

Maurice Merleau- Ponty's

Wonders of Human Behavior and Gestalt Theory

Human Body Experiencing the
Nature of Its Existence in the
World of Perception

Emil Bakalli

Master of Philosophy Lecture: *The New School For Social
Research*

Professor: Bernard Flynn, New York 2008

EMIL BAKALLI

I will start my discourse with the philosophical structure and the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty; and especially, I will initiate this intellectual inquiry with one of most valid and vital statements that he made, in the beginning of his unfortunately unfinished book, *The Visible and the Invisible*, which is: “We see the things themselves; the world is what we see.” My philosophical thinking and my own approach in this regard, is in accordance and in agreement with the position of Merleau-Ponty. And because of that, I have introduced first and foremost the most essential ingredient of his last unfinished book; which is to say that, the mode of excavating the core of the so called *essential truth* is to be found in *perception*, because perception has certain [élan] that moves or motivates our human existence. What this entrance to our phenomenological inquiry foretells us, is that the world we participate in, it is a given space, an inherent world which is already there.

Furthermore, I shall encapsulate some aspects from the very beginning of Merleau-Ponty’s endeavor into the realm of the philosophical controversies. And here again, I will embrace the bearings of Merleau-Ponty. The question that comes up is this: what philosophical positions he is confronting and finally refuting here? To begin with, Merleau-Ponty repudiates the notions of empiricism, intellectualism, classical behaviorism, and Gestalt psychology/theory. So then, the major works that he will criticize are the works or the experiments conducted by such thinkers/scientists like, Jean Piaget, Kurt Koffka, and Wolfgang Kohler, and going as far back as to rejecting Immanuel Kant. But also paradoxically enough, he will find himself far apart from the positions of Edmund Husserl (Husserl’s phenomenology was an important starting point for Merleau-Ponty, but also, a departing moment as well), and with the philosophical stand of Jean-Paul Sartre. Merleau-Ponty and Sartre are actually diametrically opposed. This essay will deal later on with these issues.

In respect to Gestalt psychology, in *The Structure of Behavior*, he refutes the idea that human nature is *structured* in accordance with the notion of causality. So for the Gestalt theorists, nature is that which is structured and that our responses are stimulated in a mechanical manner. It is the 'reflex arc' that which they advocate and that which Merleau-Ponty criticizes. We will see that Merleau-Ponty is in disagreement with this, and he will posit himself saying that, nature cannot be perceived as a robotic machine; but rather, it is the subject that penetrates nature where unification of both nature and concept find a common ground as a unity—there is no possibility for behavior to be perceived as a stimuli but as a *form* only. So for Merleau-Ponty *form* cannot be grasped in the mode of reality, i.e. *form* cannot be apprehended in the physical appearance of the space-world but in terms of perception—there exists a unity of multiples and events—that is the solidity of the object perceived. In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, he will elaborate the aspect of the world and of the lived experience—lived body; concluding that our perception operates in terms of generality and anonymity, and things do exist because they are related to our gaze. What Merleau-Ponty fundamentally rejects, is the logic of *analytic reflection* propagating that we can begin to find the truths of the world we live in, by starting with an object and gradually go backwards regressing to the domain of subject. This is a major point of Merleau-Ponty's rejection. For him the world is already there. Therefore, we will investigate notions such as, perception is not a thing, perception is the way to attain being in the world, perception is existence, perception is an anonymous activity-generality, perception involves orientation and movement, and most importantly that of the *flesh*. All these concepts will be clarified as we investigate some ideas in the last book, *The Visible and the Invisible*. Here he demarcates from what has been misperceived/misunderstood, criticizing the notion of *positivism* in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. But also, what he rejects in Sartre's existentialism is that the self is never given to itself or the self is never present—it is a *projection*. Merleau-Ponty's response will be that we are never alone because *the other* is already there.

The final issue that we will talk about, it will be around the concept of the *phenomenology of reduction*, which for Husserl constitutes the transcended ego of object—putting out of play the structure of the exterior being—reduction is the way to arrive at the 'essence' of a perceiving thing and that is the [*eidetic abstraction*]. In this conflict with Husserl's idea, Merleau-Ponty will simply repudiate it. That is because in order to arrive at the essence of the thing, one cannot go thorough without the other and that is, because I am the subject of the world that is already there—I am the subject of possibility. Merleau-Ponty elaborates with a great tenacity about these issues in *The Primacy of Perception (Eye and Mind)*, and in *Sense and Non-Sense (Cezanne's Doubt)*, asserting the notion of reduction, but from the perspective of the [artist-painter]; there

is only the effective gaze of the artist that reduces the world through his acts of vision, in a sensuous mode of acting. Vision is the centrality of the “painter-the-artist”. For him the artist is the one that effectively applies “phenomenological reduction”, because painter’s perception of an object penetrates or pervades through the different aspects and layers of life, tactile, forms, shades, depths, layers, facets, and hues of reality. At this point, he has demarcated from Husserl for whom the other’s vision and perception is a problem: hence, the importance of Merleau-Ponty.

The Structure of Behavior

Merleau-Ponty is the philosopher-phenomenologist of [ambiguity]. His alterations or mega steps of thinking from *The Structure of Behavior* to *The Visible and the Invisible* are radical and it is in the latter that he formulates his most idiosyncratic or his unique and authentic ideas. However, it is the former (his first book) that will have a profound and everlasting impact following him almost until the end. He is very explicit about his rejection of classical behaviorism and objective the theory or the Gestalt psychology, and intellectualism. From the very beginning and introduction of *The Structure of Behavior* he states: “Our goal is to understand the relations of consciousness and nature: organic, psychological or even social.” (3) And a bit further down he will say that: “We will come to these questions by staring “from below” and by an analysis of the notion of behavior...behavior is reduced to the sum of reflexes and conditioned reflexes between which no intrinsic connection is admitted...” (4) Obviously enough, we see that for Merleau-Ponty, the atomistic understanding of classical behaviorism and Gestalt psychology is a failed or doomed project—it is very mechanistic and the notion of causality undermines any other possibility. However, Merleau-Ponty’s goal of analyzing consciousness in regards to its nature, it will be from “bottom up”; thus, ‘from below’ as he put it. This is the equivalent to the Hegelian notion of the dialectical process; however, Hegelianism is not that detrimental to Merleau-Ponty as much as it was to Sartre. For Merleau-Ponty the dialectical notion of Hegel disappears along the way, as he moves on and on and it does not have an essential role as it occupies for example, Sartre’s thinking.

The point that I want to make is that, Merleau-Ponty opposes the notion of “causality” with that of Hegelian “dialectic”. But for the moment being, we are accepting Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* to be found underneath *The Structure of*

Behavior. That being said, the question is: it would be fair to name Merleau-Ponty a Hegelian? We will see later on whether it is true or not, and how much truth is contained in this question mark: although, in this respect, he is rejecting Kantian epistemology and intellectualism in its very core. And that applies to the intellectualist advocacy of Piaget as well, who in the *Genetic Epistemology* claims that: "...In sensory-motor intelligence, certain logic of inclusion, a certain logic of ordering, and a certain logic of correspondence, which I maintain are the foundations for the logical mathematical structure...We can also find in this sensory-motor intelligence the beginnings of two essential characteristics of operations, namely, a form of conservation and a form of reversibility" (43) This kind of approach is to be found in Koffka's and Koehler's (Kohler) Gestalt theory too: for Piaget the notion of intellectualist structure is to be located in the faculty of cognition. And that indicates that Piaget is deeply concerned with the structural mechanism that generates the comprehension of '*reflexive abstraction*' and '*self regulation*'. This is very much a mechanistic and atomistic attitude which leaves no doubt about the epistemological claim of Piaget; and especially, when he supports his genetic epistemological theory from the most rationalist linguistic theoretician such as Chomsky. Piaget points that: "According to Chomsky, logic is not derived from language, but language is based on a kernel of reason...The main thing that I should like to emphasize in Chomsky's position is that...he has reversed the classical view that logic is derived from language by maintaining that language is based on intellectual structures". (47, 48) It seems to me though, that we have to thoroughly comprehend the fact that, the basic core of Piaget is that *logic* is the stimuli of all behaviors coordinated from the intellectual structures and faculty, and the aspect of language is subordinated to the driving force and the rationality of *cognition*. Piaget thinks that the faculty of intelligence is unmistakable because, it has a given logical structure of arrangement and regulation or logic of communication—it always operates in such a manner as to maintain reversibility from the point of departure—this atomistic mechanism is in its highest purity. A bit further, Piaget likes to correlate his thinking with the operational linguistic experiments of Madame Hermine Sinclair saying that: "...on the basis of these experiments is that the intellectual operations appear to give rise to linguistic progress and not vice versa" (50). From this point of view, Piaget has teamed up with Chomsky and Sinclair. For it is clear that the point that Piaget wants to make, it is that logic is the epicenter of all operational structures of human behavior—it is the sensory-motor of intelligence that conserves and from where all actions dispense: language is structured by the sensory-motor of logic, meaning that language has a determinate and mechanistic *form* stimulated by logic. But where Merleau-Ponty diverges with the above theories, is that for him behavior is not a "stimuli" but rather, it is a "form". Behavior is a [*form*] says

Merleau-Ponty. It is the notion of behavior as a form that Merleau-Ponty refutes Gestalt psychology as well as he rejects Piaget's intellectualism as well; that also means, he refutes Kant's notion that human mind and sensation judges the world as it appears, i.e. Merleau-Ponty repudiates Kantianism as an epistemological sphere as judging the phenomenon of the world and space through the sensory faculty of judgment.

Now, responding to Piaget and especially to the Gestalt theory of Koehler (Kohler), and of Koffka as well, in *The Structure of Behavior* Merleau-Ponty claims: "He submits the hypothesis to the judgment of experience and it is not to this model in particular that he adheres. It happens that there do exist "physical systems" whose properties are similar to those which we have recognized in the nervous system: these systems evolve to a state of privileged equilibrium and there is a circular dependence among local phenomena...Gestalt theory justifies the notion of "form" by a criticism of the "anatomical" spirit in physiology" (47) Merleau-Ponty's criticism is particularly directed to the experiments or methodical models of [*reflex theory*] executed by Koehler, who established the principle that the nervous system is a spectrum and a domain of actions; where, the external forces influence the actions of human behavior, and that happens in a *circular* mode. In other words, the circularity of this mechanistic system is totally depended on local phenomena.

