing clearly what it means on the personal level, that is, for the victim—one runs the risk of empathizing to such an extent that one paralyzes one's power of action; on the other hand, by concealing from oneself and from others the implications of one's revolutionary acts, one risks becoming hardened and genuinely indifferent to violence, with the result that one's actions become indiscriminate and/or mystified. Merleau-Ponty would maintain that there are times and situations in which the most "progressive" form of violence calls for revolution—and that means at least the possibility of bloodshed. This ought not to turn one away from revolution, but should make one weigh one's actions with the utmost care in order that as little violence as possible be perpetrated. Furthermore, it should be added that one ought to realize that physical violence is not the only, and not even the most damaging, effect of

revolutionary activity. As Frantz Fanon points out in The Wretched of the Earth, revolutionary violence should be highly selective. As a psychiatrist stationed in Algeria during the Algerian Revolution, Fanon had an excellent opportunity to study the psychological and emotional costs of revolutionary violence for both those who inflicted the violence and their victims. His study of hundreds of such persons convinced him that both actor and victim suffered severe psychological and emotional damage as a direct result of revolutionary violence. Merleau-Ponty does not really consider either the psychological and emotional effects of revolution or the fact that he who engages in revolutionary acts pays dearly for the violence which he inflicts. Seen in such terms, the question of who is to become a revolutionary is rather complex—and again, Merleau-Ponty makes no attempt to answer it; indeed, he does not even raise it. And yet, Merleau-Ponty was not unaware of the fact that violence is not restricted to physical force and that other forms of violence can be, and often are, just as injurious. However, Merleau-Ponty tended to see such psychological or emotional kinds of violence as pervading existing established regimes; he did not consider their corresponding presence within revolution as well. Perhaps Merleau-Ponty would respond to such criticism by pointing to his contention that there is an inevitable violence in all human relationships. However, the non-physical violence incurred in revolutionary activities is of such a different magnitude and the damage done of such a different quality (surely, there is a difference between the psychological state of the average man on the street and the psychiatrist's patient) that it certainly demands separate consideration. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty's treatment of the inevitable violence of all

human relationships is so "sketchy" as to be quite inadequate.

The balance between the two extreme poles of paralysis and recklessness is not the only equilibrium to be maintained, however. In attempting to apply Merleau-Ponty's criterion of progressiveness, one must also guard against the temptation to adopt either of two other extreme positions. One of these consists of making judgments entirely in the name of what one considers to be an absolutely objective view of the future; the other involves making one's judgments solely with a view to the past which one regards as a precedent. According to Merleau-Ponty, the revolutionary is especially tempted to succumb to the former, while "bourgeois justice" is prone to fall victim to the latter.[94] The path which Merleau-Ponty would have us follow is implicit in his discussion of the Moscow Trials: we should realize that any view of the future, no matter how probable it may be, is nevertheless subjective to the extent that the future does not yet exist and is, moreover, never predetermined; yet we must not on that account dismiss the future as unimportant in decision-making. Rather, we must take a perspective on the future into account as an essential factor in the forming of judgments and the making of decisions. Merleau-Ponty, as I noted earlier, takes pains to point out that with respect to the future, we have no other criterion or guideline than probability. He is in fundamental agreement with Trotsky's view (as he interprets it) that a revolutionary future cannot justify present action unless it is recognizable there in its general lines and in its style—"one must sow a grain of wheat to harvest a sheaf of wheat."[95] Merleau-Ponty is well aware that progressive violence "should bear a sign which distinguishes it from regressive forms of violence";[96] yet he himself gives

no clear-cut description of what such a "sign" might be. By implication, he adopts what he considers to be the Marxist position in regard to this problem:

> The Marxist theory of the proletariat is. . . . truly the core of the doctrine. . . . Marxists have often compared revolutionary violence to the doctor's intervention at a birth. This implies that the new society is already in existence and that violence is justified, not by remote goals, but by the vital needs of a new humanity already in view.[97]

E) Conclusion

We are now in a position to appreciate how the "idea" of humanism functions in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. It will be recalled that Merleau-Ponty makes a three-fold division of violence: the existing violence of the Establishment, the political violence employed to change the "system," and the inevitable violence of all human relationships. He contends that the violence which is universally institutionalized overtly or covertly, can be abolished with the help of political violence. The inevitable violence of all human relationships, on the contrary, cannot be irradicated. It is a constant in the human condition. However, we require a criterion by which to choose among various forms of violence. Such a criterion must help us to decide whether or not the violence of the existing regime is preferable to the political violence which can be employed against it. Moreover, the criterion must facilitate decision-making regarding various forms of political violence which might be adopted for change. It must assist us in arriving at decisions concerning the employment of revolution or of reform.

The criterion advocated by Merleau-Ponty is progressiveness. This criterion dictates that our choice of violence ought to be made by

asking ourselves which of various possible forms of violence seems most capable of creating genuinely human relations among men and thereby of founding a more human society. Inhumanity is absolutely condemned. Humanism, therefore, serves as the real philosophical foundation for the criterion of progressiveness. However, since humanism involves the creative expression of Being, humanism is itself grounded in the realm of ontology-aesthetics. In terms of my thesis, therefore, chapter three is grounded in chapter four, and chapter four will itself be grounded in chapter five.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER III

[1]Humanism and Terror, p. 180.

[2]Humanism and Terror, p. 103; Sense and Non-Sense, p. 115.

[3]Signs, p. 213.

[4]Signs, p. 321.

[5]Signs, p. 213.

[6]Signs, p. 287.

[7]Humanism and Terror, pp. 138, 136, 140.

[8]Humanism and Terror, p. xxi.

[9]Humanism and Terror, p. 140.

[10]Humanism and Terror, p. xx.

[11]Humanism and Terror, p. 35.

[12]Les Aventures de la Dialectique, pp. 303, 304.

[13]Phenomenology of Perception, p. 373.

[14]Humanism and Terror, p. xxiv.

[15]Phenomenology of Perception, pp. 337, 353, 354, 329, 352, 82, 163, 168; Humanism and Terror, pp. 109, 110, 35[11].

[16]Humanism and Terror, pp. 96-97.

[17]Humanism and Terror, p. 60.

[18]Humanism and Terror, p. 109.

[19]Humanism and Terror, p. 110.

[20]Humanism and Terror, pp. 96-97.

[21]Humanism and Terror, pp. 121, 94-95.

[22]Humanism and Terror, p. xliv.

[23]Humanism and Terror, pp. 64, 92.

[24]Humanism and Terror, p. 31.

Footnotes for Chapter III (Continued)

[25]Humanism and Terror, pp. 93-94.

[26]Humanism and Terror, p. 56.

[27]Humanism and Terror, p. 96.

[28]Sense and Non-Sense, pp. 165, 166.

[29]Humanism and Terror, p. 55.

[30]Humanism and Terror, p. 21; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics (Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 179; hereinafter cited as The Primacy of Perception; Phenomenology of Perception, p. 363.

[31]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 166; Humanism and Terror, pp. 95, 96.

[32]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 166.

[33]Sense and Non-Sense, pp. 167-168.

[34]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 168.

[35]Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Themes from the Lectures at the Collège de France 1952-1960 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 29-30; hereinafter cited as Themes from the Lectures; Sense and Non-Sense, p. 169.

[36]Signs, p. 20.

[37]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 179.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Signs, p. 322.

[40]Signs, pp. 320, 322.

[41]Phenomenology of Perception, pp. 447, 445.

[42]Phenomenology of Perception, p. 456; Sense and Non-Sense, p. 25.

[43]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 38.

[44]Phenomenology of Perception, p. 456.

[45]Immanuel Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964), pp. 18-19; 67-68. Hereinafter cited as Groundwork.

Footnotes for Chapter III (Continued)

[46]Groundwork, p. 69.

[47]Signs, p. 328.

[48]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 168.

[49]Sense and Non-Sense, pp. 36, 37; Humanism and Terror, pp. 103-104.

[50]Sense and Non-Sense, pp. 38, 37.

[51]Signs, p. 71.

[52]Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Bücherei, 1968), p. 134.

[53]Signs, p. 72.

[54]Humanism and Terror, p. xxxv.

[55]Humanism and Terror, p. xxxiii.

[56]Humanism and Terror, p. xxxiv.

[57]Humanism and Terror, p. xxxvii.

[58]Humanism and Terror, pp. 59, xliii.

[59]Humanism and Terror, p. 94.

[60]Humanism and Terror, p. 103.

[61]Sense and Non-Sense, pp. 116-117.

[62]Humanism and Terror, p. 128.

[63]Humanism and Terror, p. 127.

[64]Humanism and Terror, pp. 126-127.

[65]Humanism and Terror, p. 126.

[66]Groundwork, pp. 32-33, 96.

[67]Groundwork, pp. 34-35, 98.

[68]Humanism and Terror, p. 85.

[69]Humanism and Terror, pp. xviii, 1.

Footnotes for Chapter III (Continued)

[70]Humanism and Terror, pp. 107, 1, 112.

[71]Humanism and Terror, p. xviii.

[72]Humanism and Terror, p. 110.

[73]Humanism and Terror, p. 109.

[74]Humanism and Terror, p. 108.

[75]Humanism and Terror, p. 35[11].

[76]Humanism and Terror, pp. 109-110.

[77]R. D. Laing, The Politics of the Family (Canada: The Hunter Rose Company, 1969), pp. 38 ff.

[78]Humanism and Terror, p. 8.

[79]Humanism and Terror, pp. 93, xvi-xvii, 35[11], 37; Sense and Non-Sense, p. 148.

[80]Humanism and Terror, pp. 1, xxxvi.

[81]Humanism and Terror, pp. 35[11], xxxviii, xvi-xvii.

[82]Humanism and Terror, pp. 97, 150.

[83]Humanism and Terror, p. 93.

[84]Humanism and Terror, pp. 94, 118, 136.

[85]Sense and Non-Sense, pp. 81, 155; Humanism and Terror, pp. 179-180; Sense and Non-Sense, p. 81.

[86]Signs, pp. 213-214; Humanism and Terror, p. 34.

[87]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 115; Signs, p. 321.

[88]Humanism and Terror, pp. xxx, 103.

[89]Humanism and Terror, p. 110.

[90]Humanism and Terror, p. 93.

[91]Humanism and Terror, p. 3.

[92]Humanism and Terror, pp. 7-8.

[93]Humanism and Terror, p. 34.

Footnotes for Chapter III (Concluded)

[94]Humanism and Terror, p. 28.

[95]Les Aventures de la Dialectique, p. 104.

[96]Humanism and Terror, p. 98.

[97]Humanism and Terror, p. 113.

IV

HUMANISM

Violence is neither opposed to, nor identifiable with, humanism. In Darkness at Noon (as Merleau-Ponty interprets it), violence and humanism are opposites.[1] In The Communists and Peace, proletarian violence, from the perspective of the future, is "a positive humanism." It is, as I pointed out earlier, "not a means of achieving humanism. Not even a necessary condition. But the humanism itself, insofar as it asserts itself against 'reification'."[2] Merleau-Ponty's view of the relationship between violence and humanism stands midway between the positions adopted by Koestler and Sartre. For Merleau-Ponty, violence can be humane or inhumane, but it is not synonymous with humanism. The kinds of violence are distinguished as progressive or regressive according to their ability to humanize or to dehumanize man. Violence finds its limit in the service of a human society. Barbarism is absolutely condemned on humanist grounds because it is utterly incapable, both in practice and in principle, of humanizing man and creating a truly human society. Merleau-Ponty commends Machiavelli for formulating some of the conditions which are indispensable for the realization of such a society. Those conditions are contained in Machiavelli's notion of "virtù."

A) The Condition for Humanism: Virtù

Machiavelli's concepts of "virtù," presence, greatness, glory, success, and barbarism enter into the very heart of Merleau-Ponty's conception of humanism. This consideration alone justifies a rather detailed investigation of Machiavelli's humanism. In addition, Merleau-Ponty's own comments on Machiavelli warrant giving the latter a prominent place in our investigation. In studying the account offered by Machiavelli, I shall point out the application which Merleau-Ponty makes of it.

Merleau-Ponty's brief essay on Machiavelli indicates those elements which he values most in the latter's humanism. He commends Machiavelli's refusal either to indulge in abstractions or to over-simplify "the knot of collective life"; and also his realization that a self-satisfied goodness which is incapable of harshness is really "a meek way of ignoring others and ultimately despising them."[3] Machiavelli's political man is not afraid to "dirty his hands." He establishes a relationship with others which is quite foreign to "moralizing politics." His is a "tough politics [which] loves men and freedom more truly than the professed humanist."[4] It is a politics which is based on the givens of our condition rather than on transcendent principles, which "combines the most acute feeling for the contingency or irrationality in the world with a taste for the consciousness or freedom in man."[5] Briefly, Merleau-Ponty places great value on Machiavelli's realization that our sole recourse lies in that unconditional presence to others and to our times which is known as "virtù."[6] "The idea of a fortuitous humanity which has no cause already won," gives

absolute value to that "virtù."[7] Without such presence to others and to our times, the humanization of man and society remains a dream.

When he relegated Marxism to the order of secondary truth in 1960, declaring it to be a view of history but not the movement of history in action,[8] Merleau-Ponty concluded that "the remedy we seek does not lie in rebellion, but in unremitting virtù."[9] I am convinced that the "virtù" referred to here is the very virtù which, in 1949, he had detected in Machiavelli's prince and regarded as Machiavelli's major contribution to humanism. Virtù requires a violence which is wisely and humanely exercised. Without virtù, even "a beginning of a human community" cannot emerge from collective life.[10] An investigation of virtù is therefore indispensable for an understanding of the relationship between violence and humanism.

Machiavelli's virtù designates a way of living with others and with Fortune—it is a "presence to others and our times" which refuses to oppress the former and strives to understand both.[11] Before considering what such a "presence to others" involves, I propose to determine what Machiavelli means by being present to our times. The key here is understanding, and what Machiavelli says in reference to the prince in this regard, may be extended to political man in general. Simply stated, "the prince who conforms his conduct to the spirit of the times will be fortunate; and in the same way he will be unfortunate, if in his actions he disregards the spirit of the times."[12] Being "fortunate" or "unfortunate"—succeeding or failing in one's policies—is therefore not simply attributable to Fortune. In the outcome of our actions, in the making of history, only fifty per cent or slightly more depends on Fortune; the rest hinges on ourselves.[13] The ways of Fortune are subtle,

for "Fortune is a woman";[14] if she is to be mastered, she must be understood, and this is a task requiring considerable skill.

Since Fortune is changeable, he who relies entirely upon her is doomed to disappointment or disaster; while he who depends least upon her will fare best.[15] Fortune can offer opportunities, but men must have virtù—the comprehension, skill, and courage—to recognize such opportunities and make the best use of them. Machiavelli illustrates his point by citing men such as Moses and Romulus as examples:

> They had no other favor from fortune but opportunity, which gave them the material which they could mold into whatever form seemed to them best; and without such opportunity the great qualities of their souls would have been wasted, while without those great qualities the opportunities would have been in vain.[16]

Both Fortune and virtù are indispensable for success—virtù cannot stave off failure in those times when Fortune becomes extremely and extraordinarily malignant.[17] (Merleau-Ponty follows Machiavelli in stressing history's maleficence and the consequent role of faith and risk.) It is crucial to comprehend "the character of the times," to conform one's actions in keeping with that character, and to accommodate oneself to events as they occur.[18] (Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the need for an ongoing reading of the present which is as faithful as possible.) Machiavelli maintains that no man has sufficient wisdom always to know how to conform his conduct to changes of times and circumstances.[19] It is essential that one be flexible enough to adapt one's policies and actions so as to remain present to one's time, even when the character of that time changes. Times are always fraught with an inevitable contingency—"the things of this world are so uncertain"; consequently, if man is to be truly "present to his time," he must be prepared to take

risks, "to take the chance of all the doubts and uncertainties."[20] What is required here is prudence; for prudence will discriminate among various risks and "accept the least evil for good" instead of demanding an unequivocal good, neutrality, or a course which is entirely safe, because it realizes that "such is the order of things."[21]

However, virtù calls for skill at maintaining a precarious balance: political man must be flexible, but not rash; prudent but not overly cautious. He must sense when audacity and impetuosity may accomplish what "all possible human prudence" cannot. In general, impetuosity is preferable to caution, but the man of virtù is he who is wise enough to discern which of these, or which mixture of them, his times solicit. (Merleau-Ponty similarly urges political man to be flexible and audacious in responding to the solicitations of his time.) He is a man of courage, "a man undismayed by adversity," a wise man.[22] Wisdom is an essential part of virtù, for it enables political man to discern appearance from reality--apparent good from true good--and to recognize evil in all its guises.[23] (Merleau-Ponty similarly insists that values must be recognizable in their appearance at a given time.) It is lack of wisdom, or short-sightedness, which leads men to adopt any policy which momentarily appears good, but really contains poison underneath.[24] Wisdom is crucial if we are to be genuinely present to our time,

> for, all things considered, it will be found that some things that seem like virtue will lead you to ruin if you follow them; while others, that apparently are vices, will, if followed, result in your safety and well-being.[25]

It is a mixture of wisdom and prudence which dictates political man's relationship vis-à-vis his time, insofar as he looks not only to the

present, but also to the past and to the future. The man of virtù thus studies the past in order to learn from its successes and failures, so as to avoid similar failures and discern similar opportunities for success in his own time; and he considers the future in an attempt to anticipate and forestall difficulties insofar as possible.[26]

Having shown what qualities a man must have and how he must conduct himself if he is to be "present to his time," I now propose to turn to a consideration of what Machiavelli means by being "present to others." As is the case in our presence to our time, our presence to others requires considerable ability. Only he who achieves both is a truly "great man," a "man of glory." (Merleau-Ponty's description of the members of the Resistance indicates that they are great in this sense—present to their time and to others.) A presence to others actually presupposes—and indeed requires—a presence to one's time, as will shortly become evident.

Stated in its simplest terms, being present to others means practising "humanness." It precludes inhumanity. Consequently, a man who is inhuman to others, can never be a "great man," no matter how "successful" his enterprises may be. Machiavelli uses Agathocles as an example to illustrate this point. Since the latter raised himself from "the lowest and most abject condition" to the kingship of Syracuse, he may be considered to have been "a success." Nevertheless, Machiavelli refuses to regard him as a "man of glory." Agathocles displayed great "moral and physical courage"; this courage was, however, coupled with tremendous, barbaric disregard of others[27]—a disregard so extreme that it involved the treacherous slaying of all the senators and the richest people of Syracuse. It is this inhumanity, this barbarism, which

precludes Machiavelli's regarding him as a great man:

> Agathocles. . . . maintained his sovereignty with great courage, and even temerity. And yet we cannot call it valor to massacre one's fellow-citizens, to betray one's friends, and to be devoid of good faith, mercy, and religion; such means may enable a man to achieve empire, but not glory. . . . We shall find no reason why he should be regarded inferior to any of the most celebrated captains. But with all this, his outrageous cruelty and inhumanity, together with his infinite crimes, will not permit him to be classed with the most celebrated men.[28]

The man of virtù—the man who is genuinely present to others—is neither incautious nor intolerant; his relationships with others are characterized by moderation, prudence, and humanity.[29] However, such a man is versatile enough to be severe and even cruel when Fortune requires. The man of virtù does not swerve from the good, if possible, but he knows how to resort to evil if necessity demands it.[30] Machiavelli points out that the Emperor Alexander lacked this essential versatility. Alexander was modest, just, benevolent, humane, and an "enemy of cruelty"; yet when obliged not to be good, he failed, and consequently paid with his life.[31] If a man is really present to others, he does not engage in cruelty lightly. On the contrary, he resorts to force only under necessity, "when there is no hope in anything else."[32] Since men are distinguished from animals insofar as the former carry on a contest by law, while the latter do so by force,[33] a man lowers himself to the animal level if he uses force at the least provocation, instead of reserving it for cases of real necessity. He who is present to others does not kill unless he is obliged, and does so "only when there is manifest cause and proper justification for it." He realizes that the reasons which justify taking life are few.[34]

Nevertheless, the man of virtù is careful not to misuse mercy;

he is wise enough to discern that what appears to be a cruel course of action may in reality prove to be more merciful than an apparently merciful alternative.[35] Machiavelli regards the life of Cesare Borgia as a case in point, and notes that

> a few displays of severity will really be more merciful than to allow, by an excess of clemency, disorders to occur, which are apt to result in rapine and murder; for these injure a whole community, while the executions ordered by the prince fall only upon a few individuals.[36]

Cruelty may be either "well or ill-applied." The former is a cruelty which "is committed once from necessity for self-protection, and afterward not persisted in, but converted as far as possible to the public good."[37] On the other hand, "ill-applied cruelties are those which, though at first but few, yet increase with time rather than cease altogether."[38] (The similarity between Machiavelli's distinction of well or ill-applied cruelty, and Merleau-Ponty's distinction of progressive or regressive violence is striking, and is surely no coincidence, considering Merleau-Ponty's sympathetic reading of the Italian philosopher.) Nevertheless, there is a limit even to well-applied cruelty. When that cruelty or oppression is so inhuman as to be barbaric, it permanently precludes glory for the oppressor. (Similarly, Merleau-Ponty contends that even if Hitler had won the war, he would have remained the wretch he was, and the collaborators no less dishonorable.) Machiavelli indicates that Agathocles' cruelty was indeed well-applied, since the treacherous large-scale massacre of the citizens of Syracuse was accomplished at a single blow and Agathocles thereafter rendered service to the state.[39] However, as I pointed out earlier, Machiavelli denied Agathocles greatness or glory despite the fact that he considered the latter's cruelty to have been well-applied.

