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THERAPEUTIC PHILOSOPHY: ARTICULATING AUTHENTIC PRESENCE

THERAPEUTIC PHILOSOPHY:
MERLEAU-PONTY AND THE STRUGGLE
TO ARTICULATE
AUTHENTIC HUMAN PRESENCE

by

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ABSTRACT

There is no "thesis" being defended in this project. Rather, it is an attempt with rigorous articulation to discern a sense of quality in the dimension of lived co-existence. With Merleau-Ponty we will survey the felt characteristics of *authentic* and *constituted* human presence in the flow of life. In the course of a phenomenology of lived intentionality we will explore *authenticity* in a context of philosophy, language, metaphysics, and ethics. Practicing philosophy as an "aid to self-discovery rather than a matter of strict demonstration" (Marcel, Mystery of Being p.2), we will seek to formulate an intentionality of human relationship embracing an originary experience of existential holism. We will begin to appreciate the "principle of an ethic" emerging from Merleau-Ponty's work as we teach ourselves to honor a felt sense of human intertwining. Our focus will be the felt flow of living relationship, the energetic current of shared presence that unites us as human organisms and in denial of which we may lead lives of fearful isolation, compensatory power-seeking, or life-numbing estrangement. We will be making overtures towards a therapeutic paradigm of felt oneness in relationship and universal human solidarity.

When the emotional force, the mystic force one might say, of shared life and shared experience is spontaneously felt, the hardness and crudeness of contemporary life will be bathed in a light that never was on land or sea.

John Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy p.211

PROLEGOMENON

This is not a normal graduate thesis. If it were, it would be a formal study of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's thought. Instead, it is a celebration of his philosophical legacy. In the spirit of Merleau-Ponty (with due acknowlegement to Henri Bergson and Gabriel Marcel), the project is not concerned with anything like Richard Rorty's pejorative sense of a "theory." It does not seek to provide metaphysical or epistemological foundations, establish logical relations, or dogmatically defend an academic position with argumentative proofs and defenses. On the other hand, neither does it provide a nihilistic apology for philosophical activity. As a heuristic meditation on the human condition, the project revolves phenomenologically around a familiar existential tension and explores a basis for what Madison might call "hermeneutical hope," or communicative solidarity in the "global civilization...now emerging throughout the world" (1981 p.33).

Underlying this project is a growing movement of social re-orientation that seeks to heal the fracture of dualistic separation with a renewed awareness of self, truth, and humanly true relationship. Therapeutic western philosophy is characterized as an effort of rigorous articulation that seeks to formulate a rejuvenating seed of human intentionality. The goal of philosophy in this sense is to help develop and work through a bodily felt context of open, engaged encounter with the world. With his deconstruction of modern epistemological tradition, a critique in which we can already "discover something deeper and more valid about ourselves" (Taylor, 1987 p.482), Merleau-Ponty is seen as an important and pioneering figure in the flux of this cultural movement.

In the struggle to articulate this emerging dimension of philosophy, we will seek to transcend "instrumental and disengaged modes of thought" in a bid to "restore depth, richness, and meaning to life" (Taylor, 1989 p.495). In an important sense, we will seek to recollect "the dimensionality of Being" (Levin, 1988 p.43). We will also encounter a philosopher's paradox: the very formulations that challenge the bounds of human self-image are liable at the same time to remove us from the bodily felt transformation of lived awareness we really seek. With this in mind, how can philosophy be therapeutic? How can words, woven into dense networks of rigorous articulation, facilitate us?

There is said to be a wall between us and others,
but it is a wall we build together.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Signs p.19

FOREWORD

This project revolves around the tension between *authentic* and *constituted* human presence in the world. These terms are not meant as moral absolutes like "Good" and "Evil." They refer, rather, to styles of perception, expression, and relationship and correspond with a phenomenological distinction made by Leonard Angel in The Spiritual Foundations of Philosophy:

> There are two modes of the experience of agency. First, there is *effort*. I *make* the motion of my body happen. I decide to do it and *make* it happen. I feel itchy, and *make* my hand move up to scratch where it itches.
> Second, there is *grace*. Everything happens spontaneously. Some of these spontaneous happenings have the structure of a person. I feel itchy, and lo, my hand moves up to scratch where it itches. A decision arises, and lo, the motion corresponding to the plan occurs. The wind blows against the tree, and lo, some leaves drift down to the ground.
> Grace reveals the equality of all nature; effort divides off the agent from the rest of nature...
> The infusion of grace in agency is the key to fulfillment.
>
> 1987 pp. 59-60

What is here called grace can be seen as an experience of authentic presence. In this sense, authenticity refers to the intentional rootedness of complex organisms in their spontaneous responsive energy *as* organisms. The felt intentionality of authentic agency is often referred to as effortlessness. This does not refer to an absence of work but freedom from self-defeating strain. Freedom from the stress of "going against a true

decision" (PhP p.436). Freedom from compelled obedience, neurotic attachment, and repression. Freedom from addiction and habitual relationship; freedom from the growing pressures of deliberate behavior typically rooted in objective relationship.