For Gestalt theory the notion of *form* is encapsulated by the condition of the *stimuli*, as that which articulates all patterns of behavior—stimuli is the regulatory agent. What comes up with this is the aspect of "form". But what Gestalt theorists such as Koehler and Koffka say about the patterns of behavior and the forms they take on, when they reveal their actions? In *The Growth of the Mind*, Koffka claims: "Always beginning with a sensory neurone and ending with a motor neurone, this apparatus is called a *reflex-arc*...A reflex-mechanism is then conceived as a pre-determined, inherited connection between afferent (receptor) and efferent (effector) pathways". (71) And to continue our analyses a bit further so as to make our point, Koffka continues to make references to Kohler (Koehler) and embracing his experiments saying that: "In all essentials the expressive movements are but simple instances of our general principle of behaviour. Kohler describes the process as follows: 'if we were to represent behaviour graphically by means of a time-curve, the behaviour of fright might show an abrupt rise in the curve, followed by a gradual fall. The dynamics of the phenomenal or mental processes accompanying this behaviour would then be indicated by a curve of essentially the same character—and so will a purely electro-motor process in a photo-electric element when it is suddenly and briefly exposed to the light'...Thus the perception in the mind of an onlooker, if it be so constituted as to embrace what is going on in the agent, must itself possess a similar articulation. And hence the

experience of the agent A, and of the observant B must resemble each other". (130-1) What Koffka is saying and what Koehler is elucidating here is that, the movement as a pattern of behavior aimed at or supervised towards a destination and purpose is very specific; because, it is stimulated by a mechanistic energy or stimuli—the behavior corresponds to the total circuit of reactions from the point of departure to the point of arrival and that means that, the itinerary is mechanically given and is predetermined away in advance. Thus we are dealing with the aspect of *reflex-arc* as a curve of mechanical reactions meaning that, the pattern of mental faculties and behaviors is a field of atomistic "causality".

The purpose of Gestalt psychology experiments were to show to us that the similarity of forms is inherited in nature, so what happens in our mental processes and behaviors is just a repetition retrieving back and forth from point X to point Y automatically responding as structured patterns in a series of physical events. This is the *reflex-arc*—Merleau-Ponty perceived this issue in a very different vain regarding the notion of form and behavior. For him nature is not a mechanical machine (in the Newtonian sense as well nature operates like a machine), but rather nature is an immense whole, that is nothing else, but an interconnection of parts in a whole—not computed. Merleau-Ponty's response to Gestalt theory in *The Structure of Behavior*, is that, Gestalt theory is unintelligible because is self-enveloping, leading him to make his claim, regarding the notion of being in the world of existence, saying that: "A consciousness according to Hegel's expression, is a 'penetration in being,'...There is, then, no behavior which certifies a pure consciousness behind it, and the other person is never given to me as the exact equivalent of myself thinking...But in fact I am aware of perceiving the world as well as behavior, which caught in it, intends numerically one and the same world, which is to say that, in the experience of behavior...Behaviorism, solipsism, and 'projective' theories all accept that behavior is given to me like something spread out in front of me...The structure of behavior as it presents itself to perceptual experience is neither thing nor consciousness; and it is this which renders it opaque to the mind...: behavior is not a thing, but neither is it an idea. It is not the envelope of a pure consciousness and, as the witness of behavior, I am not a pure consciousness. It is precisely this which we wanted to say in stating that behavior is a form" 126-7) We see that the notion that behavior is nothing but a *form*, it is that which is aimed by the strategy of Merleau-Ponty but also, this form is ambiguous and dispersed into an open totally which also means, a plurality if interconnectedness of being, i.e. the notion of atomistic and mechanical reflex-arc is refused.

In Merleau-Ponty's view, we see that behavior is not a fixation of phenomenon and most significantly; behavior doesn't exist as a structure in nature—there is not exterior

causality. He emphasizes the aspect that, the form of behavior is an internal process; therefore, departing from the concepts of *body* and *soul* and the epistemological intellectualism of Kant. We will elucidate further down these notions as Merleau-Ponty calls them: 1) *the physical order*, 2) *the vital order*, and 3) *the human order*. But before we go further on in the analysis of these three aspects of behavior, as they are clearly allocated by Merleau-Ponty; here at this point and time, it would be of an interest to exist for a moment from our main theme and to see what Hegel has in mind in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* concluding that: “Raised above perception, consciousness exhibits itself closed in a unity with the supersensible world through the mediating term of appearance, through which it gazes into this background [lying behind appearance]. The two extremes [of this syllogism], the one, of the pure inner world, the other, that of the inner being gazing into this pure inner world, have now coincided, and just as they, *qua* extremes, have vanished, so to the middle term, as something other than these extremes, has also vanished. This curtain [of appearances] hanging before the inner world is therefore drawn away, and we have the inner being [the ‘I’] gazing into the inner world...” (103) The question that arises is this: why I introduced Hegel, here and now? It is of relevance to Merleau-Ponty? I think this comment sheds some light to Merleau-Ponty’s thought and in particular in *The Structure of Behavior*, where he pin points Hegel’s concept of *penetration of being*. What does it mean? It reveals to us not only the dialectic pattern of Hegelianism, but most importantly the structure and the condition he perceives being—it is viewed and encapsulated from within or from the inner condition of its existence. The format of Gestalt psychology /behaviorism and intellectualism perceived it externally as a *thing* of forces that follows patterns of conditioned mechanism of sensory-data.

Now, Hegel speaks just of that, of the inner world, the inner condition where there is no place for mechanistic structure. Hegel speaks of a play of inner forces that penetrate into the being of the *in-it-self* in a perpetual action or kinesis. Also, what Hegel does introduce here is the notion of *I* perceive and look at the appearance of the world; where the nature of the *other* is not of specificity and not given to me—it is of the extra-sensory. It is this indubitable and discernable play of immanent conditions of inner forces that Hegel wants to dispense/assign, implying the utter or insignificant negative importance of being as nothing; the positivity is to be located at the mediating agency. The *I* factor is compressed in between these two extreme forces as Hegel says that; *I* gaze into the inner world. *I* am the mediator. *I* am the third factor that reveals the true essence of the world, that which is given to me, it is already there as Merleau-Ponty would say. For Merleau-Ponty, Hegel’s dialectic is like the bridge one has to use/take in order to get to the other side of the spectrum, and for him is to get to *The Visible and the Invisible*. Therefore, there is enough evidence to conclude that, in *The Structure of*

Behavior, Hegel's dialectics play a significant role in solidifying Merleau-Ponty's critique to Gestalt theory and intellectualism. Now, we will go back into our initial point of departure in regards to, the three orders of Merleau-Ponty: the *physical*, *vital* and *human*. What has to be remembered is that *behavior is a form*, but as dexterity of form that is not conditioned from either inner or exterior factors, but rather as an ambiguous unity of both and, it can be so in the equality of the three orders.

First, there is the *physical* structure. Here we see that; "it is the internal circulation which *is* the system as a physical reality" (137). With this we understand that physical forms are not as have been shown to us from Gestalt theory, where structures are inherited in nature and that they reflect this mechanical pattern of reflexes and behavior, but rather, forms have an internal non-hierarchical system which is oblique. A bit further he would state that Form is not an element of the world but a limit toward which physical knowledge tends and which it itself defines." (142) What Merleau-Ponty is soliciting here, is the idea that Kohler has misunderstood the concept of physical forms, because for Kohler, forms are to be found in the realm of knowledge and thus, have a web-of-local-structures-in-nature. For Merleau-Ponty the appearance of form is not bound to the idea of causality; but rather, that of ambiguity and form cannot be enveloped but it is perceived by me. Secondly, there is in the *vital* structure. Here we see that there operates the notion of action and that of vitality, but here again; Gestalt theory has no relation to the real activity of life and life's spontaneous and visceral organism. This organism does not function like a machine would operate in a stimulus reaction and responses. In the vital order, Merleau-Ponty wants to find a distribution of a balanced exterior condition working in harmony with the inner world. He states: "Vital acts *have* a meaning; they are not defined, even in science, as a sum of processes external to each other, but as a spatial and temporal unfolding of certain ideal unities" (159) Here we see that, Merleau-Ponty's aim is to say that each act has a different sound and meaning—there freely operates a field of ambiguity and that the external acts and forces are diversified, and not by mechanisms of mechanical sensory-motor-responses. The third, structure is that of the *human order* where the Hegelian dialectic looms at large. Human order is introduced as the third part or as Merleau-Ponty coins it, the "third dialectic". What is of interest here is what he claims: "at this moment consciousness is nothing other than the dialectic of milieu and action". (169) To put it differently we could say that, what is this sort of environment [*umwelt*] that he is alluring here? It seems to me though, what he is insinuating is the notion of "dexterity" in regards to that of human actions, as those things [*sachen*] that enable the forms to take shape and place. Therefore, it is action that enables us to perceive the world we live in, that which is already given to us as being already in existence. But our vitality re-creates a multiplicity of diverse worlds of existence. It is precisely in the vital order that

Merleau-Ponty criticizes the epistemological structure of Kant, i.e. the field of human act cannot be located epistemologically but rather among others. For Merleau-Ponty, the domain of consciousness is intertwined with the realm of praxis—it is the “lived consciousness” that is essential where the activity of human work can be visible. The point where Merleau-Ponty refutes Kant is where, for Kant the subject is a *priori* or a transcendental form—the subject is a world-less one, thus transcendental.

Merleau-Ponty has walked on the thresholds of transcendentalism but never in its zone, because for him the subject is the essential part of the human activity; of the human world, i.e. the subject of perception is a worldly existence and that is the very embodiment and the flesh of the world. What we have seen so far is that Merleau-Ponty operates in the Hegelian zone, in order to confront Kant’s transcendentalism; but later on, we will see that he will play off with Hegel too. Merleau-Ponty is not a Hegelian per say, but he climbed high enough in to the sphere and cliffs of Hegelianism?! However, this is not a lapse into a rampant Hegelianism either. Is it?

