The Drama of The Political

The Political Ontology of Merleau-Ponty

Hazem Masoud

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Thesis supervisor

Dra. Sonia Arribas

DEPARTAMENT D'HUMANITATS

upf. Universitat
Pompeu Fabra
Barcelona

In appreciation

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Abstract

The study aims at perceiving the political ontology of Merleau-Ponty through the metaphor of drama that he used in various ways throughout his writings. Through attempting to read Merleau-Ponty through an interpretive framework constructed from Merleau-Ponty's notions, the study seeks to sketch out the political ontology of Merleau-Ponty, and to approach the question of political ontology from a differet angle. The study also aims at showing the importance of Merleau-Ponty's latent political thinking that conceives both the political and ontology to be in a reversible relation towards each other.

Key Words: Merleau-Ponty, drama, political ontology, metaphor, intersubjectivity.

Resumen:

El estudio tiene como objetivo percibir la ontología política de Merleau-Ponty a través de la metáfora del drama que utilizó de diversas formas a lo largo de sus escritos. Al intentar leer a Merleau-Ponty a través de un marco interpretativo construido a partir de las nociones de Merleau-Ponty, el estudio busca esbozar la ontología política de Merleau-Ponty, y abordar la cuestión de la ontología política desde un ángulo diferente. El estudio también pretende mostrar la importancia del pensamiento político latente de Merleau-Ponty, que concibe tanto lo político como la ontología en una relación reversible entre sí.

Palabras clave: Merleau-Ponty, drama, ontología política, metáfora, intersubjetividad.

Preface

If we attempt to read Merleau-Ponty with an eye for the political, a whole dimension of significance would appear. In fact, I argue that the framework for interrogation that I will attempt to apply is also a key to his political ontology. Interrogation, reverie, and reversibility show that dimensions of being and of corporeality are not separated but rather intertwined. The chiasm itself operates in different levels and dimensions without reducing each to the other. Through the framework itself there's an awareness of the intertwining and reversibility that takes place within Merleau-Ponty's writing and use of language. Thus, an interrogation of political ontology in Merleau-Ponty can neither be one-dimensional, nor exhaustive or finished. It's an open process where this attempt taken by the thesis is nothing but one different perspective.

In line with the interrogative framework, I will attempt to interrogate two domains first before moving towards "drama." The second chapter will attempt to interrogate Merleau-Ponty's understanding and use of metaphor in order to account for the significance of metaphorical language in his writings. Another reason is that drama itself is used as a metaphor to denote different things. It's only through sketching out his use of metaphor that we will be attesting to the significant import that it carries in his writings. The third chapter will attempt to interrogate his invocations of the "gesture" in his works and what it might offer us in understanding Merleau-Ponty. The fourth and final chapter is an interrogation of the notion of "drama" itself. I argue that drama consists of both metaphor and gesture, and through sketching them out, we can

see through an illuminating dimension on "drama",which might help us to reach some openness on the being of the political in his thought.

As far as I know, few have granted an importance to the question of drama within Merleau-Ponty's thought. It is hardly mentioned, if it is mentioned at all; which deserves attention by itself, since the notion - or the metaphor - of drama occurs extensively in his writings. The thesis, then, attempts to grant the term attention as well as pointing out its connection to the political and social field in Merleau-Ponty's thinking.

I am guided by the following questions; the first is how can we understand Merleau-Ponty's political ontology through his own thought? The second is the place of metaphor within his own thinking, and the third is the meaning behind the recurrence of the metaphor of drama throughout almost all his writings. Those questions are the main guiding questions for the thesis. The secondary questions within the thesis are regarding the dynamics and politics involved in the use of metaphors and drama as well as the politics involved between the metaphors and dramas themselves. As for the scope, I will attempt to impose a certain limitataion for myself, leading to focusing mainly on Merleau-Ponty's words themselves.

Table of Contents

1. What is Political Ontology?

The question of political ontology has received in the past two decades - even more - a special attention among scholars of philosophy, and in particular, political philosophy, with almost each approach interpreting the question differently. Hence, there is no stable definition of political ontology, and in fact, there shouldn't be one.

The varying interpretations and perspectives on political ontology play a decisive role in the plurality of approaches to the question. Both "political" and "ontology" as it seems, require interpretive efforts and trajectory, and in our case - as we will clarify later - an interrogation. We will briefly begin with overviewing two of the relevant approaches to political ontology in order to place ourselves in-between the landscape of political ontology before we embark on interrogating it in Merleau-Ponty throughout the thesis itself. I chose both works because they are similar attempts to elucidate the political ontology at play in the works of no more than one political philosopher. Michael Marder's work offers a great interpretive effort on the work of Carl Schmitt, while Oliver Marchart's work elucidates not only the political ontology of Ernesto Laclau, but also surveying a whole spectrum of works on political ontology in the past decades.

The main difference is that Merleau-Ponty was not a political philosopher per se. His late ontology, although open to the question of the political, and since he also wrote on politics, can hardly be defined as political if

compared with other philosophers whose life work is oriented towards the question of the political. However, there are subtle - or should we say invisible? - elements within his works that can lend themselves to a different perspective on political ontology. What I am trying to do is an attempt to read Merleau-Ponty through his own philosophy. In order to do that, I will try in this chapter to assemble a methodological framework from his various methods and techniques in order to approach the unthought-of element in his political ontology.

I will then conclude the chapter with a brief state of the art that would highlight the two elements of the thesis, the political and drama.

1.1 Reviewing Political Ontology

a) Groundless Existence

In this work, Marder attempts to develop a non-objectivist political ontology through interpreting political ontology in Carl Schmitt's philosophy. For him, Schmitt offers a way out of the "bird's eye view" of the objectivist metaphysics permeating most of the contemporary inquiries of political ontology. Schmitt's oeuvre is characterized by a quest for elucidating the political mode of being through figures such as: the sovereign, the enemy, the friend, the partisan, to name a few. Marder separates between politics and political ontology, where politics is the most intense human experience which defines the possibility of being human as such, while political ontology "... is an inquiry into this

experiential field, lacking any predetermined structures, norms, or ground-rules" (Marder, 2010, p. 4).

Another feature for this political ontology which wishes to escape the objectivist metaphysics, is that it cannot but be "... an existential-phenomenological reinvention of political philosophy" (Marder 2010, p.5) which is concerned with the lived experience of politics and its deterioration in modernity. This allows it to both critically analyze institutions as well as a phenomenological existential description of subjective experiences.

Understanding Schmitt's fixation on the notion of decision through this lens, he argues that, in fact, "... every interpretation is already an existential decision, which is necessarily active, transformative, and reconstituting… interpretation becomes one of the crucial loci of the political" (Marder, 2010, pp. 8-9). Interpretation, or political hermeneutics as he labeled, subsumes "...the question concerning the meaning of Being - ontology as a whole - under the question of the specific meaning of the political" (Marder, 2010, p. 9). The road to political ontology is thus opened up by the coupling of political phenomenology and political existentialism, reaching the conclusion concerning the meaning of the political as time, which would necessitate that political ontology be expressed only as a "groundless existence." The reason behind it is that such existence "... hinges upon the finite temporality of historically situated collective and individual subjects" (Marder, 2010, p. 187), thus always groundless.

A politics, then, that embraces this existence can overcome "... the crises and metaphysical impasses of transcendentally legitimated regimes and institutions" (Marder, 2010, p. 187). Through this hermeneutic journey of Marder's Schmitt that I briefly sketched, it seems to be as much influenced by Heidegger as by Schmitt. Indeed, both shared a certain "friend-enemy" relationship (Marder, 2010, p. 6) which is itself worth separate studies, but what I intend is the framework of both the problem posed; i.e. the separation of politics and the political along the lines of ontological difference, and the conclusion given at the end where the meaning of political Being resides in temporality. I do not wish to offer neither a critique nor praise for Marder's interpretation, but I regard it as essential for describing the landscape of political ontologies developed through reading certain philosophers, and through specific trajectories.

Some points of consideration, however, should be raised here. The first is that, along the way, some contributions to political ontology were given very little attention, or rather downplayed, and I mention here - for the purposes of the thesis - the swift passing over Merleau-Ponty's ontology and Lefort's contributions. The impression that Merleau-Ponty is viewed as an ambivalent figure under the influence of the so-called "post-structuralists," and mainly through Derrida's critique of Merleau-Ponty - coupled with Foucault and Deleuze's views on Merleau-Ponty as well - became a reference point on its own with regard to approaching Merleau-Ponty for years, grouping him with existential phenomenologists who cannot get over their fixation on the primacy and transcendence of consciousness. Most of this critique to Merleau-Ponty - and also criticizing him for giving an exceptional role to vision, and thus to

presence - focus on his early period, especially phenomenology of perception, and rarely approach his later thought, but only in the light of the former. On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty sometimes is treated as no more than a dweller in the shadow of Heidegger, thus referring to Heidegger directly would be more fruitful than referring to others - imitators - who had less "original" contribution. This consideration, however, along with claiming a groundless existence to political ontology would take us now to another approach to political ontology, that of Marchart's.

b) Marchart - Antagonism

Marchart's project consists of inquiring into post-foundational political thought where the center of inquiry is political ontology. Following Ernesto Laclau, Marchart's ontological quest places antagonism as the undercurrent of ontology as a whole. I will focus here on his work "Thinking Antagonism: Political Ontology after Laclau." For it is, as Marchart states, "... an exercise in political ontology" (Marchart, 2018, P. 8).

Marchart argues that antagonism, which is "... the name that was given to the phenomenon of social negativity in the tradition of German Idealism, early romanticism, and Marxism" (Marchart, 2018, p. 1) finds - beginning from his work co-written with Chantal Mouffe - "... a contemporary systematic treatment" (Marchart, 2018, p. 2). He then goes on to demonstrate the inseparability of the question of being from the question of thinking, fused together in the question of acting. This

question consists of a belonging to and simultaneously a way out of the field of political ontology, which is an obstacle in thinking the political - and politicizing thought 0 namely his formula of thinking antagonism. Political ontology in that case poses an obstacle in thinking antagonism so far that the "... social world is based on political grounds" (Marchart, 2018, p. 10). A distinction should be maintained, then, between political ontologies which are regional ontologies concerned with political phenomena such as the nature of political institutions, functions, actors, etc. and an "...ontology of the political" which "... would be concerned with the being of the social would as such, i.e. the politicality of all social being" (Marchart, 2018, p. 10).

In following Heidegger's ontological difference, Marchart argues that instead of thinking the political difference as simply modeled after the ontological difference - as most of the "Heideggerian left's" elaborations of political ontology - we should rather view it the other way around, it's the discourse of philosophy as such that was politicized. There is a convergence at play, as Marchart argues, between the political difference and the ontological difference, where the political difference emerged as a conceptual differentiation whose trajectory is post-foundationalism. Through his exercise pointed out earlier, Marchart tries to untangle the complexities that permeate Laclau's thought - along with problems of that thought, too – in order to find the ontological meaning of antagonism.

In this quest, Marchart raises some interesting questions and remarks that are of use for our research. The first one is the distinction between

politics and the political, on the one hand, political ontology and ontology of the political, on the other, which is an attempt at radicalizing the inquiry into the political difference, already inspired by Heidegger. One of the problems encountered would be the claim for the primacy of the political vis-a-vis the social, therefore thinking ontology in political terms. The other is the contingency from where the radical difference of conflict and antagonism arises. Antagonism as the negativity that is the source of social dislocation and which "... denotes the double sided moment of original institution and original destitution of social order (Marchart, 2018, p. 23) poses a problem for contingency, for how it would hold when antagonism, understood ontologically, would always take place within a prior social horizon?

Another interesting aspect of the work is the attempt to pose the ontological question in the terms of ontology of the present. Starting from Vattimo's reformulation of Heidegger's question of Being, namely "what's going on with Being?", Marchart utilizes Foucault's explication of the question of an "ontology of ourselves" in his lectures on Kant's question of enlightenment, in order to transpose the Heideggerian Sein-Dasein relation to the corresponding Foucauldian question of an "ontology of the present" and "ontology of ourselves," arguing for a reversibility between both of them. Thus, " 'what's going on with Being?' " is just another way of asking: 'what's going on with us?'" (Marchart, 2018, p. 10).

The three points of contingency, antagonism, and 'ontology of the present,' is what concerns us for the purposes of the thesis. Besides the

impressive work on the distinction between the political and politics, Marchart shows that such difference is still more or less inspired by Heidegger through the scholarship concerned with political ontology. His mention of Merleau-Ponty in the book is in grouping him with the group of French philosophers and thinkers who were influenced by Kojeve's attempt to integrate Hegel's negativity with Heidegger's notion of finitude, proposing "... an 'existential' or anthropological version of Hegelian dialectics, whose field of application is now entirely restricted to the realm of human affairs… Kojeve can define negation as the constructive act by which man, under the sign of his own finitude (or death), freely creates history" (Marchart, 2018, p. 23). I think this might well seem evident when we look at Merleau-Ponty's earlier writings on politics such as Sense and Non-Sense and Humanism and Terror, where the Hegelian influence - or rather "Hegel's Existentialism"[1] - is all clear, especially in his understanding of Marxism and his overall political view, however, not without a critical impulse that developed through the year and culminated in his Adventures of the Dialectic and his subsequent writings until his death.

Marchart rightly notes - in sort of accordance with Marder's view on Sartre - that Sartre was the one who embraced Kojeve's formula and radicalized it in Being and Nothingness (Marchart, 2018, p. 54). However, as we will see through the thesis, Merleau-Ponty developed a different understanding of negativity, in opposition to Sartre's. Overall, Marchart seems to be in agreement with Marder on the political difference and post-foundational trajectory of the absence of ground, but

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[1]The title of one of his articles included in Sense and Non-Sense.

I think would be more skeptical regarding political subjectivity as the locus of a new ontology of the political, rather, the politicality of all social being is the one to address. This is, in fact as we noted, is a continuation of his previous work on post-foundational political thought, which is also consistent with the Heideggerian ontic-ontological difference.

1.2 Approaching Political Ontology in Merleau-Ponty

This thesis is an attempt to interrogate Merleau-Ponty's thought through himself in order to excavate and understand his political ontology in a different sense. Merleau-Ponty's "politics of reading" is evident in his readings of authors and philosophers from Machiavelli and Montaigne to Bergson and Husserl, from Proust and Freud to Claudel, and even Cezanne and Klee. Such a reading that can be characterized as "coherent deformation" in a way or another, or as he points out in his "the philosopher and his shadow," excavating the "unthought-of element" in the thought of Husserl (S, p. 160).

Indeed, even his political writings, such as *Humanism and Terror*, for instance, starts its interrogation of the politics of his time from a polemic he carries out against Koestler's novel "Darkness at Noon." In a sense, the novel crystallizes the position he wanted to critique. In another work that's also dedicated to politics, *Adventures of the Dialectic* culminates at the end in a fierce critique of a political treatise by Sartre, which also in a

sense, crystallizes the problems with the contemporary stage of Marxist dialectics.

In choosing to interrogate Merleau-Ponty through the perspective/lens of his own philosophy, we wish to remain faithful - as much as we can - to the spirit, style, and trajectory of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, believing that his own work - with its openness and emphasis on creative expression - provides the means for understanding political ontology - and ontology in general. As with every great philosopher, there is a conflict of interpretations and positions regarding his philosophy, which also can be expressed in many different ways, like Being. The one I am trying to elaborate here is just one of them.

Merleau-Ponty's political thinking as a whole poses a problem for any scholar, for he didn't work out an explicit or proper political theory, rather, his political notes and ideas are scattered all over his writings, and even many of his writings devoted solely to politics were concerned with the concrete situation and its practical complications, rather than developing a full fledged political theory, and indeed, this would be against his who philosophical position. Thus, it requires a considerable effort to put them into some form or another, let alone interpreting them. Under these circumstances, and since his death, few works were devoted to Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the political, compared to other philosophers. Some scholars and philosophers would - for a time - ignore that he may have had any useful contribution to political thought, rather seeing his works as a mere ground for the more politically elaborated work of Claude Lefort, as we have seen in the section above.

Merleau-Ponty's system, indeed, attempts to evade closure. Through his criticism of the Western metaphysical tradition, he develops his philosophy as an open system that is attentive to Being. As an openness, we too do not wish to offer any closure to this system of thought, rather, we attempt to find different routes and dimensions that can offer as much insights as questions that may well remain unresolved.

Merleau-Ponty's polemic with the western metaphysical tradition is carried out through a quest for elaborating a "new ontology." This new ontology, or the ontology of the present, as Merleau-Ponty claims, is to be found in works of art and in literature, but philosophy still did not catch up with it. Philosophy remains caught up in the perception imposed by the old tradition, once characterized by him - borrowing the term from Maurice Blondel - as an "ontological diplopia" (TL, p. 90). This condition of ontological diplopia is characterized as an oscillation between two ontological planes; idealism and empiricism - positivity and negativity - unable to bring them together in one vision. Thus, his late ontology is an attempt to highlight a dialectic without synthesis - which we will encounter through the thesis - that he developed in his late works, especially in his posthumously published *The Visible and the Invisible*.

But the same thing can be said regarding politics, for politics seem to be lagging behind, too. Thus, Merleau-Ponty in his *Adventures of the Dialectic*, attempts to elaborate and draw the contours for a new politics, a "new liberalism," a "non-communist left," or an "a-communism" (AD, p. 310) at the same time when he was developing a new ontology

manifested throughout his College de France courses. His embrace of phenomenology in the domain of philosophy and communism in the domain of action, along with his subsequent attempt to develop of both in a radical fashion, is a witness to his search for a philosophy and a politics that would be more adequate in understanding and praxis according to the present and situated by it. With regard to the conditions of his time he states in an interview before his death that; "everything will have to begin again, in politics as well as in philosophy" (MPR, p. 390).

His preoccupation with the political is, I argue, an essential orientation in his philosophical endeavor, which continued until his late writings like *Signs*, and his course notes. As for the absence of politics from his unfinished The Visible and the Invisible, he already replied to that in his interview (MPR, p. 390-1), and the manuscript did not seem to be foreign to the question of intersubjectivity, which is at the core of understanding the political for Merleau-Ponty, and which we will show later.

In approaching Merleau-Ponty's political ontology, I will attempt to seek a different route that might well be close to the ontology that he was developing, a route that takes account of Merleau-Ponty's thinking about the intersubjective field within the shadows of his works. In order to do that, we first have to assemble an interpretive framework from the diverse notions and elements that he employed through his writing and thinking in order to approach political ontology through his understanding of the notion of 'drama.' Through drama, the reversibility permeating political ontology can be visible. This is sort of against

political ontologies that still rely on the Heideggerian ontological difference.

1.3 Methodological Framework

a) Philosophical Interrogation

The notion of philosophical interrogation makes its most famous appearance within Merleau-Ponty's oeuvre throughout the pages of the unfinished and posthumously published manuscripts of *The Visible and the Invisible*. Interrogation, which is etymologically derived from the latin *inter-rogare*, which emphasizes the in-betweenness of the question (Silverman, 1993, pp. 267-268) and serves as a sort of a radicalization of phenomenological reduction towards the ontological path akin to Merleau-Ponty's late endeavors. In line with his attempt at elaborating a new ontology, Merleau-Ponty developed philosophical interrogation as a sort of hyper-reflection, a continuous questioning of philosophy's unthought, or a questioning of questioning itself. But before briefly elucidating the ontological character of interrogation, we can also argue that it might serve as an umbrella notion that is deeply interrelated to the other two notions that we will discuss below, namely; Hermeneutical Reverie, and Reversibility. One of the most obvious examples would be his reading of Husserl in *Signs* under the title "The Philosopher and his Shadow," where Merleau-Ponty seeks an "..unthought-of element in Husserl's thought.." (S, p. 160). This seemingly radical phenomenology

as a "psychoanalysis of philosophy" (Kaushik, 2019, p. xxvii), will be explained below.