The case of Agathocles demonstrates that inhumanity can be compatible with success, although not with glory. (Merleau-Ponty follows Machiavelli in stressing the empirical nature of success--success is dictated by the actual outcome of one's endeavors.) It should be noted, however, that neither humanity nor inhumanity guarantees success; Emperor Alexander on the one hand and Antonius Caracalla on the other, serve as examples.[40]

Machiavelli takes care not to portray "great" men as "supermen." He says of Moses, Theseus, and Ferdinand of Aragon, for example, that "although these men were rare and wonderful, they were nevertheless but men."[41] We find a distinct echo of Machiavelli's reminder in Merleau-Ponty's assertion that "the contemporary hero is not Lucifer; he is not even Prometheus; he is man."[42]

For Machiavelli, to be a man in the sense in which Moses, Theseus, and Ferdinand were men, requires both extraordinary "nobility of soul" and animal cunning.[43] Similarly, Merleau-Ponty notes that one must always use cunning with things and with people, and that "to be completely a man, it is necessary to be a little more and a little less than a man."[44] The man of virtù does not start from the twofold premise of a harmonious humanity and a world "well and truly made." He begins with the world as he finds it, and with the realization that the manner in which men in fact live is very different from the way in which they ought to live.[45] Although Merleau-Ponty's realistic approach coincides with Machiavelli's in this regard, Machiavelli's view of "human nature," although ambivalent,[46] tends to be more pessimistic. For him, "men are naturally bad"; human nature

does not permit men to possess the totality of praiseworthy qualities.[47] Yet he admits that men generally recognize greatness and nobility of soul, and that a genuine bond of friendship can unite men on this basis.[48] Machiavelli recognizes, moreover, the need for communication and for the pursuit of truth.[49]

If it dispenses with virtù in Machiavelli's sense, humanism remains completely "abstract" or "formal." Scattered throughout Merleau-Ponty's writings, one finds criticisms of such a humanism. These criticisms are an aid in reaching an understanding of the sort of humanism which Merleau-Ponty himself advocated, and consequently warrant consideration.

B) Abstract Humanism

By abstract, or formal, humanism (he uses the two terms interchangeably) Merleau-Ponty means those doctrines which hold that human nature is given to man, that this nature is characterized by certain attributes "as other species have fins or wings," and that "humanity is fully guaranteed by natural law."[50] Such doctrines affirm "a man of divine right," for, according to Merleau-Ponty, "the humanism of necessary progress is a secularized theology."[51] In their religious version, such doctrines traditionally teach that there are eternal transcendent values, that man is created in God's image, that man has an immortal soul, and that man's body is the instrument of, and subordinate to, his soul. This "shameless humanism" expounds "a philosophy of the inner man" which rests on a dichotomy between interior and exterior: since it regards the soul as man's essence, destined for union with God, it sees the body as the source of "temptation" and therefore a hindrance in the attainment of eternal salvation. Since it considers certain

values to be of divine origin (and revealed in the Ten Commandments) and thus eternal, and since it stresses the primacy of the "next life" (heaven) over present earthly existence, it "replaces political cultivation by moral exhortation" and fails to see that values are inseparable from the infrastructures of society.[52] This sort of abstract humanism was particularly prevalent in the generation preceding Merleau-Ponty's:

> There was also a moral gold-standard: family and marriage were the good, even if they secreted hatred and rebellion. "Things of the spirit" were intrinsically noble, even if books (like so many works in 1900) translated only morose reveries. There were values and, on the other hand, realities; there was mind and, on the other hand, body; there was the interior and, on the other hand, the exterior.[53]

Abstract humanism is more concerned with principles and ideas than with actual conditions or human relations. In Merleau-Ponty's view, Western humanism, or abstract liberalism, is such a formal humanism. It implicitly assumes that humanity progresses and is sustained through the efforts of a few exceptional men; it is "a humanism of comprehension" in which "a few mount guard around the treasure of Western culture" while the rest are subservient.[54] Merleau-Ponty compares it to the Hegelian State: "Western humanism, like the Hegelian State, subordinates empirical humanity to a certain idea of man and its supporting institutions."[55] "In its own eyes, it appears as the love of humanity" and revolutionary freedom appears as "barbarous"; it fails to recognize its own origin in precisely this "barbarism." In reality, it is "a war machine."[56] Western humanism espouses an abstract, or absolute, morality; it proclaims the "purity of means" and the "formal and 'universal' rules of sincerity and objectivity" and "truth," while at the same time actively perpetrating oppression and force. It defends the idea of liberty instead of free men; its

categories seek to sever what is, in reality, dialectically related--intention and act, circumstance and will, objective and subjective.[57] Abstract humanism is a "mystification" which considers virtues and ethics only in each man's heart and makes no effort to understand all men, including those of different cultural background, and to unite all in an effectively human coexistence.[58] It is, in the final analysis, an élitism which pays lip-service to the improving of social conditions while actively enforcing the status quo:

> No matter how real and precious the humanism of capitalist societies may be for those who enjoy it, it does not filter down to the common man and does not eliminate unemployment, war, or colonial exploitation. . . . it is the privilege of the few and not the property of the many.[59]

Contrary to its avowed adherence to humanity, justice, and truth, Western humanism is tied to very particular interests--namely, those of the property owners. As Merleau-Ponty points out,

> a politics based upon man in general, the citizen in general, justice and truth in general, once it is inserted into the concrete totality of history, works to the advantage of very particular interests.[60]

What it values most in men is their productive capacity whereby they can sell their services to the privileged elite. Thus Western humanism, or abstract liberalism, is fundamentally hypocritical; it is a verbal, rather than an effective, humanism. It proclaims freedom, for example, yet "only grants certain liberties by taking away the freedom to choose against it."[61] Since Western humanism is a humanism only in principle and not in practice, its solution to the problem of human coexistence, as far as Merleau-Ponty is concerned, is a "pseudo-solution."[62]

C) Absolute Values

Although he rejects the "absolute morality" of abstract humanism, Merleau-Ponty does not deny the existence of timeless values and the possibility of absolute judgments. Each person's judgment concerning human affairs is but a perspective based on his perception of events. That course of events is never entirely foreseeable. There can be no absolute knowledge, no rigid ethics, no set of abstract principles; and decisions must be made on the basis of factual trends or probabilities without any guarantee about their eventual outcome. However, just as firm as his rejection of "an absolute standpoint" was his refusal to adopt "vulgar relativism," nihilism, or irrationalism. Although there is neither a priori rationality nor a priori absurdity, history is not thereby reduced to a confrontation of choices which cannot be justified. There is no absolutely rational structure of things; there are no prefabricated principles valid for all occasions. Nevertheless, events do have structures which exclude certain possibilities. There is rationality; there are absolute values and timeless principles. Unfortunately, Merleau-Ponty neither provides an analysis of values nor explains what it means to adopt a principle. Moreover, he is exceedingly careless insofar as he often speaks of "absolute principles" where, judging by the context, he means "abstract principles." For example, he reiterates that there can be no rigid ethics, no absolute principles; yet he declares himself to be unconditionally opposed to barbarism, and it would seem that his criterion of progressiveness likewise enunciates an absolute principle (that is, that one should always choose that form of violence which will tend towards its

self-suspension--that form of violence which conforms with humanist aims).[63] The apparent contradiction or inconsistency is resolved in his crucial remark that he does not intend to destroy the absolute, but only the absolute separated from experience--that is, the abstract absolute.[64] By the same token, care must be taken not to judge Merleau-Ponty's remarks about relativism or absolutism in isolation. They must be understood in the total context of his own position, which steers a path between "vulgar" relativism and absolutism. In his eagerness to criticize these extreme positions, he sometimes overstates his case as, for example, in his remark that "what should be said is not that 'everything is relative', but that 'everything is absolute'."[65]

For Merleau-Ponty, there are indeed absolute values, but certain economic and political infrastructures are necessary to keep them in existence. Once again, he fails to explore the exact nature of the relationship between such values and infrastructures. This is understandable in view of his contention that "in actual history values are only another way of designating human relationships."[66] The values which he considers to be absolute, therefore, are to be found solely within man's experience as an incarnate subjectivity in an intersubjective world. They are values which emerge in concrete historical relationships; they do not preexist in a transcendent sphere.

Such absolute or timeless values are virtù, truth (which, as pointed out in chapter two (on "Methodology"), is a truth in genesis and is attained through man's inherence in a social world; truth comes to be in human relationships in history), dialogue, expression, liberty, happiness, classless society, internationalism, the recognition of man by man. These absolute values are all interrelated, and their

constellation constitutes Merleau-Ponty's humanism. In political life, judgment can be absolute because it is based on these ultimate values which, precisely because they are ultimate, are unchangeable, regardless of the future course of events. The absence of abstract principles and absolute guarantees therefore does not rule out evaluation, judgment and commitment. It simply means that our affirmations and commitments surpass our knowledge—the former, though not the latter, may be absolute[67]—and that our commitments therefore involve faith and risk.

Although at the time of engagement there can be no deductive certainty or absolute guarantee regarding the outcome of an action, there <u>can</u> be a conviction regarding its intention and the judgment made about it can be absolute. For example, in discussing the German Occupation of France, Merleau-Ponty contends that, although the members of the French Resistance Movement had no guarantee that Germany would lose the war, their judgment that Hitler's actions were barbaric and their opposition to the tyrant were right and would remain right even if the eventual outcome of the war had been different:

> As for Hitler, even if he had won, he would have remained the wretch he was and the resistance to Nazism would have lost none of its validity.[68]

Success does not justify everything;[69] certain actions are absolutely unjustifiable on humanist grounds. In an interview on Madagascar, for example, Merleau-Ponty stated:

> I am unconditionally opposed to repression, and to torture in particular. . . . It is said, and it is true, that torture is <u>the</u> answer to terrorism. This does not justify torture. We ought to have acted in such a way that terrorism would not have arisen. . . .[70]

Merleau-Ponty's critical appraisal of the conduct of Socrates at the trial illustrates the same point. Irrespective of the verdict of the jury, one can make an absolute judgment to the effect that Socrates at certain moments did not behave as a philosopher should behave, that he was wrong in opting for challenge rather than discussion, in yielding to "the giddiness of insolence and spitefulness, to self-magnification and the aristocratic spirit."[71] Judgments, however, must always be based on understanding,[72] and should be distinguished from justification. Judgments can be made about the intention and quality of an action—whether it is humane or barbaric—prior to its actual outcome; but justification is possible only after the consequences are known: "We say that political decision contains a risk of error and that only events can show whether we were right."[73]

Care must be taken not to misunderstand this notion of "right." The members of the Resistance, as I just pointed out, were <u>right</u> in their judgment of and opposition to Hitler, irrespective of the final outcome of the war. Yet only the actual unfolding of events could show whether they were right in predicting a French victory. The distinction between knowledge and judgment is the key here. In extreme circumstances, in acting in accordance with his judgment, "political man risks his neck even if he is neither greedy nor corrupt."[74] If Hitler had been victorious, those who engaged in the Resistance would have paid with their lives; yet, lacking any appeal, they would still have been right in opposing him because their opposition arose from their judgment that Hitler's actions were barbaric, and that judgment was rooted in their espousal of humanism. Those who collaborated were <u>morally wrong</u> in

supporting barbarism and would remain so even if they had been right, that is, correct, in predicting a German victory; we do not "absolve them as men who simply made a mistake."[75] Errors in prediction are always possible, because we can have no apodictic certainty with respect to future events; knowledge is always incomplete, never absolute. There is thus always "the possibility that a system might condemn us"—"we have to understand once and for all that these things can happen." This constitutes the inherent tragedy of political life.[76]

The case of Bukharin in the Moscow Trials vividly portrays this tragedy. Bukharin erred in his prediction of the course which events would take in the U.S.S.R. The situation of an imminent war transformed his opposition into counter-revolutionary activity and rendered him guilty of historical treason.[77] However, this sort of treason differs decisively from that of the collaborators during the German Occupation of France. Whereas Bukharin's treason rested on an error in foresight, that of the collaborators involved a judgmental wrong which was anchored in the espousal of values incommensurate with humanism. The collaborators are absolutely condemned on humanist grounds, but the same unconditional condemnation cannot be extended to Bukharin. Like the members of the French Resistance, Bukharin was committed to humanist values; like them, he was morally right. However, whereas the Resistance members were correct in predicting Germany's defeat, Bukharin erred in evaluating events in Russia. In short, Bukharin practised virtù but lacked Fortune. The Resistance members had both; the collaborators had neither. The collaborators are "dishonorable" and guilty not because history proved them wrong, but because they opted for barbarism. The members of the Resistance are

"heroes" whose "glory" rests on the fact that, despite ostensible probability of condemnation, they assumed responsibility for their actions and allowed human reasons to speak to them:

> But what we reproach the collaborators for is surely not a mistake in reading [history] any more than what we honor in the Resistance is simply coolness of judgment and clairvoyance. On the contrary, what one admires is that they took sides against the probable and that they were devoted and enthusiastic enough to allow reasons to speak to them that only came afterward.[78]

Bukharin's case is more complex than either that of the collaborators or that of the Resistance members. Merleau-Ponty neither condemns Bukharin nor justifies the Trials: "We do not justify anything or anyone."[79] It is impossible to demonstrate that the victory at Stalingrad required Bukharin's death.[80] Moreover, "the term 'counter-revolutionary' only has a definite meaning if there exists at present in the U.S.S.R. the possibility of an ongoing revolution."[81] Merleau-Ponty maintains that "the Revolution has come to a halt" and that the outcome of communism "has become problematic."[82] From the perspective of a proletarian society of the future, Bukharin's error constitutes a crime.[83] The Trial's verdict rests on the premise that communism is still capable of realizing its humanist intentions and that Bukharin's actions impeded the progress towards the achievement of such a proletarian society. The whole question is "whether Bukharin really died for a revolution or a new humanity."[84] Russian Stalinists like Vyshinsky considered the party's view of the dialectical movement of history to be absolutely objectively true. The P.C.F. justified the Trials by appealing to Stalingrad. Merleau-Ponty considers this type of justification to be faulty. He is concerned to remind the communists that the condemnation of Bukharin rests on an interpretation of history:

> The Trials remain on a subjective level and never approach what is called "true" justice, objective and timeless, because they bear upon facts still open toward the future, which consequently are not yet univocal and only acquire a definitively criminal character when they are viewed from the perspective on the future held by the men in power.[85]

The point is that in 1938 Moscow's evaluation of the opposition's historical role was not "an indisputable truth" but "a subjective view open to error."[86] Merleau-Ponty does not condemn the Trials for passing judgment without absolute certainty. He realizes that "it is always that way," and that the Trials are "a phase in the political struggle and an expression of the violence in history."[87] One's commitment to humanist values, while protecting one from unconditional condemnation, cannot provide immunity against history's maleficence. The only recourse is to be aware that "no actual situation in history is absolutely compelling,"[88] and therefore to allow even the improbable to "speak" to us, to avoid foreclosing options:

> There is a sort of maleficence in history: it solicits men, tempts them so that they believe that they are moving in its direction, and then suddenly it unmasks, and events change and prove that there was another possibility.[89]

However, in refusing to bar options prematurely, we should not go so far as to "hide the truths that are verifiable today in the name of the possible truths of tomorrow."[90] Dismissing the "absolute standpoint" of "abstract morality" does not reduce decision-making to a blind groping—there are values, and these "values must be recognizable in their appearance at a given time."[91] It was communism's failure to recognize the values of Marxist humanism which dictated Merleau-Ponty's decision not to become a communist.[92] In the absence of any guarantee as to the eventual outcome of history, we can nevertheless evaluate events and "push things forward in the direction of effective liberty";

because "when we enter the ways of relative morality, we must do so knowing what we ultimately want and resolved not to accept anything whatsoever."[93] The attempt to locate an absolute foundation of morality outside our experience is at best useless and at worst destructive; for it devalues or disguises those probabilities and truths which experience offers.

> If, on the other hand, I have understood that truth and value can be for us nothing but the result of the verifications or evaluations which we make in contact with the world, before other people and in given situations of knowledge and action. . . then. . . the particular acts of verification and evaluation. . . resume their decisive importance, and knowledge and action, true and false, good and evil have something unquestionable about them precisely because I do not claim to find in them absolute evidence.[94]

Merleau-Ponty was acutely aware of the inherent limitations of experience, of being himself bound to a specific perspective, but argued that the "simple fact that man perceives an historical situation as meaningful in a way he believes true" points to a phenomenon of truth and a presumptive rationality which rule out skepticism.[95]

We must stop dreaming about a complete or absolute knowledge and realize that our opinions, which remain capable of error no matter how rigorously we examine them, are still our only equipment for judging. In the very fact that there is opinion, that the good and true appear, we find a "fixed point," an absolute, within experience. Merleau-Ponty insists that "thus there is no destruction of the absolute or of rationality here, only of the absolute and the rationality separated from experience."[96] He praised Marxism for having understood this so well:

> Marxism had understood that it is inevitable that our understanding of history should be partial since every consciousness is itself historically situated. . . . Marxism rested on the

> profound idea that human perspectives, however relative, are absolute because there is nothing else and no destiny. We grasp the absolute through our total praxis, if not through knowledge—or, rather, men's mutual praxis is the absolute.[97]

It would be a mistake to accuse Merleau-Ponty of self-contradiction insofar as he asserts both that opinion is our only recourse and that there is an absolute in experience. For him, opinion does not preclude certainty, knowledge, and truth:

> It is therefore of the essence of certainty to be established only with reservations; there is an opinion which is not a provisional form of knowledge destined to give way later to an absolute form, but on the contrary, both the oldest or most rudimentary, and the most conscious or mature form of knowledge—an opinion which is primary in the double sense of "original" and "fundamental".[98]

Thus, although we lack transcendent principles, we do have "the givens of our condition,"[99] and it is crucial for us to renew continually our efforts to understand and evaluate them—in short, to comprehend the times in which we live. Such comprehension is possible because there is a logic within history. In the absence of such a logic or rationality, there would be only madmen; there would be no "stable forms" with certain recognizable properties; events would not "take shape" and anything would be equally possible at any moment.[100] However, as pointed out earlier, events do have a discernible structure, history does "put forward" significances, there is rationality or meaning—not a preexistent, absolute rationality set in a realm apart, but a meaning which comes into being through the complex interplay of the subjective and the objective.[101] This interplay which makes meaning unfold and is that unfolding meaning—for Merleau-Ponty, signifying and what is signified are two aspects of a single drama—is, I think, fundamentally akin to the "mutual praxis" which, on Merleau-Ponty's

reading, Marx regards as absolute:

> What is known as the significance of events is not an idea which produces them, or the fortuitous result of their occurring together. It is the concrete project of a future which is elaborated within social coexistence. . . before any personal decision is made.[102]

Although history does not have only one meaning from end to end, it does have a direction; facts converge and a meaning emerges. Thus it is possible to distinguish the "adventurer" from the statesman and historical imposture from the truth of an epoch by considering the response to those significances offered by history—whether the politician develops the meanings which his times "hold out" to him, or whether he "twists" them out of shape to suit his own interests; for in the final analysis, man is the "agency" of "history's inner structure."[103] Merleau-Ponty criticizes Machiavelli for lacking such a guideline to distinguish virtue from opportunism in a decisive way.