Phenomenology of Perception

In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, there exists a continuity of patterns and elements from *The Structure of Behavior* but also, a neo-departure to other directions. The new themes of Merleau-Ponty will be the notion of the body subject or lived body, the world of lived experience, perception as an anonymous activity, space, and etc. Here again, he did not have enough in rejecting Kant and intellectualism and empiricism. In other words, the book as a whole makes a lot of remarks and claims against the spiritualism of Henri Bergson as well.

But what is very interesting is the different pathway that Merleau-Ponty takes from the phenomenology of Husserl and of course, from Sartre’s existentialism. In *The Visible and the Invisible* the anti-Sartre and anti-Husserl attitude (although, in regards to Husserl may be not intentional?), oscillates high enough. Why he doubts Bergson’s consciousness and the work of mind and memory? We see that in chapter 4, in *The Phenomenal Field*, Merleau-Ponty opens up a wide criticism against empiricism, Kantian transcendentalism, intellectualism, Bergsonian spiritualism, and Gestalt psychology. He emphasizes the notion of “sense experience” as being totally mutilated by the above, the scientific and philosophical inquiries. His aim is to resurrect the marginalized field of ‘sense experience’ where, our living body and experience are given a fundamental

significance; that is that, the 'sense experience' is not treated as an intellectual structure or an empirical vested quality or mechanistic causality.

First, let's see what is that which, Merleau-Ponty rejects in Bergson's notion of *intuitionism* and why? In *Mind–Energy*, Bergson contemplates and elaborates in length and depth regarding the aspect of, where *intuition* and *subject-object* resides with such perseverance as operative, and how consciousness inserts itself saying that: "Whether we consider the act which consciousness decrees or the perception which prepares that act, in either case consciousness appears as force seeking to insert itself in matter in order to get possession of it and turn in to its profit". (22) Concluding a bit further Bergson claims that: "...I quite agree with the opinion expressed by Sir Oliver Lodge in many of his works, and especially in his admirable book on *Life and Matter*. How could there be disharmony between our intuitions and our sciences, how especially could our science make us renounce our intuitions, if these intuitions are something like act,—an instinct conscious, refined, spiritualized,—...Intuition and instinct do not oppose each other..." (34) Where I wanted to get is that, it is precisely the notion of "intuitionism" that which is the driving force of Bergson, leading him to the spiritualization of rationally of science, i.e. Bergson, diligently is contemplating [intuition] as an emotional structure" defining the philosophical realm to be an *utter accurate/unequivocal regimen or method*. In other words, can we also say that, the methodology that Bergson is propagating or better say impregnating is nothing more or less than Platonism in its purest form?! The point is not that Bergson is advocating row Platonic ideals here, but rather, our investigation is aimed at the aspect of rupturing and disseverance: we see that dualism has nested in Bergson—rationalism-sensation, heterogeneous-homogeneous, etc. Certainly, there is a prognostic penetration of subject into object or as Merleau-Ponty explains it: "It is again what happens to Bergson precisely when he contrasts 'multiple fusions' and 'multiplicity of juxtapositions'...All that has happened is that mechanical energy has been replaced by spiritual, the discontinues being of empiricism by being a fluid kind, but of which we can say that it flows, describing it in the third person." (68) The repudiation of Bergson by Merleau-Ponty in other words is that, Bergson unknowingly tried to shape the existence of consciousness as that *thing* that all that is, is "memory", "conservation", and thus *concentrating* the past events into the present, where all the active moments are nothing else but infringements or inroads on becoming the future events.

Furthermore, there is the tenacity or the intransigence of Bergson to epitomize the unification of the scientific adventures as being absolutely interrelated to the subjective activity, and also, as to make the domain of consciousness a psychic reality. Merleau-Ponty too, wants the subjective field to be emerged into the scientific realm, but not

spiritualized as a psychic energy in it. That led Bergson to diverge from the essential point of understanding consciousness and its immediate experience. Bergson's intuition disconnected the bridge between immediate experience or experience of phenomenon in exchange for the spiritualization of consciousness, i.e. for Bergson the scientific field poses questions, but it is intuition that which clarifies what is true or not. And this disjunction emerges precisely when Bergson in *Time and Free Will* introduces the notion of the third person saying that: "Our psychic states, separating then from each other, will get solidified; between our ideas, thus crystallized, and our external movements we shall witness permanent associations being formed; and little by little, as our consciousness thus imitates the process by which nervous matter procures reflex actions, automatism will cover over freedom....there is a third course which might be taken, namely, to carry ourselves back in thought to those moments of our life when we made some series decision, moments unique of their kind...this psychic state being unique of its kind and unable ever to occur again...the very idea of determination here loses every shred of meaning...". (239) There is a profound dazzling mystic sense of energy where, events in our consciousness are being determinate before we know it, like we are powerless to drive our being and where, our experience is not really a real one because is foreseen before it will happen. The notion that our psychic condition will be unified meaning also that, the conscious subject will be solidified with the consciousness of the object, thus creating a field of our knowledge fused in our being and in the world of experience—it is precisely this concept which Merleau-Ponty refutes.

Let's encapsulate a bit more in depth the refutation of epistemological-intellectualism or Kantian transcendentalism by Merleau-Ponty. For him the notion of real and actual experience is the point of our attention because, this state is prior to the objective world claiming that: "...the layer living experience through which other people and things are first givens to us, the system 'Self-other-things' as it comes into being; to reawaken perception and foil its trick of allowing us to forget it as a fact and as perception in the interest of the object which is present to us and of the rational tradition to which it gives rise." (66) Merleau-Ponty has never been so close almost in the zone of Romanticism and especially that of Herder. Actually, it is in the beginning of chapter 4 that he mentions Herder in respect to the notion of "sense experience". Herder too, diligently emphasized the field of "sensation" and the "obscure experience" prior to that of reason. Herder operates in a sort of dialectical manner where the sensuous gives rise to the rational tradition that Merleau-Ponty is talking about. In Herder's terms, there is a force at work—this force is not an entity but rather a process, i.e., this force exists only in its realization and this is a restless ontological ambiguity. Herder is not in accordance with Kant and that is because Herder seriously

contemplates the notion of the “obscure” and the “sensuous” prior to any objective world—this is what more or less, where Merleau-Ponty wants to arrive at. In *Philosophical Writings* Herder claims: “Quite generally, nothing in nature is separated, everything flows onto and into everything else through imperceptible transitions; and certainly, what life is in the creation is in all shapes, forms, and channels only a single spirit, a single flame”. (195) What is apparent at this point is that, Herder too, is in opposition to Kant as Merleau-Ponty is, and that is precisely why he mentions Herder as a reference and as a point of support regarding the notion of ‘sense experience’. Where is Herder confronting Kant? It is precisely is the zone of reason. Herder argues that we cannot understand or, we cannot judge if we do not have first and foremost grasped and comprehended the aspect and the nature of obscurity. Only from the obscure and the sensuous can judgment and reason develop. In other words, no one is born with rationally but rather we learn to rationalize through certain processes of feelings, sense experiences, and that is brought forth from the force of “perception”. Here we go back to Merleau-Ponty’s position which is, the world of the lived experience, the things are as they are precisely because I gaze at them, I make them to be, and not because of intuition or spiritualization of the world as Bergson would have it, but because the world that I see is already there—the environment [*umwelt*] and the world [*welt*] is what I see, what I perceive through the sense of my experience—my body.

What Kant wants to do, is to make reason or the cognitive faculty of judgment supervising imagination, so that understanding can have the upper hand; although, it seems that Kant wants to add them as one or as a *force of free play*— playing in a parallel mutual mode of coexistence and being. In *Critique of Judgment* Kant states: “Now a representation by which an object is given, that is to become cognition in general, requires *Imagination*, for the gathering together the manifold of intuition and *Understanding*...This state of *free play* of the cognitive faculties is a representation by which an object is given, must be universally communicable...the excitement of faculties (Imagination and Understanding) to indeterminate, but yet, through the stimulus of the given sensation, harmonious activity, viz. that which belongs to cognition in general...” (38-9-40) Apparently, what Kant says is that, there must be a mutual agreement of force between both, cognition (understanding) and sensation (imagination) into a force of play. Thus a universal law that applies to all men ‘universally without a concept’. To put it in another way, Kant says that I am able to cognize but sensation (imagination) is not cognition. The domain of Understanding or cognition [*verstand*] and that of Imagination or sensuous [*sinnlich*] are attuned or harmonized together playing in a parallel mode.

At this particular conjunction of our discourse, the other question is whether or not, reason and sensation work together or, can they function as one unity? In Kantian

terms they do. He is insinuating that both faculties come together into a mutual co-existence of an infinite or eternal *free play*. But what is of importance for us here, is that both Imagination and Understanding collaborate together, leading us again, to perceive cognition as that which will rationalize intellectually because human beings are able to cognize—thus we can share the same pleasures universally. Kant does not see the power domination here or the role of overpowering magnitude of Understanding, because in order to experience the same aesthetical experience we must cognize it intellectually. The notion of sense-experience automatically diminishes or is subordinated under that of cognition and judgment. What is important to note here is that Kant is opposed to the idea of dualism. Kant's aim to overcome the Cartesian dualistic notion through the process of Understanding and Imagination going hand by hand, i.e. the paradox of Kant is that as soon as we judge, we also automatically cognize, and as that takes place we devalue the importance of sense-experience.