We should also bear in mind the increasing role of psychoanalytic terminology used by Merleau-Ponty from the period of "Institution and Passivity" course notes - which contains a long discussion and engagement with Freud, and where the term "Hermeneutical Reverie" first appeared, along with an elaborate discussion on symbolism - onwards in his quest for a new ontology. In "The Visible and the Invisible", for example, Merleau-Ponty reminded himself to do a 'psychoanalysis of nature'(VI, p. 267), while in another note he displayed an intention to develop an 'ontological psychoanalysis' (VI, p. 270) that would replace 'existential psychoanalysis.' Beyond intellectualism and empiricism, or between subjectivity and the world, there is a middle, an in-between, that is more primordial than the two poles, and which requires interrogation. This interrogation, however, is never finished, and it can't reach an end.

For Merleau-Ponty, philosophy cannot arrive at a final destination nor should it aim at constructing a system, because the philosopher is responding to what his present time offers him, and it's from his present perception that he communicates with the past, thus expressing the present in new meanings. Later, we will discuss Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the past and the notion of institution.
The philosopher, then, isn't cut off from his situation and being, but rather expresses them. Hence, philosophical interrogation is both interrogative and interrogated. In fact, Merleau-Ponty regards not only

philosophy, but perception itself as interrogative (VI, p. 103). But first, we have to first identify the elements at play.

Merleau-Ponty chose to start from the in-between of the obvious, that is from perceptual faith itself. The first lines characterize the attitude of perceptual faith common to both the philosopher and the natural man as "we see things themselves, the world is what we see" (VI, p.3).

However, when we start to raise questions about the nature of these words, what is "we"? What is "seeing"? And what is the "world" or "things"? We start to face numerous difficulties and complications. A philosophy of reflection is, in his opinion, while attempting to answer the questions it encounters and thus interrogate the world, it still operates with a perceptual faith. It falls short of itself, since it introduces without awareness a dichotomy between a subject and an object, a perceiver and a perceived, without interrogating the initial openness which allowed us to be implicated in the world and have perceptual faith, in the first place. The solution for this impasse of philosophical reflection is only through a hyper-reflection.

Hyper-reflection is a sort of reflection that would "... take itself and the changes it introduces into the spectacle into account" (VI, p. 38). It does not assume a detached position from its world, rather it would allow a suspension of perceptual faith only to see the relations that bind it to the world. It would take into account its own implication, thus it takes the route in-between in order to question the world. In its process of reflection it attempts to arrive at the signification of the world while fully

aware that it might not and will not arrive at it. This is one core element of philosophical interrogation which would constitute part of our framework.

Interrogation, thus, is philosophy interrogating the perceptual faith about itself, and in doing so, no answer can satisfy its questions. It questions the silence in the world. If our perception is already interrogative, and if the world exists in an "interrogative mode," (VI, p. 103) it thus takes into account both its existence in the world and the world in it. Thus, abandoning the 'naive' reflective analysis (VI, p. 34) that satisfies itself in reaching a certain destination or positive meaning, can only be achieved through continuous interrogation. Philosophy, in that case, "... does not raise questions and does not provide answers that would little by little fill in the blanks" (VI, p. 105). But an interrogation can also take another shape, as the case in reading another philosopher.

In his essay "The Philosopher and his Shadow," Merleau-Ponty embarks on an interrogation of Husserlian phenomenology and Husserl's thought itself. Interrogating Husserl, he remarks that in his late works, there is an "unthought-of element… which is wholly his and yet opens out on something else" (S, p. 160). This unthought-of element exists in-between the thought of a philosopher, which is - like the perceived world, is articulated only through shadows, horizons, and levels between things in space - made of similar articulations between what he said. These in-between articulations themselves are not objects of thought, thus they would be shattered the moment they are taken out of their milieu or subjected to objective reading. To be faithful to these articulations -

between subjective and objective readings - means to find a middle path that allows for the presence of both "... the philosopher we are speaking about and the philosopher who is speaking" (S, p. 159). Despite the impossibility of deciding at some point what belongs to each, it is only by thinking again and interrogating it that we would at least stay faithful to it.

This reading of Husserl's unthought-of element seems to situate itself in-between a radicalized phenomenology - an interrogation - and psychoanalysis. As we mentioned, Merleau-Ponty incorporated psychoanalysis within his framework, especially in his later work. We then have to look for a counterpart within Merleau-Ponty's depository that would complement the interrogative act; an interpretive key to the symbolic.

b) Hermeneutical Reverie

In hermeneutical reverie, existence is animated by symbolism that needs interpretation. Perception itself is kind of having open to symbolisms and their meanings, which attests to a baroque world (S, p. 181) akin to the wild Being we are in contact with, and which ontology - and political ontology for our purposes - serves to perceive. This intertwinement between us as humans and Being, that Being which requires creation of us in order to be experienced by us (VI, p. 197), a relationship of reversibility and chiasm.

This also helps us to understand, both as a background and as a result, the association between interpretation - hermeneutics - and psychoanalysis throughout Merleau-Ponty's works, where the psychoanalyst's work is a sort of a " hermeneutic musing" (SNS, p. 25), and as in the attention given to psychoanalysis throughout his works and especially his College de France courses, in addition of course to 'the Visible and the Invisible' working notes that we mentioned. Philosophical interrogation on its own cannot account for the wild Being that Merleau-Ponty is seeking to express; the imaginary and symbolic dimensions of this Being. It has to be coupled/augmented with interpretation, a psychoanalysis of its structures, and at its core; hermeneutical reverie.

In his foreword to *Institution and Passivity* course notes, Claude Lefort sheds light on several crucial points, one of them is Merleau-Ponty's reading of Freud. The outcome was an elaboration of the notion of hermeneutic reverie. Lefort explicates that task of the - psychoanalytic - interpreter according to Merleau-Ponty in his course notes as "...not so much to grasp fully the sense of a dream communicated by the patient as it is to clarify a part of the dreamer's oneiric life by means of - to use Merleau-Ponty's interesting phrase - a sort of hermeneutical reverie" (IP, p. xxvii). In this passivity course, Merleau-Ponty discusses passivity partially through the time of half-sleep and daydreaming while focusing mainly on interpreting Freud and Proust to this end. One of his arguments is that the notion of the unconscious is a sort of sedimentation of the perceptual life (IP p. 160).

In his focus on Passivity, Merleau-Ponty shifts attention towards a phenomenon that has been marginalized throughout the history of philosophy when conceived as a state. Instead, Merleau-Ponty perceives it as a "...modality of our relation with the world" (IP, p. xx). A phenomenon that lies in-between and opens up to a dimension of being where the subject is not sovereign, while at the same time not objectively inserted into it. From these sets of lectures onwards, Merleau-Ponty launches an attack on the roots of modern ontology while seeking to develop a new ontology that expresses his contemporary times.

What is, then, hermeneutical about reverie? And how is it to be perceived? I think that in his understanding of passivity as having a revelatory function with regard to being, it's hermeneutical in the double sense of interpreting the world differently and in contrast with traditional ontological framework - with its subjectivist and objectivist versions - and in being itself a dimension of being to be interpreted - or rather interrogated? - continuously. Merleau-Ponty, in his course notes, proposes the following;

> "Method proper to the understanding of dreams: reverie over dreams, hermeneutical reverie. Because it is not something said, but an echo through totality. It is this system of echoes which also constitutes the oneirism of wakefulness (cf. Blanchot's unspeaking speech)" (IP, p. 154).

Dreams, or daydreams, are connected to chiasm which is "... a relation of relations" (Vanzago, 2017, p. 49) in his working notes to the Visible and the Invisible, when he asks what remains of the chiasm in the dream? He then notes that, "the dream is *inside,* it is on the side of the sensible wherever the world is not – – this is that "stage," that "theater" of which Freud speaks, that place of our oneiric beliefs — and not "the consciousness" and its image-making folly" (VI, p. 262)[2] or in his IP lectures, emphasizing the reversibility of symbolisms, when he quotes Eugenio d'Ors "if life is a dream, the dream is a life" (IP p. 157).

c) Reversibility and Chiasm

Through the example of hand touching (VI, p. 204), Merleau-Ponty illustrates the notion of reversibility as a structure of sensing-sensed. The paradox of reversibility is part of my experience as an embodied being-in-the-world, where I am both visible and seeing.

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty points out that seeing and touching my own body are reversible, where the body sees itself being seen and the hand or touch feel itself being touched. Moreover, visible and tactile sensations lend themselves over to each other, implying a sort of a subtle reversibility, thanks to the body schema. Later

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[2] There's more to the relation between dreams and drama, and theatrical expressions that would be discussed later.

on, reversibility will become the dynamic through which the flesh operates.

Reversibility, then, highlights the activity-passivity relationship, where activity is not distinct from passivity, but rather is passive, and vice versa. In sensing-sensed, feeling-felt character of reversibility, there is also an in-between, a gap where the two do not coincide, or else they cease to be; they rather coexist and co-belong to each other. This is not only with regard to the body, but also in the relation between the body and the world, my body and other bodies, and within the world itself where we can witness a reversibility of its dimensions.

Thus, there is no internal-external dichotomy, but rather, they are exposed to each other. This would entail that something like a "pure" action would be nonsensical, for all actions involve acting and being acted upon, taking and being taken, there is no detached perspective from its situation in the world. This is most evident in his critique of Sartre's conception of "pure" action that guided his political engagement, and which we will introduce later.

In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty argues for the replacement of notions that are shackled with traditional fact-essence, subject-object, and sensible-intelligible dichotomies, such as 'concept,' or 'representation.' with a more spatial-oriented - topological - notions such; dimension, articulation, and hinge as evading these distinctions and in line with his new ontology that allows for the play of divergence and differentiation (VI, p. 224).

Dimensionality is another term used by Merleau-Ponty in the process of replacing concepts. A dimension indicates an event or a field which goes beyond the spatio-temporal particularity in order to open up on Being, revealing a way or a style of Being which establishes a unity of experience between me and the world (VI, p. 128). Merleau-Ponty's attentive and careful use of metaphors is not to be lost on us, but we will discuss it later. Depth, for instance, is one dimension of space where (VI, p. 219) it is a first dimension, or the pre-eminently dimension of simultaneity and the tacit.

The dimensionality of the visible characterizes the sensible, it incorporates the particular within the universal in a chiasmic relationship. Later, Merleau-Ponty would also designate the term "emblem" of Being (VI, p. 270). Painting is one field where dimensionality is illustrated, the painter's gaze which is directed at a certain relationship with Being (BW, p. 298) is sensitive to this dimensionality and in fact highlights it, even opens it through pictorial gestures performed by the painter. Dimensions are also in relation of reversibility, thus this reversibility is regarded as "the ultimate truth" (VI, p. 155).

In the Visible and the Invisible, Merleau-Ponty introduces a distinction between a good dialectic - which he terms hyperdialectic - and a bad dialectic - which is the traditional conception of dialectic - in favour of the former. The notion of the dialectic has been central to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy.

The bad dialectic that Merleau-Ponty finds problematic is a dialectic that admits to synthesis between its two poles; between a thesis and an antithesis. This dialectic "...wishes to be dialectical immediately, becomes autonomous, and ends up in cynicism, at formalism, for having eluded its own double meaning" (VI, p. 94). It thus thinks that thetic thought can recompose being, forgetting that a thesis is an idealization, and that permits it to define two poles as positivity and negativity while supposing the self-suppression of the negative through the movement of synthesis. The whole "bad" dialectical enterprise is thus the result of defining the meaning of the dialectical movement apart from the "concrete constellation," i.e. its meaning defined in thought.

On the other hand, the good dialectic - the "only" good dialectic as Merleau-Ponty describes - is a self-critical dialectic that is conscious of the idealization of every thesis and thinks Being as a "... bound wholes where signification never is except in tendency" (VI, p. 94). It understands that the "inertia of its content" through which it operates is beyond the dichotomy of pure positivity and pure negativity, it is a dialectic "... without synthesis" (VI, p. 95). The two poles are left in tension, which is not resolved in a "new positive," rather, there appears in the in-between of their cross-section the need to discover a being that is neither in-itself, nor for-itself, but "... the being that lies before the cleavage operated by reflection, about it, on the horizon, not outside of us and not in us… there where "there is" something" (VI, p. 95). Chiasm or the intertwinement bears both rhetorical meaning and an anatomical one, where in optic chiasma it is the crossing of right and left optic nerve fibers in the body midline without them fusing. This enables

vision to become binocular vision, where the image received from both eyes are fused into one.

Merleau-Ponty's understanding of chiasm is usually invoked against the identity-difference dichotomy. Instead of thinking according to one of the two terms, we should think according to the in-between, the identity in difference which unites their opposition, however without merging them into a "positive" identity that knows no gaps. Thus, relations between the internal and the external, and the seer and the visible, for instance, are chiasmic so far that in being the other, it becomes itself.

In Merleau-Ponty's working notes to *The Visible and the Invisible*, he usually invokes reversibility and the chiasm in an interchangeable manner, equating them with each other. We can think of chiasm as subsumed under the general notion of Reversibility. Merleau-Ponty describes the chiasm as "like the chiasm of the eyes, this one is also what makes us belong to the same world… which is not projective, but forms its unity across incompossibilities such as that of my world and the world of the other by reason of this mediation through reversal" (VI, p. 215).

1.4 The State of the Art

I will attempt to offer a brief reading of five works in order to highlight the differences between the current thesis and the work done. The first three works are concerned with the political thinking of Merleau-Ponty, while the last two works are focused on this understanding of theater and virtuality.

a) Modern Politics

Diana Coole - Merleau-Ponty and Modern Politics after Anti-Humanism.
Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. London. 2007

Diana Coole offers a rich and expansive reading of Merleau-Ponty's
political philosophy, where she engages with the question of humanism
in a supposedly fashionable climate of Anti-humanism associated with
what is known as post-structuralism. Throughout the book, coole offers
interesting insights into the affinity between Merleau-Ponty, and for
instance, the Frankfurt school in their approach/arguments regarding
politics, and most importantly, Adorno's negative dialectics. Another
significant insight is also tying Merleau-Ponty's contributions to, not
only his context contemporaries, but also to the philosophers succeeding
him.

What I argue is missing, however, is an elaboration of Merleau-Ponty's
political philosophy/ontology through Merleau-Ponty himself.
Two major divergences arise here; the first is that, by imposing Merleau-
Ponty's late ontology as a lens through which to decipher what a
politics/or political ontology of his might look like, one might miss the
political import of his thought and fall into a traditional reading of
Merleau-Ponty. Indeed, because Merleau-Ponty didn't leave elaborate
direct traces for a thought of the political in his late writings, one has to
rely more on closely interpreting Merleau-Ponty, or, in another sense,
interrogating him which is the objective of this study. This can be

understood when seeking refuge in one of Merleau-Ponty's students, namely Claude Lefort, who serves as a lens through which Merleau-Ponty's political ontology/philosophy can be highlighted while assuming the similarities and differences between the two. This takes us to the second point.

The second concern deals with interpreting Merleau-Ponty through others. Although Coole does a fascinating job in pointing out certain aspects of Merleau-Ponty's notions/political notions through frankfurt school, Foucault, Deleuze, and Butler, showing his influence and his affinities to them, for instance. This might also risk overstretching Merleau-Ponty's political ontology into domains beyond/or rather contrary to his philosophy.

For instance, when coole introduces the notion of "Field of Forces," which is, although interesting and helpful in visualizing the field of politics, nonetheless, the notion isn't used by Merleau-Ponty in any political context with that emphasis, and in addition, she doesn't refer to any place where Merleau-Ponty has used the notion, even if in a non-political context. At some point, one feels that it's an indispensable term used by Merleau-Ponty, although he never mentions it that explicitly, and it comes forward mainly through Coole's excellent interpretative skills, though it might be confusing sometimes.

b) Existential Politics

Kerry Whiteside - Merleau-Ponty and the Foundation of An Existential Politics. Princeton University Press. New Jersey. 1988.

Another important study is that of Kerry Whiteside. Whiteside's study on existential politics is a bold attempt to offer a consistent understanding of Merleau-Ponty's political philosophy through the lens of the peculiar existential phenomenology associated with Merleau-Ponty. One point of interest is Whiteside's clear elucidation of the context of Merleau-Ponty's intellectual progress with important biographical references, the context of his life and his political involvement, is a very valuable contribution in this regard. Another aspect is his complicated disentanglement of the elements of his political philosophy, taken in a chronological order of his works. This aspect, however, is what we seek to question here.

The problem here arises from two points.

The first is the lack of Merleau-Ponty's course notes and lectures, which were still unpublished at the time, and which offers clearer and more profound insights into his thinking as a whole. Merleau-Ponty's works, remaining enigmatic in a sense, especially his late work, is greatly supplemented by the lecture notes, which is itself not sufficient, but its importance lies in opening up pathways into a more fruitful understanding of his thought, serving as indicators.
The second point is the entrapment of Merleau-Ponty's thought within the existential framework, mostly associated with Sartre, along with

inclinations found in Merleau-Ponty's early works, strengthened by certain interpretations and climate. This view risks closing off some of the more interesting interpretations of his works and along his quest of developing a new ontology. Although Whiteside points towards the transformation in Merleau-Ponty's political thought, nevertheless, it could still be regarded as a classical example for a traditional reading of Merleau-Ponty, which is, in addition, concerned with politics without the ontological dimension, or rather diluting the ontological dimension in Merleau-Ponty's thought. And indeed, Merleau-Ponty's works on politics might invite such a reading, but only from outside, from the surface, not from the in-between.

c) The Paradox of Power

Frank Chouraqui - Post-Truth Politics and the Paradox of Power. In Merleau-Ponty and Contemporary Philosophy. Emmanuel Alloa, Frank Chouraqui, and Rajiv Kaushik (eds.) SUNY, Albany. 2019

Chouraqui's argument in "Post-truth politics and the paradox of power" is centered around Merleau-Ponty's remark in his "Note on Machiavelli", that "power is of the order of the tacit." In arguing that his political thought aims at overcoming the dichotomy of might and assent, power is introduced as a third middle term. On these bases, Chouraqui is able to foster the argument that his ontological quest would lead him to an account of "being as power" (Chouraqui, 2019, p. 184). There are three aspects that carry his line of argument further. The first one is the parallel

drawn between perceptual faith and power as both have the same structure, and therefore express the same thing. He notes that the reference to the "tacit" is reserved by Merleau-Ponty in discussing prereflective being and perceptual faith, which leads to conceiving them as the grounds for intra-ontology on the one hand, and politics on the other.

The second aspect is the political problem - where politics must take place in appearance - itself defined as the recognition needed to institute legitimacy. This requires understanding the relation between both terms, not as one ground the other, but rather in a reversible relation. This leads to the question of power as an ontological principle which requires: first a distinction between force; where recognition grounds recognition and power; where freedom grounds recognition. The relation between power and freedom is also reversible, which is a necessary condition for its institution. Chouraqui's argument is a reminder of Merleau-Ponty's lesson, as he argues, to view the ontological and the political in light of each other. For example, when we start to perceive intra-ontological grounding as power provides us with the "... hermeneutic means for understanding the relations of authority and being: the fact that we experience the real as authority and authority as the real" (Chouraqui, 2019, p. 194).

Overall, the argument brought forward is compelling, yet, I argue that it lacks a fundamental insight into the dynamics of the intersubjective field in Merleau-Ponty's works - which I will attempt to sketch a fragment of it in this thesis - which might reveal a "tacit" connection between politics and ontology.

d) Theatre of the Virtual

Emmanuel Alloa - The Theatre of the Virtual: How to Stage Potentialities with Merleau-Ponty. In Laura Call and Alice Lagacy (eds.) - Encounters in Performance Philosophy. Palgrave Macmillan. Hampshire. 2014

Alloa starts with noting the influence of Merleau-Ponty's account of embodied perception - phenomenology of perception in particular - on performance artists and scholars, although he hardly wrote anything about performance arts. The focus of Alloa's argument is Merleau-Ponty's account of the 'virtual body' where the question of ontological possibility - attributed to the influence of Bergson - is at the center of his chapter. The question of the virtual is surveyed beginning from the meaning of the word itself as "... that which possesses *virtus, possibilities,* or *potentialities* is, literally, that which *can* be" (Alloa, 2014, p. 150). He argues that the dichotomy of possibilism and actualism has been unable to think contingent becoming in any terms other than a sort of irrationality. He embarks on an elucidation of Bergson's account of possibility as an influence on Merleau-Ponty for developing a 'new notion of the possible' that would emphasize movement and force, thus related to the Aristotelian *dynamis*, on the one hand, and *virtus* which is understood as force.