Constituted agency is marked by alienated synthetic behavior that does not flow from true felt relationship but rather conditions imposed, or deliberately constituted, in the context of an objective perceptual matrix. "Mind" becomes separate from "body" as a means of deliberate control. In authentic presence, mind and body function seamlessly as complimentary dimensions of an intact organism. Intelligence becomes a complex behavioral pattern of meaningful response to situated embodiment. Time flows with the movement of lived intention rather than the passing and accumulation of objective temporal units. The organism and its environment share a symbiotic relationship in the unfolding of their co-existence.

Constituted human being is often characterized by exploitive relationship: the "other" is treated objectively as a means to some end. More fundamentally, constituted presence is associated with alienation as the movements of lived relationship become objective tasks. In authentic presence the world is encountered in open relatedness. In constituted presence the world tends to be encountered in

defensive isolation. The most fundamental activities (like work, sex, and meeting people) may become tactical challenges of deliberate behavior. The most basic structures of responsibility may become threatening demands. Instead of flowing with the creative energies of life, the pressures of living may become intolerable. Although discrete types are not to be found in the real world, in the balance of the constituted/authentic polarity can be found both a source of human malady and the beginning of an articulation of possible transcendence.

Authentic presence may seem like a psychological ideal or a matter of personal style but nothing philosophically interesting. Certainly we cannot avoid the effort life constantly demands of us. Overcoming laziness, fear, and other self-defeating emotional habits, for example, may involve a great effort of re-directing personal energy. As a deeply ingrained personal and cultural framework, however, constituted perception, thinking, and being can be seen to infuse western culture with profound alienation and spiritual estrangement. Authentic presence does not seem to be a valued or even sufficiently acknowledged social or institutional quality. Constituted presence, in fact, may be the source of anxiety often maintained to be the unavoidable human condition. With David Michael Levin, it is easy to see "tremendous suffering

and need in the world around" us (1988 p.35). Philosophy, as the linguistic articulation of human truth and self-image, occupies an ideal position to mediate the context of our being in the world and perhaps help humanity through its growing crisis to a more powerful expression.

Jean-Paul Sartre wants to repudiate the "spirit of seriousness" in which humanity seeks values that are "transcendent givens independent of human subjectivity" (1943 p.626). In this he is in reaction against the tyranny of detached objective rationality. Yet he often speaks as though human beings only encounter each other as objects. "I shall never touch the Other save in his being-as-object," he maintains (1943 p.410). Sartre speaks of love as an "amorous intuition," an "ideal out of reach" (1943 pp. 376-377) . He speaks of hate as if it were a more honest relationship between people because it does not involve hope of "union with the Other" (1943 p.410). We are left with a systematic exposition of the anxiety and shame by which in his view we ultimately encounter the world and each other. In a footnote he hints at the possibility of an "ethics of deliverance and salvation" (1943 p.412), but he does not to my knowledge further articulate or explore this possibility of redemption.

Maurice-Merleau Ponty, on the other hand, recognizes the communion of human beings with each other and the world.

Rather than seek an explanation of this experience, he explores it in its felt immediacy. He articulates the dimensions of relationship embraced by authentic and constituted experience. Merleau-Ponty's entire philosophy revolves around a living, felt awareness of communion with life. Authentic presence can be seen as the foundation of a non-dualistic paradigm of being in the world. Love in this context becomes an active, spontaneously felt sense of holistic communion and truth in relationship.

The critical awareness or existential key that can initiate the experience of authenticity developed in this project follows when we locate within ourselves and give philosophical significance to that responsive integrity of which "judgment is merely the optional expression" (PhP p.3). This involves a quality of detached attention which, paradoxically, is a key to full, honest, engaged participation in the world. It is not detachment as disinterested separateness being referred to, but detachment as active clarity from an undefensive perspective. It is not objectivity as creative neutrality towards things in themselves being invoked, nor objectivity through cultural consensus, but objectivity as a felt awareness that, in Jiddu Krisnamurti's words, neither "justifies or condemns." Truth becomes, not correspondence, consensus, utility, or logical demonstration, but a deep resonance of felt relationship.

As more than a system of speculative ideas, this philosophy invites empirical investigation. Psychology, in this sense, becomes a kind of operational philosophy rather than the objective science of behavior it typically strives to be with animal and biological research, statistical reduction, and hypothesis testing. Phenomenological psychology, in fact, is a relatively new field with largely unformulated practices and procedures. To explore and apply the philosophical insights of authentic presence in an empirical context can be a challenging, instructive, and therapeutic endeavor. The global urgency of our destructive relationship with the world and each other makes work in this field particularly significant.