A certain amount of cunning, deceit, and terror is inevitable to the extent that history is contingent; but these forms of political violence must be used with discretion.[104] Intervention in history must be exercised according to a pattern outlined by history itself. The true statesman perceives the real significance and pattern in a given situation and follows history's solicitations, whereas the adventurer does violence to the pattern. Yet the possibility of a clear distinction between the adventurer and the statesman strikes me as highly dubious in view of Merleau-Ponty's own admission that there is nothing in the facts which indicates when one should "bow before" them and when one should "do violence to them."[105] Consequently, who is to say whether the pattern which one thinks one discerns in "the facts" is really that

significance which history is proffering at a given moment? Success seems to be the criterion, but, as I pointed out earlier, there are certain kinds of intervention—namely, barbaric interventions—which success cannot justify. Moreover, there is, at times, an inexplicable malevolence in history which can thwart the wisest efforts of the statesman. In political life, such risk of failure cannot be avoided. The statesman must make every effort to comprehend his time and to realize the absolute values of humanism within the confines of particular historical situations.

D) Concrete Humanism

The relationship between violence and humanism, the conditions necessary for the realization of humanism, the rejection of abstract humanism, the retention of absolute values—all these have now been considered. In endeavoring to ascertain precisely what Merleau-Ponty means by a real or true humanism, it will prove useful to devote some attention to those passages in the writings of Marx (and Engels) which deal most directly with humanism; for the values which constitute Merleau-Ponty's humanism are essentially those of Marx. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty frequently presupposes a knowledge of Marx on the part of his readers, as in the theory of alienation. An understanding of Merleau-Ponty's humanism therefore demands a thorough grasp of Marx. It should be recalled here that Merleau-Ponty's humanistic interpretation of Marx was strongly influenced by Kojève.

Unlike abstract humanism, concrete humanism takes a dynamic view of man. It will be recalled that abstract humanism regards human nature as given to man, and considers humanity to be guaranteed by

natural law. Concrete humanism, on the contrary, maintains that man has yet to become fully human, that man himself must forge a new humanity and that it is impossible to do so without corresponding changes in the infrastructures of society. Whereas abstract humanism is primarily concerned with principles and ideas, concrete humanism is principally concerned with actual conditions and human relations. Concrete humanism replaces the élitism of abstract humanism by a humanism which extends to all men. Abstract humanism is nominally humane but practically repressive; concrete humanism stresses the essential hollowness of mere words, and concentrates its attention on what men actually do. Unlike the artificial categories proclaimed by abstract humanism, concrete humanism refuses to separate means and ends, intentions and consequences, subjective and objective. Concrete humanism, unlike abstract humanism, seeks to unite all men in an effectively human coexistence.

Marxism is such a concrete humanism. In direct contrast to the primacy of principles found in abstract humanism, Marx stresses the primacy of concrete "flesh-and-blood" men: "We do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men. . . ."[106] With this as a starting point, Marx went on to explain the reasons for the inhuman conditions in which men find themselves and to suggest what the characteristics of a truly human society would be and how such a society could be achieved.

According to Marx, mankind's original situation was one of cooperation, not conflict; however, cooperation changed into conflict because some men made themselves "owners" of nature and the means of production. The profit motive eventually brought two conflicting classes—

capitalist and proletariat—and a capitalist mode of production into existence. Under this mode of production, the proletarian is separated from the means of production, from his labor-power, from his activity, from the product of his labor. Nature—the sensuous external world—continually becomes less a means of subsistence and source of enjoyment, an object belonging to his labor, and increasingly something confronting him as hostile and alien. His labor ought to be a joyful activity in which he works on nature so that it becomes manifest as <u>his</u> work and <u>his</u> creation; however, under the capitalist mode of production, labor involves suffering and alienation. Labor here is not joyous but "barbarous"; it "mortifies his body and ruins his mind." Since it is not voluntary, spontaneous activity but forced drudgery, such labor does not belong to, or affirm, his "essential being." It is not an end in itself, it does not itself satisfy a need; it is merely "a means to satisfy needs external to it." Therefore, in the very activity of production, the worker estranges himself from himself. Briefly, the product of labor is alienation, and production itself is "active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation."[107] (Merleau-Ponty adopts Marx's theory of alienation in his criticism of liberal democracy.)

An immediate consequence of this alienation of the worker from nature and from himself, is his estrangement from other men. For the worker, the other is either another worker with whom he must compete, or a non-worker; that is, a "master" (capitalist) who "owns" his activity and his product and who therefore "is alien, hostile, powerful, and independent of him."[108] The capitalist himself, however, is not exempt from human self-alienation despite the "semblance of human existence"

which that alienation carries in his case. The capitalist is an "empty being" who "knows the realization of the essential powers of man only as the realization of his own excesses, his whims and capricious, bizarre notions."[109] Under the capitalist system, eating, drinking, procreating and, at most, dwelling and dressing-up, become "sole and ultimate ends." "What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal."[110]

Man, unlike the animal, has conscious life-activity—that is, he "makes his life-activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness," and this is precisely what makes his activity free activity and constitutes his "essential being," his species character.[111] Man's production, unlike that of the animal, is not "under the dominion of immediate physical need"—indeed, man only truly produces in freedom from such need—and can be in accordance with the standard of every species. Man, therefore, unlike the animal, also "forms things in accordance with the laws of beauty," because he "knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object."[112] He confronts his product freely as his creation. However, under the capitalist mode of production, spontaneous free activity—that is, "man's species life"—is degraded to a means of maintaining his physical existence. In short, man becomes estranged from his "human being," he becomes "ever poorer as man." A "bestial barbarization" occurs in which not only his "human needs," but even his animal needs—needs such as the need for fresh air, for light, for physical exercise—cease to exist for man. The need for money is the only real need produced by the capitalist system.[113] The result for the capitalist is "subservience to inhuman, refined, unnatural and imaginary appetites"; and for the worker, reduction to "crude need"—

to "the barest and most miserable level of physical subsistence."[114] Luxury seemingly satisfies the artificially induced, refined needs of the wealthy, but it does so at the cost of "self-stupefaction." Ultimately, capitalist society is a society characterized by a "barbarism of need." In such a society, what a man is and what he is capable of, is determined not by his individuality, his creative ability, but by his possession or lack of money, which is the sole standard of value.[115] (Merleau-Ponty takes over the view that free, conscious, creativity distinguishes man from the animal, and that genuinely human creativity is obstructed in capitalist society. He, too, considers the conditions of the proletarians to be "barbaric.")

In the capitalist mode of production, the worker is reduced to a thing, a commodity; "he has no existence as a human being but only as a worker," as a producer of capital.[116] Therefore, not only is he robbed of the object of his estranged labor, but that object itself no longer has any natural or social quality, and "is unmixed with any seemingly human relationships."[117] In capitalist society,

> production does not simply produce man as a commodity, the commodity-man, man in the role of commodity; it produces him in keeping with this role as a spiritually and physically dehumanized being.[118]

For Marx, man is neither a thing nor merely a natural being; "he is a human natural being."[119] To be human, man has to comprehend and confirm himself as a conscious species being, because "the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations."[120] If dehumanization is to be overcome, man's needs must become human needs. The barbaric need for the acquisition of capital wealth must be replaced

by the need to engage in activities such as the ones which Marx mentions: reading, thinking, loving, theorizing, singing, painting, fencing, dancing, socializing, going to the theater.[121] The other person as a person, not as a means, must become a need; man in his individual existence must be a social being.

Truly human existence is a social mode of existence. The individual is a social being, even if he is engaged in activity which he can seldom carry out directly together with other people. In such cases the individual is social because he is active as a person. The raw material of his activity is given to him as a social product—for example, in the case of the thinker, the language in which he is active—his own existence is social activity, and what he makes of himself he makes for society, with the consciousness of himself as a social being. His life is an expression and confirmation, an awareness and enjoyment, of social existence. The human individual is simultaneously a particular social being and a "totality of human life-activity."[122] (Merleau-Ponty follows Marx in stressing that man can be human only in society; that is, that man's relationships must be human if he is to be truly human.)

Man's fourfold alienation—his alienation from nature, from himself, from others, and from his activity—must be overcome if he is to be truly human, if his world is to be a "true human world." Natural objects as they immediately present themselves are not human objects; and human sense, in its immediacy, is not human sensibility. The individual must "humanize" nature, and in so doing, he will humanize both his mental and his practical senses.[123] This means that man's essential life-activity must become an end in itself, that the object

produced by this activity must not be impersonal capital, but an object which confirms and expresses man's humanity, and that man, instead of laying nature waste for the sake of financial gain, must "work on" nature so that it may reflect his own distinctively human creativity. Man must objectify his essential being in nature if he is to create and cultivate a rich human sensibility—that is, "senses capable of human gratifications, senses confirming themselves as essential powers of man."[124] (Merleau-Ponty, too, emphasizes the sensuousness, expressiveness, and organic unity of the living body.) Moreover, man's self-objectification must express the social dimension of his nature—must express man as a social being—because "the senses of the social man are other senses than those of the non-social man." The eye, for example, becomes a human eye as its object becomes "a social, human object—an object emanating from man for man."[125]

> To recapitulate; man is not lost in his object only when the object becomes for him a human object or objective man. This is possible only when the object becomes for him a social object, he himself for himself a social being. . . . it is only when the objective world becomes everywhere for man in society the world of man's essential powers. . . that all objects become for him the objectification of himself, become objects which confirm and realize his individuality, become his objects: that is, man himself becomes the object. The manner in which they become his depends on the nature of the objects and on the nature of the essential power corresponding to it. . . . Thus man is affirmed in the objective world not only in the act of thinking, but with all his senses.[126]

Once money is no longer "the existing and active concept of value," and its possession no longer the access to the whole objective world of man and nature, an individual's relationships will be determined by his ability to express his essential powers. Expression will replace possession as the index of a person's individuality, of his essential

being, capabilities, and fortunes:

> Money. . . confounds and exchanges all things. . . . He who can buy bravery is brave, though a coward. . . . Assume man to be man and his relationship to the world to be a human one: then you can exchange love only for love. . . . Every one of your relations to man and to nature must be a specific expression, corresponding to the object of your will, of your real individual life. . . . if through a living expression of yourself as a loving person you do not make yourself a loved person, then your love is impotent--a misfortune.[127]

(Merleau-Ponty also stresses the individual's unique power to express himself creatively.) It is noteworthy that Marx stresses the social-sensual-expressive nature of language:

> For his own sensuousness first exists as human sensuousness for himself through the other man. . . . The element of thought itself—the element of thought's living expression—language—is of a sensuous nature.[128]

The individual expresses his life in his activity, in his mode of production, in the real, sensuous objects which he creates; ultimately, "as individuals express their life, so that are."[129] (Like Marx, Merleau-Ponty focuses on the social-sensual-expressive power of language, and on the all-encompassing nature of expression.)

Although the individual can express his humanity in the human production of articles to satisfy basic needs, the full expression of his essential powers requires what Marx calls "the realm of freedom"—that is, the realm beyond the sphere of material production which is required to satisfy man's basic physical needs. (Merleau-Ponty follows Marx in regarding freedom as vital for creative expression.) Marx insists that a truly human society still retains such a "realm of necessity," although that realm is "regulated rationally" so as to require a minimum expenditure of energy under maximally human conditions. (By implication, Merleau-Ponty agrees with this view.) Even in Marx's ideal society,

"the true realm of freedom . . . can flourish only upon that realm of necessity as its basis."[130] Within that realm of necessity, the individual can attain a measure of fulfillment to the extent that he is involved as a human being in the community of other men. Because man is a social being, he can develop his true nature only in society. To develop his true nature or essential being, the individual must express himself fully according to his essential capabilities, and this he can do only as a member of the community: "Only in community with others has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions."[131] Insofar as he produces things as a human being, the individual confirms both himself and his fellowman. In his production, he objectifies his particular individuality and thereby experiences the joy of knowing his personality as an objective, sensuously perceptible power. Moreover, he has the conscious satisfaction of knowing that the object which he creates is essential and appropriate to the need of another human being, who will affirm the producer in his use of the product. In such a mode of production, the individual immediately confirms and realizes his "true human and social nature"; his labor is a free manifestation and enjoyment of life, and his product is a "mirror" reflecting his human nature.[132]

If such a human mode of production is to be possible, the capitalist system of production must be overthrown. Private property, with its concomitant estrangements—alienated labor, capital, the opposing classes of capitalists and proletarians—must be abolished. The harmony between man and nature, and man and man, must be restored; all human senses must be emancipated; need and enjoyment must lose their egotistical nature; a socialist mode of production must be

established; communism must replace capitalism. As Engels put it so well:

> . . . the former division of labour must disappear. Its place must be taken by an organization of production in which, on the one hand, no individual can throw on the shoulders of others his share of productive labour, this natural condition of human existence; and in which. . . productive labour, instead of being a means of subjugating men, will become a means of their emancipation by offering each individual the opportunity to develop all his faculties. . . in which, therefore, productive labour will become a pleasure instead of a burden. . . .[133]

Marx was firmly convinced that communism was a "practical humanism":

> . . . communism, as the annulment of private property, is the justification of real human life as man's possession and thus the advent of practical humanism.[134]

Moreover, he announced that the attainment of communism would signal the end of conflict among men:

> Communism as the positive transcendence of <u>private property</u>, or <u>human self-estrangement</u>, and therefore as the real <u>appropriation of the human</u> essence by and for man; communism. . . equals humanism. . . it is the <u>genuine</u> resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man. . . . Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution.[135]

Marx argued that a proletarian revolution would be required to overthrow the capitalist system of production. Only the proletariat is in a position to undertake this task, because it alone is aware of a shattering contradiction between its human nature and its inhuman condition of life. (Merleau-Ponty adopts Marx's theory of the proletariat.) The proletariat is conscious of its spiritual and physical dehumanization; its degradation is so complete that it has lost even "the semblance of humanity." The luxuries of the capitalist class make it oblivious to alienation—its own and that of the proletariat. It leads a thoroughly comfortable, though "stupefying" existence;

consequently, it sees no need to abolish the capitalist system—indeed, its own luxurious existence depends upon the maintenance of the system of private property. At most, the capitalist class can be theoretically aware of human self-alienation. The proletariat, on the other hand, is not merely theoretically conscious of the alienation resulting from capitalism, "but through urgent, no longer disguisable, absolutely imperative need—that practical expression of necessity—is driven directly to revolt against that inhumanity."[136] All the inhuman conditions of life in capitalist society stem from the system of private property and are "summed up," or concentrated, in the situation of the proletariat; consequently, in abolishing the barbarous conditions of its own situation, the proletariat necessarily abolishes them in society at large.

Because the proletarian directly suffers the greatest poverty he also feels the greatest need of genuine wealth—not material wealth as capital, but human wealth; that is, the richness of engaging with other men in essentially human life-activities. The very fact that he feels the lack of such genuine wealth indicates that he is "ontologically richer" than his counterpart, the capitalist:

> It will be seen how in place of the wealth and poverty of political economy come the rich human being and rich human need. The rich human being is simultaneously the human being in need of a totality of human life-activities—the man in whom his own realization exists as an inner necessity, as need. . . . Poverty is the passive bond which causes the human being to experience the need of the greatest wealth—the other human being.[137]

The absolute extremity of material need thus carries with it the greatest human need—the need for the other person as a person. As I have shown, under the capitalist mode of production, human sensibility

is enslaved, is reduced to the sense of possessing or <u>having</u>—specifically, to the desire to acquire material wealth. This estrangement is most acute in the proletarian; all his physical and mental senses are forcibly geared by his extreme deprivation—his condition of near-starvation—to the acquisition of the material means necessary for his sheer survival. Consequently, the proletarian feels the need to humanize his sensibility, to appropriate a <u>human</u> world—a world of human achievements—through <u>human</u> relations to the world (relations such as "seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, being aware, sensing, wanting, acting, loving"[138]).

Furthermore, the condition of the proletariat acts as a mirror—it reflects the inhumanity pervading the society as a whole:

> The meaning which production has in relation to the rich is seen <u>revealed</u> in the meaning which it has for the poor. At the top, the manifestation is always refined, veiled, ambiguous—a sham; lower, it is rough, straightforward, frank—the real thing.[139]

The "meaning" which capitalist production has, is human self-alienation. In the case of the poor—the proletariat—this alienation is manifest as misery, <u>suffering</u>. Such suffering is not only manifest, but widespread: since the proletariat is the class comprising the majority of society, its suffering is the suffering of the majority. The proletariat's alienated labor is "activity as suffering."[140] There is a kind of "suffering" which is ontological, which is part of the natural being of man:

> To be sensuous is to <u>suffer</u>. Man as an objective, sensuous being is therefore a <u>suffering</u> being—and because he feels what he suffers, a passionate being. Passion is the essential force of man energetically bent on its object.[141]

However, the misery of the proletariat goes far beyond this sort of

suffering. "Ontological suffering" can be apprehended humanly as "an enjoyment of self in man," for it ultimately means to undergo another's action—"to be the object of another's action."[142] The suffering of the proletariat, on the other hand, does not involve being affirmed through another's action, but rather, being subjected physically and mentally to barbaric, inhuman conditions of life and work. (Merleau-Ponty adopted Marx's view regarding the exploitation and dehumanization of the proletariat.)

The suffering of the proletariat serves not only as a mirror to reflect the brutality of capitalism, but also as a bond linking fellow sufferers. The proletarian realizes that by himself he is powerless to alleviate his misery, and that, therefore, his only hope lies in "joining ranks" with fellow proletarians to change, by common action, those inhuman conditions responsible for their suffering. Consequently, through his suffering, the proletarian feels a genuine need for, and bond with, other men—specifically, other laborers: "The brotherhood of man is no mere phrase with them, but a fact of life, and the nobility of man shines upon us from their work-hardened bodies."[143] Marx was convinced of the inevitability of the proletarian revolution—a revolution which he regarded as necessary to abolish private property and establish a classless, truly human society.[144] (Until the 1950's, Merleau-Ponty agreed that a proletarian revolution was necessary to establish a truly human society.) The inhuman conditions of the proletariat, he maintained, would compel it to revolt, and the inherent contradictions of capitalist society would drive it to its ruin. (Merleau-Ponty differed from Marx here.) Humanism, as far as Marx was concerned, was therefore already in view to the extent that

alienation was already being overcome due to economic necessity:

> Modern industry, indeed, compels society, under penalty of death, to replace the detail worker of today, crippled by life-long repetition of one and the same trivial operation, and thus reduced to a mere fragment of a man, by the fully developed individual, fit for a variety of labours, ready to face any change of production, and to whom the different social functions he performs are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers.[145]

Therefore, Marx's humanism holds a definite note of optimism.

E) Merleau-Ponty's Humanism

Having examined the abstract humanism which Merleau-Ponty rejects, as well as Marxist humanism which, to a large extent, he adopts, we are now in a position to devote our attention to the values whose constellation constitutes Merleau-Ponty's humanism. Merleau-Ponty's position is perhaps best summarized in a passage by Thomas Langan:

> . . . he rejects the notion of a human nature conceived as a fixed unequivocal idea in favor of a historical becoming without predetermined goal, the signs of which, at a given moment in history, are acts tending to improve and express communication between men. . . .[146]

The significance of this passage will become clear as I proceed.