Following this line of argument, he emphasizes that Merleau-Ponty's thought can be approached along the lines of a *kinesis* which transcends

local movement as a change in place but as an internal praxis of the body in-between its departure point and heading towards what it approaches. He notes that Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the body is linked to virtuality in more than one case, including the ability of gestures to construct a "virtual network" and initiating a theory of intersubjectivity. He then turns to Deleuze's understanding of drama and theatre in terms of the virtual and also its difficulties, which prompts him to replace theatre with cinema as a more adequate path in conceiving the virtual. He then sketches out Merleau-Ponty's understanding of theatrical representation and the reversibility of the visible and the invisible involved on stage, and invokes several arguments from other thinkers that work in tandem. In conclusion, the relation between theatre and politics is highlighted where the two stages are traversed by virtualities and modalities of what is 'to come.'

e) Chiasm as Virtual

Marcello Vitali Rosati - The Chiasm as Virtual: A Non-concept in Merleau-Ponty's Work (with a Coda on Theatre). In Duane H. Davis and William S. Hamrick - Merleau-Ponty and the Art of Perception. SUNY, Albany, 2016

Rosati bases his argument on the existence of some concepts, especially the chiasm, in Merleau-Ponty's work that would help to solve the theoretical problem posed by Aristotle's concept of *dunaton* (the possible). He first demonstrates the meanings of the term in ancient greek as something that can move, implying its capacity to do, and in latin as

potentialis or *virtualis.* He then proceeds to demonstrate the difficulties of the notion understood as possibility oscillating between pre-actualization and post-actualization. The middle way that he proposes is found in the notion of *kinesis*, which is the realization of an ability.

Deleuze, as the philosopher of the virtual, appears again in order to define the virtual as a "...real without being actual. It belongs to the real as a structure of reality" (Rosati, 2016, p. 287). What is different from Alloa's trajectory is Rosati's positing of the Merleau-Pontian notion of chiasm as a "virtual point where a visible that becomes virtually invisible and an invisible that becomes virtually visible are intertwined" (Rosati, 2016, p. 290). This, as he demonstrates, finds its expression in Merleau-Ponty's account on theatre, treated here as a metaphor. Drama, then, is the virtual space where the movements of the character and that of a role meet, meaning that the actual can be conceived as inseparable from the virtual which is ontologically preceding it. He proposes then a re-evaluation of Merleau-Ponty's thinking on theater, despite being marginal within his oeuvre which can help bring out a new conception of the virtual.

As much as Their contribution is valuable and offers new insight, there are two points that I would like to highlight here in the context of the thesis, with regard to both Alloa and Rosati. The first is that, although Deleuze's thought intersects with Merleau-Ponty's on various topics and interests, it might be distorting as a result of this proximity. What I'm trying to achieve in the thesis is sketching certain entries to the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty through his own thought itself. The second

point, which is crucial, is that the focus on theatre in Merleau-Ponty - especially within a political context - is risky. Of course there is a natural overlap between theatre and drama, but their synonymy with each other would only lead to confusion regarding Merleau-Ponty's treatment of both. Instead, I argue for considering the metaphor of 'drama' in his writings, which - as I hope the thesis would be able to demonstrate - is different from that of theatre, and has its roots within Merleau-Ponty's influences.

2. Metaphor

2.1 The Question of Metaphor

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is populated by metaphors, to the extent that it can be labeled 'metaphorical.' From his late writings, metaphors such as: shadow, encroachment, écart, hinges, pivots, dimensions, chiasm, and the implex, to name a few, appear everywhere. The most famous metaphor from Merleau-Ponty's late period, to the extent that it became the emblem to his late thought, is of course, the "Flesh." Even from his earlier period, metaphors such as 'hermeneutic musing' (SNS, p. 25), 'forest of symbols' (SNS, p. 22), populate his style of thinking and writing. Indeed, in 1946, right after the publication of *Phenomenology of Perception* his work was criticized - along other philosophers associated with existentialism at the time - , and it was noted that it should be regarded as literature more than philosophy.

A number of the metaphors used by Merleau-Ponty are borrowed from specific literary authors, most importantly, Proust and Valery, while other metaphors are borrowed from other philosophers but subject to what he terms as "coherent deformation" which in turn was borrowed from Malraux (PPT, p. 132). This dependency on literary language is manifest in Sense and Non-Sense, for instance, where Merleau-Ponty states that "From now on the tasks of literature and philosophy can no longer be separated… philosophical expression assumes the same ambiguities as literary expression, if the world is such that it cannot be expressed except in "stories" and, as it were, pointed at" (SNS, p. 28).

At the same time, we encounter an impression when reading Merleau-Ponty that he had a negative outlook regarding metaphor in most of his writings. To be clear, Merleau-Ponty never theorized metaphor, nor did he offer a separate analysis of it, yet, he uses it extensively to the extent that most scholars agree upon characterizing his philosophy as "metaphoric", nonetheless, with caution. Drama itself is regarded as a metaphor, and in order to understand it, we must attempt to understand Merleau-Ponty's thinking about metaphor, or rather, what is metaphor according to Merleau-Ponty? In order to address the questions that it poses.

Indeed, metaphor poses the question of meaning. In dealing with metaphor, we are faced with a multitude of meanings and images that might well lend itself to confusion. On the other hand, it also lends itself to opening new horizons of understanding and relations, to new possibilities. Thus, the question of metaphor invites another question, that of interpretation, not only of the thought and meanings in question, but of the being of metaphor itself. Expression that is creative needs an attempt at an inventive reading as well.

2.2 Overview of Merleau-Ponty's Scholarship on Metaphor

In this section I will attempt to briefly run an overview over some views on metaphor within Merleau-Ponty's scholarship. I argue that in order to start with metaphor, we also have to go in-between certain aspects that

could be representative, I assume, of the landscape regarding our subject matter.

a) Barbaras and Metaphoricity

In his *The Being of the Phenomenon*, Barbaras argues that, indeed, "Merleau-Ponty's reflection is animated in its entirety by the question of metaphor" (Barbaras, 2004, p. 194). He thus understands Merleau-Ponty's conception of metaphor between the visible and the invisible as underlied by "metaphoricity." In defying the classical conceptions of metaphor, which implies the possibility of a transfer between the two terms in a metaphoric relation on the condition that both terms are distinct, yet bear a certain similarity. In rejecting the metaphor between the visible and the invisible, Merleau-Ponty points towards a deeper ontological unity that envelops both worlds of the visible and the invisible. Merleau-Ponty's approach, then, makes this strange metaphoric relation present in order to "... draw from it consequences for the ontological plane: these are brought together in the concept of dimension" (Barbaras, 2004, p. 195). The dimension, which is a spatial term, represents "figuratively" a "mental event," is prior to the differentiation between these two orders, thus allowing for this metaphoric relation to be meaningful, it is a dimension where "... both are crystallizations, both are modes of differentiation" (Barbaras, 2004, p. 195). Thus, things already "... proceed from a general "metaphoricity." from a universal participation that they concentrate or crystallize in order

to be constituted as things. The dimension of sense, at once figurative and figured, is the truth of sense itself" (Barbaras, 2004, p. 195).

b) Saint Aubert and Analogicity

Metaphors, gaining their power of transposition from being rooted in the body itself as a system of equivalences - which we will come to later - belong "...to thought itself as carnal, as expression of the animated and animating body, and, hence, as sublimation of corporeality."
It is then against the ontological dichotomy imposed by the metaphysical tradition on embodiment, metaphor "...expresses—and in turn contributes to the composition of—an anthropological unity" (Saint Aubert, 2020, p. 134). But then, would not that impose a certain limitation to metaphor in Merleau-Ponty's thinking?

In thinking the flesh, since Merleau-Ponty conceives language as inhibited with shadows and silences. These are not metaphors, Saint Aubert argues, but rather figuratives, or 'incorporeals,' which is also the invisible that is the other side of the visible. Those figuratives "... are those dimensions (shadow, lighting, atmospheric color, reflection, transparency, relief, contour, distance, and so on) that support the appearance of the figure, that contribute to what makes it a figure, but which are not themselves figures as such" (Saint Aubert, 2020, p. 147). The figurative, as distinct from figures, is rather the matrix of all metaphoricity.
He notes that since the figurative, or rather the incorporeal is not the flesh anymore - for the flesh itself is dependent on depth and shadow - thus it

emphasizes the limitations of metaphor (Saint Aubert, 2020, p. 148). These figuratives operate through the in-between of things and works out their differentiation and unity, therefore contributing to the formation of their identities as well.

and since expressivity itself is dependent on these figuratives, therefore, in developing a new ontology that accounts for the invisible of the world, it's the source and the condition of possibility of metaphoricity, and hence the move from metaphors to figuratives.

c) Vanzago and the Sensible Idea

Another point of departure regarding the status of metaphor in Merleau-Ponty's works, comes from Luca Vanzago. Vanzago argues that we should deal with Merleau-Ponty's uses of metaphors not as a metaphor in the classic sense, nor in the sense of 'metaphoricity.' Rather, we should approach metaphor as a 'sensible idea.' But what would that mean?

Borrowing the notion of 'sensible idea' from Carbone, Vanzago first states that metaphor, though it is rejected by Merleau-Ponty in accounting for the relations between the visible and the invisible, nonetheless, it appears again in the same text when describing a language that functions autonomously from the thinker, not as tool at his disposal, where words would find their combination "...by virtue of a natural intertwining of their meaning, through the occult trading of the metaphor." (VI, p. 125). This "occult trading of metaphor," Vanzago notes, institutes relations that "...escape the free initiative of the philosopher" (Vanzago, 2005, p. 465).

It follows, then, that Merleau-Ponty's understanding of metaphor both is informed by and introduces an understanding of truth in language as non-coincidence.[3] Vanzago argues that this "good" notion of metaphor - in the lines of the distinction between "good" ambiguity and "bad" ambiguity that Merleau-Ponty introduced before, and in regard to hyperdialectic, too - is a metaphor "... connected with the idea that language is not simply an exercise in naming things that pre-exist this exercise, but is a way to *let the things be*" (Vanzago, 2005, p. 466).

Vanzago follows his claim that Merleau-Ponty, when addressing the metaphor in the relation between the visible and the invisible, he was referring to the classical conception of the metaphor as a figurative sense, in contrast to it as a proper sense.

But it is possible that implicitly, Merleau-Ponty was also suggesting another conception of metaphor which "... no longer separates proper and figurative senses, and, therefore, which grants the metaphor a function of truth" (Vanzago, 2005, p. 467). He finds inspiration in Blumenberg's notion of "Absolute metaphor" as bearing a resemblance to Merleau-Ponty's understanding of metaphors. The "good" metaphor, then, is a metaphor that brings something different to visibility, they are "instruments of vision" which not only allows one to see relations differently, but also, as it follows, it institutes new relations. Paradoxically, it "is one that was never heard before and, yet, at the moment in which it is spoken, it becomes normal, it institutes a norm"

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[3] " But we have to recognize the consequence: if language is not necessarily deceptive, truth is not coincidence, nor mute." (VI, p. 125)

(Vanzago, 2005, p. 468) and that explains why some metaphors would become a sort of "dead" metaphors.

The main argument of Vanzago regarding "presenting" is understood through the relation between Merleau-Ponty's "new" ontology and a conception of metaphor that forms an important dimension of it, as long as it "presents" objects rather than "re-presenting." Through this capacity, metaphors - in its connection to perception - can be understood as "sensible ideas."

The sensible idea is, unlike the "positive" concepts of the sciences, are ideas that seek to explore the invisible world and are disclosed through the experience of the visible world, in addition to literature and works of art. These sensible ideas are elusive and cannot be possessed completely because they are found within the interlacing between the visible and the invisible, or rather, behind the sensible. their manifestation "... cannot be separated from their retreat behind the sensible. They are "there," but as different from what appears. And yet this elusiveness is their mode of givenness" (Vanzago, 2005, p. 472).

This sensible idea, then, is a form of initiation to a dimension of being, and in that it is like a metaphor, it "...puts together what common sense tends to disjoin and separate" (Vanzago, 2005, p. 472) which entails its instituting function.

d) Kaushik and Apostolopolous

In rejecting the ontological importance attributed to metaphor in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, Kaushik argues instead in favour of the

"Symbolic." as a key to his oeuvre. Indeed, symbolism formed a crucial part in Merleau-Ponty's thinking. In conceiving metaphor in the classical sense, Kaushik rejects its ontological use altogether as posing certain dangers both with regard to reading Merleau-Ponty, and its dangerous implications within a context of a post-truth politics. The symbol differs from metaphor in that it is capable of generating meanings and relations - along with traversing contexts - without being subsumed by any and at the same time when used becomes invisible. Metaphor, on the other hand, is confined by a certain positivity in asserting its novelty, which means that "being possesses an original meaning distinct from ordinary meaning" (Kaushik, 2019, 127-28) thus can be misleading, especially politically as it would amount to politics of absolute power.

On the other hand, through rejecting the interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's use of metaphors as based on a metaphorical mode of expression, Apostolopolous argues in favour of regarding them as "creative descriptions." In holding that expressivity is a privileged dimension in Merleau-Ponty's thinking that captures something essential about the world, metaphor would be excluded because it induces certain insights into perception and distracts us into another plane. Creative descriptions are not ordinary descriptions because they both change the terms used and re-animates the norms of expression. In keeping in line with Merleau-Ponty's understanding of expression in relation to the meaning of experience, creative descriptions "... purports to describe meanings genuinely given in perception" (Apostolopolous, 2019, p. 254).

2.3 Merleau-Ponty on Metaphor

a) Merleau-Ponty against Metaphor

" A *direction* of thought - this is not a metaphor - There's no metaphor between the visible and the invisible (the invisible: either my thought for myself or the sensible given to the other for me): metaphor is too much or too little: too much if the invisible is really invisible, too little if it lends itself to transposition" (VI, pp. 221-22).

In rejecting a metaphor between the visible and the invisible, Merleau-Ponty seems to dismiss the notion of metaphor altogether, for its inadequacy in accounting for the relations involved in his new ontology. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty, as we have shown earlier, attempts to replace the traditional intellectual notions that involve possession of its object of thought by the subject, with more "topological" notions that would be more adequate in accounting for his understanding of the intertwinement of the flesh and its dynamics beyond a subject-object dichotomy.
At the same time, his increasing use of metaphors, as already pointed out, is still in question, for he seems to paradoxically reject and adopt metaphors at the same time, even before his turn to ontology, since his *Phenomenology of Perception*.

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, we find him dismissing the role of 'projection of memories' as filling the gaps of perception as "... nothing but a bad metaphor hiding a deeper, ready-made recognition" (PhP, p.

23). It is bad - and metaphor - because it is based on a circular argument in accounting for perception, because what is seen at the moment should be organized in such a way for me so I can be able to recognize associated former experiences with it. The notion then ceases to offer a coherent explanation for the phenomenon it explains, and ceases to be a notion altogether, becoming rather a bad metaphor. The empiricists, when attributing perception to mere chemical and physical stimuli, reject the feelings and meanings visible to perception in gestures, behaviour, convictions, and inhabited space, they reject the presence of a 'human' or 'cultural' world, and perception becomes impoverished. However, if we admit that certain characteristics of the intended object is the ground for all associations or projections, then, "... the 'human world' ceases to be a metaphor and becomes once more what it really is, the seat and as it were the homeland of our thoughts" (PhP, p. 28). The metaphor, then, is distinct from describing reality as it is.

Again, empirical psychology, which seeks to understand motion objectively under the notion of 'dynamic phenomenon,' does not take into account the 'body' which is a condition for motion itself and its unity, thus "... the metaphor of the dynamic phenomenon leads the psychologist astray" (PhP, p. 317). Metaphor in that sense is of dangerous consequences, it is distracting and confusing us from attesting to the lived experience itself. It seems that, at this point, metaphor is conceived along the classical line of thought as a lesser account for reality, unless it offers a fitting expression to our embodied perceptual experience.

Barbaras rightly criticizes the process of transfer carried out in metaphors, as inferred by the philosophical tradition. He argues that transfer can be only possible in the context of the constituted world, when the two terms belong to the same milieu and not yet differentiated. Indeed, classical conceptions of metaphor presuppose that a transfer can take place only between two circumscribed beings, which does not apply to the case between the visible and the invisible. It will express too much since, if the terms are absolutely distinct, there could be no relation between them, and too little, for the reason that in accepting transposition, there would be no divergence between the terms because it "... supposes an axis of identity between the terms - their adherence to the same dimension" (Barbaras, 2004, p. 195).

However, we also find Merleau-Ponty in favour of metaphor elsewhere; he seems to be less hostile regarding the understanding of metaphors, especially after accommodating De Saussure's ideas on language into his own thinking. For instance, in his *Institution and Passivity* course notes, fearing the temptation that these metaphors can be taken literally in relation to locality, he attempts to replace the spatial metaphors found in psychoanalysis with "... something that seems to correspond better to the real state of affairs" (IP, p. 232). These 'something' are not fixed terms. Instead of spatial, they are 'dynamic' metaphors. The problem becomes not the metaphor as such, but what it entails.

 In his *Cartesian Ontology and Ontology Today* we find a favourable view of metaphor when it comes to the disclosure of the visible world through speech. Speech - an "intelligible mouthful" - bears a certain

signification that is not "... an "the idea of intellect," but a signification that is a metaphor, put in relation to everything that our habits and our regulations [contrôles] separate" (PPT, p. 121). Signification, thus, becomes metaphorical, and to speak of the 'style' of the landscape - which is invaded by words - before our eyes, is "... to form a metaphor" (VI, p. 155). But before we try to interrogate the relation between metaphor and meaning, I think we first have to ask the question: what is expression?

b) Metaphor and Expression

For Merleau-Ponty, expression is another all-encompassing term that permeates the entirety of his thought. Indeed, the question of expressivity posed itself in all domains of life, especially after the shocking experience of WWII and its consequences. For Merleau-Ponty, expression accounts for a reversible movement from the internal to the external and from the external to the internal, breaking up the traditional dichotomy that separates the inner world from the outer. In speech, works of art, politics, religion, history, and most importantly the perceived thing and the living body; all of them participate in the ontological structure of expression where meaning emerges. There is no living body, or speech, or a perceived thing that is not pregnant with meanings calling for their expression in various ways, and at the same time, there is no meaning unless it's expressed and embodied.

This means that the phenomenon of expression does not take place outside of a certain context, or rather a situation. In his description of the experience of depth, Merleau-Ponty defines the constituent elements as motive and decision.

In taking up the example of a journey, Merleau-Ponty attempts to illustrate the relation between motive and decision. The journey, is motivated when;

> "... it has its origin in certain given facts, not in so far as these facts by themselves have the physical power to bring it about, but in that they provide reasons for undertaking it. The motive is an antecedent which acts only through its significance, and it must be added that it is the decision which affirms the validity of this significance and gives it its force and efficacy" (PhP, p. 301).

Thus, both motive and decision constitute the two elements of a situation, where "the former is the situation as a fact, the second the situation undertaken" (PhP, p. 302). This means that there is a reciprocity between motivating and motivated, and it is the same relationship, argues Merleau-Ponty, that exists between the experience of convergence, or apparent size, and that of depth. This is in virtue of describing the phenomenon of depth according to cerebral physiology. Merleau-Ponty further argues that the motivating and the motivated communicate through their significance. Expressivity, too, is the "...property that a phenomenon has to disclose, through its internal arrangement… another [phenomenon] that is not and was never even actually given" (SWWE, p. 21).

The body works out the impression of the phenomenon perceived or lived and expresses it; in behaviour, in speech, in thematization, or in action. This takes place at the nexus of my embodied perception at the moment of lived experience. There is a background of sedimentation of meanings, sensations, and images accumulated through the perceptual, social, and the conceptual tradition that I inherit. In addition, my past experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon finds its own expression in the unconscious. This is where a creative expression is born, and Merleau-Ponty argues, that:

> "The process of expression, when it is successful, does not merely leave for the reader and the writer himself a kind of reminder, it brings the meaning into existence as a thing at the very heart of the text, it brings it to life in an organism of words, establishing it in the writer or the reader as a new sense organ, opening a new field or a new dimension to our experience" (PhP, p. 212).