Here, we see the same or even stronger Kantian ideas in Schiller's book; *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, where he contemplates the principle that the sensuous and reason as collaborative agents form the structure of human culture and society. But to return back to our initial point of departure, Merleau-Ponty criticizes Kant from the start of the *Phenomenology of Perception*; in the preface too, saying that: "The world is not what I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world, I have no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible. 'There is a world', or rather: 'There is the world'...This facticity of the world is what constitutes the *Weltlichkeit der Welt*, what causes the world to be the world...Kant shows himself in the *Critique of Judgment* that there exists a unity of the imagination and the understanding and a unity of subjects *before the object*, and that, ...I am aware of a harmony between sensation and concept". (xix) Merleau-Ponty's denunciation of Kantian transcendentalism and intellectualism lies precisely in the principle of the world. For Merleau-Ponty, the world is there in front of my presence, in front of my gaze, I live it and I am in it because it communicates to my sphere of presence and because the world is. Here we see some germs of *The Visible and the Invisible* too. Therefore, as we said a bit earlier, in Kant we have a lack of the contingency of the realm of thought. Merleau-Ponty's position is that Kant has neglected the notion of perceptual phenomena because: "Ordinary experience draws a clear distinction between sense experience and judgment. It sees judgment as the taking of a stand, as an effort to know something which shall be valid for myself every moment of my life...This distinction disappears in intellectualism, because judgment is everywhere where pure sensation is not—that is, absolutely everywhere". (40) The point that Merleau-Ponty wants to make is that the meaning of perceptual phenomenon is inherent and the role of judgment becomes not central. In other words, sensation is not to be found in the mode of experience and

arriving at the essential point, 'consciousness is always consciousness of an object. To attain the realm of the sensuous is when I think perceptually, because I find my being enveloped in my body, being present in the world, and being here and now alongside with the others in the midst of the world, into the space that is already there—in front of my general gaze. One cannot just think of the world as a mechanically evoked event or form a specific world, because the world or the space I am in is of the world that exists prior to me. Kantian transcendentalism or intellectualism or 'analytic reflection' thought that, we could begin investigating our world starting from the object and then go into retrospective/backwards or into a regressive state. Merleau-Ponty rejects this principle because it mutilates our *sense experience* as we are present in the moment, in the presence of the visible world.

There are a few more points or major topics in the *Phenomenology of Perception* that I want to tackle. I will start with the presence of our body as it relates in the world and the object-horizon structure. Now, it is my visual body that enables me to investigate the world that which I surround with my body; however, what also is of interests to pin point here, it is the notion that I cannot gaze at my physical body. Can I observe my body than? If that is true how is it possible? At this point we have an underlying significance of Husserl, but also contradictive with what Merleau-Ponty has to say. Merleau-Ponty initiates and starts from Husserl's phenomenological investigations and at the same time he diverges a lot from him. Then what Husserl has to say? For Husserl, the principle of phenomenology is retained in *subjective absolutism* and that for Husserl there is no such thing as the *exterior of being* because, we move into and by "internal horizons"; where, one surface leads to the next one regarding the manner we encapsulate an object. Thus for Husserl we constitute the transcendence of an object penetrating into it, onto it, below it, under it, above it, and from any other combination of horizons and visual perspectives. Husserl coins this way of being; reductive. The point of divergence between Merleau-Ponty and Husserl, is that for Husserl we do not need the-other, because if that is the case, then how could I penetrate the-others' body to the very condition or nature of subjectivity? It seems that the right response from Merleau-Ponty will be that, it is the presence of the-other from where we will arrive at the realm and heart of subjectivity. So the mega divergence is *the-other*, and this is a major split. In *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Husserl tackles the idea of transcendental subjectivity which to say, his contemplation is to reduce the totality of what is real to the mode of transcendental-phenomenological reduction or *eidetic abstraction*; reformulating a pure reductive subjective state of being, and that will be the essence of the thing, which is to say, of our way of seeing the world—with no exteriority involved. In this way for Husserl, phenomenology is the field of essences or the domain of cognitive science that searches the state of essences and how they are

constituted subjectively. Let's investigate why Merleau-Ponty is at unease state with the 'phenomenological reduction' that Husserl aspires?

It is in *The Idea of Phenomenology* that Husserl asserts that: "First, the Cartesian *cogitatio* already requires the phenomenological reduction. The psychological phenomenon in psychological apperception and objectification is not a truly absolute datum. The truly absolute datum is the *pure phenomenon*, that which is reduced. The mentally active ego, the object, man in time, the thing among things, etc., are not absolute data; hence man's mental activity as his activity is no absolute datum either...But one thing seems to help us along: *eidetic abstraction*. It yields inspectable universal, species, essences, and so it seems to provide the redeeming idea: for we do not seek "seeing" clarity about the essence of cognition"? (5, 6) What Husserl is insinuating here is that, the original way to arrive at the pure essence of things or objects is through pure seeing and also, what fills out the hole or void of empiricism, sciences, Kantianism, and Cartesian dualism, is the notion of "eidetic abstraction" (the phenomenal *bracketing out*), as that which operates not on the basis of the objective world, the world of the things where man's objective and mental capacity acts; but rather, in a pure inner subjectivity, where we reduce the whole of reality to a phenomenal reduced datum. In other words, what Husserl is implying is that, the world we perceive is not possible to be conceptualized unless it is constituted by the notion of the transcendental ego, i.e., there is no option for anything to be it, if it is not to rely for its existence on the phenomenal self.

To be clear, Husserl's idea of *phenomenal reduction* is a nascent step that aims at making the essence of cognition a doctrine, a science in its own right. By the notion of eidetic abstraction we understand the absolute-given or self-given as evidence. That is to say that, the field of phenomenology is looking for a really pure and absolutely reduced form or given object encapsulating or distilling from it the pure essence by a method of pure seeing. The main task of Husserl is how do I arrive at the essence of a perceived object? Here is where Merleau-Ponty finds himself not in agreement with Husserl, because for Husserl as we previously saw, the transcendental reduction is an eidetic abstraction or reduction to a zero index. Furthermore, Husserl wants to formulate a cognitive science through the phenomenal reduction and that is not just the experience per say, but it is about how do we get to the essential structure of a thing. Husserl's position is that there is a free mode of variation in regards to the aspect of the horizon of perception, i.e., is essence in itself as that which dictates possibilities. Husserl adds that: "How far does self-givens reach? Is it contained in the givenness of the *cogitatio* and in the ideations which grasp it in its generality? Our phenomenological sphere, the sphere of absolute clarity, of immanence in the true sense, reaches no

farther than self-givenness reaches". (8) The field of self-givenness is all that is in the existence of forms. It is the absolute manner of the seeing the sees the things in their *immanence*, and that through the seeing of essences we grasp the generality of an object that is being seen.

In Husserl we are really dealing with a teleological perseverance which is indivisible, in the sense that I see the Metropolitan Museum Art, in New York. How do I perceive this mass of concrete building as it expands in many difference perspectives from me as I gaze at it? In Husserl's understanding the building exists "in different modes of givenness". That is so because I perceive it as a building that is constituted in my cognition. There is real experience involved and that is important to remember, but also, there are variations of this building that I now see. I see the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art in various images and I perceive different forms of it as I go on and on, so then gradually I replace the images of this building in different planes or surfaces or facets. This description is the physiognomy of the essence of my perception—I cannot perceive all sides of the building at once, but rather one at a time, one profile at time. There is a progression of unfolding visions taking place and replacing one another. What that also means, is that, perception is not and it cannot (according to Husserl) be dissolved by a doubt or nothingness, but rather by another perception of the same general initiation. All horizons and visual variations are interconnected as an apprehensible unit constituting the totality of the objet in a teleological mode.

Let us now return to the main theme of our discourse and that is where Merleau-Ponty stands in relation to Husserl. We will see that in a way he shares the teleological notion of perception as it is investigating the object. But the point of their divergence is precisely where Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the aspect that my presence and my existence is given to me; therefore I do not need as Husserl implies, the moment where I grasp my existence through the essence of my subjectivity, but I am here and now because the world is given to me as that which is already there. A bit earlier we saw how Husserl neglected and dismissed the idea of 'man in time or object' not allowing him to get to the nature of subjectivity. But for Merleau-Ponty that is not true, because in *Phenomenology of Perception* he says that: "Thus, to sum up, the ambiguity of being-in-the-world is translated by that of the body, and this understood through that of time". (98) The idea of *time* as that which makes my presence here and now solidifying our existence. This is realized through my body because my body is the driving force for my presence being in the world, I breathe and experience through it and that is truly self-given as evidence. But also, because of my body I am conscious of my surroundings and my settings. He asserts: "I know that objects have several facets because I could make a tour of inspection of them, and in that sense I am conscious of the world

through the medium of my body". (95) That leads us to claim that the phenomenal thinking of Merleau-Ponty is very different because, in Husserl we are dealing with an *absolute subjectivity*, thus discarding the value of *the body-the-other* principle, for that of the *eidetic abstraction*. In Merleau-Ponty we have the importance of the other because, the other enables me to arrive at the state of subjectivity; but also, through my body as that which is the vehicle operating in the midst of the world, I gaze at things and look in and around the environment and thus I do constitute the world—I am the subjectivity of the world itself. In Merleau-Ponty's view, I am in my body as that silhouette which observes and diffuses into the world or as Merleau-Ponty greatly says: "Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism..." (235) Therefore, my living body is an organism that, I myself do not observe but my body is in the position to penetrate or permeate into my subjective world. For Husserl this is unacceptable. My body is the immanent observer. In regards to Husserl's *pure seeing* and the absolute datum of subjectivity without exterior incitement Merleau-Ponty clearly responds: "It is never our objective body that we move, but our phenomenal body, and there is no mystery in that, since our body, as the potentiality of this or that part of the world, surges towards objects to be grasped and perceives them" (121) What he is contemplating here, it is the notion of my [anonymous body] pervading the world of existence. Also, at this point we have Merleau-Ponty standing in a diametrical position from Sartre, because in Sartre's view, I experience myself as a subject *only* when I experience the 'other' as an object, i.e. I either turn myself into an object for the other or vice versa. But for Merleau-Ponty, it is the phenomenal body that arrests the world—it is precisely this essence of my being that is my subjectivity and the possibility or potentiality of the already given world; I do not have to be looked at or to specifically gaze at a particular body, in order for my subjective state to exist. According to Merleau-Ponty, I do not stand in front or behind or left-right of my body, but rather I am in it, I am the very embodiment of it operating within it, i.e. the dissimilitude or alternatives cannot be assumed or be taken for granted in a particular location.