Merleau-Ponty follows Marx in distinguishing between human and animal life. Unlike the animal, "man creates his means of life, culture, history, and thus evinces a capacity for initiative which is his absolute originality."[147] For Merleau-Ponty,

> man is the being who is not content to coincide with himself like a thing but represents himself to himself, sees himself, imagines himself, and gives himself rigorous or fanciful symbols of himself.[148]

Man is a dynamic being, a being who responds to modifications in the human situation with corresponding changes in himself. There is, here,

a continual movement of growth and "recovery": man initiates changes in his condition, and the new experience of that condition initiates and translates changes in man himself. Since he coexists with others in society, such changes in his condition and in man himself likewise involve changes in human relationships. They, similarly, can change and grow, can become more or less translucent.[149]

Like Koestler's Rubashov, Merleau-Ponty starts from the affirmation of a value--the value of men.[150] It will be recalled, however, that this value is not a rigid absolute for Merleau-Ponty. He admits situations, like those of war, for example, in which, in order to protect the very conditions of basic humanity, one cannot recognize an absolute value in all men.[151] Nevertheless, man is a basic value for Merleau-Ponty, and as such, is central to his evaluation of society: "the value of a society is the value it places upon man's relation to man."[152] Merleau-Ponty, following Marx, insists that human relationships are of ultimate importance--the relationships of man to nature, to himself, and to other men. What matters, is how men actually work, love, live, and die; not what principles they may proclaim in abstraction from their concrete everyday existence. It is the former, rather than the latter, which determines whether man's relationships are human or inhuman:

> To understand and judge a society, one has to penetrate its basic structure to the human bond upon which it is built; this undoubtedly depends upon legal relations, but also upon forms of labor, ways of loving, living, and dying. . . . principles and the inner life are alibis the moment they cease to animate the external and everyday life.[153]

Merleau-Ponty, of course, is not suggesting that there is any one uniform way in which men must live the various aspects of their lives. "Human life," as he points out, "is not played upon a single

scale"; yet the marvellous thing is that "there are echoes and exchanges between one scale and another."[154] These "echoes and exchanges" are what count, for they are made possible only by the essential "humanness" of man—by the fact that "men do not exist side by side like pebbles,"[155] but coexist, express themselves, and communicate in an intersubjective, social world—and they bear witness to this human dimension, that is, to man's humanity. "Echoes and exchanges" indicate the active presence of dialogue and communication—human activities par excellence—among men, and are grounded in men's "oneness, which is not merely a biological resemblance but is a similarity in their most intimate nature."[156] Men's lives are therefore "scales" emanating in all directions from the focal point of this "oneness." Although each man is a sovereign and infallible judge of his own happiness or misfortune,[157] the "oneness" of men, that is, their human being, permits the recognition of common conditions which either preclude or promote happiness. The fact that it is possible to stipulate such minimal conditions points not only to man's "humanness," but also to the interrelatedness of all aspects of society—both infrastructures and superstructures.

Truth, for Merleau-Ponty, is a basic value in the constellation of values constituting humanism. Truth, dialogue, expression, and coexistence are all essentially interrelated. This will become clearer in my discussion of the realm of ontology-aesthetics, but it should be mentioned briefly here. "What is most valuable in men," says Merleau-Ponty, is "their idea of truth"[158] (one must take care not to misinterpret Merleau-Ponty here, or to make a Platonist of him). His reason for saying this is as follows: men who see something and think it is true believe it to be true for everyone. Thereby, they substitute

themselves for others, or put themselves in another's place. This, however, is only possible in a world which is an "intersubjective field," and it presupposes a fundamental universality among men such "that each lives in all."[159] There is "the appearance of a part of the truth in the encounters we live."[160] To live an encounter involves communication, and "it is in the world that we communicate through what, in our life, is articulate."[161] The universality of men rests on, or presupposes, the "unjustifiable certitude of a sensible world common to us"; and it is this certitude which "is the seat of truth within us."[162]

Perhaps Merleau-Ponty's idea of the universality of men would be clarified by distinguishing between what might be termed a "minimal ontological universality" on the one hand, and an "effective universality" on the other. (Merleau-Ponty himself uses the latter expression occasionally.) The former is a universality "which men affirm or imply by the mere fact of their being and at the very moment of their opposition to each other."[163] The latter is a universality in which all men throughout the world mutually recognize each other as men and establish relationships adequate to this recognition. Effective universality is not a datum; it is something to be realized "through the dialectic of concrete intersubjectivity."[164] Serious humanism recognizes that man never <u>is</u>, but rather exists, actively "<u>becomes</u>," in the movement by which coexistence becomes truth.[165] This notion of a dynamic truth rooted in coexistence will be explored more fully in my discussion of the realm of ontology-aesthetics.

There is an apparent contradiction between Merleau-Ponty's claim that only abstract humanism recognizes a human nature in man, and his

remarks which seem to point to precisely such a nature (for example, the statement that men share a "oneness, which is not merely a biological resemblance but is a similarity in their most intimate nature"[166]). The contradiction is, however, only apparent. It is perhaps best explained by pointing out that the conception of human nature which Merleau-Ponty repudiates, is that which lays claim to a predetermined essence—often held to exist in the "mind of God"—to which man must conform physically and spiritually. The view which he adopts maintains that there are certain genetically transmitted, physiological characteristics, certain phylogenetically given needs and capabilities; but that there is no Platonic Form preexistent in an eternal heaven of ideas, to which empirical men must conform as instances. There is no eternal Creator who "knows" before all time, the destiny of particular individuals. One passage, in particular, in the Phenomenology of Perception should dispel any apparent contradiction in Merleau-Ponty's position in this regard. I shall therefore cite it at some length:

> Existence has no fortuitous attributes, no content which does not contribute towards giving it its form. . . . If. . . we conceive man in terms of his experience, that is to say, of his distinctive way of patterning the world, and if we reintegrate the "organs" into the functional totality in which they play their part, a handless or sexless man is as inconceivable as one without the power of thought. . . . Everything in man is a necessity. . . . On the other hand everything in man is contingency in the sense that this human manner of existence is not guaranteed to every human child through some essence acquired at birth, and in the sense that it must be constantly reforged in him. . . . Man is a historical idea and not a natural species. In other words, there is in human existence no unconditioned possession, and yet no fortuitous attribute.[167]

There is, however, an inadequacy in Merleau-Ponty's conception, insofar as he has failed to examine the nature not only of natural needs, but also of culturally acquired needs which can become secondary

"biological" needs. Marx had already spoken of money as a culturally acquired need and had stated that in producing new commodities, men speculate on creating new needs in others. Merleau-Ponty by-passes this insight, and therefore fails to see that, as Marcuse explains, the overcoming of alienation involves not only a radical transformation of society, but also a new sensibility, a new sensorium.[168]

Man's legal relations, his forms of labor, his ways of loving, living, and dying, are all essentially interdependent. Merleau-Ponty owes this fundamental insight to Marx; namely,

> the idea that morals, concepts of law and reality, modes of production and work, are internally related and clarify each other. . . [that] all human activities form a system in which at any moment no problem is separable from the rest.[169]

For Merleau-Ponty the war and the German Occupation of France confirmed the validity of Marx's insight. Before 1939, to be a humanist meant, for him, merely "to want liberty, truth, happiness, and transparent relations among men." The war years brought him to the realization that values remain nominal and valueless in the absence of an economic and political infrastructure adequate to their realization. The result was the rejection of what, in retrospect, was recognized to be abstract humanism, in favor of practical humanism:

> What is perhaps proper to our time is to disassociate humanism from the idea of a humanity fully guaranteed by natural law, and not only reconcile consciousness of human values and consciousness of the infrastructures which keep them in existence, but insist upon their inseparability.[170]

Merleau-Ponty did not abandon the basic values which he had held before the war; he merely detected their hollowness as abstract principles. For example, he now realized that

> it is the essence of liberty to exist only in the practice of liberty, in the inevitably imperfect movement which joins us to others, to the things of the world, to our jobs, mixed with the hazards of our situation.[171]

In short, unless men experience liberty in their concrete relationships and activities—in their work, in their love relationships, in the thousand daily preoccupations of living—they are not free. True liberty is realized in effective human relationships; it is "the concrete liberty of a proletarian civilization—without unemployment, without exploitation, and without war."[172] A truly human community can be based neither on principles nor on the premise that human society is a community of reasonable minds.[173] Consequently, a serious humanism will confront the relationship of man to man as a problem rather than a "fait accompli," and will see it as its task to accomplish the effective recognition of man by man throughout the world. Concrete, or practical, humanism realizes that man himself must reconstruct human relations; and that, to do so, men will have to realize their "capacity for initiative" and take their history into their own hands. A practical humanism is one which understands "what is humanly valuable within the possibilities of the moment."[174] It is a "radical humanism" such as that of Machiavelli, for it insists on anchoring values in certain historical situations, and manifests itself as a relationship to men rather than principles because principles commit one to nothing. They may be adapted to any end and serve as instruments of oppression.[175] "Machiavelli," says Merleau-Ponty, "was right: values are necessary but not sufficient; and it is even dangerous to stop with values."[176]

Man, according to Merleau-Ponty, has "an inexhaustible core"; yet he is not an inaccessible subjectivity because he is an incarnate subjectivity. Insofar as he has sensory functions and fields, man is

already in communication with others; and it is in the experience of dialogue that a common ground is constituted between men—their perspectives merge into each other and they coexist through a common world.[177] Because man is a dynamic being, men's "relations with nature are not fixed once and for all."[178] Like Marx, Merleau-Ponty stresses the value of technology as a prerequisite for a truly human society. Technology has already made universal communication possible and is in the process of providing for the satisfaction of men's basic physical needs on a universal scale; what remains is, on this basis, to create truly human relations among men:

> This great feverish and crushing arrangement of what is called developed humanity is, after all, what will one day enable all men on earth to eat. It has already made them exist in one another's eyes. . . . They have met in blood, fear, and hatred, and this is what must stop.[179]

Merleau-Ponty adopts Marx's basic values—the recognition of man by man, internationalism, and classless society.[180] His humanism, too, is a concrete humanism, a "humanism in extension" which is not restricted to, or created by, a privileged few, and "which acknowledges in every man a power more precious than his productive capacity. . . as a being capable of self-determination and of situating himself in the world."[181] This humanism realizes that a man's situation or condition of life—for example, that of the proletarian—may be so inhuman, so barbaric, that it does not permit him to be a man.[182] Consequently, it sets itself the task of eliminating such inhuman conditions, in order to free man, and thereby provide him with the opportunity of realizing his creative potential. A "humanism in extension" declares that "as long as the proletariat remains a proletariat, humanity, or the recognition of man by man, remains a dream or a mystification," because

a "humanism in extension" is just that—a humanism which extends to all men.[183]

Merleau-Ponty adopts Marx's theory that the proletariat is the concrete vehicle of human values.[184] Following Marx, Merleau-Ponty argues that the proletarians are the only ones in a position to realize humanity, because they are detached from their natural surroundings and deprived of their private lives; and also because their fate is common to the proletarians throughout the world.[185] Contrary to Marx's predictions, the logic of the proletariat's situation has not actually led it to join forces in a universal class in order to overthrow capitalism and create a common freedom. Nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty maintains that no other segment of society has the potential to create a truly human society:

> Perhaps a universal class will never emerge, but it is clear that no other class can replace the proletariat in this task. Outside of Marxism there is only the power of the few and the resignation of the rest.[186]

The reason why this task can be entrusted only to the proletariat is that it alone is the

> class of men who, because they are expropriated in present society from their country, their labor, and their very life, are capable of recognizing one another aside from all differences, and thus of founding humanity.[187]

Merleau-Ponty does not explain what this expropriation from country, labor, and life means or involves; he obviously presupposes that his reader is thoroughly familiar with Marx's analysis of alienation. Though critical of Marxism, as I have shown, he accepts Marx's analysis in this regard.

Merleau-Ponty points out that perhaps the proletariat will never

be in a position to create humanity, that the condition of the proletariat as described by Marx is insufficient "to set a proletarian revolution on the path to a concrete humanism," and that it is certainly possible to doubt that all history's violence stems from the capitalist system. However, he affirms with Marx that only the proletariat is "capable of recognizing other men as such and being recognized in turn."[188] Herein, ultimately, lies Machiavelli's shortcoming. Although he formulated some of the conditions of a concrete humanism and set the problem of such a real humanism, Machiavelli failed to portray a genuine reciprocity. Machiavelli's prince practises "humanness" and rejects inhumanity; yet he is not capable of recognizing other men as men and being recognized as such in turn. Like all elders, scholars, intellectuals, saints, and government officials, the prince cannot create humanity because his historical role "consists entirely in controlling others, whether by force or persuasion."[189] Though "present" to others, he does not encounter them in a relationship of reciprocity—he is, after all, a prince and they are his subjects. Proletarians, on the contrary, can recognize each other purely and simply as men, since, as a class, they all lack society's usual criteria for recognition—prestige, money, power—which "confound and compound" all natural and human qualities.[190]

The proletariat, therefore, constitutes a human core. By overthrowing capitalism, it would automatically abolish that society's criteria of recognition and thereby make it possible for all men to recognize each other simply as men. "Proletarian praxis is the vehicle of an effective universality"; therefore, the proletariat is indispensable "if men are one day to be human to one another. . . if universality

is to become a fact."[191]

The proletariat is in a position to undertake a universal role "because it has no possessions, no interests, and almost no positive traits." Only the proletariat is "above particularities, it alone is in a universal condition."[192] It simultaneously embodies the experience of individuality and universality.[193] In the proletariat, this universality is not abstract or theoretical, but rather a concrete, de facto universality which is manifest in the very condition of its life:

> In reflection every man can conceive of himself as simply a man and thereby rejoin the others. But that is through an abstraction: he has to forget his peculiar circumstances, and, once he has gone back from thought to living, he again conducts himself as a Frenchman, a doctor, a bourgeois, etc. Universality is only conceived, it is not lived. By contrast, the condition of the proletarian is such that he can detach himself from special circumstances not just in thought and by means of an abstraction but in reality and through the very process of his life. He alone is the universality that he reflects upon.[194]

Only the proletarian can live the revolution because he alone experiences oppression, and through that experience, life itself becomes awareness for him. The consciousness of the proletarian's condition is "the initiation of truly human coexistence."[195]

The proletarian's daily experience of oppressive dependency puts him in the best position for becoming conscious of that dependence as alienation, and "for taking his life into his hands and creating his own fate out of it rather than merely bearing it."[196] In short, the proletarian's very act of living in such an extremely inhuman condition "motivates the awakening of consciousness" and polarizes him toward certain values.[197] The proletariat is least driven to deceit, because it is the majority in a decaying society, and because, owning

nothing, it has nothing to lose, no interests to protect.[198] As the essential factor of production, the proletariat has the potential to organize a humane appropriation of nature and to resolve the contradictions inherent in the capitalist system. Its degradation, which makes it capable of recognizing other men as men, puts it in a position to transcend national conflicts and create an authentic internationalism.

"Man is mirror for man";[199] the proletarian's misery reflects and throws into relief those conditions which deny the possibility of a truly human life--one in which man recognizes himself in man, so that each consciously lives in all. The misery of the proletarian can evoke compassion in the capitalist to the extent that the latter identifies with the former, that is, to the extent that he recognizes himself, stripped of all his possessions, in the mirror which the proletarian proffers. However, as Merleau-Ponty points out, that suffering need not evoke sympathy; it may call forth shock and contempt.[200] Consequently, the proletariat cannot rely on the capitalists' compassion to eliminate those conditions which are the cause of its suffering. "Proletarian means," therefore, are essential in the attainment of a truly human society.

How does Merleau-Ponty envision such a "truly human" society? He provides several indications as to what its essential features would be, but at the same time cautions that

> no one can know what freedom may be able to do, nor imagine what our customs and human relations would be in a civilization no longer haunted by competition and necessity.[201]

Moreover, there is no single solution to the human problem:

> One solution of the human problem, one end of history could be conceived only if humanity were a thing to be known—if in it knowledge were able to exhaust being. . . . Whereas, on the contrary, in the depth of social reality each decision brings unexpected consequences, and man responds to these surprises by inventions which transform the problem. . . . There are only advances.[202]

Consequently, Merleau-Ponty concentrates his attention on the question of human possibilities rather than on "an immanent solution of which history will be the result."[203] With these reservations in mind, I now propose to consider the meaning of a "truly human" society for Merleau-Ponty.

Some of the basic ingredients of such a society are those postulated by Marx. However, it will become clear as I proceed that Marx's ideal society is merely a prerequisite for Merleau-Ponty's "truly human" society. Since Merleau-Ponty's position in this regard is highly complex, it may prove useful to summarize the argument before elaborating its various aspects.

Marx's Utopia is a society which has eliminated the existing violence of the Establishment. Merleau-Ponty disagrees with Marx's claim that such a society has thereby likewise done away with conflict among men—it will be recalled that Merleau-Ponty argues that there is always an inevitable violence in all human relationships. Marx, on the other hand, maintains that truly human relationships are relationships without conflict, and that such relationships will be established at a certain concrete time in history. From that time on, man will be truly human and will reveal his true essence by creating objects and enjoying them. Moreover, for Marx, men can be authentically human even if they do not make objects, providing that money is abolished so that

relationships can no longer be based on, and confounded by, money. Since, for Marx, expression is not the creative expression of dynamic, "brute Being," his view of human relationships lacks Merleau-Ponty's open-ended and developmental aspect. The latter starts with less than Marx, in claiming that there is always a nonhuman element in human relations—an inevitable violence; but his view of a truly human society demands far more than does Marx's Utopia. Merleau-Ponty's ideal society is one in which there is genuine "expression," genuine dialogue, through which Truth is revealed and created. Merleau-Ponty's notion of creativity is essentially different from Marx's. For Marx, man creates himself in his products; for Merleau-Ponty, man continually recreates himself in a self-expression which need not produce sensuous objects in nature. Expression is by its very nature always open-ended and incomplete. Man expresses himself in different ways, and thereby reveals and develops "brute Being," Truth. Man's expression is creative, and the most perfect forms of expression are art and philosophy. Man's authentic humanity consists in creative expression; hence, the tremendous importance of the ontological-aesthetic dimension in Merleau-Ponty. Man's inherence in, and expression of, "brute Being" is what makes him truly human. The existing violence of the Establishment, and the political violence employed to change it, must be abolished in order for such true expression, or true creativity, to be possible. Unlike Marx, Merleau-Ponty argues that the absence of such violence does not guarantee the presence of truly human relationships. For the presence of such relationships, genuine dialogue, genuine expression, is needed as an essential aspect of genuine

coexistence. Ultimately, human relationships are valuable because only in truly human relationships can Truth, or "brute Being," emerge and develop--since this emergence and development depends on man's creative expression. I showed earlier that humanism is the value underlying Merleau-Ponty's criterion for the employment of violence. It now becomes evident that the ontological-aesthetic realm "grounds" humanism, and therefore that violence finds its ultimate justification in the ontological-aesthetic realm.