For our part, metaphor is also an expression, a creative one indeed. It breaks up the internal-external dichotomy and operates through a sedimented - instituted - depository, while at the same time opening up new dimensions of being.
 But as an expression, it is still facing the same problems that face expressivity as such. The main problem is that expression faces two problems; the problem of finding in the things what it has already wanted to find, and a paradox which "... lies in the relation between the actual expression and *what is yet to be expressed*... between what is yet to be

expressed and its means, ways, forms… the "ready-made expressions," in which something is already expressed" (Waldenfels, 2000, p. 91). How can metaphor - and expression in general - interact with this question?

There is another aspect that Merleau-Ponty glimpses, which is a conception of an operative language. For instance, in our own speaking, we do not think about the structure of language, nor do we think about what we say, rather, it seems that signification itself works when we stop conceiving it as a code, and starts when we become mere operators of the words we utter. Operative language is the language that "... makes us think, and living thought magically finds its words." In fact, thought and language are not two distinct orders, but each of them is split into two and encroaches on each other, there is "... sensible speech, which is called thought, and abortive speech, which is called language" (S, p. 18). At the same time, there is an inarticulate thought and an accomplished thought, thus expression takes place not between thought and language, but rather between thinking language and speaking thought. The parallel pathways of thought and language are not the cause for speech, but "... it is because we speak that they are parallel" (S, p. 18).

In this operative language, what is considered is the reversibility between the visible and the lived experience on the one side, and language on the other. Through the exchange played out between silence and speech, operative language thus does not need a translation into signification and thoughts, it is rather;

"... that language-thing which counts as an arm, as action, as offense and as seduction because it brings to the surface all the deep-rooted relations of the lived experience wherein it takes form, and which is the language of life and of action but also that of literature and of poetry—then this logos is an absolutely universal theme, it is the theme of philosophy" (VI, p. 126).

The development of an operative language might be one solution offered by Merleau-Ponty to the paradox of expression. As a language of life and action, as well as literature and poetry, it too must retain a special place for metaphor and metaphoric expression. But considering this, are philosophy and poetry the same? And how do they relate to each other?

c) Philosophy and Poetry

Earlier on, Merleau-Ponty conceived of poetry - along with literature - as a "variety of existence," it uses "a particular language, in such a way that the existential modulation… finds in poetic art a means of making itself eternal" (PhP, p. 174). But one of the most interesting remarks comes later on, in his discussion of Schelling. In *Nature* course notes, Merleau-Ponty discusses Schelling's philosophy of nature and states that for Schelling, ordinary language is not adequate for a philosophy of nature. Rather, it needs a language that would capture nature "... in its least human aspect" (N, p.45) which means that it's as close as it can to poetry. Merleau-Ponty then explains that;

> "The philosophy of Nature needs a language that can take up Nature in its least human aspect, and which thereby would be close to poetry. Art is the objective realization of a contact with the world, which itself cannot be objectivated, just as philosophy is the discovery of an arrangement whose meaning is open" (N, p. 45).

This, however, does not mean that philosophy and art are one and the same, or that the experience of the philosopher is indistinguishable from the artist. Although art can completely objectify all that which the philosopher can only subjectively express, there is a difference, because "nature starts from the unknowable and finishes consciously. Inversely, art starts from certain conscious thoughts and finishes in something that can be perpetually taken up again" (N, pp. 45-6). The philosopher is aiming at expressing the world, while the artist aims at creating it, thus there is a divergence between both experiences; they do not overlap or coincide. Despite this, there is only a possible relation between the two experiences - of the artist and of the philosopher - as long as "... the experience of the artist is open, an *ek-stasis*" (N, p. 46). But that was Merleau-Ponty's elucidation of Schelling, what about Merleau-Ponty himself?

There are remaining questions that are still unresolved, and in the next section, we will attempt to interrogate them more closely.

2.4 Merleau-Ponty's uses of Metaphor

a) The Politics of Metaphor

Expression in general is an act, and metaphor as an expressive act designates a field of meaning where new relations are established, where perspective is altered. But both opening and marking up a field and institution are political. On the other hand, metaphor in the way it's used, reveals its politics. If, as Merleau-Ponty argues, "... political action is an act of one person upon another" (HT, p. xxxii), can't we understand that regarding expression as well? We might, in extension, argue that metaphor is intersubjective, and in some sense, public. But once it becomes instituted, it becomes visible while its metaphoricity hides itself, it becomes invisible, thus lending it to be conceived within the bounds of a theory of truth correspondence, as Vanzago argued before. We however, have to consider some initial questions that, I think, would extend our previous questions.

In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty attempts to designate that which "has no name in Philosophy" (VI, p. 147) giving it a certain name; that of the "flesh." In a philosophy which tries to escape the philosophical tradition - where one of its main tasks was to give proper names to things - what does an act of naming that which has no name mean? And if it has no name, how can we name it?

Can metaphor be the only "indirect" way in order to name that which has no name?

Metaphor also poses another problem, that of connotations.
This problem could be regarded as follows, metaphor is in appearance, the product of subjective use, or rather, creativity. From the outset, it seems like a typical phenomenological relation of intentionality that is rather ambiguous, for two reasons. The first one is that in living experience, a metaphor is born in the subject's intentional relation to the thing. But yet, it's unconscious, too; it eludes the consciousness in a way or another. For the depository that it stems from is both conditioned - in the sensible context of already instituted metaphors, systems of language, signification, perceptions, and feelings that we are born into - and free - in articulating that which hasn't been heard before, whether it had a name or didn't have, into a new configuration - in relation to being. The problem is that any metaphor might carry older significations and associations on its back, thus proving to be both confusing and distracting.

This conditioned-conditioning of metaphor cannot be excluded from politics or other domains, or rather, politics cannot be excluded from such relation, for one reason - among others - that Merleau-Ponty himself didn't do so. But is it a sufficient starting point for an interrogation? Let us start with the problem of naming first.

b) The Problem of Naming

Naming is not only a political act, but is also involved in the politics of the philosophical tradition itself. The philosophical tradition has always claimed the exclusive authority to name, designate and categorize as well. It has traditionally operated through finding the right terminology for a phenomenon, in which these terminology will supposedly correspond to the essence or truth of the phenomenon in question, thus freezing it and establishing it as an object for thought. In fact, one of the targets of *Phenomenology of Perception*; namely, empirical psychology, was criticized by Merleau-Ponty as operating within the shadow of Plato. He notes that the act of pointing out, in "... exactly the same way as the act of naming" (PhP, p. 139), already operates under the presupposition that the object pointed out is to be kept at a distance rather than approached or grasped by the body. This act of "pointing out" would only be possible on the grounds that the object is detached from its immediate existence; its "monadic existence" - in order to be "... subsumed under some category and promoted to the status of a concept" (PhP, p. 139). We can argue that it is also political because power is what names; it fixes identities, assigns names, categorizes, and limits fields of perception and movement.

Merleau-Ponty, then, aware of the problems that entail the act of naming and its philosophical lineage, seems to be going along a different route. He states that:

"In a sense the whole of philosophy, as Husserl says, consists in restoring a power to signify, a birth of meaning, or a wild meaning, an expression of experience by experience, which in particular clarifies the special domain of language" (VI, p. 155).

But how does it work?

In his inaugural lecture for the college de France, Merleau-Ponty argues that philosophy is never outside its historical condition, rather it is constituted in relation to social and historical modes of exchange. Philosophy then is an "... architecture of signs" that seeks to change its historical situation - which it does not accept as much as it does not accept its own past - by revealing it to itself. Thus, it substitutes for "...the tacit symbolism of life it substitutes, in principle, a conscious symbolism; for a latent meaning, one that is manifest" (IPP, p. 57). It then gives its historical situation access to a conversation between other times, places, and perspectives, and in the cross-section of these movements, truth appears (IPP, p. 57).

Although history cannot take the place of philosophical, literary, or aesthetic criticism, it is also through authentic writings that one can capture crystallizations of certain fragments of history, and in that case it is necessary in order to account for the extent of the changes it introduced and at the same time, was subject to. Philosophy, then, "...turns towards the anonymous symbolic activity from which we emerge, and towards the personal discourse which develops in us, and which, indeed, we are. It scrutinizes this power of expression which the other forms of symbolism

exercise only in a limited way" (IPP, p. 57-8). It captures those moments where meanings take hold of themselves due to its sensitivity to all forms of facts and experience, and in recovering that meaning, it also "...pushes beyond all limits the becoming of truth, which presupposes and brings it about that there is only one history and one world" (IPP, p. 58).

In conceiving language as a system of signs, Merleau-Ponty embarks on a more generalized understanding of this system as animating each and every institution. The cultural, or social space is now seen as a symbolic space, and accordingly, meanings are also latent "... in all the modes of human commerce." and since they are all systems of symbols, or symbolisms, then "an interconnection among all these phenomena is possible… and perhaps even the translation of one symbolism into another is possible" (IPP, p. 57). This allows Merleau-Ponty to perceive social and political phenomenon on the one hand, and expressivity itself, which operates on the basis of "the reciprocal relations between the will to express and the means of expression" (IPP, p. 55). On the other hand, to be actually corresponding to each other. This might also illuminate one aspect of the "occult trading of the metaphor" which was mentioned earlier. Such a philosophical stance, however, is shrouded by ambiguity, but what kind of ambiguity is it?

Merleau-Ponty, in fact, distinguishes between two kinds of ambiguity: a "good" ambiguity and a "bad" ambiguity, similar to the "good" and "bad" kinds of dialectic which Merleau-Ponty developed later. Actually, dialectic does not replace ambiguity in that regard, rather, it complements it. The "bad" ambiguity is a philosophy that - in its expression of

experience - brings dualisms together, so long as they are referred to one or more principles, where those principles serve as a final positivity that unites them. Waldenfels mentions Descartes as an example, where the soul and body mixture "... would still adhere to heterogeneous principles such as Reason and Nature; the novelty would merely be a composition of the old, of the already given" (Waldenfels, 2000, p. 94).

On the other hand, the "good" ambiguity would strive to express 'experience by experience,' knowing that the main characteristic of philosophy "... is the movement which leads back without ceasing from knowledge to ignorance, from ignorance to knowledge, and a kind of rest in this movement" (IPP, p. 5). Thus, this "good" ambiguity cannot be but expressivity itself. In the attempt to express experience by experience within the systems of symbols that we inhabit, expression serves as the transition between one symbolism into another, as between the internal and the external, and the background through which they operate. In doing so, it takes account of the divergence that operates in-between the signs as well as in-between experience and the experienced, and expression and the expressed. It is conscious of the exchange between speech and silence, which is the condition of all speech.

Taking account of the exchange between silence and speech, Merleau-Ponty adds the other dimension of Husserl's conception of language and philosophy. In addition to the signifying power of language, Merleau-Ponty states that:

"… as Valery said, language is everything, since it is the voice of no one, since it is the very voice of the things, the waves, and the forests." "And what we have to understand is that there is no dialectical reversal from one of these views to the other; we do not have to reassemble them into a synthesis: they are two aspects of the reversibility which is the ultimate truth" (VI, p. 155).

What, then, does the problem of sedimented meanings - the terrain of expression and metaphor - pose for creative expression?

c) The Problem of Connotations

Tradition - or rather, institution - poses both a problem as well as a possibility for metaphor and expression in general. In some way, an instituted metaphor - one that becomes part of our tradition - might persist for centuries, dictating our own perspective and understanding with regard to a particular phenomenon. For example, "time flows by" is a metaphor that likens our experience of time to the flow of a river stream flowing from the past towards the present (PhP, p. 477-78). Merleau-Ponty notes that this metaphor - persisting since Heraclitus - is extremely confusing, because it only works through the secret presupposition of positioning a witness within, or on the side of this river. But then again, the temporal relations transposed would be reversed, for what is coming from the source will be the future. The metaphor here, based in our tradition, is not only distracting from our experience of time, but also blocks other perspectives on the experience at hand, hence its persistence. It is a metaphor that carries certain sedimented connotations and

associations which block our understanding of it in a new way. How, then, does this tradition - which we find ourselves in - work in relation to expressivity?

In "The Philosopher and his Shadow," Merleau-Ponty begins his interrogation of Husserl's thought with a remark about tradition. He remarks that a tradition is established when its origins are forgotten, and in that case "precisely because we owe so much to tradition, we are in no position to see just what belongs to it (S, p. 159). Tradition becomes like a second nature, since we are born within its domain and are deeply formed by its perspectives, meanings and presuppositions, it seems like its origins are mythical, as if tradition is just the ordinary state of things. This applies not only to cultural tradition, but also to perceptual tradition. Tradition as 'institution' permeates all the fields of existence, from the level of the organism to universal history. Meanings, associations, and images are sedimented through time both internally and externally, but this sedimentation is also our depository from which expressivity emerges.

Indeed, our immediate understanding of and reaction to the behaviour of close ones and their contexts, or towards certain places, experiences, or objects, are the result of this process of sedimentation. It establishes an acquired world, bringing certain references to the fore without the need to recollect them from memory. there is thus a "...'world of thoughts', or a sediment left by our mental processes (PhP, p. 149). But this acquired knowledge is neither inert nor finished, it rather oscillates in a dialectic movement between itself and my present thought and experience, in other

words they are sustained by my present experience while endowing them with signification, and at the same time, receptive to new meanings and sedimenting them. The world-structure itself, argues Merleau-Ponty, "... with its two stages of sedimentation and spontaneity, is at the core of consciousness" (PhP, p. 150).

This depository that is always left by sedimentation is enveloped within the notion of institution. Metaphor itself can be institution - as we have seen above with the problematic metaphor of time - in the sense that it establishes certain dimensions in experience which would endow other experiences with meaning in reference to it. As a forgetfulness of origins, institution involves a double aspect of this forgetfulness; positive and negative, a "conquest of sense and evacuation of sense, realization which is also destruction" (IP, p. 58), and this dialectic movement of end and beginning involved in institution is "... what sedimentation is: trace of the forgotten and thereby a call to thought which depends on itself and goes farther" (IP, p. 58-9).

But metaphors are not only words, they also pertain to certain attitudes. For instance, Merleau-Ponty notes that in a psychological case, the re-emergence of the symptoms of aphonia was the result of a prohibition that "... restores the situation metaphorically" (PhP, p. 186). Situations, too, can acquire a metaphorical quality in the sense of a reenactment. It is not only that we use metaphors and in turn they have effect on us and on our bodies and behaviour through what they induce, but the metaphorical process itself can animate what we live through.

On the other hand, connotations carried by metaphors can be the very reason for adopting them, only if they can really express the phenomenon they describe. Thus, Merleau-Ponty would encourage taking literally[4] what - according to his reading - Levi-Strauss would take as a metaphor. In conceiving the social dynamics of reality as similar to physics, for instance, Levi-Strauss would stress the metaphorical quality of his words when speaking the language of "lived experience". Instead, These metaphors should be taken literally, for the reason that they refer to the "perceptual orientation of the social space" (IP, p. 74). In their literality, then, metaphors can offer glimpses of certain styles in lived experience.

Style is creative expressivity as a manner of being. Style takes up its depository and reforms it into a manner that is its own expression of its relation to being-in-the-world. Style, then, is not imitation or mimicry, it imitates and works out this imitation into something different; a style that can be instituted and be imitated later, just like works of art. We can also say that, not only that a style is metaphorical in a sense, but also that certain metaphors, as instituted, have developed a style of their own. Waldenfels remarks that "an expression that would owe everything to what is to be expressed would no longer be a *creative* expression, while a creation that would owe nothing at all to what is to be expressed would no longer be a *creative* expression... the event of expression always moves between two extremes" (Waldenfels, 2000, pp. 95-6). As Merleau-Ponty argues;

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[4] Emmanuel de Saint Aubert adopted a "methodological principle" based on taking metaphors literally throughout his works.

" "All style is that giving form to elements of the world which permits the orientation of these elements towards one of the essential parts of the form." There is signification when we submit the data of the world to a "coherent deformation" " (S, p. 54).

In the painter's perception, for example, all the intellectual and visible vectors of his painting converge towards the same signification. This style does not begin before the painter's perception in some internal laboratory accessible only for him, rather, it takes place as soon as he perceives, when certain arrangements of gaps, vectors, axes, figures and grounds, and norms and their deviations take shape. At the moment when the specific elements in the world gain a dimensional value, through which we can establish relations with other dimensions and start to express those relations and experiences in the language of this dimension, this is when the painter's style is instituted.

Style, for the painter, is a "... system of equivalences that he makes for himself for the work which manifests the world he sees. It is the universal index of the "coherent deformation" by which he concentrates the still scattered meaning of his perception and makes it exist expressly" (S, p. 54-55).

How then does Merleau-Ponty read the other metaphors that he uses? What is involved in Merleau-Ponty's politics of reading, or rather his "metaphorical" style?

The writer, as much as the painter, has a style. They both express their experience of being in similar fashion. But the writer here is not an exclusive term for literary authors, rather they include philosophy as well. As early as his Sense and Non-Sense, Merleau-Ponty announces that the tasks of both literature and philosophy cannot be separated anymore. Both philosophical and literary expressions are engaging with the same ambiguities, "... if the world is such that it cannot be expressed except in "stories" and, as it were, pointed at" (SNS, p. 28). This commitment to and assumption of ambiguities might form hybrid modes of expression, where both theater and the novel will open up new dimensions of being. In addition to that, they all operate according to a certain "coherent deformation."

In his discussion of literature, Merleau-Ponty likens the expressivity of the writer to that of the painter. In both their works, they shape the reality that they see, and in doing so, they bring what is lived and known to the fore into a new light. This becomes a passage into the imaginary, not as a visible thing but rather as a dimension, or a coherent deformation. For Merleau-Ponty, what is important in this notion is this coherency that allows this act of deformation to overlap between landscapes, human beings and discourses in a reversible movement. This overlapping consists of diverse visible, as long as "... visibles and human beings include differentiations, reliefs of the same order, or are mounted on the same axes, participate in the same essences, or are metaphors for each other, even attest to "divergence" [écart]" (PPT, p. 132). This also implies the complex relations that are involved in the work of one metaphor on other metaphors.

Merleau-Ponty borrowed metaphors from a lot of authors and applied a sort of coherent deformation in their use. This includes 'chiasm' and the 'implex' from Valery, 'ontological diplopia' from Blondel, 'coherent deformation' itself from Malraux, in addition to those borrowed from natural sciences, or art. What is involved here is that Merleau-Ponty also highlighted the inevitability of this 'coherent deformation.' We then would ask a simple question; how Merleau-Ponty uses metaphors?

d) Spatial Metaphors

In a working note from *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty wrote;

> "The aesthetic world to be described as a space of transcendence, a space of incompossibilities, of explosion, of dehiscence, and not as objective-immanent space. And then thought, the subject, to be described as a spatial situation also, with its own "locality" And hence the spatial "metaphors" to be understood as an indivision of being and nothingness. And hence meaning is not nihilation" (VI, p. 216).

Merleau-Ponty emphasizes through his spatial metaphors the divergence that takes place both between signs and in perception. This does not pertain to the aesthetic world alone, for painting itself opens up the horizons of perception that is not flat as the geometrical or Cartesian models of space, rather it allows the perception of depth and colour; an

encounter with visibility and invisibility. In conceiving of a more adequate expression of the space of lived experience, Merleau-Ponty sought refuge in another conception of space that accounts for dimensions, folds, and reversibility; namely, topology. In contrast to the Euclidean space which - in its relation to the classical ontology - is a model for a perspectival being; a space without transcendence, topological space is rather a model of wild or brute being, where it is "... a milieu in which are circumscribed relations of proximity, of envelopment, etc. is the image of a being that, like Klee's touches of color, is at the same time older than everything and "of the first day" (Hegel)" (VI, p. 210).