There is nowhere to be found, and nothing better like this particular idea projected by Merleau-Ponty, in regards to my body as a work-of-art. What does he mean when he asserts that? He puts forward the idea that: "The body is to be compared, not to a physical object, but rather to a work of art". (174) Esoterically and phenomenally speaking the situation is to be grasped and comprehended by saying that, we are not the beholders of our body parts or between our physical and optical or ocular or seeable form of our body, but rather, we could say that we are the consolidation of all of it, gazing at it and caressing it: we are the sensation of our existence in its ambiguous form. The body as a work of art is like a ligature or a tie or a network of variety of multiple definitions—there is no space here for any specificity or applications. It is like the

paintings of Cezanne, where all the strokes and facets and layers and hues on canvas have *bind-in* keeping them all in harmony. Therefore, according to the position that Merleau-Ponty has taken we say that, our body is really a flux but a flux in unity and ambiguity; in other words, the existence of our body is always a given to us, as the world is already. Our body is implied in its existence. The significance here is that, my body is not perceived as a static object because as Merleau-Ponty asserts: “I have no means of knowing the human body other than that of living it, which means taking up my own account the drama which is being played out in it, and losing myself in it. I am my body...I possess experience...” (231) It is the aspect of being a part of my body and experiencing it as a whole and living it in its acts as it immerses and immerses in the conditions of the world; this is the way I claim it as being me and my body, a lived experience because I can only experience and live the conditions of my own body. I cannot experience or constitute other’s situations because, I do not experience their inner awareness and liveliness as I do with my own body. That is to say, that when I constitute my existence and my world, I am not able to embody another existence or consciousness. I am an ambiguous life and form that strives for existence in its multiplicity of existences.

According to Merleau-Ponty’s view, I cannot separate my subjective and objective state or conditions, because this path would lead me to capture the body as cognition or a scheme or concept. My body is neither perceived transcendentally as Kant would have it, nor as an intellectual condition as Piaget claims it to be , nor as a mechanical reflection as the Gestalt psychology/theory of Koffka and Koehler proclaims it to be, nor as empiricists tried to rationalized it and emptying it, nor as in Descartes’ dualism because there is the force of god that transcends man’s existence, nor as Sartre wanting to believe that my body [is] because the other is gazing at me; so, the necessity and positivity of the other’s objectivity make me to realize my subjective condition, and nor as in Bergson, where the speculative spiritualization and mysticism operates because knowledge is produced when the subject enters the realm of the object, and finally not like the notion of Husserl that body’s presence stops me from penetrating in the realm of my subjectivity, so no need for external presence; but rather, the answer is to be found in Merleau-Ponty’s contemplation: I live my body as a worldly condition experiencing it in the reality of my given world—the body of the other as an object, it cannot be related to me personally, the presence of my body is operating under the umbrella of the anonymous life and existence: it is the moving silhouette of a living form/organism—I *composite* my body, and yet is not to be seen as a mere object. My body inhales and exhales the energy of life and always is immanent or, as Merleau-Ponty says: “I delve into the thickness of the world by perceptual experience”. (237). In other words, my body is never centered at a given point of departure, so my perception

cannot grasp my body in the acting moments of perceiving, i.e. my being stands in between the phantasmagorical and perceptual mode of being.

Where is this situation leading us? Merleau-Ponty, esoterically and even practically has diametrically diverged from both Husserl and Sartre; although, he has never been compressed or de-compressed in between them as some common misleading discourses and pseudo-interpretations of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology have claimed. We have clearly shown that Merleau-Ponty stands high enough, so as to deserve his own unique philosophical-phenomenological pedestal. Another thing to pin point here, is: where and how he does locate and encapsulate the notion of *phenomenological reduction*? For him this has to be found in the "Artists-Painter's" *visual reduction* as the artist arrests, and precariously or schizophrenically "encapsulates the spectacle" of the world and the "visual fragments", of which, we normally do not see and perceive; the artist/painter reduces and deconstructs for us the existing segments we inhabit, but not yet seen as the visual phenomenon and formations of the world. In *Sense and Non-Sense* Merleau-Ponty asserts: "...it is Cezanne's genius that when over-all composition of the picture is seen globally, perspectival distortions are no longer visible in their own right but rather contribute, as they do in natural vision, to the impression of an emerging order, of an object in the act of appearing, organizing itself before our eyes...The painter recaptures and coverts into visible objects what would, without him, remain walled up in the separate life of each consciousness: the vibration of appearances which is the cradle of things—and only one lyricism—that of the continuous rebirth of existence...". (14, 17-8) For Merleau-Ponty, the path to attain the *pure seeing* and *phenomenological reduction* that Husserl aimed at, is to be grasped not by the eidetic abstraction and the absolute subject but rather, in the painter's vision of the world as he encapsulates or captures the world. That is to say that, we participate in the world but we are unable to arrest the vibrancy of reality as the painter does—the artist is the one that through his vision applies reduction, because his perception of an object through his eyes walks us through the paths of unseen shades, tactile bodies of reality, strokes and thickness, fluid-transparent and opaque, hues and nuances and palpable facets of different realities that we would not have walked in otherwise.

More than that, [artists-painters] give life and flesh to the world—the world that passes us by and we rarely understand it or distil it in our presence of ubiquitous reality as it really is—painter's vision unifies these vibrancies into things that have life and are alive having their own flash of reality. This is not an imitation of reality or we could also say that, even in the Abstract Expressionist paintings like those of Mark Rothko or Jackson Pollock or Clifford Still; they are in no way a mere reflection of subjectivity—it is painter's instantaneous glimpse of the enchanted vision of life. Thus this is an *advent* of

events of invisible realities conceived and reckoned by the visualization of invisible parts of that reality which, we do not get to see ourselves otherwise, but we could perceive it through painter's vision of eye and mind. This is the attribute of artists-painters and also their attitude [*einstellung*] towards life, of the lived-world and their own body as interacting with the world that is already there—this is our world, i.e. the true [*aletheia*] world that is annotated by the dexterity of the Painter. What are these invisible realities of the world that we do not see, but only painters' vision deciphers? They are possible realities that are not yet realized in their full capacity but also, not yet revealed to us. Are these vibrant perplexes of realities just nascent Things in the [thickness and in the depth] of the worlds that exist in themselves? Could these forms or things of unseen realities constitute segments and instances which, we mundanely react as 'something I don't know' [*je ne sais quoi*]? These nascent things are brought to our vision by the impelling and permeating or fascinating eye-mind of the Painter, the one that lures in-the-things-themselves, as the one that decodes the enigmas of nature; the depths of our human nature as well.

Merleau-Ponty expresses the same pattern of thoughts in regards, to this artistic and Painter's painterly decoding quality of visualization in *The Primacy of Perception* (his last published work) asserting: "...painting celebrates no other enigma but that of visibility...The painter's world is a visible world, nothing but visible: a world almost demented because it is complete when it is yet only partial...The painter, whatever he is, *while he is painting* practices a magical theory of vision...In fact they exist only at the threshold of profane vision; they are not seen by everyone. The painter's gaze asks them what they do to suddenly cause something to be and to be *this* thing, what they do to compose this worldly talisman and to make us see the visible" (166) According to him, this is the obscene aporia or perplexity where the "eye and the mind" [*geist*] of the artist-painter that is expended in an instantaneous charm or allure. It is the mind and above all the eye of the painter, that is been inverted by the horizons of the unseen world, and that is the threshold that the painter translates into our visible and visual language. In Merleau-Ponty's view, it is the beautiful [*schone*] appearance [*schein*] charm or talisman that the painter interrogates and recreates it in his idiosyncratic vision, phenomenally reducing the essence of the world and enabling us to perceive and see the otherwise unseen realities.

The reduction of the world takes place only in the zone that painter's eye and the action of his body as he performs. Merleau-Ponty rightly claims: "A painting makes us see in the same way in which we actually see the thing itself, even though the thing is absent. Especially it makes us see a *space* where there is none". (172) I would have not agreed more with what Merleau-Ponty is contemplating here; which to say, this is the

“depth” that a painting enables us to pervade and forget ourselves, the “depth” that incites our sensuous being, a being that we never get to see but where a painting allows us to endeavor, thus to experience our own body as it perpetuates into the enigmatic world. It is this crude or coarse zone of reduced phenomenal horizons and above all, the ‘space’ that our eye wonders in the canvas of a painting, concealing no more and opening a plexus of enrapturing and drifting universes. The painting is that plane surface that has depth, space, tactile, layers of realities that resonate to us as human beings, because we are these worlds that exist, and yet, they have not become tangible and real. These ecstatic and exuberant realities become bone and flash when we envision them and of course, these realities do not aim to reveal any subjective mode of being because, they operate beyond subjectivity, and because in these layers and facets of the world there are no ideas nested; they are for-themselves and in-themselves; they are in themselves and make sense only when the painter’s gaze interrogates, decodes, ruptures, reveals, and gives form and shape to them—gives them existence and breath; gives a language and light, depth, and space enabling us to see without really thinking reflectively.

It is fair to say that, Merleau-Ponty tacitly urges us to “see” and not just “look” at things. And to remind ourselves here, the same concept is shared by great composer, Igor Stravinsky, saying that: ‘to listen is an effort, and just to hear is no merit’; and the same idea pervades our current condition where, we can say that: ‘seeing is an effort, and just to ‘looking’ at things, is no merit’. Merleau-Ponty agitates us to see the what, where, how, when, interiors or exteriors and from what point of view we see our world; and thus, how we pervade our world, the world that is there—the world of perception. If then, he inflames in us the magic of seeing, so then how do we penetrate in it? Husserl wanted to construct the notion of *pure seeing* as well. But according to Merleau-Ponty, the *phenomenal reduction* takes place in painter’s eye-mind-body performance because: “The painter is entitled to look at everything without being obliged to appraise what he sees...THE PAINTER ‘takes his body with him,’ says Valery. Indeed we cannot imagine how a *mind* could paint...but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement.” (161-2) What is revealed here is that, the body sees, is seen and above all it caresses the things of the world that it breaths—it is an organism that is visible and actively situated as an object among others; this [living body] is intermingled and interconnected into the layers and into all the facets of this world that embraces it and it is a part of it.