Having provided this summary of the argument, I now propose to retrace my steps and develop its main features. As mentioned above, Merleau-Ponty adopts some elements of his ideal society from Marx. Basically, it is a society without unemployment, exploitation, or war--a society in which the causes of these evils have been eliminated. In such a society, the exploitation of man by man is replaced by "true coexistence," which does not mean the existence of a plurality of subjects but an intersubjectivity.[204] Community and communication supplant social hierarchy," 'camaraderie' in the finest sense of the word [is] made the law of the state," and "social relations [are] based on what men truly are rather than on the prestige of money, power, and social influence."[205] It is a society in which there is an explicit, mutual recognition among men <u>as</u> men which is manifested in a common freedom, in shared projects, in genuine dialogue, rather than the implicit recognition of conflict and the race for power. Acts of aggression are replaced by actions in which men generously meet one another in the particularity of given situations.[206] In such a society, there are still "legal relations"; there is some kind of administrative power. Merleau-Ponty makes it clear that he does not

favor "an anarchical liberty"; technology and its administrative apparatus cannot be wiped out. However; if there are leaders in such a society, those leaders are men first and foremost.[207]

For Merleau-Ponty, dialogue is an essential aspect of human relations, and thus an important element of humanism. Whereas Machiavelli had stressed only the need for communication between a prince and his ministers, Merleau-Ponty sees the necessity for a real dialogue among men at all levels of society. He criticizes communist intellectuals for failing to engage in such dialogue, but points out that the West, too, has not developed dialogue to the extent that it should have.[208] There should be, for example, a continuous exchange in the sphere of political life, such that the ruler or ruling party keeps the public honestly and fully informed, puts important questions before the people, and regards public opinion as an important element in decision-making. Merleau-Ponty uses the example of the French decision regarding the Marshall Plan to point out that "the question should have been raised publicly, an informed public opinion should have weighed in the negotiations with America."[209]

Dialogue, or real communication, involves an essential and universal "openness" to others in the sharing and shaping of a common world. Merleau-Ponty recognizes that Machiavelli's contemporaries were limited in this respect by the times in which they lived. The world "had not taken stock of itself"; Europe was "unaware of itself" and full of discord; lands and men were scattered. There were no means of communication and communion whereby "the universal people," the peoples of all lands, could have "recognized, acted in concert with,

and rejoined each other."[210] Consequently, Machiavelli could hope for no more than the creation of an Italian nation free from foreign incursions; and, in Merleau-Ponty's view, "it was necessary to begin by creating this bit of human life in order to create the human community."[211] Today, however, humanity has given itself the means of universal communication and communion, and the problem of a real humanism can be taken up again as that of a humanism which "looks for man's effective recognition by his fellow man throughout the world."[212] Such a humanism tries to "seek harmony with ourselves and others, in a word, truth, not only in a priori reflection and solitary thought but through the experience of concrete situations and in a living dialogue with others," and thereby to "maintain and expand man's relation to man."[213]

In a truly human society, man's estrangement from nature is overcome and replaced by a "humane appropriation of nature." Merleau-Ponty does not elaborate as to what would constitute such a "humane appropriation of nature." Once again, he presupposes a thorough understanding of Marx on the part of his readers. Merleau-Ponty regards a socialistic ownership of the instruments of production, as outlined by Marx, to be a necessary prerequisite for a truly human society. However, unlike Marx, he is not convinced that it is a sufficient condition for the realization of such a society. Merleau-Ponty's remark will be recalled:

> We are sure that the world will not. . . rediscover beliefs and values unless the men who are least involved with the special interests of imperialisms regain possession of the economic apparatus. We know neither whether this necessary condition will be realized nor whether it is a sufficient condition.[214]

Consequently, despite his adoption of Marx's basic values, Merleau-Ponty sees the need to "relativize" Marx's Utopia. He replaces Marx's idea of "an immanence of the complete, true Society in which man is reconciled with man and nature," by the idea of a quest, "through always atypical cultural devices," for a life which is livable and men who are "healthy" not because they have completely eliminated their contradictions, but because they make constructive use of them by "dragging" them into their "vital labors."[215] Violence, in the sense of conflict and incoherence, is a constant, but it can be minimized. In a truly human society, "the inevitable violence of all human relationships" is transformed into what might be called a "permanent permeability." This remains ours because we are open to each other and coexist to such an extent that we see ourselves in each other, encounter each other as "alter egos" in discussion, live in each other:

> To seek harmony with ourselves and others. . . in a living dialogue. . . accepts our incoherence and conflict with others as constants but assumes we are able to minimize them. . . . The whole question is to know whether if we take our conflicts and divisions seriously it cripples or cures us.[216]

A truly human society is, therefore, not a conflict-free community, but a society in which the "constraints of coexistence" are reduced to the "inevitable minimum."[217] Marx's vision must be tempered in view of the course actually taken by communism in the Soviet Union. For example, Merleau-Ponty points out that proletarian power does not necessarily establish reciprocal relations among men; that a collective and planned economy does not necessarily benefit the proletariat; that the end of private property is not necessarily

the end of exploitation; that the relationships between men are not simply the reflection of their relations with nature; and that the idea of a truth which <u>becomes</u> in the life of the party and of the proletariat is perhaps a chimera.[218]

Ultimately, the reason why socialism is merely a prerequisite for, and a necessary ingredient of, a truly human society, is that, to be truly human, men must have the freedom, and realize that freedom, to express themselves creatively to an extent which the structures of society up to the present have not made possible. A truly <u>human</u> being, therefore, has yet to be created by man collectively and individually--individually to the extent that, in the final analysis, only the individual himself can actualize his potential for creative self-expression; and collectively, to the extent that that expression is not possible in the absence of living dialogue with others, and that social structures as a whole must be changed collectively. One should recall Merleau-Ponty's remark in this regard:

> Alienation is not simply privation of what was our own by natural right; and to bring it to an end, it will not suffice to steal what has been stolen, to give us back our due. The situation is far more serious: there are no faces underneath the masks, historical man has never been human, and yet no man is alone.[219]

No one can say that "the complete man" awaits us in the future, or even that man can ever be integrated into coexistence. It is by no means certain that a human world in which "each country's happiness is compossible with that of others," can be attained. However, "failure is not absolute."[220]

There are definitely elements of hope in Merleau-Ponty's considerations regarding the chances of the emergence of a truly human

world: no one can know the actual capacity of humanity; relationships can grow more translucent. The contingency of history assures us that we do not have to judge the future by what has happened in the past.[221] However, Merleau-Ponty's hope is not unmixed with doubt, as becomes evident in this passage dating from 1951:

> Sometimes one starts to dream about what culture, literary life, and teaching could be if all those who participate, having for once rejected idols, would give themselves up to the happiness of reflecting together. But this dream is not reasonable. . . . our time. . . in recognizing—without any intervening veil—the menace of adversity. . . is closer perhaps than any other to recognizing the metamorphoses of Fortune.[222]

Putting aside the question of possibility and probability, one can give some further indications regarding the nature of a truly human society. It "will be a society in which past traumas have been wiped out";[223] a society which will provide "the preliminary conditions for 'transparent' social relations" insofar as it is freer, has more instruction and information for the public, more concrete criticism and publicity of the actual functioning of society and politics. Just how the actual mechanics of such a society would function is an open question—how, for example, every person from within his own concrete situation, is to have a decisive voice in the affairs of that society. Merleau-Ponty admits that "the problem of suffrage is wholly before us. We have not even reached the point of catching a glimpse of what a society which had solved it would be like."[224]

In regard to the actual work relationships in such a society, Merleau-Ponty has little to say. His position seems to be that of Marx; namely, that the dimension of work is something which cannot be totally eliminated, but that work relationships can be transformed so

that they do not involve exploitation. (Here, once again, Merleau-Ponty presupposes an acquaintance with Marx's analysis of exploitation.) Presumably, this would imply an organization of production such that, as Engels put it, "no individual can throw on the shoulders of others his share of productive labour, this natural condition of human existence."[225] Since, as I have shown, what matters for Merleau-Ponty is how men work, love, live, and die, he would presumably agree with Engels that work is a natural aspect of human existence. The crucial point is that in a truly human society, work would not enslave any segment of the population as the proletarians are enslaved at present. Rather, work relationships would be such as to leave all members of the community free to realize their potential for creative expression.

F) Violence and Humanism

Merleau-Ponty contends that the proletariat is oppressed and degraded; that it is subjected to inhuman, or barbaric, conditions. This contention should now be considered within the larger context of the relationship between violence and humanism. There is a fundamental obscurity in the notion of violence, because Merleau-Ponty fails to provide a comprehensive account of what it means to be violent, to inflict violence, to suffer violence. In my examination of the criterion of progressiveness, it became clear that violence is judged to be either more or less humane, and that progressive violence is humanizing while regressive violence is dehumanizing. If one takes dehumanization to mean the inhibiting, damaging, or destroying of what is most human in man, then one is apt to conclude that barbarism, as the most regressive form of violence, irreparably destroys what is

most human in man. If one reasons, further, that by killing a man one puts an end to, or destroys, what is most human in him, then one is likely to interpret barbarism as signifying the killing of a man. However, although Merleau-Ponty unconditionally condemns barbarism, he does not advise the revolutionary to refrain from killing the counter-revolutionary. Merleau-Ponty claims that one can kill without dehumanizing. One kills humanely if one "looks the victim in the face." Barbarism does not necessarily involve bloodshed; yet it is condemned as absolutely negative because, both in intention and in action, it is a contradiction in terms for barbarism to contribute to the humanization of man and the construction of a more human society. The "barbaric conditions" of the proletariat, therefore, are conditions which dehumanize the proletariat and which do not contribute to the creation of a proletarian society. The identification of barbarism with dehumanization is problematic. Unfortunately, Merleau-Ponty never really explored the meaning of dehumanization. I shall consider this problem further in chapter five.

G) Criticism

It seems to me that Merleau-Ponty's position vis-à-vis the proletariat is open to criticism. Merleau-Ponty realized that the very idea of a proletarian power had become problematic, and that the formulation of the world situation in terms of bourgeoisie and proletariat was "no longer anything but a way of speaking."[226] Nevertheless, he continued to maintain that only the proletarians were in a position to realize humanity, that they alone were the concrete vehicle of human values. He never completely abandoned the hope

that the class struggle as conceived by Marx would one day reappear and become the motivating force of history. In short, Merleau-Ponty lacked the foresight to realize that a time would come when the working masses, at least in the industrialized countries, would not longer lack money and the prestige which money can buy; that they would acquire interests to protect; they they would no longer experience oppression; that, rather, theirswould be what Marcuse calls a "euphoria in unhappiness."[227] Moreover, Merleau-Ponty did not really foresee that the world would become divided into wealthy nations on the one hand, and poverty-stricken countries on the other; that the proletariat in the classical sense would become largely external to the industrialized nations; and that these wealthy powers would acquire undreamed of capabilities for "containing" change. Nor did he anticipate that a far more devious and subtle alienation would come to light—an alienation which has nothing to do with economic poverty, and which rests on socially acquired modes of consciousness (I am referring here to the sort of estrangement from one's authentic self of which Laing speaks, and to the estrangement of women).

Merleau-Ponty's insistence on the need for a practical humanism, for a humanism which is concerned with how men actually work, live, love, and die, stands as a valuable reminder to those concerned with the problem of violence. However, his attempts to "map out a path leading to a humanism for all men" strikes me as disappointingly inadequate. He never renounced the Marxist values of internationalism, classless society, or the recognition of man by man; yet, having given up the idea of revolution in the Marxist sense, he failed to find a realistic plan for the realization of these values. Those "preliminary

conditions" which he did suggest—the consulting of majority opinion, the availability of more instruction and more precise information, a socialistic system of production, better communication at all levels of society[228]—are very preliminary indeed. Merleau-Ponty himself apparently realized the inadequacy of his suggestions when he observed that a parliamentary democracy was no real solution either. However, he seemingly excused his inability to provide a more insightful alternative to revolution with the remark that social problems do not admit of solutions in the way that mathematical problems do. Nevertheless, one should not be overly severe in criticizing his position in this regard. It must be remembered that Merleau-Ponty, like Machiavelli, "speaks a language that of necessity remains enigmatic, intriguing, and incomplete. He speaks the language of political transition, the very substance of which prevents full articulation and lucidity."[229]

As I have pointed out, Merleau-Ponty's vision of a truly human society is based, to a considerable extent, on that of Marx. However, Merleau-Ponty's version of such a society goes far beyond Marx's analysis in regard to the notion of creativity, or creative self-expression, and gives his vision an ontological-aesthetic depth which is to more than hinted at in Marx's remarks regarding creativity. With this added depth, we enter the ontological-aesthetic realm, wherein the ultimate justification for violence is to be found. It is also in this realm that I shall have occasion to recall the previously quoted passage from Professor Langan's book.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

[1]Humanism and Terror, p. 13.

[2]The Communists and Peace, p. 55 (text and footnote).

[3]Signs, pp. 211, 217.

[4]Signs, p. 217.

[5]Signs, p. 218.

[6]Signs, pp. 218-219.

[7]Signs, p. 219.

[8]Signs, pp. 9, 11, 12.

[9]Signs, p. 35.

[10]Signs, pp. 223, 214.

[11]Signs, pp. 218, 219.

[12]Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), p. 111.

[13]The Prince, p. 110.

[14]The Prince, p. 114.

[15]The Prince, pp. 113, 111, 21.

[16]The Prince, p. 21.

[17]The Prince, p. 26.

[18]The Prince, pp. 112, 2.

[19]The Prince, p. 112.

[20]The Prince, pp. 46, 101.

[21]The Prince, pp. 100, 102, 101.

[22]The Prince, pp. 112, 113, 114, 43.

[23]The Prince, pp. 62, 103.

[24]The Prince, p. 61.

Footnotes for Chapter IV (Continued)

[25]The Prince, p. 68.

[26]The Prince, pp. 65, 9, 109.

[27]The Prince, p. 35.

[28]The Prince, p. 36.

[29]The Prince, p. 72.

[30]The Prince, pp. 77, 78.

[31]The Prince, pp. 67, 84, 85.

[32]The Prince, p. 116.

[33]The Prince, p. 76.

[34]The Prince, pp. 73, 74.

[35]The Prince, p. 71.

[36]The Prince, p. 72.

[37]The Prince, p. 39.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid.

[40]The Prince, pp. 85, 87, 88.

[41]The Prince, pp. 115-116.

[42]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 187.

[43]The Prince, pp. 73, 75-76.

[44]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 166; In Praise of Philosophy, p. 66.

[45]The Prince, pp. 67, 76-77; Signs, p. 206.

[46]The Prince, pp. 107, 76-77, 100, 117.

[47]The Prince, pp. 76, 67.

[48]The Prince, p. 73.

[49]The Prince, pp. 105-106.

Footnotes for Chapter IV (Continued)

[50]Signs, p. 226.

[51]Signs, p. 240.

[52]Signs, pp. 226, 223, 223, 226.

[53]Signs, p. 226.

[54]Humanism and Terror, pp. 175-176.

[55]Humanism and Terror, p. 176.

[56]Humanism and Terror, pp. 35[11], 176, 186.

[57]Humanism and Terror, pp. 174, 125, 127, 175, xxiv, 42.

[58]Humanism and Terror, pp. 125-126, xiv.

[59]Humanism and Terror, p. 175.

[60]Humanism and Terror, p. 124.

[61]Humanism and Terror, pp. 176, 179, 35.

[62]Humanism and Terror, p. 103.

[63]Signs, p. 166.

[64]The Primacy of Perception, p. 27.

[65]Humanism and Terror, p. 95.

[66]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 152.

[67]Phenomenology of Perception, pp. 382, 395, 405, 407, 409; Signs, p. 206; In Praise of Philosophy, p. 39.

[68]Humanism and Terror, p. xxxv.

[69]Humanism and Terror, p. xxxiv.

[70]Signs, p. 328.

[71]In Praise of Philosophy, p. 40.

[72]Humanism and Terror, pp. xxiv-xxv.

[73]Humanism and Terror, pp. xiiii, xxxv.

[74]Humanism and Terror, p. xiiii.

Footnotes for Chapter IV (Continued)

[75]Humanism and Terror, p. 39.

[76]Humanism and Terror, pp. xiv, 62.

[77]Humanism and Terror, p. 52.

[78]Humanism and Terror, pp. 40-41.

[79]Humanism and Terror, p. xxxv.

[80]Humanism and Terror, p. xxxiii.

[81]Humanism and Terror, p. xxii.

[82]Humanism and Terror, pp. xxi, xxiii.

[83]Humanism and Terror, pp. xxxii, xxxiv, xxxv.

[84]Humanism and Terror, p. xxxiv.

[85]Humanism and Terror, p. 27.

[86]Humanism and Terror, p. 31.

[87]Humanism and Terror, p. 31.

[88]Humanism and Terror, p. 39.

[89]Humanism and Terror, p. 40.

[90]Humanism and Terror, p. 184.

[91]Signs, p. 323.

[92]Ibid.

[93]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 152; Signs, p. 324.

[94]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 95.

[95]Humanism and Terror, pp. 142, 95, 96.

[96]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 95; Signs, p. 206; The Primacy of Perception, p. 27.

[97]Humanism and Terror, p. 18.

[98]Phenomenology of Perception, pp. 396-397.

[99]Signs, p. 218.

Footnotes for Chapter IV (Continued)

[100]Humanism and Terror, p. 41; Phenomenology of Perception, pp. 88, 449.

[101]Phenomenology of Perception, pp. xix, xxi.

[102]Phenomenology of Perception, p. 449.

[103]Phenomenology of Perception, pp. 450, 448, 449, 450; Humanism and Terror, p. 162.

[104]Humanism and Terror, pp. 117-118, 96-97; Sense and Non-Sense, p. 166.

[105]Humanism and Terror, pp. 63, 93, 117.

[106]Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The German Ideology (Moscow, 1964), p. 37.

[107]Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959), pp. 69, 68. Hereinafter cited as Manuscripts.

[108]Manuscripts, p. 75.

[109]Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Critique (Moscow, 1956), p. 51. Hereinafter cited as The Holy Family; Manuscripts, p. 117.

[110]Manuscripts, p. 69.

[111]Manuscripts, p. 71.

[112]Manuscripts, p. 72.

[113]Manuscripts, pp. 71, 72, 107, 108, 109, 107.

[114]Manuscripts, pp. 108, 109.

[115]Manuscripts, pp. 113, 128, 129.

[116]Manuscripts, pp. 24, 79-80.

[117]Manuscripts, p. 81.

[118]Manuscripts, p. 80.

[119]Manuscripts, p. 146.

[120]The German Ideology, p. 646.

Footnotes for Chapter IV (Continued)

[121]Manuscripts, p. 110.

[122]Manuscripts, pp. 96, 119, 97, 98.

[123]Manuscripts, pp. 146, 101.

[124]Manuscripts, p. 101.

[125]Manuscripts, pp. 101, 99.

[126]Manuscripts, pp. 100-101.

[127]Manuscripts, pp. 130-131.

[128]Manuscripts, p. 104.

[129]The German Ideology, p. 32.

[130]Karl Marx, Capital (Chicago, 1906), III, 955.

[131]The German Ideology, p. 91.

[132]Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, trans. & eds. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1967), pp. 281-282.

[133]Friedrich Engels, Anti-Duhring (Moscow, 1962), pp. 403-404.

[134]Manuscripts, p. 151.

[135]Manuscripts, p. 95.

[136]The Holy Family, p. 52.

[137]Manuscripts, p. 104.

[138]Manuscripts, p. 99.

[139]Manuscripts, p. 113.

[140]Manuscripts, pp. 28, 70.

[141]Manuscripts, p. 146.

[142]Manuscripts, pp. 99, 146[1].

[143]Manuscripts, p. 115.

[144]Manuscripts, p. 63.

Footnotes for Chapter IV (Continued)

[145]Karl Marx, Capital, trans Moore and Aveling (London, 1889), Book One, vols. I and II, 494.

[146]Thomas Langan, Merleau-Ponty's Critique of Reason (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 112.

[147]Humanism and Terror, p. xviii.

[148]Signs, p. 225.

[149]Signs, p. 225; The Primacy of Perception, p. 9.

[150]Humanism and Terror, p. 11.

[151]The Primacy of Perception, p. 35.

[152]Humanism and Terror, p. xiv.

[153]Ibid.

[154]Signs, p. 310.

[155]Signs, p. 321.

[156]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 98.

[157]Signs, p. 321.

[158]Signs, p. 321.

[159]Signs, p. 321.

[160]Humanism and Terror, p. xlvi.

[161]Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 11.

[162]Ibid.

[163]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 70.

[164]Humanism and Terror, p. 35[11].

[165]In Praise of Philosophy, p. 65; Signs, p. 240.

[166]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 98.

[167]Phenomenology of Perception, pp. 169-170.

[168]Manuscripts, p. 107; Herbert Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation, pp. 11, 37.

Footnotes on Chapter IV (Continued)

[169]Humanism and Terror, p. 154.

[170]Signs, p. 226.

[171]Humanism and Terror, p. xxiv.

[172]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 162; Humanism and Terror, p. xxiii.

[173]Signs, p. 222; Phenomenology of Perception, p. 56.