This allows for deriving a whole host of references in using a metaphor of this type, as well as accounting for the divergence at the level of the metaphor itself. In addition, both topological space and in Klee's works share a similarity to each other, yet they diverge. But then again, are meanings and metaphors born in the topological space or in a canvas? Or is it to be found in-between?

As far as meaning is divergent, it does not take shape within a subject, rather, it is determined in others where the sensible world itself is only complete in the other's perception "a fortiori the social world and history" (IP, p. 136). The signification endowed to me through my perspective ends in other perspectives as well. In other words, meaning - or sense - is not deposited from an outside, but rather is born within the intersubjective field. Merleau-Ponty remarks that the meaning of words are understood "... in a context of action, and by taking part in a

communal life" (PhP, p. 208). In the same fashion, a certain style is disclosed to me similar to the experience of understanding a philosophical piece. It is understood only when the reader starts to grasp the piece's 'existential manner,' which would take hold on me through "... reproducing the tone and the accent of the philosopher" (PhP, p. 208).

Within this communal life, meaning arises in the exchange of expressivities in an intersubjective field. Speech itself is aroused by another speech owing to the power of "continuous metaphor" (PPT, p. 133). These metaphors carry out an intersubjective life through their divergence from each other, allowing them to give birth to other metaphors on their way as well. Expression both expresses and longs to be expressed. Thus, the 'metaphorical' reproduction of tone and accent of the philosopher, however, carries with it endless interpretations and meanings and opens up a space for creative expression.

e) The Metaphors of Politics

Merleau-Ponty also used metaphors in regard to his political writings. There are two metaphors that I would like to single out for their intertwinement with philosophy.

In his "Note on Machiavelli," Merleau-Ponty made the striking remark that, "power is of the order of the tacit" (S, p. 212). In describing power as belonging to the tacit might mean that there is a visible and invisible of the intersubjective field. If belonging to the order of the tacit, this means that power cannot be visible, it manifests itself in the visible but at the same time belongs to a hidden dimension of the intersubjective field. We might as well think of it the other way round in reversibility, as the invisible is power that allows for the visible to be visible in the first place. This order of the tacit also carries with it a play in-between the signs of 'power' and 'tacit.' In-between the two there is a tension between appearance and hiding. But there is another relation involved; the relation between politics and philosophy in Merleau-Ponty's use of metaphors. Indeed, the symbolisms involved allow for such an exchange, but the question is also concerning Merleau-Ponty's own thought.

The other metaphor we approach is that of 'ruins.' Merleau-Ponty used it in two different contexts at around the same time[5]. The first was in his preface to *Signs* where he was contemplating the political world of certain ideals and institutions in the time of writing. The ruins of this political world (S, p. 23) is in fact, he remarks, not ruins for those who are younger, rather for them, it is the order of things. This implies that they would be able to dwell through it freely. On the other hand, we find in a working note in the Visible and the Invisible, he writes; "Start from the present: contradictions etc. ruin of philosophy" (VI, p. 183) - both attest to the same problems, but ruins are also past institution, it seems

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[5] This was around the same time he gave the interview that we mentioned in the previous chapter.

that Merleau-Ponty here is emphasizing the transitional quality of his time, which neither philosophy nor politics has grasped its ontology. But what could a philosophy which dwells in-between ruins look like? The remark he made on the future is quite impressive, but how would that influence this ontology?

All these terms used by Merleau-Ponty, were also metaphors, but in different senses, for different purposes. Metaphors are used to describe or highlight the work and dynamics of metaphors themselves, and expressivity. It is expressivity reflecting on its own expressivity.

2.5 Metaphor and Mimesis?

So far we sketched out a fragment of Merleau-Ponty's thought and usage of metaphor with different implications, too. Merleau-Ponty uses metaphors carefully, to the extent of literality. We can think about it in several ways, for language understood so far is not an instrument, it is an act, a manifestation, and has a life of its own. It is hard to understand metaphor as an "instrument of vision," rather, it is more as a "vision in-between" things (Saint Aubert, 2020, p. 126). That being said, and according to Merleau-Ponty where "Vision is a style" (PPT, p. 132-3) we would be sure that there is no metaphor in the traditional sense could be between the visible and the invisible.

The problematic metaphor of the Flesh, in fact, invites the question of mimesis. One of the ways to think about it is that, against a theory of truth correspondence, metaphor in Merleau-Ponty breaks up the mimetic

relation that characterizes the traditional conception of metaphor. Thanks to divergence (écart), the metaphor does not coincide with an "outside" original sign that corresponds to what it signifies.

At the same time, Saint Aubert argues that the body is the condition of metaphoricity as such, since the body schema is a system of equivalents where senses correspond to each other - which we will encounter this notion in the next chapter - which raises the question of analogicity is raised regarding the work of metaphor as such. He shows that later, with the advent of his conception of the flesh, Merleau-Ponty, in his last published essay; *Eye and Mind*, invoked the notion of "effective resemblance." where analogicity becomes "... the fruit encounter between flesh and being, the common depth of their respective polymorphism" (Saint Aubert, 2020, p. 151). This was conceived in Merleau-Ponty's late period where he was occupied with the psychoanalytical themes of the unconscious and the imaginary and incorporated them extensively in his work.

Metaphors in that sense expose another layer of the traditional conceptions of language that assumes the direct contact between signs and what they signify. What is involved in a representational account on metaphor is a sort of analogicity that is mimetic in nature; The metaphor imitates the original and true relation between a word and its corresponding object but in a weaker sense; it has nothing to do with truth but rather produces an "aesthetic effect." Accordingly, the metaphor in its imitation would still refer not only to the phenomenon it wishes to express, but also to the original term itself in the process. This deprives

the metaphor from its expressive capacity which Merleau-Ponty both highlights and utilizes in his writing and thinking. We can argue that the "bad" metaphors that Merleau-Ponty critiqued are also the ones that operate within a mimetic understanding of language, thus failing to express the reality it tried to convey.

Some of the questions that I would leave open would consider deepening an understanding of the divergence that is in play between an ordinary sense of the metaphor and its figurative sense according to Merleau-Ponty, interrogating his thought once more.

But if the body schema is a system of equivalents that is the basis of metaphoricity as Saint Aubert argues, the question then is how does it function?

3. Gestures

Gestures are peculiar in their existence. They occupy a remarkable place within Merleau-Ponty's perspective. Since his thought is concerned with embodied perception and movement, and since he is occupied with the question of meaning and expression, then the gesture would appear most often throughout his writings. The fact that gestures are non-verbal communication and expression is the reason they play a central role in the creation of sense apart from speech. But more than that, they are also performed by the body which possesses an ability of expression in-between silence/rest and sound/movement. The life of gestures is rich with significations as much as it is ambivalent. In this chapter we will consider the gesture and its uses by Merleau-Ponty, but first we have to briefly sketch out his thought on the body and perception.

3.1 Embodied Perception

a) What is a Body?

The body, as Merleau-Ponty characterizes, as long as it has patterns of behaviour "... is that strange object which uses its own parts as a general system of symbols for the world.." and it is through it that we find ourselves at home in the world "... 'understand' it and find significance in it" (PhP, p. 275).

But the person does not find himself as a detached absolute perceiver - as a transcendental consciousness hovering around a world that is his home - but rather, "... he has historical density, he takes up a perceptual tradition and is faced with a present" (PhP, p. 277). This perceptual tradition, I argue, is extended into the social world, too, and as much as it gives sense to the person, it poses a greater problem which will be later formulated as "perceptual faith." This problem of tradition that Merleau-Ponty posed when discussing Husserl requires more than phenomenology, it requires a "phenomenology of phenomenology" (S, p. 178) which developed later into a hyper-reflection that questions the place of consciousness with regard to the world perceived.

Perception, thus, is our openness to the world. Perception is above all, a bodily perception. Perspective does not pose an objective view-point, nor it is an object, but rather, it is constituted through my bodily inhibition of the world, being a part of it. Not only is it spatial, it also has a temporal dimension, thus Merleau-Ponty remarks that "... subjectivity at the level of perception, is nothing but temporality, and this is what enables us to leave to the subject of perception his opacity and historicity" (PhP, p. 278). We do not only move through space, but through time as well, but this space opened up for perception - if we follow the line of thought drawn for now - could not mean an objective field for vision, what would it be like then?

Perceptual experience was first thought along Gestalt theory terms, where, as functions of the body, its horizons are structured according to

figure-ground structure that forms the phenomenal field. The phenomenal field itself is not a mere "objective" field of vision constituted in thought, nor is it an arrangement of sensory facts, rather it is the basis for a transcendental field. In line with the Gestalt principle that the whole is more than the sum of its part, the transcendental field is the space for the possibilities and necessities for the embodied perspective. This space of embodied perception is conceived by Merleau-Ponty as the body schema, where he would state that ""the theory of the body schema is implicitly a theory of perception" (PhP, p. 239).

The body schema expresses the gearing together of sensory and motor faculties of the body, and at the same time, they are geared towards its outside, or its bodily space, it is an "open system of an infinite number of equivalent positions directed to other ends" (PhP, p. 163). In that sense, bodily space is both determined by and determining the actual space that surrounds it. We do not think before we move; we do not picture our movements a priori as an idea, but at the same time we are not determined in our movement and bodily reactions solely on certain stimuli as the empiricists believe, our embodied behaviour is more complicated, more intelligent. When I adjust my body in a certain way, I do it instantly, with regard to my environment and possible positions given to me by my bodily space, even if the space that I inhabit is abnormal - for example, tilted - or if I am myself in an awkward position, as being upside down. It might take time, but eventually my body manages to adjust itself.

In this regard, the body schema is both passive and active. It is passive as it involves the influence of the bodily space on me, and active because I not only adjust myself, but I move, and in movement, my body schema opens up different and new possibilities for itself. Space also is not only spatial, but spatio-temporal, which entails that the movement of the body schema is not only in space, but in time too.

As an example of how both vision and touch are in correspondence with each other through the body schema - which will later be expanded in his understanding of the flesh - Merleau-Ponty notes that:

> "What unites 'tactile sensations' in the hand and links them to visual perceptions of the same hand, and to perceptions of other bodily areas, is a certain style informing my manual gestures and implying in turn a certain style of finger movements, and contributing, in the last resort, to a certain bodily bearing. The body is to be compared, not to a physical object, but rather to a work of art" (PhP, p. 174).

The body itself is expression. It is through the body schema's system of equivalents which unites the senses and the object is actually "...the seat or rather the very actuality of the phenomenon of expression" (PhP, p. 273). The expressive value of the reciprocity of auditory and visual experiences is not only what grounds the unity of the world perceived, it is also through it that verbal expression and intellectual signification are grounded. The body is rather "... the fabric into which all objects are

woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my 'comprehension'" (PhP, p. 273).

The body schema extends its system of equivalents - holding that the body is a being-in-the-world already - to its perception of the world which it inhabits. As remarked by Merleau-Ponty;

> "I perceive the thing in its own self-evident completeness" and through my perceptual experience this is what maintains the presentation of "indefinite set of concordant views". Through the exploratory movements of my own body, its identity is of the same kind as identity of the thing; this identity of the thing becomes another aspect of my body's, for example, "... the fireplace is a system of equivalents not founded on the recognition of some law, but on the experience of a bodily presence" (PhP, p. 215).

We should note that Merleau-Ponty translated the Heideggerian notion of Being-in-the-world as être-au-monde (Schües, 1992, pp. 345-372). This translation makes a crucial difference from Heidegger's notion, for Heidegger's notion implied a static presence in the world that I inhabit, while Merleau-Ponty, in consistency with his trajectory of thinking, implied movement; it is a movement of being towards the world, not as the two are distinct entities, but rather as emphasizing both embodied movement in the world, and the movement of being in transcendental terms. Another term that Merleau-Ponty used for meaning is sense.

'Sens' in French also is associated with movement as it has double meaning; 'meaning' and 'direction' (Morris, 2004, P. 81). Through this play on words - we can rather say with a sort of a metaphorical flare according to his own understanding of metaphor, it emphasizes the joining of meaning and movement, or meaning through movement, which is also synonymous in a sense with meaning through perception.

Perception, In Merleau-Ponty's writings after *Phenomenology of Perception*, acquired a different significance. Owing to the influence of De Saussaure, he started to conceive perception as rather diacritical (VI, p. 232-3), and it is even evident in our physiognomy, where we have two eyes, and two ears, each receiving different - divergent - inputs and through this divergence, they produce a unity of sense experience. It is evident in the case of vision, where each eye receives a monocular image that diverges slightly from the other, and through our body - the chisam in literal sense of the word - they produce a binocular vision. In this way, perception becomes one instituted-instituting of symbolism and a symbolic system of itself. Perspective itself is meaning, and vision is a style (PPT, pp. 132-3).

Movement and meaning themselves are coupled through a bodily praxis of movement. Merleau-Ponty even argues for their inseparability and synonymouty, he notes on the dynamic that envelops meaning and movement that not only does meaning require a specific distribution between motion and rest, but also a certain tempo for it to be realized (SWWE, p. 77).

This movement can be regarded as the natural rhythm of meaning which in turn defines the bodily praxis. This praxis is different from the notion of action in Bergson (SWWE, p. 29), nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty in *The Sensible World and the World of Expression* course notes stated that the body schema itself is what is implied in this praxis;

> "The body as a system of equivalences is not only a body of movements, but these movements themselves contain what is more, we can say the locus of meaning and expressivity in movement. Thus, Merleau-Ponty would describe the body as a "system of equivalent gestures" (PhP, p. 367).

3.2 Gestures in Movement

Gesture itself, as we said, is peculiar. It has several manifestations, several meanings and several contexts. For this reason we will attempt to outline the life of gestures as directional, as expression, and as intersubjective.

a) Gestures as Directional

Gestures are directional because they move in a bodily space, they move inevitably in one direction or the other, or can involve several directions in one complex gesture. Within this space of the body schema, gestures

may function as anchor points for the body and its moving directionality in that space, and therefore both adjusting itself and the body through its environment. Through this directionality involved, gestures can open up a field for the body, and other bodies, too. They can also mark out a space for the body as having certain boundaries.

These gestures can also point out where attention should be, as a direction for perception, and in doing so, it can select certain phenomena to be highlighted from its context and to be named, as in the example of platonic empiricists we saw in the act of naming. At the same time, it can be directed towards meanings and experiences, or the world (S, p. 67) as well as questioning, for interrogation is also a gesture. And it can be directed towards others, with a multitude of meanings that it can carry within this act, for instance, accusation, choice, surprise, or blame. At the same time, it can be directed to oneself; touch also, is a gesture.

Touch is one privileged gesture for Merleau-Ponty, specifically as we have seen, touching oneself. In this gesture, the tactile sensation is taken by the fact that it is active-passive, this entails a certain chiasm that involves the gesture with an operation where the gesture feels itself feeling.

b) Gestures as Expressive

Gestures are also expressive. In perceiving gestures, we do not search internally for the meaning of gestures in a as much as a closer experience,

we do not compare or recall my feelings attached to my past usage of a similar gesture in order to find a meaning in it. There can't be any reasoning of analogy or resemblance, rather, when facing an angry gesture, for instance, "I do not see anger or a threatening attitude as a psychic fact hidden behind the gesture, I read anger in it. The gesture does not make me think of anger, it is anger itself" (PhP, p. 214). The meaning of a gesture, then, is not an object, like a thing giving itself to perception, it is rather part of our intersubjective existence, which allows us to approach and react to their meaning immediately.

In *The Sensible World and the World of Expression* course notes, Merleau-Ponty compares the body schema to language. He notes that the body schema is prior to explicit perception, because as language "... expresses not significations but differences of significations. Likewise [the] body.." does not express perceived things, but rather expresses "...[the] index of our pre-thetic relations with [the] space in which it establishes us" (SWWE, p. 103).

Merleau-Ponty's basic components in describing the expressivity of the lived experience are words and gestures, the coupling of the two together is evident from his first writings until the last ones. Indeed, in *phenomenology of perception*, he conceived of the spoken word as a 'genuine gesture' (PhP, p. 213), and we understand his usage in the sense that it is one of various gestures, and at the same time as emphasizing the place of gesture as the primary expressivity of the body; for our embodied existence from the time of birth until learning to speak is

expressive through sound - a cry, which is also a sort of gesture - and gestures.

The linguistic gesture - the word - was conceived by Merleau-Ponty before his turn to a Saussaurian linguistic system. There he conceived of words as carrying their meanings and emotional content - in lived experience - in their movement (PhP, pp. 217-8). The meanings of words, in that regard, does not require - in speech - an interpretive effort nor an intellectual one to grasp their meanings. Meanings present themselves in speech as they are expressed in words, and I think speech here is also a privileged site for this understanding of meaning since they appear with a whole other host of expressions; there is the intonation of a voice, facial expressions, body gestures, and rhythm. Meanings, then, as words, can be perceptible.

Gestures, thus, serve as a model for speech. For gestures are the primary expressive phenomenon that has its meaning in itself, we do not associate meanings after the fact; we see threat or anger, for example, in the threatening or angry gesture, not outside of it or as its effect. Which means that gestures not only express emotional content - something other than it is - but the gesture itself carries this emotional content in the air, the gesture itself is the expression.

The body schema itself - in reference to experiments carried out by psychologists - involves gestures of grasping and taking hold of what it approaches or perceives; it does not distance itself. Which is another expression of the body-at-the-world, where its movement also involves

opening up new territories; new bodily spaces for itself and its possibilities.

This expressivity of the gesture and its meanings might also prove ambivalent sometimes. A gesture might not express something specific, or it might express a multitude of meanings in one single gesture, let alone a complex gesture. In addition to that, words might have the ability to be translatable, while gestures cannot be. This invites us to also think of gestures as diacritical, in the sense that a gesture gains meaning - or several meanings - only through its divergence from other gestures in its field. But if we think of it that way, we might as well think of it as opening up new possibilities, it can be an opening to being.

c) Gestures as Intersubjective

Gestures are intersubjective. They take place in the field of intersubjectivity, where they acquire meanings and signification, without which they would not exist. The gesture presents itself for the interlocutor as a question, as an invitation to the intersubjective field where they exist and from which they participate in a depository of sedimented meanings, references and experiences. The field of intersubjectivity which is the field of fields (Barbaras, 2004, p. 253) consists in movements and interactions between bodily schemas, creating relations of agreement, conflict, or indifference, but it is only in these relations where senses - or meanings - is born. Gestures, within this field, take place in-between me and the other, and in this space, there are

acquired gestures already inherited from tradition, and new gestures that open up different relations.

Gestures and words do not fall under some ideal significance for the subject which perceives them, rather, they take up each other, and through my body they inter-communicate with one another. My body's sensory aspects are "...immediately and mutually symbolical, precisely because my body is a ready-made system of equivalents and transpositions from one sense to another. The senses translate each other without any need of an interpreter, and are mutually comprehensible without the intervention of any idea" (PhP, p. 215).

Gestures take place in an intersubjective field, and it is understood only through a reciprocity of conduct of gestures and the intentions in both the subject and the other, that is between the subject's gesture and the other's intention, and vice versa. Its experience is "... as if the other person's intention inhabited my body and mine his. The gesture which I witness outlines an intentional object" (PhP, p. 215). Now, this intentional object cannot be fully understood unless my body's powers themselves are adjusted to it. The gesture, understood this way, brings into my attention perceptible fragments of the world, and invites my "concurrence" in them, thus the gesture is present to me as a question about my existence in the world and with others. If there is communication with others, then it is "...achieved when my conduct identifies this path with its own. There is mutual confirmation between myself and others" (PhP, p. 215).

3.3 Depth

In order to account for meaning within the bodily space, I suggest that we try to sketch out the phenomenon of depth according to Merleau-Ponty's understanding.

"Traditional ideas of perception are at one in denying that depth is visible" (PhP p. 297), states Merleau-Ponty. Both Empiricism and Idealism equate depth with breadth, thus depriving it from its originality and significance. These remarks on the phenomenon of depth will be expanded in Merleau-Ponty's later work to carry a considerable ontological weight, especially in his essay *Eye and Mind*. For Merleau-Ponty, Empiricism and Idealism both share a God's point of view, for whom "... breadth is immediately equivalent to depth" (PhP, p. 298). The equivalence of depth with breadth, however, is part of our perceptual faith, where the substitution of one dimension for another and thus conceiving depth and breadth from no point of view is suggested already by the world. It is this equivalence that is "... part and parcel of the self-evidence of an intersubjective world" (PhP, p. 298) which induces a forgetfulness of the originality of depth in everyone, including the philosophers.