Now, the living body that sees the world is a body that contingently unearths the lost and sealed realities and discovers new ones, the ones that have yet to be seen. The bodily- performance of the painter brakes through the unseen and enigmatic multiplicity layering of life, of things as they exist so that, the things have to take a form or shape becoming realities of the lived world. It is not only the mind that precariously and esoterically works in painter's vision, but also, and most importantly, there is the body that dances with the rhythms of the already existing world; becomes it, and not because it is trying to relate to it—it is precisely as that which is the very incarnation and the breathing air and flash of it. Thus is the vision of the painter, who never stops visualizing and decoding the living things of the world, where, not everyone gets to see them in the way they seal and unseal themselves. Artist's/painter's vision is like the penetrating and live-forming light of the sun, which penetrates and gives life to everything that exists in the human world. The painter's vision of the world gives life to all the things that he wonders about and gazes at. It is the notion of perception that takes place in the openness of generality and anonymity where the painter's body is build up around perception, activating his eye-vision while, precariously capturing the word in its very early moments of emergence into becoming that which is not yet formed. That leads us to say that, for Merleau-Ponty, the invisible world that the painter encapsulates on his canvas, is the invisible of the visible only, i.e. what he sees! And that is so, because perception can never arrest my body in the act or in the instance of my perception. The painter's visual perception too, can never grasp his performing body in the acting moment of perceiving the world.

The Visible and the Invisible

It is in *The Visible and the Invisible* that Merleau-Ponty gives his most authentic and yet, his most thoughtful answers to the questions that we have touched upon so far. He gives an answer to Sartre, and this will be our focus in this analyses. Merleau-Ponty was a philosopher-phenomenologist of ambiguity. Sartre was a philosopher-existentialist of positivity, and radical-ultra-Bolshevist—the very extreme opposite of Merleau-Ponty. Sartre was the unofficial or pseudo-ambassador of international proletariat, speaking vocally as their voice, going from one corner of the world to the other and advocating the values and sublimity of Communism; Merleau-Ponty was not that at all because, he

was very critical and suspicious of Stalinist and Maoist communism and of its theory after all in general. Are not they diametrically opposed? If there is still a mind of doubt, we can also say that, Sartre is a dialectician and not a phenomenologist unwilling to deal with the aspect of *passivity*, but rather, with the idea of act and praxis only because humans want to attain freedom. Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the notion of *hyper-reflection*, which is to say that, before an event happened there was a precedent or there was something prior to it, thus a given perception replaces another perception and so on; one perception takes the place of the other's fluidity in a flux of interconnections. But in Sartre, this is impossible because for him consciousness is opaque—ego for Sartre is not the subject but rather the object. For Sartre the *other* is constituted and emerges as a Fact, which is to say that, if I am able to experience my body (myself) as a subject in the world, I ought to experience the *other* as an object first: to transcend his transcendence and that is called by Sartre as the transcendence-transcended. The in-itself is, and the in-itself is positive; being, just is and it exists. Also, Sartre's idea is that the self is never given to it-self because the self is never present—it is a projection. According to the position that Sartre takes, his consanguinity or affinity to the object as the other is of an axiological affinity of that of being-to-being.

Look, what does not work for Sartre in this existential presence, is not the notion of "affinity" as in Husserl where, he equates and amounts the faculty of being, to that of gnosis or insight, neither as in Hegel where he diagnoses and classifies the realm of gnosis/insight to that of being. Sartre thinks that our worldly-human reality is a lonely existence and that is precisely so; because, the other's existence is perpetually and instantaneously an unforeseen irreducible factuality. In other words, for Sartre the existence of the other cannot be reduced to a probability cause. The problem that Sartre also has, it is with regards to the notion of *nothingness*, which is to say, he so deliriously and vehemently implies in *Being and Nothingness* that: "*Non-being exists only on the surface of being.*" (49) And a bit further down Sartre concludes: "Nothingness, if it is supported by being, vanishes *qua nothingness*, and we fall back upon being. Nothingness can be nihilated only on the foundation of being; if nothingness can be given, it is neither before nor after being, nor in a general way outside of being. Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being—like a worm." (56) Obviously enough, we see that for Sartre, nothingness if it has to be, it can only be regarded as a *parasite* within the physiognomy of being; nothingness is totally subordinated into the power of being's existence. The notion of "positivity" is alluring Sartre's idea of what being is. For him being is. Being is because Sartre wants to advocate the notion of Action or Praxis where the realm of passivity is disregarded as something that has no significance, or might be that, the unknown zone of passivity is

too dense and thick for Sartre?! For Sartre, the other's body is the apparatus or the paraphernalia so that I can see myself.

Sartre's, first aspect-thickness (Sartre would never use the terms, thickness or dimension to non-being/nothingness) of being is to be located in the existence of my body. The second aspect is that, by body as existence has to relate to my body as the instrument, which is to be used by the other where the other can stage his own existence too. The third aspect is that, the existence of my body is important to be grasped or acknowledged by the other's gaze. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre asserts: "With the appearance of the Other's look I experience the revelation of my being-as-object; that is, of my transcendence as transcended. A me-as-object is revealed to me as an unknowable being, as the flight into an Other which I am with full responsibility...I particular I feel myself touched by the Other in my factual existence; it is my being-there-for-others for which I am responsible. This being-there is precisely the body...my body is for the Other as the Other's body is for me—that I have met the Other first in his object-making subjectivity and then as object." (461, 464) What Sartre is vindicating or even pelemicizing here, it is the notion that the other's look turns me into an object experiencing my factuality as a body-object; while, the other becomes my subject and vice versa, which is to say that, what Sartre is congealing here, is the fact that the facticity of the Other, appears to me as that which he will coin it as 'transcendence-transcended' thus, transcending the Other's transcendence. In other words, Sartre is claiming that the other's body as being presence or encapsulated in a position of seeing or being seen now and here or there—that is the very mechanism that I can capture myself-object or selfness transcending the selfness of the other. The *other is my object mirror* that which enables my objectification and selfness to materialize as a transcendence surpassing towards my possible possibilities. Through the body of the other as a fact I can transcend my selfness—the *gaze* is the most pertained zone of this dialectical engagement. It is the relation of me-and-the-other in the midst of the world gazing at each other, so that I am enabled to experience my-being-an-object. Through the gaze of the other I comprehend myself as an object because I am perpetually fleeing towards the other.

The final question is this: how Merleau-Ponty considers all that that Sartre vehemently contemplates? It seem to me, that Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's philosophies are far, too far apart—tremendously diametrically diverged. Let's examine how and where they are operating in very different grounds of existence in the word, and that of being and non-being or that of being and nothingness or that of activity and passivity and that the other as a fact gazing at me or the other as subject dispersed in the world. We have earlier said that, Merleau-Ponty does not see the body as an object,

i.e. it does not matter if it is my body or the body of the other because there is no possibility for me to penetrate and comprehend any other body but mine only—because I can live my body experiencing it and eventually deplete myself in it in a plethora of anonymity and not be found in a particular interconnectivity—my body operates ambiguously. Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* puts forewords the very opposite of Sartre, saying that: “But if another’s body is not an object for me, nor mine an object for him, if both are manifestations of behaviour, the positing of the other does not reduce me to the status of an object in his field, nor does my perception of the other reduce him to the status of an object of mine. The other person is never quite a personal being.” (411) According to this statement, we can say that I am in the world because I do constitute it in a way, but also, because of that I am not able to reckon another consciousness. That is to say, that it is precisely the state of my consciousness related to my existence being there for me, as it is correlated to my worldly experience limiting me to be able to allow for any other being and consciousness to operate in me, and have a direct gaze-to-gaze impact on me making me realize myself or selfness as Sartre claims. Because according to Merleau-Ponty my body operates in a state of generality and ambiguity under the veil of anonymity. Merleau-Ponty’s position is to be found around the notion of *hyper-reflection* meaning that, I find myself always already-there-somewhere and somehow—there is a world before I existed—I entered it in the *middle of nowhere* and yet it exists and it has a meaning. But also, what is of interest regarding Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of I and my-body, is to say that yes; I do exist in a sense and arrangement of generality because, there is no pure singularity for me, and yet I am still I depleted from the thickness of the general mode of existence.

In *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty starts to leave behind the notion of subjectivity departing from it, it is as if my body is the conductor that orchestrates an orchestra where my perception lands, but my body is still surrounded by my perception. Let’s take a closer look at what Merleau-Ponty offers us in *The Visible and Invisible*. The first notion that he introduces is that of “reflection”. Because there is “reflection”, we are aware of things that we take for granted in a way; however, to really see the world, we must reflect on it, question the existence of it and the way it exists. In other words, according to Merleau-Ponty’s position, we ought to reject the idea that “things” evolve or start from pure “nothingness” or pure “positivity”, i.e. we should begin our thoughts and not even ask whether or not the world exists, but rather the question ought to be: [how] the world that we find ourselves in exists, and *how* things are correlated and *how* they appear to our vision of the world that is already there, before our arrival and after our departure from it? Simply put, there is not space for skepticisms or doubts if the

world exists, because whether we understand it or not, we are already in the vortex and the swirl of the world—we are inserted in it.

It would be wiser to ask the question of: *how* we got there and not hallucinating or spiritualizing and saying as skeptics do and ask if we are there, here and now and where. Now, I started my discourse stating what Merleau-Ponty says at the very beginning of this unfinished book, but so fundamental to understand the real him and his philosophical orientation. He asserts: “We SEE THE THINGS THEMSELVES, the world is what we see...” (4) Here we got a powerful taste of his idea from the very early start. With this statement in mind, we will run our inquiry with the hope to conclude with what Merleau-Ponty wanted to be known for and where his position is against Sartre. We said that in the end, Sartre’s being and non-being/nothingness will be the points of our refutation, rejecting the very core of Sartre’s positivism and hyper-dialecticism. Merleau-Ponty tries to get beyond the realm of subjectivity by asking: “What if I took not only my views of myself into account but also the other’s views of himself and of me? Already my body as a stage director of my perception has shattered the illusion of a coinciding of my perception with the things themselves...No doubt, it is not entirely my body that perceives: I know only that it can prevent me from perceiving, that I cannot perceive without its permission; the moment perception comes my body effaces itself before it and never does the perception grasp the body in the act of perceiving.” (8, 9) We are not even dealing anymore with the subjectivity of my body or the subjectivity of the other’s body in the world, because as Merleau-Ponty pin points, it is the very conducting instances of my body as being the solo maestro/conductor, directing the movements and the sounds of perception and leading my being to be in between the phantasmagorical and perceptive world. Thus my being is never centered but always finds itself in instantaneous perceptual peripheral moments and in a sort of pre-reflective segment of existence. In other words, I live myself in a mode of generality first before I am I as a singular being in the world.