[174]Signs, pp. 223, 222; Humanism and Terror, pp. xvii, 147; Signs, p. 219.

[175]Signs, pp. 219, 220.

[176]Signs, p. 221.

[177]Phenomenology of Perception, p. 361; The Visible and the Invisible, pp. 11, 167; Phenomenology of Perception, pp. 353, 354.

[178]In Praise of Philosophy, p. 43.

[179]Signs, p. 336.

[180]Signs, p. 268.

[181]Humanism and Terror, p. 176.

[182]The Primacy of Perception, p. 106.

[183]Humanism and Terror, p. 155.

[184]Humanism and Terror, p. 126.

[185]Humanism and Terror, pp. 111, 147.

[186]Humanism and Terror, p. 156.

[187]Humanism and Terror, p. xviii.

[188]Humanism and Terror, pp. 154, 155.

[189]Ibid.

[190]Manuscripts, p. 130.

[191]Humanism and Terror, pp. 36, 144.

[192]Signs, pp. 279-280; Humanism and Terror, p. 116.

Footnotes for Chapter IV (Continued)

[193]Humanism and Terror, p. 144.

[194]Humanism and Terror, pp. 115-116.

[195]Humanism and Terror, pp. 36, 113, 112.

[196]Humanism and Terror, p. 114.

[197]Humanism and Terror, pp. 115, 127.

[198]Humanism and Terror, p. 128.

[199]The Primacy of Perception, p. 168.

[200]Humanism and Terror, pp. 170-171.

[201]In Praise of Philosophy, pp. 43-44.

[202]The Primacy of Perception, p. 205.

[203]The Primacy of Perception, p. 206.

[204]Humanism and Terror, pp. xxiii, xviii, 112, 110.

[205]Humanism and Terror, pp. 146, 147.

[206]The Primacy of Perception, p. 26.

[207]Humanism and Terror, pp. 35[11], xix.

[208]Humanism and Terror, pp. xxvii, xxix.

[209]Humanism and Terror, p. xxix.

[210]Signs, p. 222.

[211]Ibid.

[212]Ibid.

[213]Humanism and Terror, pp. 187, 188.

[214]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 124.

[215]Signs, p. 131.

[216]Humanism and Terror, p. 187.

[217]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 119.

Footnotes for Chapter IV (Concluded)

[218] Humanism and Terror, p. 175; Les Aventures de la Dialectique, pp. 114, 177-178.

[219] Signs, pp. 33-34.

[220] In Praise of Philosophy, p. 43; Sense and Non-Sense, pp. 5, 124.

[221] Humanism and Terror, p. 12; The Primacy of Perception, p. 9; In Praise of Philosophy, pp. 43, 44.

[222] Signs, pp. 242, 243.

[223] Sense and Non-Sense, p. 144.

[224] Signs, p. 322.

[225] Anti-Duhring, pp. 403-404.

[226] Signs, pp. 329, 13.

[227] Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society, p. 5.

[228] Signs, p. 322.

[229] Alkis Kontos, "Success and Knowledge in Machiavelli" in The Political Calculus: Essays on Machiavelli's Philosophy, ed. A. Parel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 99.

V

THE REALM OF ONTOLOGY-AESTHETICS

Merleau-Ponty's humanism finds its basis in his ontology-aesthetics, insofar as man's inherence in, and creative expression of, "brute Being" is what makes him truly human. My choice of the term "ontology-aesthetics" here perhaps requires a word of explanation. Generally, such a hyphenated term is unduly cumbersome; in this case, however, it serves an important purpose. In Merleau-Ponty's philosophy there is, it seems to me, a dimension which is not reducible to either ontology or aesthetics. Traditionally, ontology has signified a study of Being in which the transcendence of Being figured explicitly or implicitly. Aesthetics, on the other hand, usually refers to a philosophical study of art in the classical sense--that is, music, painting, sculpture, literature. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy diverges from traditional ontology and aesthetics in that it emphasizes Being as "coextensive" with world, and expression as primordially carnal. I have chosen the term "ontology-aesthetics" to refer to a study which simultaneously concerns itself with Being and with expression, because for Merleau-Ponty the two are primordially interrelated. Being requires creative expression in order to Be in its Truth; and creative expression requires inherence in "brute Being." The dimension of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy with which I am concerned here is neither an "ontological aesthetics" nor an "aesthetic ontology." It is equally and simultaneously

an ontology and an aesthetics--hence, an ontology-aesthetics.

Merleau-Ponty's ontology-aesthetics, is, I submit, the most interesting aspect of his work, yet it is the most fragmentary. Throughout his writings, Merleau-Ponty repeatedly introduces the theme of "expression," pausing now and then to consider it at some length as, for example, in his essays "On the Phenomenology of Language" and "Cézanne's Doubt." Only towards the end of his life does he persistently focus attention on it. Death overtook him just as he was in the process of working on a book which was to provide the ontological basis for his previous philosophizing. There are numerous indications that, had he finished it, this volume would not merely have repeated earlier themes and arguments, but indeed would have been the foundation of his whole work. As it is, we are left with only fragments: the manuscript edited under the title La Prose du Monde; an article, "Eye and Mind," which appeared in January 1961 and is a preliminary statement of some ideas which were to be developed later (and never were); a manuscript containing the first part of his projected book; and a number of working notes. The manuscript and a selection of the notes were edited posthumously under the title The Visible and the Invisible.

As early as 1951, at the time of his candidacy to the College de France, Merleau-Ponty was already preparing to write this work, as one discovers in a text sent to Martial Gueroult:

> My first two works sought to restore the world of perception. My works in preparation aim to show how communication with others, and thought, take up and go beyond the realm of perception which initiated us to the truth.[1]

In the same text, he admits that he has yet to develop theories of truth and intersubjectivity, and promises to make "the general problem of

human interrelations" the major topic of his later studies.[2] He declares, moreover, that "the philosophical foundations" of works like "Cézanne's Doubt" and Humanism and Terror "are still to be rigorously elaborated," and that the "bad ambiguity" encountered in the study of perception will give way to a "good ambiguity" in the phenomenon of expression.[3]

As Merleau-Ponty planned it at this time (1951-2), his work was to come full circle, beginning with a study of the perceived world, moving on to the ontological foundation of that world, and returning with this insight to enrich the initial study of the world of perception:

> Our inquiries should lead us finally to a reflection on this transcendental man, or this "natural light" common to all, which appears through the movement of history--to a reflection on this Logos which gives us the task of vocalizing a hitherto mute world. Finally, they should lead us to a study of the Logos of the perceived world which we encounter in our earliest studies in the evidence of things.[4]

In his working notes of January 1959, Merleau-Ponty again stresses the "necessity of a return to ontology," outlines that ontology as "an ontology of brute Being--and of logos," and declares that it would take up again, deepen, and rectify his first two books.[5] This ontology was to "take up the whole philosophical movement in a fundamental thought" and bring the results of the Phenomenology of Perception to ontological explication.[6] "One cannot," Merleau-Ponty says, "make a direct ontology. My 'indirect' method (being in the beings) is alone conformed with being."[7] This "indirect method" was to disclose "the Lebenswelt as universal Being" and reveal that

> this perceptual world is at bottom Being in Heidegger's sense, which is more than all painting, than all speech, than every "attitude", and which, apprehended by philosophy in its universality, appears as containing everything that will ever be said, and yet leaving us to create it (Proust).[8]

The "new ontology" to be expounded in Merleau-Ponty's projected book was to initiate a study of painting, music, and language. Only after this study of a "whole series of layers of primitive being" would he "be definitively able to appraise humanism."[9]

Although that definitive appraisal was precluded by Merleau-Ponty's untimely death, the written fragments which he left behind allow one to trace his humanism to its basis in the ontological-aesthetic realm. Men have in common not only certain physical characteristics but also a "natural light or opening to being which makes cultural acquisitions communicable to all men and to them alone."[10] This "natural light or opening to being" expresses a fundamental insight which must be attributed to Martin Heidegger. It will be recalled that, in a passage cited earlier, Merleau-Ponty himself declared that his ontology would investigate "being in the beings" and that Being was to be understood in Heidegger's sense. (Merleau-Ponty was rather careless in his use of capitalization; sometimes he capitalized Being or Truth, and sometimes he did not, although it is clear from the texts that the meaning is not "beings" but "Being," not "a truth" but "Truth.") As Professor Langan points out,[11] Merleau-Ponty's work nowhere authorizes the conclusion that his perceptual world is "at bottom" Being in Heidegger's sense. Nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty's sense of "Being" does "take over" some of its basic features from Heidegger's "fundamental ontology." Consequently, a very brief consideration of Heidegger's work cannot be circumvented; I shall select only those features which are most relevant for an understanding of the meaning of "Being" for Merleau-Ponty. A more complete investigation of the German philosopher's thought, or a detailed comparison of the two philosophies, is out of the

question here; no attempt can be made to do full justice to Heidegger.

A) Heidegger's "Fundamental Ontology"

According to Heidegger, man is "thrown" ("geworfen") into the world by a mysterious ("rätselhafte") act of Being ("Sein") utterly beyond his control. Being "sends" man to "ek-sist" or "stand out" as the "Da" of Being; that is, as the place ("Ort") where Being can appear. Man, providing he ek-sists "authentically," holds open, by his openness ("Offenheit") to Being, a "space" where Being can reveal itself. In order for this revealing to be possible, there must be not only an open space but also light. Being is itself "light" ("Licht") and illuminates the place of its appearance. But this place, this open space, is man. Therefore, Being's light makes man visible so that he "stands out," or ek-sists, from the radical darkness of nothingness as what he truly is. He "points out" and guards the "place" where Being appears in order that Being can disclose itself as it really is; that is, in its Truth. Heidegger's extremely rich and complex language defies adequate interpretation; each key word carries so many nuances that become unduly strained, contrived, or even lost, when put into English. Consequently, in fairness to Heidegger, I shall let him speak for himself:

> Die Weise, wie der Mensch in seinem eigenen Wesen zum Sein anwest, ist das ekstatische Innestehen in der Wahrheit des Seins. . . . Der Mensch ist vielmehr vom Sein selbst in die Wahrheit des Seins "geworfen", dass er, dergestalt ek-sistierend, die Wahrheit des Seins hüte, damit im Lichte des Seins das Seiende als das Seiende, das es ist, erscheine. Ob und wie es erscheint, ob und wie der Gott und die Götter, die Geschichte und die Natur in die Lichtung des Seins hereinkommen, an-und abwesen, entscheidet nicht der Mensch. Die Ankunft des Seienden beruht im Geschick des Seins. Für den Menschen aber bleibt die Frage, ob er das Schickliche seines Wesens findet, das diesem Geschick entspricht; denn diesem gemäss hat er als der Ek-sistierende die Wahrheit des Seins zu hüten. Der Mensch is der Hirt des Seins.[12]

> The way in which man in his own essence is present to Being, is the ecstatic standing within the Truth of Being. . . . Man is rather "thrown" by Being itself into the Truth of Being, so that ek-sisting thus, he may guard the Truth of Being in order that an entity may appear in the light of Being as the being which it is. Whether and how it appears, whether and how God and the gods, history, and nature enter into the illumination of Being, presenting and absenting themselves, is not determined by man. The advent of entities rests in the destiny of Being. For man, however, the question remains whether he finds what is appropriate to his essence to correspond to this destiny; according to this, as one who ek-sists, he has to guard the Truth of Being. Man is the guardian of Being.

Man can be "the guardian" of Being only if he ek-sists "authentically." To be present to Being, man must return out of his "estrangement" from Being—an estrangement which is due to "inauthenticity" or "fallenness"; that is, an absorption by, or fascination with, the entities of the world.[13] The experience of anxiety ("Angst") in the face of utter contingency and radical non-being (that is, finitude and imminent death) is needed to "shock" man out of his estrangement. Such anxiety is characterized by a feeling of uncanniness, an indefinite feeling of "not being at home."[14]

The true nature of man ("Dasein") is to reveal or "uncover" Being; and, reciprocally, Being reveals itself in man, for man is the only being who can ask the "Seinsfrage"—the question of Being; that is, man alone can question Being as to its meaning.[15] To uncover and discover Being, man must lift the "veil" of Being, which is nothingness ("Nichts"); he can do so only by an existential experiencing of anxiety.[16] Truth, as primordial Truth, is unconcealedness; in the openness of Dasein, Being "manifests itself and conceals itself, yields itself and withdraws."[17] Being does not exhaust itself in Dasein, although it is "involved in" Dasein. Dasein stands open for the openness of Being in which it stands,

and Being makes it possible for Dasein to be thus open to Being; that is, to let Being appear.[18] Being illuminates itself, since it is the source of "light"; but it can do so only through man's presence to Being's Truth. Consequently, Truth and Dasein stand in a primordial relationship to one another. "There is" Being only insofar as there is Truth, and there is Truth only insofar as, and so long as, there is Dasein.[19] The revelation of Being in its Truth is an event, a coming-to-be, in the world, insofar as Dasein is a being whose Being is essentially worldly—Dasein is a being-in-the-world.

Being is neither God nor causal principle; it is not circumscribed or exhausted by the totality of beings.[20] Language is "the house of Being" which preserves Being's self-relevations throughout history.[21] Man ("Dasein"), as a being who speaks, is indispensable for the articulation and preservation of Being.[22] However, this does not mean that man takes precedence over Being. Man's humanity (in other words, that which makes him "truly human") is to be found in his ek-sistence—not in the determination of man as the essentially important being, but rather in Being which sends man out into ek-sistence.[23] Man's dignity consists in his being "called" upon to live in Being's "house" as "the guardian" and neighbor of Being.[24] Man can heed this vocation or calling insofar as he, due to "thrownness," stands in the world and open to the world in virtue of his sensibility, comprehension (understanding) and power of speech. These modes of his Being enable him to uncover and make visible the structure of Being in the beings of the world, and make possible an understanding and expression of Being in the first place.[25] The man who is best equipped to articulate the mystery of Being's self-illumination in the entities of the world is the

philosopher, whose "fundamental thinking" probes for the destiny of Being in the beings at hand. But even the philosopher must remain silent about the ultimate "why?"—the question as to why Being reveals and conceals itself. That remains a mystery and Being's self-illumination a mysterious "gift."[26]

B) Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger: Similarities and Differences

Merleau-Ponty's conception of Being owes many of its basic features to Heidegger's insights: man as a being situated within and open to, Being; the inseparability of being-in-Truth and being-in-the-world; the primordial interrelatedness of Being, Truth, and man; the importance of language, and specifically, philosophical language, for the articulation of Being's Truth; Being as the source of "light" and the origin of expression; Being as dynamic and irreducible to any of its concrete expressions. Nevertheless, there are important differences between the two philosophers' senses of Being, the most crucial of which point to unresolved tensions in Merleau-Ponty's thought. Some of these differences will become apparent in my discussion of Merleau-Ponty's ontological-aesthetic realm; therefore, I shall merely call attention to them here.

Although both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty see the need for man to overcome alienation if he is to be "truly human," being "truly human" does not mean the same for Merleau-Ponty as for Heidegger. It should be noted that for Merleau-Ponty, in contrast to Heidegger, alienation is rooted in the socio-economic infrastructure of society and therefore can only be definitively overcome collectively, by a change in society's

basic structures. This, I submit, accounts for the fact that Merleau-Ponty is interested in examining revolutionary violence, whereas Heidegger is not. For the latter, as previously explained, anxiety is needed to shock man out of his estrangement. Finally, Merleau-Ponty, far more than Heidegger, stresses the living body as elementary expression, and emphasizes the importance of intersubjectivity for expression. Merleau-Ponty accents language as communication among persons; that is, as dialogue.

However, the fundamental difference, I submit, lies in Heidegger's notion of radical nothingness ("Nichts"), which finds no parallel in the thought of Merleau-Ponty. For Heidegger, creativity really rests with Being. That is, it is Being which is creative, and this creativity is a gratuitous "gift" of Being's self-revelation to and through man, who, in standing open to Being's creativity and guarding the "space" of its appearance, lets Being be. For Heidegger, each creative self-revelation of Being is a mystery which brings-to-be something radically new out of nothingness ("Nichts")[27]—that is, from the nothingness "out" of which man is "thrown" into Being, the nothingness "out" of which he ek-sists and into which death returns him.

For Merleau-Ponty, on the bther hand, it is man who is creative. Man "inheres in" the "silent world" of "brute Being," which is the inexhaustible "power" or "source" of creative expression, in the sense that in its absence, creativity would be precluded for man. It provides the "raw material," so to speak, for man's creativity. Being's Truth depends on man's creative expression in order to emerge and develop. For

Merleau-Ponty, Being is coextensive with the world[28]--but "world," it should be noted, is not restricted to the dimension of the visible. There is always a dimension, or "layer," of invisibility underlying the visible,[29] and this substructure is of the order of "brute" or "primitive" Being. Brute Being is the dimension of the tacit, the pre-individual, the generalized, the pre-personal.[30] By his creative expression, man draws on this "mute world," brings it to articulation, and thereby into explicit consciousness.

Merleau-Ponty's view lacks the mysterious "gift" character of Heidegger's conception of Being. Brute Being does not conceal itself or withdraw; it is given in "one sole explosion of Being which is forever"[31]--it is a Being in "dehiscence."[32] Creativity, therefore, does not depend upon an unpredictable "yielding" of Being in Heidegger's sense. Rather, since Being is given once and for all, and since man is given with the event of his birth "the means. . . for being present at the fission of Being from the inside,"[33] it is up to man whether or not, to what extent, when and how, he brings Being to creative expression. Consequently, whereas the "why" of each self-disclosure or self-concealment of Being involves a fundamental mystery for Heidegger, for Merleau-Ponty only the initial "why," the "why of Being's original dehiscence, is mysterious.[34] Nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty does regard expression as being a "miracle"--presumably in the sense that there is Being in the first place and that man is equipped to express it creatively.[35] It is significant that, whereas Heidegger tends to speak of Being and expression as "mysterious," Merleau-Ponty is inclined to employ the term "miraculous." Heidegger's Being "comes forth" out of a radical Nothingness ("Nichts") to reveal itself in expression, and

unpredictably withdraws again into the "Nichts." Merleau-Ponty's Being, on the other hand, is coextensive with life as such, and its expression constitutes a cultural acquisition that becomes sedimented in history. Merleau-Ponty's Being is present to man by the mere fact that man lives, although he may not have a reflective awareness of Being's presence. Merleau-Ponty's Being is present in the visible world; it is its in-visible structure.