However, through the description of lived experience carried out by phenomenology, we have to reach out for the originary moment where the phenomenon of the world appears to us. Thus, in setting aside preconceived knowledge and plunging into the moment of birth for the

individual, it is shown that it is already a birth into the perceptual field. It is depth then, Merleau-Ponty argues, which,

> "... more directly than the other dimensions of space… forces us to reject the preconceived notion of the world and to rediscover the primordial experience from which it springs: it is… the most 'existential' of all dimensions… it quite clearly belongs to the perspective and not to things" (PhP, P. 298).

The originality of depth lies in the fact that, for perception, "it is the dimension in which things or elements of things envelop each other, whereas breadth and height are dimensions in which they are juxtaposed" (PhP, p. 308)[6]. As a dimension where the envelopment of things are exposed, it is also a spatio-temporal dimension. Mentioning Straus, Merleau-Ponty argues that when an object is perceived from a distance, the subject either holds it already or is still holding it, thus it is "... in the future or in the past as well as being in space" (PhP, p. 309).

But, beneath the objectified depth, that which is perceived in the lived experience of everyday life, a depth that is detached from experience and lends itself to be conceived as breadth, there lies a primordial depth, a depth which "...confers upon the other its significance, and which is the thickness of the medium devoid of anything" (PhP, p. 310).

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[6] That does not mean that breadth and height are to be sidelined, for in fact as he argues later on in the Phenomenology of Perception, they too are existential dimensions.

On the transition to the ontological plane, depth emphasizes the envelopment of the exteriority of seen things. It is no longer a dimension, but rather a 'first' dimension that contains all other dimensions. The experience of depth would be that of "... the reversibility of dimensions, of a global locality from which other dimensions gain their sense" (BW, p. 311). Depth became understood as the "... pre-eminently the dimension of the simultaneous" (VI, p. 219). It is through depth that things coexist in degrees of proximity from each other or slip into one another while retaining their distinctiveness. Without depth, Merleau-Ponty argues, there would be no Being nor world, and things would not have a flesh. It is thus "pre-eminently the dimension of the hidden" (VI, p. 219).

Depth, for its part, is a depth of the flesh, the flesh itself is a "... being of depths" (VI, p. 139). The flesh was already conceived by Merleau-Ponty not only through the example of vision - in the mirror, I see myself seeing - but most importantly, through the gesture of the touch. Depth is an opening to being, it is where intersubjectivity is conceived in a different light, gaining a certain ontological dimension. Through the flesh, intersubjectivity is in fact an intercorporeity. Merleau-Ponty remarks that the body as a sensible-sensing is a reflection that is;

> "the realization of an intersubjectivity which is first intercorporeity and becomes culture only by relying on sensible-corporal-communication (the body as organ to be seen/of being seen) . Thereby this is not a hierarchical but a lateral relation, or Ineinander. It is to give this depth to the human body" (N, p. 273).

What that entails is that the intersubjective field can find its ontological dimension through chiasm, reversibility, and divergence that characterizes the flesh. Within this depth, the intercorporeal relations do not only ascribe to it in the spatial sense, but also accordingly, to temporal depth; the mythical time (Wiskus, 2013, p. 36). Mythical time is an important ontological dimension that we will consider when we approach drama, but in the meantime, we carry on with the notion of gesture, how do gestures relate to this dimension of being? In a working note, Merleau-Ponty states that;

> "The flesh = this fact that my body is passive-active (visibleseeing), mass in itself and gesture" (VI, p. 271).

Gestures as part of the flesh - initiating it and initiated by it - can be also expressive of the ontological dimension that it opens to. Concerning ourselves with intercorporeity, we might well argue that it is dependent on gestures. One feature of gestures is that they point to what is beyond itself. The ambiguity of gestures as indeterminate, referring to a multitude of meanings to the extent that they can be misunderstood, provides it with a power in-between. Gestures of this sort take place in depth and towards depth. Gestures operate in-between the planes of the possible and the actual. Being a non-verbal communication, and being an expression that diverges from other expressions, it both induces a possible action as well as being an act on its own.

3.4 Politics of Gesture

For Merleau-Ponty, movement as an experience guided by sight "... teaches the subject to harmonize the visual and the tactile data" (PhP, p. 286). Once movement becomes habitual ",,, they set up between the old and the new directions, stable 'associations' which do away with the former in favour of the latter, theses being dominant by reason of their visual origin" (PhP, p. 286).

Here Merleau-Ponty invokes the exceptional in order to understand the ordinary without being tied to understandings provided by the two poles of Idealism and Empiricism, the same as he did with the case of the phantom limb, and in fact, akin to phenomenological reduction, radicalized by Merleau-Ponty. Above, he examines the cases of "Vision without retinal inversion" (PhP, p. 285). In correcting this vision through glasses, it's shown that the system of equivalences of perception takes time to adjust itself to the new relations between the body and its surroundings.

"The possession of a body implies the ability to change levels" (PhP, p. 292). Thus in order to understand space, we have to think about it in those terms, "...just as the possession of a voice implies the ability to change key" (PhP, p. 293).
For Merleau-Ponty;

> "... the phenomenon of habit is just what prompts us to revise our notion of 'understanding' and our notion of the body. To

understand is to experience the harmony between what we aim at
and what is given, between the intention and the performance –
and the body is our anchorage in a world" (PhP. p. 167).

a) Habituality

Habit is what is instituted in the body schema. It is institution - instituted-
instituting - in so far as it acts as a system of reference to other related
experiences and bodily conduct in general including, for instance, the
times and spaces that the body accustoms itself to through certain
movements and actions, and at the same time it acquires movements and
experiences that was already instituted - personal and public, including
past or short-lived habits - and adapt to its environment in a certain
manner, adding something new of its own as well, for it "... expresses our
power of dilating our being-in-the-world, or changing our existence by
appropriating fresh instruments" (PhP, p. 166). Merleau-Ponty seemed to
hold a positive attitude towards habit as a proof of our embodied
existence in the world, for it means that the body finds itself a home in
the world through its body schema. One case that he saw as evidence for
the habitual quality of the body schema is the case of the phantom limb.

The phantom limb refers to a case where the patient with an amputated
limb would still feel its presence within his body schema. His body will
still function on the basis of its habit, and in denial of the trauma
projected by amputation. Merleau-Ponty notes that the phenomenon of
the phantom limb should be "... understood in the perspective of being-
in-the-world. What it is in us which refuses mutilation and disablement is

an I committed to a certain physical and inter-human world" (PhP, p. 94). Merleau-Ponty would point out that repression subsumes the phantom limb phenomenon, where the habitual body becomes trapped within the temporal confines of an aborted project. The subject's personal time becomes frozen, while the impersonal time continues, which provides the means to understand repression as a transition of a subject from his own subjectivity into an abstract existence that is arrested in a past experience.

The phantom limb presents a sort of an impossible gesture, which enables us to consider gestures as habitual, too. If we think of style, we will find that it consists of certain habitual gestures that by the time that style is developed, it comes to identify it as such. We might think of certain gestures that we used to make when somebody close was around, but is not anymore now, yet we continue to habitually perform those gestures when a reminder, a memory, or a situation that was associated with the lost one finds a similar situation in the present. Thus, we can say that we unconsciously reenact certain aspects or episodes of that situation, or rather we might say that this situation is 'restored metaphorically.' In this instance, we might also say that our gestures are operating in-between the imaginary and the real. This is also related to the notion of bodily techniques.

Although Mauss has spoken famously about bodily techniques, Merleau-Ponty seems not to mention him in regard to this notion but once in demonstrating the scope of sociological work where he states that "Mauss says that humanity has constructed its spirit in using its body (body technique) in a complete osmosis of all domains that were typically

distinguished" (CPP, p. 235). Yet, it seems that he somehow incorporated aspects of his work in his understanding of habit.

b) Gesture as Initiation

Gestures have the power to initiate and this power to initiate always presupposes an intersubjective field where meanings of those gestures are developed and understood, even endowing an "... object for the first time with human significance, if it is an initiating gesture" (PhP, p. 226). A gesture, then, has the capacity to be transitional from one symbolism into another. In that sense, it stands in two symbolisms at the same time, meaning that its function transcends both symbolisms into a more general symbolism. In initiation, a whole other symbolic field - world - is opened. The body itself is not only expression, the body is symbolism (N, p. 211). The symbolic power possessed by the initiating gesture paves the way for a cultivation of habit, and also the suppression or transformation of certain habits. Thinking about initiation through gestures would also bring to the fore the question of the interior-exterior dichotomy. Does the gesture belong in-between? And if so, can we think about it in terms of a chiasm?

c) Public Gestures

Merleau-Ponty argues that there is a social perception (IP, p. 136). Which also entails that there is a social body schema, or that the body schema itself is social. Indeed, this is evident regarding gestures since they are

intersubjective. But pertaining to the social field involves other examples for the peculiarity of gestures. A gesture in that sense would then mark out a social space for the body, but in addition to that, we might as well say that there are certain gestures that mark out social spaces for social bodies. These are instituted gestures in the field of culture. In addition to what we previously sketched, a gesture might interpellate, fixing identities to certain multitudes of subjects, as well as directing groups of people, inducing certain actions and reactions in them. Force itself has a transformative effect on public gestures, as Merleau-Ponty demonstrated regarding religious convictions, "Force may impose gestures but not an inner conviction" (SNS, p. 174). where there is a change introduced, the gestures do not convey their emotional content, it rather involves different meanings at the same time. We might also think of force itself as having certain gestures that repress other gestures and their freedom, to the extent of forcing certain "public gestures" (SNS, p. 151) to be avoided, as Merleau-Ponty recalls his WWII experience under occupation.

Another example of that would be music performances, where the conductor initiates a piece of music to be played, initiates the musicians into performance, and initiates the audience into another symbolism of sonic - and visual, too - experience. For instance, the movements of a musician in rehearsal are "consecratory gestures" (PhP, p. 168). Every gesture by the conductor has a certain meaning to both the audience and the performers, and in addition, it induces compliance.

Gestures are also found in works of art; in sculptures, for instance, with one gesture - and often more - arousing a debate among professionals and academics about its meaning and significance, and probably opening up different new meanings in a swarm of interpretations. In addition, they also have a socio-historical life of their own in relation to public perceptions of it, especially when occupying a public space. It is those gestures that take their place in tradition, that often acquire different interpretations and uses, for multiple reasons. They are attached to certain feelings and situations such as hugging a close one when time has passed since last seen. Gestures can also arouse certain associated sensations through their performance, both on the side of the performer and the spectator. In this, they have a certain emotional content that affects its context, even after its movement.

Another important field of gestures is cinema. Merleau-Ponty pays cinema a specific attention - though not extensively - to the extent of hailing it as opening up new dimensions of experience. One of his interests lies in both the rhythm of the film and the technique induced by slow-motion. At one point, he regarded that film is like a gesture, it has its meaning in its own rhythm and "does not mean anything but itself" (SNS, p. 57).

In addition to that, there are also gestures of politicians. These gestures are typified gestures, more than those ascribed in the tradition of each society - some of them are more generalized of course - they are attached to a certain role; a role that induces typified attitudes and gestures as well as a reaction to those gestures. These gestures performed are not

authentic or true. They are part of the role, and for that reason, we can view them also as instituted; they become a host of references through which other public gestures can be referred to them, as well as being imitated, not only in this context, but in a whole series of different contexts.

We should note also that in imitating them, it can arouse three different feelings on both sides of the spectacle; ridicule, indifference, and most importantly, a sense of power that accompanies its role, as well as certain compliance to it and with it, this also relates to the example I drew on force. As I said, this can take place on both sides, but also on one side only, i.e. the politician performing a gesture of power is both feeling powerful and at the same time, obeying the demands of the instituted gesture; both acting and being acted upon. We might as well say that gestures, too, are reversible in that case as others.

3.5 Gesture and Mimesis?

Can we think of gestures as outside the boundaries of traditional conceptions of mimesis?

The existence of gestures itself already invites the question of mimesis. We as humans get initiated into the world through imitation; we learn to walk and have an upright posture - meaning that we gain access to human perspective - through the imitation of others. The same with almost every new activity we learn is taking place through mimetic dynamics and

behaviour. At the same time, a gesture seems to contain in its dynamics and movement something much more than imitation for two reasons.

The first reason is that gestures require a certain bodily praxis that is not involved in thinking within the scope of traditional mimesis. This bodily praxis is demonstrated through the body schema as understood by Merleau-Ponty. In the acts of gestures, especially, there are certain ends that cannot be attained by imitation of this gesture. The gesture's space of possible actions, like the body, are not only dependent on physicality. Rather, they carry a socio-historical/cultural sediment within their conduct. This sediment allows for their efficacy according to the situation that envelops them. But in reversal, what also allows for its creative expressivity.

In addition to that, gestures pertain to a certain style, and style - as a manner of being - cannot be imitated. The features of style can be imitated for sure; its outer structure, or the relations involved in it, for sure. But, it is always imitated with some divergence. For the imitator also possesses a style of his own - whether conscious of it or not - and this clash of styles does not permit the incorporation of one style into the other completely. It is even hard for one to imitate his own gestures. Gestures can be re-enacted and reproduced, but only 'on the basis of', only with reference to a host of references which refer to each other and also to different institutions in personal and public history. Gestures have a politics of its own and acts in-between the possible and the actual, the present and the absent.

a) The Flesh

We should pose the question of whether there is a flesh of gestures and a certain relation of reversibility is expressed through the being of the gesture. In reversibility, what is involved is that a gesture gestures at itself, exceeding the example of the touch. The gesture as much as it has its meaning in itself, it also reflects on itself, in addition to being in a hyperdialectical movement. Indeed, a gesture oscillates between expressing something and something yet to be expressed, the same as it oscillates between activity and passivity; gesture is an active-passive movement. We might also pose the question of whether there is an invisible gesture.

With all these relations at play in Merleau-Ponty's use of the term gesture, we might as well think of his philosophy as a sort of gesture itself. As far as I attempted to sketch out a little drama of gestures and its politics, as a gesture towards the drama of the political.

In *Infancy and History*, Agamben remarks that;

"What characterizes gesture is that in it there is neither production nor enactment, but undertaking and supporting. In other words, gesture opens the sphere of ethos as the most fitting sphere of the human. But in what way is an action undertaken and supported? In what way does a res become res gesta, a simple fact become an event? Varro's distinction between facere and agere derives, in the final analysis, from Aristotle. In a famous passage from the Nicomachean Ethics, he contrasts them thus:

'Action [praxis 1 and production [poiesis] are generically different. For production aims at an end other than itself; but this is impossible in the case of action, because the end is merely to do what is right"' (Agamben, 1993, p. 140).

4.The Question of Drama

Drama, from the etymology *drāo*, poses the question of action. But in addition to that question, it also poses the questions of identity and intersubjectivity, and above all, the question of politics. The birth of the greek drama was in proportion with the birth of the greek polis, and both were conceived in and occupying the public space to the extent of being contestants to each other over it. Of course, the encroachment of the drama into politics and the intrusion of politics into drama led to viewing both with a contradictory gaze; that of amazement but at the same time disdain. When we think about the forms of drama, we find that its origins are multiple and even older than the greek one. Which ushers towards its presence in us as humans.

The birth of sense in drama is also the subject of interest for philosophers and thinkers throughout the past two thousand years. We can say that the question of drama is also the same question of philosophy with regard to finding meaning.

What prompts us here to engage with the question of drama is Merleau-Ponty himself. His usual invocation of the term drama through his writings led us first to try and conceive, in my opinion, its two main components; namely the metaphor and the gesture. After sketching out some of their features in the previous chapters I would like in the next chapter to sketch out how Merleau-Ponty thought about it and what was involved in his use of it.

4.1 Politzer and Merleau-Ponty

a) The Influence of Politzer

One of the main influences on Merleau-Ponty - and many among his generation as well - is Georges Politzer.[7] The publication of his "Critique of the Foundations of Psychology" marked an important step in a rejection of behavioural psychology" and a possibility of a rehabilitation of Freud for a whole generation of existentialists and phenomenologists, too. Along with Bachelard and others (CPP, pp. x-xi), he ushers the way for a new "concrete," inventive, and situated understanding of psychology that roots it in lived experience. The focus of analysis carried out by this new concrete psychology would be the notion of "drama;" a totality rooted in concrete lived experience and taking account of its material situation without traces of occultism, which Politzer wished it could act as a substitute for the "unconscious" (Bruyeron, 2016, p. 83). "Dramatic life" is then an attempt to understand the singularity of the human being and his experience through a materialist approach, while denouncing both psychological theories of interiority - that of interior psychic life - and formalism.

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[7]"Merleau-Ponty is heavily influenced by Georges Politzer's critique of Freud, and he cites Politzer frequently in his summation of Freudian theories. Merleau-Ponty also extensively discusses the work of several contemporary psychoanalysts, among them his friend Jacques Lacan, Melanie Klein, Anna Freud, Helene Deutsch, Germaine Guex.J. L. Moreno, and a number of psychoanalytic anthropologists. When praising their work, Merleau-Ponty focuses upon the ways in which these psychoanalysts provided more inclusive accounts of child development." (CPP, p. xi)

Freud is hailed as the one who succeeded in addressing the field of human singularity, but only falling short of complying with the demands of his own thinking, succumbing to classical psychology at the end of his Interpretation of Dreams (Bruyeron, 2016, p. 93). Politzer, on the other hand, is not content with developing a concrete understanding of man in action and language, but attempts at connecting it with history and collectivity. For, at a given moment and place, relations - both materialist and linguistic - between men develop, contributing to a widening of the fabric of this drama, thus drama becomes the building block in the construction of a materialist theory of history. It develops from a concrete psychology into a sort of an envelopment with understanding social and economic relations, on both planes of the individual and the collective, simultaneously. Drama, then, does not unify and singularize human beings as such, but it also gives a certain form, or structure, to the human group "... which in its action and its reflection on its concrete situation, is called revolutionary class" (Bruyeron, 2016, p. 85).

Bimbinet notes that Merleau-Ponty's critique of objective psychology in *The Structure of Behavior*, is deeply influenced by Politzer's arguments in his *Critique of Foundations of Psychology*. In criticizing the abstraction and realism involved in both tendencies of introspection and some experimental psychophysiology, the psychic facts become depersonalized, thus indifferent to each other. In concrete psychology, on the other hand, "...the psyche is understood in the form of a singular behavior, the "drama" - synthetically unified by its dependence on the life of the subject; and this personalization of the psyche is at the same

time what prohibits us from conceiving it in a realist way" (Bimbenet, 2004, p. 49 Cf.1). Causality, then, can not offer an adequate understanding of the expressive relations between psychic states, It is this sort of totalization of the psyche under subjectivity that now evades idealization.

Merleau-Ponty, on his part, in his critical exposition of subjective and objective psychologies in the Structure of Behavior, attempts to recover the true inspiration of their theoretical constructions, which is the concrete situation in which we find ourselves, with all its entanglements. This original mode of being that evades the traditional abstractions of intellectualist and realist perspectives on psychology is "... "dramatic life" for Politzer, "ambiguity" for Merleau-Ponty" (Bimbenet, 2004, p. 20). But how does Merleau-Ponty use the word?

b) Merleau-Ponty

Despite his attested influence on Merleau-Ponty who referred to him in *The Structure of Behaviour*[8], he didn't mention Politzer in relation to drama until in a footnote in *Phenomenology of Perception*, where he remarks; "We here take the word in its etymological sense (and without any Romantic overtone) as did Politzer" (PhP, P. 193, n14). The context of the reference is his discussion of sexuality. There, he remarks that;

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[8] In the Structure of Behaviour, Merleau-Ponty mentions drama when critically reflecting on infantile perception. "...and nature is perhaps grasped initially only as that minimum of stage setting which is necessary for the performance of a human drama." (SB, p. 168)

"when we say that sexuality has an existential significance or that it expresses existence, this is not to be understood as meaning that the sexual drama is in the last analysis only a manifestation or a symptom of an existential drama" (PhP, p. 193).