Accordingly, the wave of perception never arrives on time so as to be able to reach the point of caressing or possessing my body in the instance of perceiving; because, there appears to be an unseen flicker or flash of my body obliterating or fading itself before the hit of the perceptive wave arrives at it. My body is that which perceives because, it is not just an object per se, but my body is located in the vortex of perception and never as the one that directly perceives or as that which is been perceived—but we have to keep in mind that the view of Merleau-Ponty is this: I never reply to the lived experience of the other and that is so because my lived experience is my private world that exists for me only—so do the others. A bit further down, Merleau-Ponty states: “...each of us has a private world: these private worlds are “worlds” only

for their titular; they are not the world. The sole world, that is, the unique world, would be *koivos kosmos*, and our perceptions do not open upon it.” (10) This *public world* (he is using direct Greek terms here) that is being mentioned by Merleau-Ponty is that, it is not my own world because my own world stands apart from the public world and that is so uniquely mine, and it relates to my existence and the manner I observe the things in the world of things. I can only cipher or cast on the things that I and only I see; although, the others see all the same things of the world that I see, but the difference is that I cannot experience the lived experience of the other (s), e.g. I see a surrealist painting of René Magritte and an abstract painting of Wassily Kandinsky, or I listen to Igor Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*, and Pyotr Tchaikovsky’s *Overture*, and I read a poem of Wallace Stevens such as *The Idea of Order at Key West*; however, I can never rejoin or see what the other sees or rejoins from those paintings, musical notes and poetic sounds, and even if I go and see them myself again next day—I will not have the same apprehension of them as things as they exist, because they project different patterns of realities or things that stand in the world of their own. In other words, my *lived-experience* of these paintings cannot be the same as it could be for any other, even for me, because if I go back next day and see them, I will have a different feeling and perception of them—this is my private world of phantasms-realities.

On the other hand, we live in a world of communication. That is to say that, it is precisely this open ground *of our sharing common world* that which, we share with the others and that that we are able to interact and to communicate. It is as though, this communicative world [*welt*] and environment [*umwelt*] allocates our presence and existence with the other (s) face to face with the world we participate, but in generality and anonymity—it is not as Sartre believes that we have to have the other’s gaze at us directly as a fact of being there in front or back of us. But at the instance that I think that, I do share a world with other, it is because I share it in its exoteric mode of being not there with me; but rather the other is present in the same world I participate in and consequently share with. According to Merleau-Ponty’s prism of how we relate to the other, as common beings of the shared world and how we are experiencing the same instances of it—I rejoin the other in the [world] already given to us as being already there. My lived experience is not the other’s and vice versa, but we understand the world we inherent reckoning or adding up one thing: it is because of my lived experience of joy, pain, anguish, and having lived all the vibrancies that life makes us to go through, that I relate and share what the other feels and emotionally experiences. That is understood only in a dimension of a generalized common lived world.

Therefore, the interposition or mediation of the other does not interfere in my esoteric ambiguity and enigma that defines my world of perception. My eye and view

upon the things of the world and the things of the environment that my lived experience if nourished, is and remains just mine—uniquely mine, but also, it is a shared value of the world—it is shared in distance and perception of a multiplicity of horizons that we as living experience-oriented-beings-function. I depart from the world of things and my itinerary is that which returns back to my initial point of departure: that is to return back to myself. This sort of worldly communication and orientation operates as an engine that my private world (and the private worlds of others too) is the very key of how we communicate and apprehend at hand as lived experience. We reflect in the “world of our vision” because, at the end of the day, this is our world and is that of our visualization. We reflect because we vision and perceive. It is my inner condition and my inner world that I reflect upon the exoteric one. In the same manner, Merleau-Ponty refers to this by saying that: “...one does not think a thought from the outside, by definition thought is thought only inwardly.” (31) How is that I think inwardly? Using Heidegger’s phrase “sensation is vibration”; which is also to say that, my body is that living organism-sensor-magnetic moving silhouette that penetrates into the exteriority of things—I reflect on the things where my body is that presence, that encounters things in the open horizon of the world of things, and as that instrument that is the very presence of “truth”. We are moving bodies of the same world, but since my view upon the world is inwardly oriented, because the operating system of my thought is as such, that it moves from the inward condition to the exterior condition of things, then simply enough we could say that; the condition of others that as “me-I” (being a thought), they ought to be precisely the same as I am because we inherent the same nuances of the world we share. It is the range and the wide spectrum of the reflective condition that allows us to participate into the web or the plexus of our esoteric universe and find the common truth as that which unities us as a unity—a unity that is very divers, contingent and extremely ambiguous.

Reflection is that *centrifugal* and *centripetal* compound that radiates back and forth—it is the perceptual perseverance of my body that enables my inner thought to be opened up upon the common shared world of things. My body soars in the world and transmits back and forth to my inwardly plexus a plethora of realities that also, open the gate of my perceptive world or as Merleau-Ponty indicates and contemplates that, through the ubiquitous/ever-present phenomenon of the ‘perceptual experience’ we finally arrive at the terminal; which is to say, ‘to see well’. It is this very condition of reflection that Merleau-Ponty calls it *hyper-reflection* saying that: “It must plunge into the world instead of surveying it.” (38-9) According to this statement, *hyper-reflection* questions the given appearances of the experienced world, it does not just go along with whatever is given from it, but rather, it penetrates into the core and the womb of things so deep that, there is no way as to really know whether this or that endeavor or

the outcome of things will be projected in the world. *Hyper-reflection* is that very thing that concerts or coexists with the ambiguous unrest and fluidity from the point of departure to its point of arrival—to the end development, i.e. what is preceded by something prior to it, and not determining an exact result but rather, operating in the mode of generality where the most significant aspect is that: I am able to depart from my being through the network of me-being-a-thought—exercising my presence and experience on the exterior world, which is placed between the world of the others—my life is intertwined with the conditions of the others—my body is the *stage* where things happen and perception penetrates into the core of horizon of the world, and of the lived-experienced-world as well.

Another point that I want to make before we end this enormous field of phenomenological view upon the world of things, it is the aspect of being and nothingness or that of absolute being and the emptiness of void or nothing. Where Merleau-Ponty stands in this regard? In this respect, we will see not only the greatest clarity of divergence from Sartre, so there cannot not be any doubt about the phenomenological philosophy of Merleau-Ponty; but rather, will see that there has never been any affinity or flirtation between of them—they have walked on the same layers of human presence but from a very different level or field of perception and thus indivisibly apart from one another. Blending the two of them is like blending the mass of *iron* with *water*. In mine mind, the absolute positivity of Sartre is that sort of “iron”, that “iron-of-being” that is positive and from where non-being springs or exists as Sartre coins it; the worm that infiltrates into the body of being. On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty’s discernable position is like that of the “water”, because from the beginning of *The Structure of Behavior* to his unfinished book of *The Visible and the Invisible*, he has perpetually and instantaneously been glimpsing and altering and alluring to different plexuses of the phenomenological order—if water evaporates because of its necessity of its liquid/physical structure, so has done Merleau-Ponty, transcending himself through ambiguous puzzles that define our presence into the world of things: we evaporate and deplete as well, and only our vision and perception onto and into the world we inherent makes us penetrate the very *real seeing* of how things are in their brute condition.

In direct opposition to Sartre, Merleau-Ponty asserts: “It is with this intuition of Being as absolute plenitude and absolute positivity, and with a view of nothingness purified of all the being we mix into it, that Sartre expects to account for our primordial access to the things, always tacitly understood in the philosophies of reflection, and always taken in realism as an action of the things upon us—which is unthinkable.” (52) What is that element he finds unthinkable in relation to what Sartre is insinuating? It is

openly clear and obviously understood that Merleau-Ponty is questioning the very core of Sartre's philosophy, which is to say, the absoluteness of being and its absolute positivity. In Sartre's view, being is and nothingness is not. However, Merleau-Ponty takes a closer look elucidating that the *Being and Nothingness* of Sartre, seems philosophically appealing and theoretically lucrative, but at the end of the day, it remains hollow and very illusive. It seems to me that this is a strong position against Sartre. Furthermore, we have to keep in mind that, *Being and Nothingness* is highly super-dialectical in nature, thus Hegelian in perfection underlining a Marxist element of 'alienation'. Thus, this is precisely what Merleau-Ponty wants so strongly to repudiate, because for him the other is already there and because we enter the world where we are already among people and in a given situation, i.e. we work our-selves out from solipsism so it is never a part of our life—we are never really alone, and in regards to the notion of alienation Merleau-Ponty vindicates that, alienation is not something to be aimed at because I cannot be alienated from myself: I am fully present to myself. For Merleau-Ponty, the notion of the other is not to be founded in God as that solution that leads us to absolute subjectivity, because Spinoza did aim at it in the same path looking in the absoluteness of being in the embodiment of God. But the same path and the same idea was taken ever, and thoughtfully and thoroughly tacked by Immanuel Levinas, who again paradoxically enough, reintroduced mystic-theism or the omnipotent-God—entering from nowhere into the structure of absolute being, while Hegel did the same thing, aiming at the absolute being infinitely, and finally Sartre, who in Merleau-Ponty's view is the ultimate Cartesian.