C) The Problem of Dehumanization

In chapter four, I discussed the meaning of barbarism, and noted that Merleau-Ponty ultimately fails to explore the meaning of dehumanization and to explain its relationship with barbarism. It is interesting that Heidegger, while rejecting all traditional humanism, was better able than Merleau-Ponty to explain the meaning of dehumanization. The reason for Merleau-Ponty's failure is to be found in the fundamental difference between the two philosophical positions. For Heidegger, that which makes man truly human is to be found "outside" man, in Sein. Consequently, if the relationship between man and Sein is severed, man becomes inhuman. For Merleau-Ponty on the other hand, that which makes man truly human is to be found within man himself. Dehumanization, therefore, can only indicate some sort of diremption within man himself. Heidegger's man (Dasein) is human insofar as he "ek-sists" out of radical nothingness and responds to Being's "call." Man's essence (Wesen) is a "gift" of Being.[36] If man rejects that gift and absents himself from Being, he ceases to be truly human. His humanity lies in the relationship which Being establishes with him in thought (Denken). All creative activity rests in Being and is brought to fulfillment in thinking:

> Das Denken vollbringt den Bezug des Seins zum Wesen des Menschen. . . . Alles Wirken aber beruht im Sein und geht auf das Seiende aus. Das Denken dagegen lässt sich vom Sein in den Anspruch nehmen, um die Wahrheit des Seins zu sagen. Das Denken vollbringt dieses Lassen.[37]

It is up to man to find his way back into Sein's proximity, and thereby back to his own essence: "Der Mensch ist in seinem seinsgeschichtlichen Wesen das Seiende, dessen Sein als Ek-sistenz darin besteht, dass es in der Nähe des Seins wohnt."[38] Man's humanity rests in his essence; his inhumanity, in his remaining "outside" his essence:

> Wohin anders geht 'die Sorge' als in die Richtung, den Menschen wieder in sein Wesen zurückzubringen? Was bedeutet dies anderes, als dass der Mensch (homo) menschlich (humanus) werde? So bleibt doch die Humanitas das Anliegen eines solchen Denkens; denn das ist Humanismus: Sinnen und Sorgen, dass der Mensch menschlich sei und nicht un-menschlich, 'inhuman', das heisst, ausserhalb seines Wesens. Doch worin besteht die Menschlichkeit des Menschen? Sie ruht in seinem Wesen.[39]

Man's essence consists of his "ek-sistence," that is, his "standing" in, and out of, the Truth of Sein: "Das Wesen des Menschen beruht in der Ek-sistenz"[40]; "Ek-sistenz bedeutet inhaltlich Hinausstehen in die Wahrheit des Seins."[41] Man's essence therefore lies in his relationship with Sein, and that relationship is Sein itself: "Das Sein selber ist das Verhältnis. . . ."[42] Man is human only insofar as he "ek-sists," that is, insofar as he "stands out" in Sein's openness: "Der Mensch ist und ist Mensch, insofern er der Ek-sistierende ist. Er steht in die Offenheit des Seins hinaus. . . ."[43] The essence of humanity, in short, consists in ek-sisting out of, and belonging to, Sein.[44] Sein is creative; its creative process is thinking (Denken); and its expression is speech (Sprache). To be human means to be related to Sein in such a way as to "unveil" this creativity. Dehumanization signifies the severance or absence of such a relationship.

For Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, man is primordially related to Being from within Being. He can participate in "the fission of Being. . . from the inside." Being is, and remains, present to man as long as man is alive. Man's humanity is to be found within man himself, in his power of creative expression. Dehumanization, therefore, can only signify the inhibiting, damaging, or destroying, of man's creative power. Extreme dehumanization would seem to indicate an inner diremption of man which renders him incapable of expressing himself creatively. Insanity seems to me to be the only situation in which such irremediable destruction actually occurs. A problem therefore arises in reference to the relationship between dehumanization and barbarism. Earlier, I distinguished violence according to its ability to humanize or to dehumanize man. Unfortunately, Merleau-Ponty fails to clarify the precise nature of the relationship between violence and dehumanization. If dehumanization involves the negation of man's power of creative expression, one seems to be unable to condemn acts of violence such as, for example, an arbitrary slap in the face. Superficially, such violence would not seem to involve the damaging of man's power of creative expression. However, insofar as Merleau-Ponty regards the living body as primordially expressive and as the vehicle of all expression, any damage to the body constitutes a violation of man's expressive power. Nevertheless, the meaning of dehumanization still poses a problem in regard to barbarism. It seems to me that dehumanization does not always coincide with barbarism. If man's true humanity consists in his power of creative expression, and if dehumanization means the inhibition, damage, or destruction of what is most human in man, then barbarism would seem to mean the irreparable destruction

of man's power of creative expression. However, Barbarism does not necessarily destroy man's creative power. The Nazi concentration camps, for example, were barbaric; yet, individuals emerged from them with their power of creative expression intact. (Eli Wiesel would be one example.) In such a case, barbarism does not coincide with dehumanization. Sometimes, however, the two do coincide--as in the case of those who went insane as a result of the Nazi experience. Merleau-Ponty failed to discuss the relationship between barbarism and dehumanization. He explored humanism, but failed to probe the meaning of dehumanization, of what it means to inflict violence. While his discussion of humanism justifies his use of the term "barbarism" to designate an extreme form of violence, his account lacks an adequate investigation of the relationship between barbarism and dehumanization, and between dehumanization and violence in general. In short, he failed to provide a phenomenology of dehumanization. In view of the "inner relationship" between man and Being, such a phenomenology would no doubt have been problematic.

D) The Problem of Nothingness

Merleau-Ponty says that events of the objective world fall into nothingness, yet maintains that "the world is articulated starting from a zero of being which is not nothingness."[45] As Professor Langan points out,[46] he lacks Heidegger's notion of a really radical "Nichts." Although Merleau-Ponty considers thought or consciousness as "Offenheit of a corporeity to . . . World or Being,"[47] man, for him, does not simply guard the "space" of Being's appearance and "let Being be." Heidegger's man is passive compared with Merleau-Ponty's man. The latter, instead of being only the "shepherd" of Being, creatively

expresses Being and thereby develops the Truth of Being. For Heidegger, Being speaks through man; man merely stands open to Being's revelation. For Merleau-Ponty, on the contrary, man is in a relationship of ongoing dialogue with Being: he questions Being, responds to Being, creatively develops Being. Yet, since Merleau-Ponty's man does not ek-sist "out" of radical nothingness, his creativity involves a paradox. As mentioned in the Phenomenology of Perception, Cézanne was aware that something must be left unexpressed if there is to be expression, that a certain lacuna is crucial. Merleau-Ponty's comment on Cézanne's observation indicates that he himself realized, at least to a certain extent, the need not merely for a lacuna in the visible pointing to its invisible substratum, but for a more radical nothingness: "The problem of the world, and, to begin with, that of one's own body, consists in the fact that it is all there."[48] In a passage cited earlier, Merleau-Ponty stated that Being "appears as containing everything that will ever be said, and yet leaving us to create it."[49] There is a problem here concerning the sense in which there can be creativity if everything is already given, albeit only potentially; the extent to which there can be creativity without something radically new coming-to-be. Professor Langan concludes that Merleau-Ponty's notion of Being, with its lack of radical nothingness, cannot account for the coming-to-be of anything really new.[50] Before a further investigation of this problem, it is necessary to examine Merleau-Ponty's ontology-aesthetics at greater length.

E) Creative Expression

For Merleau-Ponty, "Being is what requires creation of us for us to experience it."[51] By the mere fact of existing as an incarnate subjectivity, man is already in primordial contact with Being. In his Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty had already described the body as spontaneous expression, and had explained how "all perception, all action which presupposes it, and in short every human use of the body is already primordial expression."[52] "Primordial expression" is an originating, or primary operation which opens a field and founds a tradition by creating and implanting meanings there where previously there were none.[53] It is, however, impossible and indeed meaningless to distinguish precisely what comes from man and what is contributed by "things," to determine where nature ends and man or expression begins.[54] The "marvel" of expression is that "men somehow secrete culture without even wanting to," that "the human world. . . is somehow natural for man."[55]

Culture consists of the accumulation of meanings which are created with the birth of expression and become sedimented significances, forming "a unity of human style." Merleau-Ponty considers "the order of culture or meaning an original order of advent," and emphasizes that the meaning inaugurated by primordial expression is "in principle a meaning in genesis" which continually solicits new responses and is never completed.[56] The expressive gesture of the body, which is begun by the smallest perception, is amplified into painting and art; and "art and philosophy together are . . . contact with Being precisely as creations."[57] (For Merleau-Ponty, ontology and culture are intimately related—there

can be no ontology in the absence of culture, because Being requires creative expression in order to Be in its Truth.)

There is no reason to seek an explanation for the phenomenon of expression—a miracle which is natural to us—in a Hegelian Spirit ("Geist") of the world operating in and through us without our knowledge. Merleau-Ponty insists that "the spirit of the world is ourselves, as soon as we know how to move ourselves and look."[58] Just as our living body can gather itself into a gesture which dominates the physical "dispersion" of its limbs, just as all the moments of an individual life are united in advance at the moment of its birth, so spatial and temporal distances are transcended in "a unity of human style" through the convergence of our efforts to express. There is, therefore, a "unity of culture," a "field distinct from the empirical order of events" which, while calling for "a series of successive steps," that is, a development, does not entail a suprasensible world with its own laws of causality, or a Spirit of Culture "which is already in possession of itself on the other side of the world that it is gradually manifested in."[59]

Culture is by no means restricted to art and philosophy. It embraces, for example, all the meanings which have become sedimented in empirical language by authentic, or creative, speech. All men are situated within a culture and, in participating in the universe of discourse, partake of cultural acquisitions. All "are condemned to meaning,"[60] all are in contact with Being, although that contact takes many forms and, correspondingly, involves different degrees of "closeness" to Being. The "human moment par excellence" is the moment "in which a life woven out of chance events turns back upon, regrasps,

and expresses itself."[61] Art and philosophy, as I have pointed out, constitute the most adequate, the most perfect, forms of expression.[62] Art, understood in its traditional sense, perfectly exemplifies the simultaneous completeness and incompleteness of Truth, of expression. Each work of art is complete in itself, is a complete expression; yet it does not negate preceding or following works of art. As part of a tradition, it is incomplete. Since artists and philosophers are rare, one might be led to conclude that the majority of men are excluded from an intimate "tête-à-tête" with Being. This supposition, however, is erroneous since, as Merleau-Ponty points out, men in general understand, respect and admire great and beautiful things.[63] The creations of artists and philosophers, therefore, "speak" to their fellow men, introducing them to unfamiliar perspectives, making them dwell in a world to which they do not have the key--a world which is uttered, and rendered accessible, through creative expression.[64] Moreover, genuine intersubjectivity is vital if creative expression is to take place; there must be others to witness the signification of expression.

The philosopher occupies a privileged position, but he cannot express himself really creatively, and therefore cannot bring Truth into being, if he regards other men as objects or merely uses them as examples of expression. He does not rely on the expression of others--their ways of living, of being--because he lacks a privileged perspective and requires their perspectives to verify or modify his own view of the world. Rather, other people are an essential part of the world and, consequently, if the philosopher disregards their perspectives, he cannot express either the world or himself truly or creatively--for he,

too, is a part of that world. In short, he cannot then express Being in its Truth, since world and Being are, as previously pointed out, coextensive. It is each man's inherence in brute Being which makes him a unique self. If the philosopher regards other men as objects to be studied, he fails to grasp their uniqueness or the truth of their various ways of expressing their contact with Being. The philosopher, therefore, must engage in an ongoing, genuine dialogue with his fellow men.[65] He must attempt to communicate his vision to them and, in turn, must try to grasp their perspectives. Failure to do so will result in a distorted and inadequate expression of Being, or Truth. As Merleau-Ponty points out, "there is no vital spirit in gloomy isolated dreams; spirit only appears in the full light of dialogue."[66]

The world envelops and exceeds our perspectives, but we enjoy what Merleau-Ponty calls "perspective multiplicity" insofar as we communicate with others, for their lacunae are never where ours are.[67] We are all within, and open to, Being--Being is a "great mute land which we never leave."[68] Authentic language--language which inaugurates fresh significations--takes root in this "land" and, far from being a "mask over Being," is its "most valuable witness." It is the only expressive process capable of settling into a sediment and constituting an acquisition for use in human relationships.[69] The philosopher experiences within himself the need to speak, and in responding to that need, "continues an effort of articulation which is the Being of every being."[70]

That men possess the sheer power of expressing--an "irrational power" which creates and conveys meanings--Merleau-Ponty regards as "an ultimate fact" which must be recognized.[71] It is this "power"

which unites men in a "brotherhood of expression" and points to the essential universality of life, in virtue of which "that which is most our own"—our unique contact with Being—becomes a universal means of apprehending and conveying significances: a means of understanding and making something understood, of seeing and presenting something to be seen.[72]

The "place" from which a man speaks, that "world in the world" born of his own inherence in Being, is unlocked to other men precisely to the extent that he speaks authentically, because "speech is a relation to Being through a being."[73] The world in which expression embodies itself in art or language is the everyday world of customs, laws, works, and the relationships upon which these rest. There is a reciprocal relationship between expression and this everyday world—they shape one another; hence, the previously mentioned need for a human world if there is to be true speech. Such speech requires a "mental and practical space." Expressive speech need not necessarily employ empirical language. Painting, for example, speaks by way of a "tacit language" in which the painter communicates his intended meaning and thereby invites further recreation and transformation from those to whom the painting addresses itself. Like philosophy, painting requires genuine intersubjectivity and involves its own sort of "dialogue," because "it is in others that expression takes on its relief and really becomes signification."[74]

Speech does not articulate a preexisting idea or truth; "the only pre-existent Logos is the world itself," and that world is radically contingent.[75] Brute Being is neither "fact" nor "essence";

its Truth is created in genuine dialogue, for Being is that which appears, and to appear, it must be expressed. Being, therefore, is Logos—"the language that has man," the Truth that is realized in man but not as his property.[76] Man is already in Truth and cannot escape it, because "Truth is another name for sedimentation"[77] and sedimentation is accumulated significance—the world as the "flesh" of Being and man, the accumulation of creative expression throughout the history of man. Logos is originating expression, authentic speech—the speaking and the spoken, since "expression is everywhere creative, and what is expressed is always inseparable from it."[78] Logos is therefore essentially dynamic; it is "praxis"—for "[a] word. . . is always a word with someone," and Logos is Being's Word with man. It is dialogue, Truth which "is known only through the praxis which creates it."[79]

This never-ending dialogue takes place in the perceived world. It is here that men experience "a truth which shows through and envelops" them, rather than being held circumscribed by the mind.[80] Perception assures man of "an inapperceived," a "hidden-revealed"—in short, an invisible of the visible.[81] The perceived world, it will be recalled, has an "invisible inner framework," a layer of brute Being, which is the "background of silence" that never ceases to surround expressive speech, and without which there could be no expression.[82] Just as an entity's sensible structure can be understood only through its relation to the lived body, "so the invisible structure can be understood only through its relation to logos, to speech." The "invisible meaning" is "truth that speaks itself at the depths of speech."[83]

For Merleau-Ponty, as for Heidegger, language is "the home" of Being.[84] Although Being cannot be "fixed" or "looked at," it manifests itself in the sensible appearance of "the sensible. . . without ceasing to be ambiguous and transcendent."[85] The invisible is precisely in-visible; it is "the secret counterpart" of the visible and appears only within the visible.[86] The relationship of man with brute Being is not a relationship of For-itself and In-itself, or subject and object, or effect and cause.[87] It is a primordial relationship with Being from within Being—a relationship of "envelopment" which is the origin of Being as Logos, Truth. Merleau-Ponty was well aware that his notion of truth was not that traditionally held by philosophers. Indeed, he considered it to be "a new idea of truth," "a new type of relation between the mind and truth."[88] It is unfortunate, therefore, that his projected volume on The Origin of Truth which was to "replace the notions of concept, idea, mind, representation with the notions of dimensions, articulation, level, hinges, pivots, configuration" was never completed.[89]

F) Philosophy

As I pointed out earlier, Truth is Being as Logos, which requires man's creative expression; and that expression requires genuinely human coexistence. Man becomes conscious of the nature of his inherence in brute Being and his relationship with Being as Logos, in philosophy:

> We shall call "philosophy" the consciousness we must maintain—as our consciousness of the ultimate reality. . .—of the open and successive community of alter egos living, speaking, and thinking in one another's presence and in relation to nature as we sense its presence behind, around, and before us at the limits of our historical field. . . . Philosophy is nature in us, the others in us, and we in them. . . . it is the vigilance which does not let us forget the source of all knowledge.[90]

Hence, the dimension of philosophy is "the dimension of coexistence--not as a fait accompli and an object of contemplation, but as the milieu and perpetual event of the universal praxis."[91] The philosopher, in articulating "the ties of truth which bind him to the world and history," verbalizes the lived experience of his "tête-à-tête" with Being--an experience shared by all men insofar as all inhere in Being.[92] "Philosophy is merely an elucidated experience"; in making experience reflective, it prevents life from dissipating itself in ignorance of itself or in chaos.[93]

Philosophy "like art is the act of bringing truth into being"[94]--it is, indeed, the supreme form of that act precisely because it is a consciously articulated expression of the most fundamental, and hence universal, human experience. Philosophy alone "aims at the total domain of Being."[95] Expression, as already pointed out, can take many forms. Bodily gestures such as frowning, for example, express; but they do so to a large extent unconsciously and circumscribe only a limited experience. The experience which philosophy expresses, on the other hand, is the experience of man's envelopment in, and by, Being. The philosopher is himself that experience become conscious of itself. In articulating his experience in words, the philosopher responds to life's most general structures and creatively expresses the primordial Word, or Being as Logos. In doing so, he grasps basic meaning-structures and renders them permanent cultural acquisitions.

Although a philosophy belongs to a certain historical time, "there is nothing to prevent it from capturing--precisely through that time--truths which are acquired once and for all."[96] There cannot, however, be a "final" or complete truth, any more than there can ever

be a definitive painting to end all painting. Expression is by its very nature open-ended and incomplete.[97] This is so because Being is dynamic; it solicits expression, it "speaks" to man and must be expressed by man if it is to be Logos, Being in its Truth. Expression continually questions Being, and in doing so, "takes up and carries forward" the already acquired meaning-structures.[98] Consequently, as long as there is expression, as long as there are men capable of expressing, the Truth of Being will be Truth in genesis.

G) Expression and Violence

The full significance of the passage from Professor Langan's book, cited in chapter four, can now be appreciated. I have shown that man inheres in, and is enveloped by, Being; that his power of expressing Being in its Truth is what makes him truly human; that expression takes place in the world and requires a genuine inter-subjectivity; and, finally, that the process of expression is forever incomplete. From this it follows that Merleau-Ponty's man lacks pre-determined goals and actively <u>becomes</u> as a truly human being to the extent that he achieves an ever more adequate expression of Being, which is simultaneously his own self-expression insofar as he inheres in Being. The signs which point to such an increasingly more adequate expression are acts which tend to improve and express communication between men, since such communication is essential for the expression of Being in its Truth.

It will be recalled that Merleau-Ponty realized that a sign was necessary to distinguish between progressive and regressive forms of violence. In view of Professor Langan's remark, that sign can now

be understood to indicate the improvement and expression of human communication. I would go a step further and add that progressiveness is distinguished by improved dialogue not only of men with each other, but also of men with Being. The "tête-à-tête" with Being expresses itself creatively in a variety of ways, the most perfect being philosophy. Progressive violence is a violence which is instrumental in establishing a human community such that this kind of creative expression--that culminating in philosophy--is possible. Violence is progressive if it brings about at least the minimal conditions for genuine creativity. Earlier, it became clear that Merleau-Ponty considered socialism to be such a minimal condition. To the extent that violence had established socialism in the U.S.S.R., it had been progressive. The question posed by Merleau-Ponty was whether, with the advent of Stalinism, communist violence continued to be progressive, or whether it had in fact become regressive. Had Bukharin died for a new humanity--for a society in which the conditions for creative expression would be realized? If so, then the violence of the Moscow Trials would be justified beyond doubt. However, it is not always easy to judge whether, in fact, there has been a genuine improvement in men's dialogue with each other and with Being. Moreover, such a sign will not help the statesman in the moment of decision; for the effects of employing progressive violence can become evident only gradually, after the decision has been made as to which form of violence to adopt. As Merleau-Ponty said in reference to Marxist analysis, so we might echo here, "we still have to know what to do."[99]

What Merleau-Ponty calls "the inevitable violence of all human relationships" is perhaps better designated an ontological encroachment,

which is transformed into an ontological permeability in a truly human society. Earlier, I pointed out that this involves a perceptual intrusion (insofar as men's perspectives encounter each other in one another's "fields"), and an ontologically based conflict of opinions and projects. In view of Merleau-Ponty's remarks concerning the realm of ontology-aesthetics, this ontological permeability can now be understood in terms of men's common openness to Being, "by which [they] pass into one another"--"Being is this strange encroachment by reason of which my visible, although it is not superposable on that of the other, nonetheless opens upon it, that both open upon the same sensible world."[100] I explained earlier that, in Heidegger's ontology, man merely guards the "place" of Being's appearance, whereas in Merleau-Ponty's ontology-aesthetics, man engages in ongoing dialogue with Being. In the latter case, man's creative expression is necessary to structure Being. The structuring of Being already occurs at the level of perception:

> We express the world through the poetics of our own being-in-the-world, beginning with the first act of perception which carves into being the perspectives of form and ground whereby the world has an architecture or foundation.[101]

In order to structure Being in keeping with its solicitations, man must intervene in Being. Herein lies the ultimate reason for Merleau-Ponty's contention that there is a violence which is an inevitable aspect of man's being-in-the-world. The nature of man's intervention in Being distinguishes the adventurer from the statesman. The latter knows when Being's structuration requires a violent intervention in history. Since Being is coextensive with world, with life as a whole, man's intervention in Being involves intervention in the lives of other men.