The same applies to the reduction of existence to sexuality. Rather, existence is the ambiguity that enables communication between several manifestations without any of them being reduced to the other. The drama, taken in its etymological sense - and Politzer's own conception of it - emphasizes a concrete lived experience that is at the same time action. We find in another setting an important insight to Merleau-Ponty's understanding of Politzer's 'drama.'

In presenting an article of Michel Crozier in *Les Temps Modernes* (MPR, p. 185), Merleau-Ponty praises "culturalism" and certain investigations carried out by American Social Psychology, for their contribution to the attempt "... to reveal the tacit words, unofficial, yet lived between men" (MPR, p. 185) which is beyond the official image of these relations, an image that both expresses and masks them. These relations, to which we have access now thanks to the fields above, are "... what Politzer called the interhuman "drama" amidst the living history where we find meeting up all casualties, all determinants whose objective workings, economics, demographics, law, and the history of ideas study" (MPR, p. 185). Their task consists of applying the principle that "... the truth of a social system lies in the type of human relations it makes possible" (MPR, p. 185).

While Marxist sociology was attentive to the correlation between cultural and economic conceptions within a single human life, some authors, however, couldn't but infer the infrastructure of economic relations in a sort of mystical causality. On the other hand, the notion of culture "... as a totality that has its laws of balance, its molecular changes, its crises, its restructurations" (MPR, p. 185) clarifies the link between economic facts and ideas. Thus, they allow us to pursue not only these charts of everyday conflicts, but also "... this latent history that silently animates the official history as it waits to manifest itself in the explosion of events" (MPR, p. 185). I argue that the words used by Merleau-Ponty to describe this interhuman drama are crucial in our attempt to interrogate Merleau-Ponty, given his careful use of words that we tried to sketch. But before we continue, we should take a look first at that field which reveals the tacit words and unofficial history; namely, culturalism.

c) Culturalism

In his lecture course titled "The Experience of Others" within his lectures at the Sorbonne published as *The Child Psychology and Pedagogy*, Merleau-Ponty gave the closest thing to a definition of 'drama,' and within this context he was already hailing "Culturalism" for years. Culturalism was the name given to "new anthropological psychoanalysis" (CPP, p. 98) which, in Merleau-Ponty's opinion, attempts to synthesize both psychologically-oriented and sociologically-oriented theories of the social. In doing so, culturalism would emphasize the intersubjective character of society. He considers culturalism to be close to a phenomenological sociology, which focuses on the integration of the

child in society as a "phenomenon of symbolic consciousness" (CPP, p. 239). Already aware of the problems between social relations and psychological relations, culturalism does not reduce either one to the other, rather, it focuses on the individual as part of a social structure where they both influence each other.

In focusing on the child setting within familial relations, it does not limit its study, instead it focuses on the setting which the child inhabits. What makes it significant is its focus on base personality as an intermediary, where tensions both within the family and in the social field would correspond to tensions in the entire system, thus it is both a psychological and a sociological explanation. For Merleau-Ponty, this is a solution to a problem that highlighted by Marxist thought when analyzing intersubjective relations, where true for him, true Marxist thought wouldn't be confined to the determinism of economic relations of production, but rather is emphasizing the importance of cultural world as much as the economic. For the study of culture then, Merleau-Ponty proposes that our research be guided by "aesthetic, sociological criteria" (CPP, p. 240). Within this trajectory, Merleau-Ponty started to analyze the theatrical process as a one manifestation of social relations.

4.2 Merleau-Ponty on Drama

For Merleau-Ponty, acting is a "gestural language" which, as gestures, produces its own meaning. The magic of theater happens because my

body becomes involved in the actor's gestures and movements, the meaning of his acts reside in the "virtual foyer" of his gestures (CPP, p. 453). And this is what Merleau-Ponty calls "drama." what is seen on the stage are only behaviours where their meaning is displayed, objects exist only in relation to the actor's gestures.

This dramatic magic takes place with the presence of the actor's body. The actor's gestures make imaginary objects exist, they establish imaginary relations where nonexistent objects carry the same significations as visible objects. The magic of the theater is in its creation of an imaginary world through gestures, and this imaginary allows for the visibility of others' behaviour for me. But how is this "gestural language" enacted? What does an actor do?

Again, Merleau-Ponty starts from reflection on habit. Against traditional conceptions of acting, Merleau-Ponty decided, as usual, to go a different route. For Merleau-Ponty, habit - as we have seen - is "plastic" and not restricted to certain circumstances and situations. Rather, it is a natural tendency that approaches its situation with a certain solution that is both "corporeal and spiritual; it is an existential operation" (CPP, p. 452); a very complex case of habit would be an actor who is learning a certain role. Far from imitation in the classical sense, the actor "... relies on his body exactly like the painter relies on his body when he paints; the painter carries his body and it allows him to function" (CPP, p. 452). After finishing with all the work needed for studying his role, his tendency to inhabit a role is natural and oriented by his body, he recognizes certain styles, certain expressions that resonate with his process of creating a role. An expression or gesture that is similar to the character's style will grasp his attention and he would immediately

modulate it into his process of trying different performances. This tendency by the actor is not an intellectual operation, rather it takes place through his bodily schema.

The relation with the other, including the audience, takes place through the body schema. It is through the movements and manifestation of bodily forms of the other's body that I understand it as a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. I am also aware of having the same structure of the body schema which as a system of equivalents, I feel the encroachment of both our bodies as if both form a system. The other's body constitutes a possibility of movement for me, and this relation is deepened and emphasized in the actor's work when he inhabits a role that is other than him. It is then that the spectator's body schema is directed to both the perceived and the imaginary world, and through an overlap between the actor's attitude and the meaning of the performed text, the imaginary starts to replace the real.

This is the magic of the theater; the incursion of the imaginary into the real. It is then after expanding on the magical imaginary of the drama, that Merleau-Ponty poses an interesting question; " Do we find something analogous—the individual's projection in an imaginary role—in the domain of real life?" (CPP, p. 454).

a) Types of Drama

Throughout his works, drama manifests itself in several forms, from the personal to the historical, existential, and even metaphysical drama. It also appears implicitly behind, or beside some other notions that he uses. In a sense, as noted by Bimbenet, it adheres to the notion of ambiguity which, I will try to show, animates its logic through its process and dynamics, and also seems to envelop us throughout every dimension of being. I will try to discuss here some of his uses of drama through the different contexts in which they appear.

In the preface for *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty writes that,

> "...all periods of history appear as manifestations of a single existence, or as episodes in a single drama—without our knowing whether it has an ending. Because we are in the world, we are condemned to meaning, and we cannot do or say anything without its acquiring a name in history" (PhP, p. xxii).

The similarity implied by Merleau-Ponty between existence and drama should not be lost on us, but before we start treating drama in its different manifestations within Merleau-Ponty's oeuvre, we should take a look first at the question he posed in his lectures. Are there social roles?

b) The Notion of Role

In reflecting on the life and political involvement of Nizan, Merleau-Ponty illustrates that the reason for him leaving the communist party was his realization "... that to be a Communist is not to play a role one has chosen but to be caught in a drama where without knowing it one receives a different role" (S, p. 31).

The notion of role, as it plays out in his discussion of Nizan's politics, is connected here directly to a role in a drama. These allusions are also connected to another role; the role of the politician.

In likening the role of the politician with that of the actor, Merleau-Ponty notes that;

> "We suggest that every man who undertakes to play a role carries around him, as Diderot said of the actor on stage, a "great fantom" in which he is forever hidden, and he is responsible for his role even when he cannot find in it what he wanted to be" (HT, p. xxxii).

Political roles as demonstrated by Merleau-Ponty seem to impose a certain style on their actors that they cannot but accept, and this type of role is instituted in both tradition and the structure of the intersubjective field. As a public role, it manifests itself through acting on others, but reversibly, those who assume political roles are accountable in front of the public gaze, which restricts their freedom of movement outside of the

role's responsibilities. In addition to that, the consequences of political action are borne by the society as a whole, and he included. But apart from political roles of that sort, there is another type of role that operates within the social and intersubjective field. Is it as much restricting as the role of the politician?

In his reflections on the occupation years in WWII, Merleau-Ponty demonstrates the transformative effects of this intense political experience which formed in him and his generation a certain political awareness that was absent prior to the war. One of the effects of this experience is the awareness of 'social roles' where;

> " just as an actor slips into a role which envelops him and which alters the meaning of al his gestures, just as he carries this great phantom with him, animating it and yet controlled by it, so, in co-existence, each of us is presented to others against a historical background which we did not choose; and our behavior toward others is dictated by our role" (SNS p. 144).

Everything about embodied existence is involved within this social dynamic of interhuman relations. The political weight of social roles does not only affect the exterior expression of gestures, but has its effects on the body as a whole; the capability of alienation carried out by subjects towards each other becomes a sort of a traumatic sediment. The subject in the intersubjective field becomes doubled, both in its self perception and in the perceptions of others in a sort of reversible relation. In carrying the same phantom that haunts every role undertaken, the subject is typified as

well as oscillating between the imaginary and real. The only remedy - in Merleau-Ponty's opinion - would be the wiping out of past traumas, but until then, social life would be animated by a dialectic of agreement and conflict, not between subjects, but between phantoms (SNS, p. 144).

This, however, is not a closed circle. For Merleau-Ponty himself, he found his way through resistance in some way, but for those who are part of an intersubjective field in times of peace, not permeated by an intense political experience such as war; do their social roles face the same existential and tragic consequences?

c) Social Roles in a Normal Setting

In approaching the same issue, Merleau-Ponty briefly extends his analysis of drama and theater into social life. The same comparison to the actor takes place, but this time it appears to be more complicated than an objectifying - stereotyping - effect in social roles.

In a sense, life might be thought of as an invention of a role that is freely decided by the subject, for instance " vocation always consists in the free decision to derealize oneself in a role" (CPP, p. 454). But freedom is always situated, just like self-expression, it operates on a sedimented background of what we acquired and achieved, which means that my freedom in assuming a role is always on the basis of the givens at hand.

In an intersubjective field, for instance, the others are present in me in a certain sense, as much as I am present in them. This is where life and

theater differ. The actors on a stage might undertake a performance while spectators might feel not involved, while in life, the role someone assumes is subject to a sedimentation of past relations with others, there are always responsibilities involved and situations engaged between myself and others, unlike theater where the actor-spectator relation is defined with certain limitations, and the actor has the ability to start over his drama and his role. Social roles are weighed down with the past relations and experiences, and with future expectations. Even self-expression in life was compared to adopting a certain behaviour in order to play a role. An initiative or a call is noted while certain relations and connections are being created in order to express myself.

Perception of others, then, is a perception of a certain freedom that exists within a situation and is simultaneously transformative of that situation. At the same time, other human beings are always exposed to the possibility of their roles being fixated into stereotypes, which also involves another possibility of abandoning this role altogether. There is a wide range of the appearances involved in the perception of others and their roles which attests to their freedom as well as the limitations of this freedom.

We will now aim to sketch out some of Merleau-Ponty's uses of "drama" within the context of his writings.

d) Merleau-Ponty's Uses of Drama

Drama also comes to refer to a literary work or as in cinema. In this regard, Merleau-Ponty is concerned with the dramatic structure itself as a plot that involves a certain rhythm carrying it from a beginning to a middle, to an end, and sometimes with no beginning and a relative end as in the metaphysical novel which take account of the metaphysical in man[9] which he hailed against the moral novel (SNS, p. 26).

This plot of a drama is based on a situation with its two components of motive and decision. This highlights the tensions, rhythm, and polarity in a situation where decisions would have consequences that open up other multiple situations and where there are other people involved, this is where a plot thickens (SNS, p. 32). But also, drama can be a past epoch (IP, p.168) where it stays in the unconscious as sedimentation. We might think of the unconscious as consisting of multiple past dramas that might be relived again when it finds a similar dramatic setting or situation. In that sense, Merleau-Ponty speaks about personal dramas (IP, p. 24), (SWWE, p. 64).

The personal drama involves all the dramas that we sketched in Merleau-Ponty's use so far. We live past dramas, as well as the present drama that we are implicated in, and those present dramas find their expression in the symbolism of dreams (IP, p. 218). We might as well argue that situations themselves are dramatic in nature. In demonstrating it through

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[9] His reading of Simone de Beauvoir's *l'Invitée*

the example of a journey, Merleau-Ponty utilizes its dramatic quality in order for it to be visible.

With that in mind, Merleau-Ponty seems to indicate that history itself is composed of a series of intersubjective dramas (S p. 3), and this, I argue, might open up a dimension on his question about the existence of a 'historical unconscious' (AD, p. 77). which operates through an anonymous logic of selection. In that sense, there is a socio-historical drama which involves political dramas such as those in *Humanism and Terror*, which we will briefly encounter.

Marxist drama, for Merleau-Ponty is not played between men and things, nor between the economic and cultural field, rather, it is played as a choice between the revolution as truth and as action. and is based on historical interactions transformed by the logic of situations (S, p. 276). this is also from another plane - though historical - played out through the interhuman drama of revolution "as a struggle and transtemporal creation" (AD, p. 210) involved, where as we have seen above, the 'non-official' political life would find its expression in explosive events.

But politics also have a certain tragic quality. In addition to the subtle drama ensuing in the Hegelian master-slave dialectic (SNS, p. 108) we should note that Merleau-Ponty usually uses the metaphor of tragedy - which has been instituted in Marxist politics by Marx himself - not to refer to the interhuman drama, but rather to adversity (S, p. 239).

A tragedy has a clear example in the oedipal drama, where the sense of the tragic comes from our implication in a situation we did not choose nor do we know, and yet we have to bear its consequences (HT, p. xxxix). This reveals the essential contingency of our situation and the tragic quality of drama, where politics became the modern tragedy (S, p. 6), for politicians are also involved in a drama that they did not choose and they know it might not end well (SNS, p. 113).

In distinction from tragedy, melodrama emerges as a typifying and vulgar sort of drama, where everyone involved in the historico-political field is stereotyped (AD, p. 147). But in that manner, can we then claim that the 'official' political life as a whole possesses a sort of a melodramatic quality?

e) Political Drama

In *Humanism and Terror*, Merleau-Ponty started his interrogation of the political question of his day through two dramatic settings; the first is his detailed critique of Koestler's dramatic depiction in his novel *Darkness at Noon* of communism and the events of the Moscow trials as an attack on the communist left. The other setting is the Moscow trials themselves which he analyzes. What interests us here is how he depicted different manifestations of drama in a political setting.
The trial - any trial - is a dramatic setting in the first place where roles are distributed and acquire even more meanings in the context of a

general drama invoked in the courtroom; such as becoming part of a drama between patriotism and treason, or between the past and the future, gaining a sort of epic quality. Merleau-Ponty uses the word drama here extensively to denote all types of drama. Such as subjective and objective; "the drama of subjective honesty and objective treason" (HT, 44), historical; "drama of historical responsibility" (HT, p. 71), and reenactment of an old drama "drama of the opposition member in the Party, is, at least formally, the drama of the heretic in the Church" (HT, p. 68). In these cases, another feature of drama that highlights its political character; namely, the conflict between "protagonists in the drama" (HT, p. 94).

All these dramas, including personal dramas - with the different senses and contexts they appear in - are played out in an intersubjective field. This can be understood as a feature of interhuman drama itself, the idea that it has different dimensions that are reversible. At the same time, they all seem to share the same symbolic structure, hence allowing for their overlap at times. I now turn briefly to the two dimensions of drama that I argue are its main elements.

4.3 Drama as Metaphor and Gesture

a) As Metaphor

Drama is a metaphor. It is usually used in speech to denote a certain structure of events. But a metaphor can be more than what its traditional sense conveys. In that regard, it can be understood as a metaphor according to Merleau-Ponty's understanding of metaphor. Drama is taken "literally" as involving dramatic situations, plots, rhythm, protagonists and antagonists, the passivity-activity of action, and an imaginary flair akin to the symbolism it came from. But at the same time, drama has a metaphorical effect; it is capable of metaphorically transforming the situation in which it is involved where certain objects or incidents would acquire different meanings through the actions of a drama, as much as the ability to metaphorically restore situations in a sense of a reenactment or a reliving of drama. This ability can be also understood as a sort of a 'coherent deformation' of its situation. In addition to that, our dramas rely on metaphors, not only as in a play-act, but also in our everyday social conduct. Dramatic metaphors slip through our understanding of ourselves, others, and life itself. This might be understood in light of its own structure, where our bodily space is "the darkness needed in the theater to show up the performance" (PhP, p.115) and our involvement in a human drama beginning from a vital drama to the drama of the cultural and symbolic field (N, p. 193).

b) As Gesture

But also, drama is gesture. First of all, it is a gestural language, and through its gestures it creates an imaginary where the objects are both existing and non-existing. Through their reversibility, gestures also have a dramatic quality of their own. They open up the intersubjective field through a variety of conflicting-agreeing gestures, as we briefly illustrated in the previous chapter. In that sense, drama is also movement. It can be understood also as a gesture in the sense that it conveys its meaning through its own dynamics and behaviour, not from outside. For instance, a film is a cinematographic drama that acts like a gesture (SNS, pp. 57-8).

c) Metaphor of Theater

A certain question arises with regard to the metaphor of "theater." Merleau-Ponty's use of the term is in a sense, ambiguous, it acts not only as a stage of visibility - likening the darkness of theater to bodily space (PhP, p. 115) - or as a stage for the unconscious; "our oneiric beliefs" (VI, p. 263), but also as a confined space that is limited to theatrical art and its magic. In discussing Sartre's politics, he accuses him of conducting a sort of action - pure action as Sartre understood - that is imaginary, and turns social dissent into theater with no actual

consequences other than a show of presence (AD, p. 118). Indeed, Merleau-Ponty discussed the difference between theater and the drama involved in social roles, but it seems that there is a certain chiasm between the two. The chiasm involved is between two symbolisms that are in proximity, yet distant from each other. The symbolism of the political and social field, and the symbolism of theater, although sometimes confused with each other, nevertheless, we can compare them to vision and action as understood by Merleau-Ponty, where there is a difference but also a certain proximity (AD, p. 178).

d) Dramatic Action

I argue that dramatic action is based in real life, it takes place in the field of intersubjectivity, and even the personal dramas are conducted with the background of sharing in an intersubjective field. Theater, on the other hand, although expressive, is confined in its space and limited. It depends on a script and rehearsal, and rarely does it display contingency. The two actions; dramatic action - in the way we tried to illustrate - and theatrical action are of two orders. But we can also say that there is a sort of reversibility between the two, i.e. actions in interhuman drama can turn into an imaginary theatrical action, while a theatrical action can turn - inside or outside theater - into an actualized action. It is this dramatic action that we are concerned with, and instead of viewing it as an imaginary action, it might be well understood through a term that gives access to it; namely symbolic action.

4.4 Symbolism

Symbolism came to play a crucial role in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy in the period succeeding The publication of *Phenomenology of Perception*. The intertwining between nature and culture - thanks to structuralism, anthropology and psychoanalysis where they meet in "culturalism" as he described, coupled with his understanding of Marxism in a non-orthodox way - made him aware of the symbolism that animates our existence. His reflections on painting and literature - especially Proust and Valery - also opened up an essential dimension for the experience of symbolism. Mauss, above all, is hailed as someone who allowed himself to access the diversity of the relations between the cultural and individual realities through conceiving the social field in terms of symbolism (S, p. 116). Symbolism on its part, has a symbolic function which guarantees that humans have much more significations than the defined signified objects for the reason that it can only find reality by "anticipating it in imagination" (S, p. 122). The task of the philosopher, then, would be to allow reasoning a broader capacity for that which "... in ourselves and others, precedes and exceeds reason" (S, p. 122).