What is important for Merleau-Ponty, it is to get rid of the idea of either pure/absolute positivity or pure/absolute negativity. How he will find the way out of these two mega-structures that have vehemently dominated the realm of philosophy for a long period of time? The answer of Merleau-Ponty is that: "I am justified in saying that I am in the world. Idealism and reflective cramp disappear because the relation of knowledge is based on a "relation of being", because for me to be is not to remain in identity, it is to bear before myself the identifiable, *what there is*, to which I add nothing but the tiny doublet "such as it is."" (57) What Merleau-Ponty is alluding but also, what he is alluring here is that, of *what there is*, which is to say that, there is a world that I am in because it existed before I entered it and that because the world is already there—*what there is!* What there is, it is also me-being-in—the-world. *What there is*, it is to say that I am I as long as I operate in a sense of ontogenesis, i.e., in the development of my own individual profile/organism. In a strongly anti-Sartrean position Merleau-Ponty indubitably claims: "I remain the sole witness of the ontogenesis, the others can add nothing to the evidence of being for me. Before they intervene I already knew that being owes nothing to my states of consciousness ...The other's gaze on the things is a

second openness ... I remain the sole *ipse*; the other, as long as he does not speak, remains an inhabitant of my world, but he reminds me very imperiously that the *ipse* is a nothing, that this anonymity does not form the spectacle for itself, that it forms it for X, for all those presumptively who might wish to take part in it.” (59) Here, the message is this: I am the driver of my life, I am that body that presents itself in the middle of the world and my ‘thoughts qua mine’ because the others cannot penetrate in me, into the progression of my lived-experience of the world I live in—I am both nothing and being at the same time. I cannot be just that nothingness that confronts the world of being and me being that void of that empty nothingness—I am both evolving myselfness simultaneously and contingently in the environment I appear to be, to arise and to dissipate.

In other words, if I remain the ontogenesis of my existence and also, my [*ipse*] or as that which “exists in my-self” regardless of other’s gaze, then we can say that: we reject Sartre’s view. We reject it because the other’s gaze or look on me cannot assert it as its own property and right to allege that, it has a connection/affiliation that necessary I am the bridge or the pathway for the other to reflect on himself. I am not a given fact for the other. Thus, the point of our position is that: in no way, the other’s perception can infiltrate or diffuse or even contend with my very vision of the given world. Why? Because, according to Merleau-Ponty’s position on this matter, it is me and only my mind me that lives my own perception from within me—it is from this stand point, that the virtue of my ontogenesis is not to be commensurable or a match for any other’s own condition of ontogeny. I remain I for as long as I perceive and visualize the horizons of the world. It is precisely this specificity and aptitude of my own ontogenesis that defines me-as-I and demarcates/differentiates my perception of the world from any other’s perception of it. The *direct facticity* of the other’s gaze does not define my presence and experience in the world.

That being said, in regards to the notion of ontogenesis, we see that how far apart Merleau-Ponty stands from Sartre, and how much they differ and tremendously diverge from each other. Sartre’s failure and consequently where I refute his core position, is that he relies too much on the *factuality* of the other’s gaze on me, and also, obliterating my own inner experience and thus hermeticizing my vision and perception of the lived-world as something of a bunkerization effect, where the gaze of the other is imperiously super-visioning my act and presence. Merleau-Ponty solidifies his position (which I find myself in agreement with) in this aspect, and liberates our presence in the world by asserting that: “There is no positive experience of the other...For reflection, we—the others and myself—could not have in common a world that would be numerically the same, we could not rejoin one another in the common signification of

our thoughts and in the indivision of ideality.” (61) It is precisely this positive experience of being for Sartre, which has cramped our presence and treated our experience, vision, and perception of the world from an invalid prism. Sartre’s super-dialectical or refined Cartesian structure frosted our inner experience and its capability to penetrate into and onto the horizons of the visible world of things. The other, of course can never infiltrate into my very essence of things, because the manner I perceive and act visually in the world cannot be identical, thus it cannot be dialectical. But rather, our world appears to flash on us ambiguously and not having to account for a common world that is symmetrically and numerically the same for all of us. There is a position that Hegel created as the clash of master and the slave, Marx redefined it as the conflict of bourgeois and the proletariat, and Sartre as the other and me imprisoned in this static-ecstatic hollowness—not regarding my very ontogenesis and my experience as I live through my inner world that ambiguously and instantaneously evolves: it is my own vision of things that I encounter my exteriority. My invisible-me evaporates and depletes once I experience the visible-me to take form and become the very appearance of me in the world of things. Where is the other and consequently his gaze located? Is it that his presence has to be physical or factual? According to what Merleau-Ponty has to offer us in this regard, we say no. The other is like that wind that caresses us from everywhere we go and stay or as Merleau-Ponty says: “for he is not entirely *ipse*—I alone am...” (61) The other is not entirely himself either. The other too, is not wrapped up and is not furnished with the faculties of being because he too, is just like me a thought and a seeing mist of nothingness, that comes to coat and enclosure my being as an umbrella covering my body from the rain of the others gaze.

Finally according to Merleau-Ponty, we are *thinking* human beings—we constantly *think*; and consequently, we say that all we are is a *mist of thought* that interrogates the world we are in. Our bodies observe and penetrate the horizons of the world which reveals itself to our perceptions as we move and interact with it. My body is that negative platform that enables my ontogenesis to perform its work and maintain my thought to be me-I as an idiosyncratic being among other beings that are just ‘thoughts’—just like me, for I am a thought that is engaged with the other’s thoughts sharing the same world that we commonly see—the visible world that is there in front of me—it is what I see. Our private worlds become one unit that we coin the world we see. At this point we reject the strategy of ‘reflection’ because we are not thoughts that radiate from a located central point of departure, but rather, we are to be found everywhere in the middle of every act, in its plethora and multiplicity, contingency, and finally its ambiguity. We refute the philosophy of reflection (as Merleau-Ponty does as well) because it mystifies our consciousness too, and that leads us to say that because of this, the other’s thought cannot share the same world that I share—the world is what

we see and the world ought to be our point of reference. But if we are to spiritualize our consciousness, then that is impossible. So then, where is the answer to be found? What sort of field of presence and experience we ought to apply at this point of our conclusion? There is the notion of *negative element* that which Sartre subordinated or obliterated as something that has no importance, because nothingness is not—it does not claim anything, and that is, if it is what it seems to be a parasite worm that appears to us because there is a Being that allows it to be, and negate itself, but never negates the source of being. We are rejecting this very trap which is the absolute positivity of being—this is the very dialectic core of Sartre.

Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that where we need to pay attention to, it is the negative aspect of our being asserting that: “... it is for a philosophy of the negative the very definition of the *ipse* to adhere to a *de facto* situation or to sustain it as its bond with being... From the point of view of a negativist philosophy, the synchronism of the consciousness is given by their common belongingness to a Being to which no one has the key and whose law they all observe... ” (63) In other words, it is this notion of my being situated in the world among others, however, there is not particular point or location that one can open up and overwhelm the other with positivist energy only. We are all floating into and onto the world that we see experiencing our own self as we are involved with the other (s). Our point of connection with one another is the world of “being”, that which we all similarly see of what is there in front us and most importantly, it is precisely this living-world-that-we-see as our shared common ground that we are situated in. That is to say that, I am a living body that penetrates and floats in the world of being—I do live this experience through my body as that which is involved in to a situation and this situation is not local because, it is a shared situation passing all over other’s as well—this situation is the world we inhabit.

Therefore, each living being experiences the same world and is situated in the same inhabitation of being; meaning that I am a ubiquitous or an ever-present being that knows and experiences the same events of the world as the others do. We reject Piaget’s intellectualism, Kantian transcendentalism, Gestalt psychology, Husserl’s eidetic abstraction and phenomenological reduction, and Sartre’s absolute positivism and hyper-dialectic or super-Cartesian strategy, arriving at the gate or at the threshold of what being is and what it constitutes. Thus we have taken the position of Merleau-Ponty, of what the other constitutes for me, where is the other located, where and how I poses myself in relation to the world—our position is: we are interconnected into the world we share with one another but, from the point of our ontogenesis only, and of our private lived experiences of the world that is already there—the one that we see and see it in its very core and brute reality. We see it not from a body that is just a body,

but from a body that is a *thought*, from a *negativity* that relates into one world and that is the *world of being*.

In conclusion, we can say that, the *other* can be the *other* if we are sharing the same world that we see, and for what it is in front of us, only as a *thought* that relates to my *thought*; and of course, the other that lives a life of its own and not mine, the other whose lived experience is his and it cannot be mine. I live my life and the other his. I never perceive the other in a direct contact of factuality—there is no room here for the claim of Sartre: “being is and non-being is not.” We keep Merleau-Ponty’s assertion and say that, we see a world that is given to us, which is the world of being and this world that we see has its own *meaning*. Thus, if I am to encapsulate my situation I do not start to search for it from a pure negation or pure absolute positivism; but rather, to be able to see that being and events are to be replaced by other events that will relate prior to what happened, as that truth of things related to the world of being—these things evolve in the word of being because *this is the world of what there is*—there is the word that we see and the world we visualize—my world constitutes the world that all we share—*our world; which is to say, the word that we see and that which enables us to perceive what it really is, and penetrate it in its crust and visualize our presence in it.*

Works Cited

- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Structure of Behavior*, Pennsylvania: Duquesne U. Press, 1983
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*, London/New York: Routledge, 2007
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Primacy of Perception*, Illinois: Northwestern U. Press, 1964
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Sense and Non-Sense*, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible*, Illinois: Northwestern U. Press, 1968
- Piaget, Jean. *Genetic Epistemology*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970
- Koffka, Kurt. *The Growth of the Mind*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD, 1951
- Bergson, Henri. *Mind – Energy*, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975
- Bergson, Henri. *Time and Free Will*, New York: Dover Publications, INC. 2001
- Husserl, Edmund. *The Idea of Phenomenology*, The Hague: Martinus Hijhoff, 1973
- Hegel, G. W. F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977
- Herder, Johann Gottfried. *Philosophical Writings*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge U. Press, 2002
- Schiller, Friedrich. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, New York: Dover Publications, 2004
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*, New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*, New York: Washington Square Press, 1992
- Stevens, Wallace. *The Collected Poems*, New York: Vintage Books, 1900
- Kandinsky, Wassily. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, New York: Dover Publications, 1977
- Lehrer, Johan. *Proust was a Neuroscientist, Igor Stravinsky*, Boston: H. Mifflin Co., 2008

Meuris, Jacques. *Rene Magritte*, Geneva, Taschen: 1992

Tchaikovsky, I. Pyotr. *1812 Overture, Op. 49*, New York: Dover Publications, 2003