H) Criticism and Conclusion

There are difficulties and inadequacies in Merleau-Ponty's position. Some of these are due to the unfinished nature of his work, such as, for example, his failure to develop a theory of truth, or to examine in detail the various forms of expression--such as music, painting, literature. In this area of his philosophy, the lacunae are indeed very numerous. There is, for instance, no analysis of expression--no detailed examination of what it means to express oneself, no full account of what it means to be aware of a work of art, no comprehensive investigation of the nature of a work of art. There is no adequate study of the relationship between art and philosophy, no argument for the claim that philosophy is "supreme art."[102] Furthermore, there is no thorough account of how the expression of the reflective grasp of one's life is an expression of Being in its Truth. There is, moreover, no satisfactory examination of the relationship between brute Being and Truth, and no comprehensive probing of the realm of the "invisible." Nor is there sufficient account of just what it is that renders philosophy the supreme form of expression; how it differs, if indeed it does, from any expressed reflection on life--whether anyone who reflects is by that fact already a philosopher.

There are, of course, other questions which remain unanswered. For example, one wonders what allows certain persons to express themselves artistically or philosophically, and what the precise nature of the relationship is between such forms of expression and the social milieu in which they arise. Like Machiavelli and Marx, Merleau-Ponty formulates humanism not in terms of the human <u>person</u>, but in terms of

man. The male implicitly sets the standard for humanity. Since creative expression is what makes one truly human, since the supreme forms of that expression are art and philosophy, and since, historically, the artists and philosophers who have been recognized as great were men, almost without exception, Merleau-Ponty's treatment of humanism seems in order. It blinds him to the basic question regarding the relationship between creative expression and social structures as a whole. Had he considered the question concerning the dearth of female artists and philosophers, he might have been led to probe the fundamental and vital connection between social institutions, socialization processes, and the freedom to express oneself creatively. As it was, he considered such a connection only in very elementary Marxist terms. (Linda Nochlin's essay, "Why Are There No Great Women Artists?" is very illuminating in this regard.[103]) It is also possible that, being a philosopher himself, Merleau-Ponty is biased in regarding philosophy as the supreme mode of expression of Being in its Truth. Furthermore, in a genuinely liberated society, the artistic modes of expression might not be the traditional ones. Merleau-Ponty speaks of painting, literature and music, as they have been understood up to the present, in societies which are not truly human. He does not consider the possibility of the traditional sort of art being replaced by an aesthetic form of society, that is, an aesthetic environment as such. Clearly, Merleau-Ponty's sphere of ontology-aesthetics, as it stands, is very underdeveloped.

Earlier, I mentioned the problem of creative expression in reference to Merleau-Ponty's lack of a radical "Nichts" of the Heideggerian sort. I queried the extent to which there can be genuine creativity without anything radically new coming-to-be.

Merleau-Ponty regards painting as an activity by which something which was "virtually visible," analogous to a human embryo, "becomes at one and the same time visible for itself and for us. The painter's vision is a continued birth."[104] Similarly, literature captures a meaning "which until then had never been objectified" and renders it accessible.[105] Truth is created when "successful expression frees what has always been held captive in being."[106] Merleau-Ponty occasionally even speaks of philosophy as a creation which is the "expression of the mute experience by itself."[107] Nevertheless, he insists that this sense of creation designates a radical creation, a creation which is at the same time "an adequation." Such creation does not rest on itself. Rather, it is a creation which is "called forth and engendered by the Lebenswelt as operative, latent historicity, that prolongs it and bears witness to it."[108] The "Nichts" which Merleau-Ponty is willing to recognize as operative in creation is not a "nichtiges Nichts," but a "fecund negative,"[109] a negative "pregnant" with possibility, or latency.

Since expression makes the fecundity of the "Nichts" come to be in a radically new way—as visible, rather than invisible—I see no need to condemn this sort of creativity as less than truly creative because it does not bring something radically new forth from a radical "Nichts." Creation, in Merleau-Ponty's sense, does make something come-to-be in a radically new way and therefore, I contend, is just as genuinely creative as if it had brought into being something radically new. The fact that something can come forth "out" of the visible "in" which it has been hidden involves a profound mystery.

In conclusion, I propose to retrace the main steps of my argument that, for Merleau-Ponty, violence finds its ultimate justification

in the realm of ontology-aesthetics. I began with an examination of the three sorts of violence which concern Merleau-Ponty: the existing violence of the Establishment whether overt or covert, the political violence employed to change that "system," and the inevitable violence of all human relationships. Since violence is already universally institutionalized, the twin principles of nonviolence and unconditional respect for others are not viable. Choice of action is therefore confined to a choice among different forms of violence. There can be no absolute principles, no rigid ethics; the only honest standpoint is a relative one (I pointed out how Merleau-Ponty's study of perception prepared the way for this conclusion). However, it became apparent that Merleau-Ponty's relativism is not a "vulgar relativism," that the absence of prefabricated principles does not mean the positing of a Heracleitean flux.

Since our choice is limited to different kinds of violence, the crucial question centers on the criterion to be employed in making decisions regarding its use. Merleau-Ponty's response to this question consisted of several guidelines—probability; majority opinion; promise of, versus threat to, humanity—and the decisive criterion of "progressiveness" (whether the employment of a particular form of violence tends toward the suspension of violence, whether it is likely to produce a more human society). When confronted with a choice among a variety of actions involving violence, the determining factor in that decision should be which of those actions is most likely to bring about a society which seems most capable of creating human relationships among men. The criterion of progressiveness, therefore, is based on

humanism--violence is justified to the extent that it is employed in the service of founding a more human, and correlatively, a less violent, society. It is allowable to sacrifice those who are a threat to humanity and to promote those who offer a promise of humanity.

In having recourse to the criterion of progressiveness, it is vitally necessary to maintain the proper balance between understanding and action, paralysis and recklessness. One must look the victim in the face, one must appreciate what violence means for him. Moreover, one does not kill for merely relative progress. Therefore, if revolutionary violence does not offer the hope for absolute progress, one cannot engage in it. One must question one's situation and attempt to respond to its demands. There is neither a priori rationality nor a priori absurdity, neither determinism nor creation ex nihilo; one must "take up and carry forward" those structures which one discerns as promising in the givens of one's time. All action is a response to a factual situation, and each situation has its unique and unforeseen aspects. Consequently, there are no ready-made answers. Since our actions implicate others, it is imperative to consider not only intentions but also consequences. Good intentions are no excuse for faulty judgment, nor does success justify everything. Even disinterested collaborators are guilty; one cannot avoid dirtying one's hands. Furthermore, means and ends are inseparable--revolutionary violence cannot employ barbarism, and can be justified only by the vital needs of a humanity already in view. Merleau-Ponty gradually became convinced that revolutionary violence cannot satisfy the criterion of progressiveness. Consequently, he turned to parliamentary reform as a more promising method of approximating the kind of society which he considered

a prerequisite for the development of man's "true humanity."

Humanism, as pointed out, underlies the decisive criterion for the employment of violence. I attempted to determine what humanism means for Merleau-Ponty. To this end, I examined Marx and Machiavelli, both of whom very considerably influenced Merleau-Ponty's conception of humanism. This humanism is characterized by concreteness, by a primary concern with concrete flesh-and-blood men. It involves virtù--a real presence to others and to our times. It stresses the need for creating an effective universality among men, the need for genuine dialogue, genuine "openness" to others in the sharing and shaping of a common world. Such humanism unconditionally precludes barbarism. It is a humanism which seeks to establish the sort of society best suited for the development of man's true humanity.

It became evident that Marx's Utopia is merely a prerequisite for Merleau-Ponty's "truly human" society; as such, however, Marx's vision proved crucial for an understanding of that of Merleau-Ponty. For the latter, a truly human society is one in which "true coexistence" replaces exploitation and community and communication take the place of social hierarchy. Further, there is a living dialogue and a mutual recognition among men. In such a society, relationships are based on what men truly are, rather than on money, power, or prestige. In a truly human society, the causes of war, exploitation, and decadence have disappeared. The inevitable violence of human relationships is transformed into a natural permeability. It is a socialist society, and one in which the violence of the Establishment and the political violence employed against it, have been abolished. The absence of

violence (except the natural permanent permeability), however, does not by itself guarantee the presence of truly human relationships, of a truly human society. For that, genuine dialogue, genuine expression, is needed as an essential aspect of real coexistence. To be truly human, men must have the freedom, and realize that freedom, to express themselves creatively. In thus expressing themselves, they express Being in its Truth. Ultimately, human relations are of value because only in such relationships can "brute Being" emerge and develop in its Truth.

Man's authentic humanity consists in creative expression; his inherence in, and expression of, "brute Being" is what makes him truly human. The existing violence of the Establishment and the violence employed to change it, must be abolished in order for true expression, or true creativity, to be possible. A truly human society is one in which there <u>is</u> genuine expression, genuine dialogue, through which Truth is revealed and created. Violence is justified, therefore, to the extent that its use brings about a society which is truly human in this sense. The ultimate justification for violence is consequently to be found in the ontological-aesthetic realm--that realm which deals with man's creative expression of Being.

It was necessary, therefore, to examine the realm of ontology-aesthetics, which I did with the aid of Heidegger's fundamental ontology. As in the case of Merleau-Ponty's position regarding violence and his conception of humanism, so here, too, it was necessary to draw on a large variety of Merleau-Ponty's writings in order to distill his stand--but here, the task was rendered even more difficult by the fragmentary nature of his final work.

It became clear that, for Merleau-Ponty, man is situated within, and is open to, Being; that being-in-Truth and being-in-the-world are inseparable; that Being, Truth, and man are primordially interrelated; that Being is the source of man's creative expression; that Being's Truth depends on man's creative expression in order to emerge and develop. The most perfect way of bringing Being to creative expression is to be found in art and philosophy. The latter, however, takes precedence over the former in that language lends itself to sedimentation, to an acquisition to be developed further, far more, for example, than does music or painting: "painting as a whole presents itself as an abortive effort to say something which still remains to be said."[110] I explained why there must be genuine dialogue between the philosopher and other men, if creative expression is to take place. I showed, further, that there is a reciprocal relationship between creative expression and the everyday world of customs, laws, work and love. It became evident that the human moment par excellence is that moment of reflection-expression which is the essence of philosophy. Finally, I pointed out that Truth is Truth in genesis, and that it consequently calls for a never-ending effort of creative expression on the part of man.

In its most succinct form, therefore, the argument runs as follows: since violence is already universally institutionalized, it is imperative that there be a criterion whereby a choice can be made among various forms of violence. That criterion is progressiveness. Progressiveness dictates that that action is to be chosen, the employment of which will be most likely to produce a more human society. Consequently, the criterion to be consulted in the use of violence is

based on humanism. Humanism (that is, Merleau-Ponty's version of humanism) holds that man's true humanity consists in creatively expressing Being in its Truth. But creative expression and Being belong essentially to the ontological-aesthetic realm; consequently, humanism is grounded in that realm. Since ontology-aesthetics grounds humanism, and since humanism grounds progressiveness, and since progressiveness is the decisive criterion in regard to violence, the ultimate justification of violence is to be found in the ontological-aesthetic realm.

I would disagree, therefore, with Professor Langan's observation that

> it is disturbing to find the philosopher of intersubjectivity and total engagement turning with nostalgia to the painter's silent, solitary experiments as closer to the real than anything he or anyone else can say.[11]

In my view, it was precisely <u>because</u> he was a philosopher of intersubjectivity and total engagement, that Merleau-Ponty turned to the investigation of art and aesthetic expression. The motivation was not nostalgia, but a genuine concern to uncover, investigate, and elaborate a <u>ground</u> for intersubjectivity and total engagement, a foundation which could provide the answer to the questions asking <u>why</u> intersubjectivity is so essential; why men ought to strive to make their relationships with one another more human; why total engagement is imperative; why violence can be justifiable and under what circumstances; why it is so important to engage actively in the building of a more human world. Merleau-Ponty, as far as I can see, did not regard the painter's mute experiments as closer to the real than anything that the philosopher could say. He did, indeed, consider art to be a privileged way of

access to, and expression of, Being; but he never ceased to think that, ultimately, the philosopher's approach in using philosophical language was superior, and exemplified the human moment par excellence. Merleau-Ponty's increasing preoccupation with the ontological-aesthetic realm, I submit, was an effort on his part to rethink his previous philosophizing and provide it, at last, with a foundation. It was a rethinking which involved a profound, a radical, deepening--a going to the depths, to the foundation in ontology-aesthetics. I consider it an irreparable loss, therefore, that Merleau-Ponty did not have the time to complete his persistent probing to the foundation in Being, that death overtook him when he had barely begun this task.

The contention that violence is not merely a political matter, but rather, that its justification must be sought at the fundamentally deeper level of ontology-aesthetics, constitutes, I think, an invaluable insight. Merleau-Ponty never "spelled out" this insight. Nowhere did he actually present an argument of the sort given in the preceding recapitulation (involving the steps: violence, progressiveness, humanism, ontology-aesthetics); nowhere did he even state explicitly that there is a connection between violence and the question of Being, of creative expression. However, I have made it the task of my thesis to show that such an insight and its corresponding argument can--and should--be inferred, or constructed, on the basis of the remarks on violence, humanism, expression, and Being, scattered throughout Merleau-Ponty's writings. Had he lived, I believe he would have rethought the problem of violence and presented such an argument since, as I pointed out, he clearly stated in 1951-2 that the philosophical foundations of Humanism and Terror still required rigorous elaboration.[112] This was the very

book which he devoted explicitly to the problem of violence and humanism (although, as a glance at my footnotes indicates, it by no means gave a full presentation of his position even as it was at that time). Whether, at the time of his death, Merleau-Ponty was himself consciously aware of the exact nature of the connection between the problems dealt with in Humanism and Terror and the major themes of his book in progress (The Visible and the Invisible), is a question which cannot be answered. However, since all the "pieces" for such an insight and its corresponding argument can be found in the writings which he left us at his death, that insight must be attributed to him. It is, I repeat, an invaluable contribution to the whole problem of violence.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER V

[1]The Primacy of Perception, p. 3.

[2]The Primacy of Perception, pp. 6, 9.

[3]The Primacy of Perception, pp. 7, 11.

[4]The Primacy of Perception, p. 10.

[5]The Visible and the Invisible, pp. 165, 168.

[6]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 183.

[7]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 179.

[8]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 170.

[9]The Visible and the Invisible, pp. 169, 178.

[10]Signs, pp. 239-240.

[11]Merleau-Ponty's Critique of Reason, p. 184.

[12]Martin Heidegger, Über den Humanismus (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1968), p. 19.

[13]Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1967), p. 176.

[14]Sein und Zeit, pp. 263, 188, 189.

[15]Sein und Zeit, pp. 220, 7.

[16]Martin Heidegger, Existence and Being (Chicago, 1965), p. 21.

[17]Martin Heidegger, "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics," in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, ed. Walter Kaufmann (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1956), 210, 213.

[18]Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, pp. 214, 215.

[19]Sein und Zeit, p. 230.

[20]Über den Humanismus, p. 19.

[21]Über den Humanismus, pp. 21-22, 45.

Footnotes for Chapter V (Continued)

[22]Über den Humanismus, p. 24.

[23]Über den Humanismus, pp. 22, 24, 25.

[24]Über den Humanismus, pp. 29, 31.

[25]Sein und Zeit, pp. 220, 221, 230.

[26]Martin Heidegger, Zur Sache des Denkens (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969), pp. 80, 90.

[27]Merleau-Ponty's Critique of Reason, p. 181.

[28]The Visible and the Invisible, pp. 170, 254.

[29]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 251; The Primacy of Perception, p. 187.

[30]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 262.

[31]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 265.

[32]The Primacy of Perception, p. 187.

[33]The Primacy of Perception, p. 186.

[34]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 252; Merleau-Ponty's Critique of Reason, pp. 181, 182.

[35]Phenomenology of Perception, p. 197.

[36]Über den Humanismus, p. 7.

[37]Über den Humanismus, p. 5.

[38]Über den Humanismus, p. 29.

[39]Über den Humanismus, p. 10.

[40]Über den Humanismus, p. 31.

[41]Über den Humanismus, p. 16.

[42]Über den Humanismus, p. 20.

[43]Über den Humanismus, p. 35.

[44]Über den Humanismus, p. 42.

Footnotes for Chapter V (Continued)

[45]Phenomenology of Perception, p. 407; The Visible and the Invisible, p. 260.

[46]Merleau-Ponty's Critique of Reason, pp. 182 ff.

[47]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 254.

[48]Phenomenology of Perception, p. 198.

[49]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 170.

[50]Merleau-Ponty's Critique of Reason, pp. 181 ff.

[51]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 197; Signs, p. 65.

[52]Signs, p. 67.

[53]Signs, pp. 67, 95.

[54]Signs, p. 59; The Primacy of Perception, p. 188.

[55]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 118.

[56]Signs, pp. 68, 69, 59, 42.

[57]Signs, p. 70; The Visible and the Invisible, p. 197.

[58]Signs, p. 66.

[59]Signs, pp. 68, 69.

[60]Phenomenology of Perception, p. xix.

[61]Signs, p. 240; The Primacy of Perception, p. 11.

[62]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 197.

[63]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 118.

[64]Signs, pp. 51, 77.

[65]The Primacy of Perception, p. 51.

[66]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 147.

[67]Signs, p. 52; The Visible and the Invisible, p. 187.

Footnotes for Chapter V (Continued)

[68]The Visible and the Invisible, pp. 128, 126.

[69]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 126; Phenomenology of Perception, p. 190.

[70]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 127.

[71]Phenomenology of Perception, pp. 189, 194; Signs, p. 52.

[72]Signs, pp. 52, 53, 59; The Primacy of Perception, p. 10.

[73]The Visible and the Invisible, pp. 180, 118.

[74]Phenomenology of Perception, p. 87; Signs, pp. 47, 52.

[75]Phenomenology of Perception, pp. xx, 398.

[76]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 121; Phenomenology of Perception, p. 397; The Visible and the Invisible, p. 274.

[77]Signs, pp. 109, 96.

[78]Phenomenology of Perception, p. 391.

[79]Humanism and Terror, p. xlvi; Signs, p. 96.

[80]The Primacy of Perception, p. 6.

[81]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 220.

[82]Signs, p. 46.

[83]The Visible and the Invisible, pp. 224, 185.

[84]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 214.

[85]Ibid.

[86]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 215.

[87]The Visible and the Invisible, pp. 215, 216, 222, 257.

[88]Signs, p. 109; The Primacy of Perception, p. 6.

[89]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 224.

[90]Signs, p. 110.

[91]Signs, p. 113.

Footnotes for Chapter V (Concluded)

[92]In Praise of Philosophy, p. 63; Signs, p. 158.

[93]Phenomenology of Perception, p. 63; The Primacy of Perception, p. 19.

[94]Phenomenology of Perception, p. xx.

[95]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 204.

[96]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 132.

[97]The Primacy of Perception, p. 189.

[98]The Visible and the Invisible, pp. 199-200.

[99]Sense and Non-Sense, p. 79.

[100]The Visible and the Invisible, pp. 204, 216.

[101]John O'Neill, Perception, Expression, and History: The Social Phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 50.

[102]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 197.

[103]Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness, eds. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New York: The New American Library, 1971), pp. 480 ff., especially 492-493.

[104]The Primacy of Perception, pp. 167-168.

[105]The Primacy of Perception, p. 9.

[106]Signs, p. 96.

[107]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 197.

[108]The Visible and the Invisible, p. 174.

[109]The Visible and the Invisible, pp. 196, 263.

[110]Signs, p. 79.

[111]Merleau-Ponty's Critique of Reason, p. 116.

[112]The Primacy of Perception, p. 7.

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