In *Institution and Passivity* course notes, Merleau-Ponty, in arguing against Sartre's understanding of the imaginary, reflects on symbolism as;

> "The idea that symbolism is the imaginary', that the unconscious (or symbolic consciousness) is not to be connected back to a

causal order. Rather, it consists in embodiment and the relation with others; projection and introjection are not operations of a "consciousness." Describe, outside any *Erkenntnis theoretisch* abstraction, the sedimentation, the relation with the world and others as relation not with ob-jects, but with what I have been, with "agencies." Here the rule is indistinctness and the exception, differentiation" (IP, p. 155).

Given Merleau-Ponty's critique of the imaginary. How then is the imaginary equated with the symbolic?

In discussing Sartre's politics, Merleau-Ponty opens up the question of action in politics, through the question of the dialectic. I argue that the question posed by party politics is not exclusive, rather, it animates the whole political system, Merleau-Ponty thus remarks that;

> "To be sure, this extreme subjectivism and this extreme objectivism have something in common: if the social is a second nature, it can be modified, like the other, only by a technician, in this case a sort of political engineer. And if the social is only the inert and confused residue of past actions, one can intervene and put it in order only by pure creation" (AD, p. 98).

The problem is that in both cases, the party's action does not conform to any criteria of meaning, for if the party alone is speaking from the vantage point of a theoretical knowledge that deciphered the logic of history and its future, then it cannot be held accountable for its actions.

On the other hand, if the party does not know, i.e. history is absolutely chaotic, then whatever comes about in its course of action, it is still better than the present arrangement of relations, which means that it also can not be held accountable for its actions. This, of course, does not apply on the party politics alone, but rather it envelops all the political spectrum, which operates on the basis of a subject-object dichotomy. This means that, "The philosophy of pure object and the philosophy of pure subject are equally terroristic, but they agree only about consequences. As for their motives, these remain in a position of rivalry" (AD, p. 98).

Merleau-Ponty here seems to distinguish clearly between "drama" and "theater." In his lengthy critique of Sartre's political thinking and his positing of a pure action, he notes that pure action it is "either suicide or murder," and in fact an imaginary action, not ideal as Sartre claims. This imaginary action does entail real consequences, because when "it tries to impose itself on things, it suddenly returns to the unreal from which it was born. It becomes ... theater" (AD, p. 118).

This pure action is a theatrical demonstration that becomes a mere spectacle, and ends up in negating itself, without inducing a change, and " The ardent negation which was to inspire a pure action becomes an exhibition, the duel becomes a show or an exchange of gazes" (AD, p. 118).

In this way, Merleau-Ponty points towards a distinction between the imaginary which is cut off from the concrete, and an action that is conscious of the intertwinement between the imaginary and political

reality. It is as if there is a distinction between a "bad" conception of the imaginary, and a "good" one; much like the distinction between "bad" ambiguity and "good" ambiguity, the same for dialectics. The action that he is concerned with is, I argue, what he understands as "Symbolic Action." Indeed, in a working note - among many - he remarks that;

> "Being and the imaginary are for Sartre "objects," "entities" For me they are "elements" (in Bachelard's sense), that is, not objects, but fields" (VI, p. 267).

Against Sartre's understanding of the party as giving orders to the workers, Merleau-Ponty rather sees the function of the party, as giving the militants a line of direction, a "perspective of action," that is only developed after examining both the situations regarding "relations of force" and "the way the proletariat lives and interprets the situation" (AD, p. 120). For, within the party, there is a continuous recurrent movement of growth and decline of the proletariat which lives politically inside the party and is represented by it. The history of the party itself consists of its attempts to use ".. the ebb and flow that are the respiration of the class and of the entire society" (AD, p. 120). But it's not only that it is represented in the party, it is embodied in the party as much as the party is embodied in it, they are "coupled together" and it is only through taking together class reactions and party's actions as having the same value, only then they both form a single history. The party then should include "... this plurality or this inertia… which is its flesh, the principle of its strength and, in other moments, of its weakness, and the control

wheel which for the moment holds it back but which tomorrow may take it beyond the ends which it proposed" (AD, p. 120).

If the goal of politics, or any human project in general is to change the world, then what is needed is not a rigidified conception of truth and the world, but rather a truth "which gives us a hold on adversity" and a world "...which is dense and which moves" (AD, p. 144). Hence, the awareness of the contingency traversing our intersubjective situation and the dramatic transformations that take place through it. For that reason, political and historical judgment "...is of the category of action." As far as it is concerned with power, along with acts and their consequences in concrete situations, can never be objective, and because of this, it escapes the dichotomy of morality and pure science. It operates through a hyperdialectic, which "...makes for continual oscillation between morality and science" (AD, p. 155).

a) Symbolic Action

What is involved in the question of politics as Merleau-Ponty demonstrates through his critique of Sartre, is the perspectives through which the political and social field is seen. On the one hand, the main problem lies in a distinction between men and things; the old subject-object distinction that posits a readymade truth. On the other hand, there is another perspective that views this interworld as "... history, symbolism, truth-to-be-made" (AD, p. 200).

If the intersubjective relation is mediated through a field of human symbols, then an action that would take place in this field can only recognize that it is partial, it cannot assume purity or reach "the event itself." It recognizes that it is mediated, and in that sense, even the most intense political experience such as war, would be regarded as a symbolic action. If symbolism is a functioning of signs which are effective beyond meanings attached to it, then it is expression, too, this entails that its adequate action is "... an unveiling, an unveiling which is an action - in short, a dialectic" (AD, p. 142). This symbolic action does measure its effectivity in relation to the direct results of any event, for it already assumes the complexity and entanglements that permeates the symbolic field - with all its dimensions and chiasms - instead, symbolic action relies on being a sign for intention and its effect as a "meaningful gesture" (AD, p. 200).

Action understood as symbolic action does not confine itself to the terrain of official and party politics, but rather it can take place within any symbolism. Literature and books, Merleau-Ponty argues, should also be considered as actions, and a commitment to this action requires writing them according to high standards, while keeping in mind the unveiling duty entailed in this action. Politics, then, as he states, would not be immediate, for "... If politics is not immediate and total responsibility, if it consists in tracing a line in the obscurity of historical symbolism, then it too is a craft and has its technique" (AD, 201). So far as they are symbolisms, politics and literature can correspond to each other and participate within general symbolism which allows transpositions, they both are "... linked with each other and with the event, but in a different

way, like two layers of a single symbolic life or history" (AD, p. 201).
Yet in virtue of divergence, they would remain distinct from each other.
In recognizing this divergence, the one who belongs to either world
would be aware of the demands and dynamics involved within each, and
would thus keep committed to both writing and action. This means that to
be politically engaged, or to be committed to a certain cause does not
require involvement in the official politics of part and government.
Writing - and philosophy - are both symbolic actions, and both are
dramatic.

4.5 CONCLUSION

a) Drama and the Question of Mimesis

I will attempt to pose some questions regarding our attempted
interrogation of Merleau-Ponty's thought. The whole study itself was
supposed to be a continuous interrogation. And the questions posed,
might sum up what we tried to do in thinking Merleau-Ponty's 'tacit'
thought.

In rejecting analogy in metaphor, Merleau-Ponty's understanding would
entail that metaphor does not correspond to an external "true" relation,

originary relation between sign and sign, or between the sign and the signified. Instead, metaphor opens into a dimension of being that wasn't perceived that way before. Metaphor corresponds to an openness.

If we carry on with our interrogation, analogy is by extension implying mimesis. Imitation, then, in a traditional understanding of mimesis, cannot be judged according to an original action or movement outside itself; judging it according to how close it is to the "original" - we might say as well, "ideal" - relation. It should rather be understood according to and on the basis of its effect. Although the structure of institution is the same - the same dynamics working within the symbolic matrix - it's never the same. There is no institution that resembles its predecessor completely, or else it wouldn't be institution, nor does it subsume its successor, or else it would be an objective model.

Imitation, rather, opens up a new dimension of being, a different style adopted and developed by the imitating body as its own. Merleau-Ponty clearly shows this in his description of the experience of theater in *The Child Psychology and Pedagogy* lectures which we pointed at.

In language, as in movement, I'm initiated into a world (symbolic) through imitation. The posture that the child learns to imitate since he begins his first steps is what makes the rather peculiar human perception possible. The upright walk is what opens a horizon in front of me, a perspective different from animals. But although imitating, I develop my own style, that in turn might be imitated, contested, desired, repelled, or instituted-instituting. Merleau-Ponty's treatment of painting - the work of

art in general - and the sense of "style" is one of the main trajectories for this understanding of mimesis.

b) The Question of Freedom and Power

Merleau-Ponty understood freedom as relational, for liberty "... exists only in the practice of liberty" (HT, p. xxiv). I acquire a sense of freedom in viewing the other's freedom as we have seen when contemplating on the social role and freedom.   This entails that freedom lives within the intersubjective field, the same as meaning which appears in intersubjectivity. But freedom is also situated. It takes place with a dense background that this freedom acts upon, thus transforming the instituted situation in which it finds itself.

The life of societies is determined on the value of freedom that shines through these intersubjective relations, thus society acquires its meaning with regard to other societies - here and there, past and future - but this freedom as situated, and as with every society, there is power involved. Power as Merleau-Ponty noted, "thwarts" (S, p. 213), it situates social and political freedom and draws its boundaries.

Merleau-Ponty describes power as of "the order of the tacit" (S, p. 212); this "tacit" is of the same order that appears in interhuman drama with its - unofficial - history, words and gestures. We might say that the life of intersubjectivity possesses both a visible and an invisible on its own. In his working notes, Merleau-Ponty reminded himself to raise the question

of "the invisible life… the invisible culture" (VI, p. 229). But first, we must address a feature in this interhuman drama that relates to power.

It seems that there are instituted dramas in each society. These dramas range from the personal to the public history, reenacted, referred to, sublimated, and working their way to our perception of life and history. The oedipal drama for instance is one famous example of an instituted drama. (which Merleau-Ponty confirms in IP, p.15) They seem to find their way in our life by means of natural tendency; meaning that its origins are forgotten. But at the same time, Merleau-Ponty remarks that there are civilizations that do not have this oedipal drama in its own institution, which also means that there are other instituted dramas that take its place in different places, different times. In that regard, we also realize that as there are differences in the life and conduct of the unconscious, there are also other manifestations of power involved on a deeper level. This remark might also question the place of freedom with regard to an institution that persisted for centuries, is there a way out? This is more of an open question.

Power evokes imitation. In an interhuman drama, the gestures, metaphors, and style associated with power can be imitated in reversibility; meaning that those who are subject to power might reenact and incorporate the dramas associated with power - dramas of both showing power and acting power - in their own interhuman dramas and styles as long as they create a symbolic effect that would alter their situation. In that sense, imitation harbors on the edges of the imaginary and this brings us to an interesting relation. We might argue that there are

two phantoms involved in the social role: one that we carry, and another is a phantom limb; or rather, a social phantom limb. Meaning that within our social roles, there is a space of social and political possibilities that we feel within the reach of our corporeal schema, but nevertheless, it is imaginary. The question then would be, what could this loss in the political and social field be? From where it was amputated?

If power - political action - is thought of as "... action of one person upon another " (HT, xxxii), then, it can appeal to the reversible relation of authority and recognition. As much as it demands obedience, it needs recognition from its subjects, otherwise it would be mere force. In a reversible fashion, those who grant recognition are in position of authority while power has to recognize them in order for it to be power in the first place. This also highlights the chiasm that is between power and its subjects. This chiasm highlights the fact of an originary freedom and power, where the two were not yet differentiated, a gesture towards an ontological plane that contains both. The social phantom limb of freedom is rather repressed and appears as coping with power in the fact of recognition.

In fact, Merleau-Ponty argues that "no effective freedom exists without some power. Freedom exists in contact with the world, not outside it" (SNS, p. 148). The exercise of power is an expression of freedom as much as the exercise of freedom is an expression of power. This power and freedom drama should then be regarded in hyperdialectical terms, but what does this dialectic correspond to?

c) The Question of Ontological Diplopia

The ontological diplopia as understood, is an oscillation between two ontological planes without integrating them into one vision that achieves identity in difference.

We can also argue that there is an ontological diplopia in the political field. Merleau-Ponty, as we have seen, criticizes both subjectivist and objectivist politics and later extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism in politics as problematic.

This permitted him to draw correlations between phenomenology in the field of philosophy and marxism in the field of action. But later on, Merleau-Ponty called for a new understanding of communism.

We can argue that ontological diplopia of action is the problem of the western metaphysical political thought. In tandem with Descartes, there was Hobbes.

In embracing the ontological diplopia as a sort of hyperdialectic, the chiasm is highlighted. The chiasm in vision is the way the body unites two monocular vision into one binocular vision, while diplopia is a case of double vision, maintaining the two visions without being able to appreciate their identity in difference. For a political perspective that would not be diplopic, it has to be chiasmic, it has to assume the identity in difference found within the interhuman drama and which turns it into a socio-historical drama, otherwise it would remain an 'unofficial' history without recognition, which would lead to explosive events.

Merleau-Ponty, in evading the problematic of subjectivity-objectivity duality within the political field, called for the development of a new 'liberalism', which he termed as 'non-communist left', and also, an a-communism (AD, p. 185). His thinking of an a-communism came in a period where he started to call for a new ontology. This new ontology also proposed the rethinking of the relations between philosophy and nonphilosophy. In that sense, Merleau-Ponty saw the way out of this political diplopia in a democratic system (AD, p. 185)[10] which would ensure the freedom needed for maintaining intersubjective relations of conflict and agreement without repressing them. The democratic drama would thus maintain the relation between politics and lived experience in the interhuman drama, in hope of avoiding the turn of the political field into "ruins." This is another question posed.

d) The Question of Possibility and Virtuality

Drama posits the question of the possible and the actual in an acute sense. For Merleau-Ponty, the actor's gesture operated in a virtual foyer. We can say that political life itself operates through the logic of situation, where political decisions actualizes the situation in response to the motive - or several motives - which is the situation as a fact. Although the decision is situated, nevertheless it operates within possibilities opened up by the motivation itself. Merleau-Ponty remarks that,

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[10] He does not use the word diplopia but he stated that an a-communism would make them face their political problems instead of "living with one eye fixed on the U.S.S.R and the other on the United States.

"... A policy therefore cannot be grounded in principle, it must also comprehend the facts of the situation… politics is the art of the possible. That does not suppress our initiative: since we do not know the future, we have only, after carefully weighing everything, to push in our own direction" (HT, xxxv).

In Adventures of the Dialectic, Merleau-Ponty states that political decisions prepare and respond to those moments when history is "... caught in a movement which attracts and submits to its rhythm an increasing number of facts" (AD, p. 120) but they do not create those moments. Which can bring another question of another situation with a dramatic quality to the fore.

e) The Question of Revolution?

In Phenomenology of perception, Merleau-Ponty elucidated the structure of situation in order to draw attention to its similarity to the dimension of depth in space. In the same fashion, we can raise the question of revolution as a situation and an event, and also as institution (IP, p. 7). It is a situation that finds expression in an explosion of the social where the tensions of the latent history/politics that animates the official politics were intensified. It is also an event in the sense of institution and symbolic action that opens up the depth of the social field. A revolution would thus open up a dimension of being where new relations are established within the symbolism it is. For Merleau-Ponty, institution is

neither mimicry of the past… nor fulguration of the future" (IP, p. 8). Rather, both are correlative; it is instituting-instituted. The "originary time" of any institution, would then be the factual time, "the time that it is" (IP, p. 8).

We might leave open the question of the time of drama in the reversibility between instituted and instituting.

In the end, we might ask the question: can drama - in the sense utilized by Merleau-Ponty - be regarded as a dimension of the political? I argue that drama highlights the bond between the political field and being.This relation does not play the game of the ontic-ontological distinction, rather, it is performed in the order of the tacit, this latent 'un-official' history that Merleau-Ponty pointed out. We can say that drama is an openness to the depth of the political and social field. This way we can think of drama as a dimension that is reversible with every other dimension and at the same time keeping an identity in difference. The order of the tacit is where the political dwells with its dialectic and chiasms, and it is drama that can give us access to the reversibility between the two.

Taminiaux remarks that "... perhaps the sought-for 'hyperdialectic' rejoins the most ancient sense of dialegein; to welcome the difference." (Taminiaux, 1985 , p. 172).

Conclusive Thought

Merleau-Ponty and his shadow

I tried throughout the thesis to sketch a way that might help in conceiving both Merleau-Ponty and his political ontology in a different light, away from the conventional readings of political ontology. The question posed, and which can never be answered fully and completely, is the presence of shadow in our thinking and conduct that we might have not thought about its importance for us to be who we are. Merleau-Ponty teaches us this attentiveness to shadows, hinges, vectors, and dimensions that he takes in the literal sense of the term. As much as these "figuratives" are seen by Merleau-Ponty in others including Husserl, he must have been aware that he also had a shadow, or an unthought-of element within his hyper-reflection. What sustains the writer is this shadow that attests to a drama of visibility and invisibility and what is in-between them. What we attempted to sketch out through the thesis is precisely this shadow, these contours that brought Merleau-Ponty into our visibility and the visibility of those who will come after. With regard to metaphor, we tried briefly to show its behaviour and manner of being, which I think would hide itself at the moment it was perceived. If the invisible is the other side of the visible, then it dwells within the world of shadows. This is also what we tried to highlight when interrogating gestures. Gestures are truly peculiar in their existence to the extent that they take numerous forms without being subsumed by any of them. This is also what would follow us when we encountered drama. We should say that it is not power, but rather it is drama that is of the order of the tacit. It seems counterintuitive when the

history of drama consists of one thing and one thing only, becoming visible. But drama is more than the stage, for drama is where the theatrical art gets its material. The interhuman drama - as Merleau-Ponty borrowed the term from Politzer - is at play in the latent history of the social, to the extent of reshaping it from scratch. Drama is the rhythm of both our movements and our thoughts. I hope I had been able to throw some shadow to the thought of Merleau-Ponty in order for it to be able to see itself.

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List of Abbreviations

Since I focused mainly on reading through the work of Merleau-Ponty, I figured out a it would be more practical if I inserted a list of the abbreviations that I used throughout the thesis in order to demonstrate certain aspects in his thinking.

AD

Adventures of the Dialectic. Translated by J. Bien. Evanston:
Northwestern University Press (1973).

BW

Basic Writings. T. Baldwin (ed.) London: Routledge (2004).

CPP

Child Psychology and Pedagogy: The Sorbonne Lectures 1949-1952. Translated by T. Welsh. Evanston: Northwestern University Press (2010).

HT

Humanism and Terror: An Essay on the Communist Problem. Translated by J. O'Neill. Boston: Beacon Press (1969).

IPP

In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays. Translated by J. Wild and J. E. John. Evanston: Northwestern University Press (1963).

IP

Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954-1955). Translated by L. Lawlor and H. Massey. Evanston: Northwestern

University Press (2010).

N   *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France*.
           Translated by R. Vallier. Evanston: Northwestern
           University Press (2000).

PhP   *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by C.
           Smith. London: Routledge (1962).

SNS   *Sense and Non-Sense*. Translated by H. L. Dreyfus
           and P. A. Dreyfus. Evanston: Northwestern
           University Press (1964).

S   *Signs*. Translated by R. C. McCleary. Evanston:
           Northwestern University Press (1964).

MPR   *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*. T. Todavine and L.
           Lawlor (eds.).
           Evanston: Northwestern University Press (2007).

TL   *Themes from the Lectures at the Collège de France
           1952-1960*. Translated by J. O'Neill. Evanston:
           Northwestern University Press (1970).

PPT   *The Possibility of Philosophy. Course Notes from the
           Collège de France, 1959-1961*. Translated by K.
           Whitmoyer. Stéphanie Ménasé (ed.) Evanston:
           Northwestern University Press (2022).

SWWE   *The Sensibe World and the World of Expression:
           Course Notes from the Collège de France, 1953*.
           Translated by B. Smyth. Evanston: Northwestern
           University Press (2020).

SB   *The Structure of Behavior*. Translated by A. L. Fisher. Boston: Beacon Press (1963).

VI   *The Visible and the Invisible*. Translated by A. Lingis. Claude Lefort (ed.). Evanston: Northwestern University Press (1968).