Writing this project has been a sort of intellectual catharsis at the heart and on the fringes of a struggle to see and let go of attachment, to be undefensively aware of emerging truth and creatively present in the world. I often feel I am experiencing the world afresh in the powerful sense of bodily felt spontaneous experience that Merleau-Ponty gives philosophical attention. The question is, do such personal motivations in philosophy threaten to reduce it to an exercise in narcissistic psychologism? Husserl offers us wisdom in this regard. He tells us philosophy can be "genuine" and "radical" only if the philosopher has "penetrated to a clear understanding of

himself" (1970 p.99). He tells us the phenomenological attitude is "destined to effect, at first, a complete personal transformation" (1970 p.137). Personal and psychological expressions of subjectivity in philosophy, especially phenomenological philosophy, are in this sense not only understandable but a critical part of living philosophical commitment. On the other hand, Husserl reminds us that the subjectivity we are primarily interested in as philosophers is "not that of the isolated subject" (1970 p.167). These admonitions indicate the intricate balance philosophers must strike in their work. It is half-hearted to divorce the relevance of phenomenological research from lived being in the world, just as it is counter-productive to ignore the disclosures of lived experience in philosophy.

Above all, this project does not revolve around argument but an existential experience of holistic awareness. Authentic presence is not treated as a purely academic concept to be philosophically manipulated, nor as an objective psychological artifact, but characterized as a therapeutic embrace of being in the world and as creative engagement with the world. Creative, that is, both in a sense of productive spontaneity and creative in a sense of nourishing interpretive appropriation. Both natural being and creative presence are embraced with the emergence of

life. This project seeks above all, develops and reviews over and over, both a physical connection with specifically human energy and a therapeutic interpretive framework of authentic presence. Merleau-Ponty is drawn upon heavily for his eloquence and insight from both perspectives. The project, however, is again not designed to establish or defend an interpretation of Merleau-Ponty or any bare intellectual conclusion. The only "conclusion" it seeks to bring the reader is that authentic presence is something more than another concept with which to fill philosophical archives. Philosophers who already experience the holistic awareness it keeps coming back to may find the project redundant. Hopefully they will find enough philosophical creativity to engage their interest in the movement of thought and relationship it strives to represent.

Finally, this project is rich with personal pronouns. "I" is used to refer to myself (the writer). "We" is used primarily in two senses, either as "the reader and I in the exploration of these ideas" or "we as humanity." Sometimes, assuming a philosophical readership, "we" implies a certain alliance: "we philosophers of life." If the reader does not consider him or herself a philosopher of life, but rather a philosopher of logic, linguistic analysis, or perhaps just verbal ostentation, please go on to indulge the text. The practice of philosophy itself will be interrogated from the perspective of authentic presence.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many philosophy professors who have conditioned my philosophical bearings. In particular Dr. J.D. Rabb and the late Dr. William Morris at Lakehead University, and my thesis advisors Dr. Jeff Mitscherling at the University of Guelph and Dr. Gary Madison at McMaster University. All these thinkers, along with Hans-Georg Gadamer, Charles Taylor, Richard Rorty, David Michael Levin, Jacob Needleman, Huston Smith, Mervyn Sprung, Robert Persig, and John Shotter share with Merleau-Ponty varying degrees of therapeutic interrogation in their work. They personify a tradition in which the distinction between philosophy and psychology grows less and less absolute. Their influence as western academic thinkers in the development of a humanly responsive philosophy of authentic presence cannot go without special acknowledgement in this project.

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Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961)

1930: graduated from L'Ecole Normale

1930-1935: taught at Beauvais, Chartres

-"Study Project in Perception" (1933)
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1935-1938: junior faculty member L'Ecole Normale

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-Phenomenology of Perception (1945)
-Sense and Nonsense (1948)
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-Consciousness and the Aquisition of Language

1952-1961: Chair of Philosophy College de France

-In Praise of Philosophy (inagural speech, 1952)
-Adventures of the Dialectic
(breaks with French communist party and J.P. Sartre)
- Signs (1960)
-"Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis"
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1960: Hoeller, 1982)

Posthumous:

- The Primacy of Perception (1964)
- Themes from the Lectures at the College de France, 1952-1960 (1970)
- "The Experience of Others"
(Lecture Course, 1951-52: in Hoeller, 1982)
- The Prose of the World
(unfinished manuscript, 1973: see p.xviii)
- The Visible and the Invisible
(interrupted manuscript, 1968)

KEY to ABBREVIATIONS

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

PhP	Phenomenology of Perception
PrP	The Primacy of Perception
Sense	Sense and Nonsense
Signs	Signs
Prose	The Prose of the World
Viz	The Visible and the Invisible
OTHERS	"The Experience of Others" (Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry XVIII)
FREUD	"Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis: Preface to Hesnard's *L'Oeuvre de Freud* (Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry XVIII)

Hans Georg Gadamer

Truth	Truth and Method

NOTE: The Prose of the World is an earlier, more comprehensive version of work also found in "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" (Signs pp.39-83). Occasionally, the two texts will be cross-referenced using [square brackets].

PHENOMENOLOGY and a NEW AGE

There are those who believe that humanity is emerging at a new level of consciousness. For example, in Cosmic Consciousness (first published in 1901), the Canadian philosopher Richard Maurice Bucke spoke of a coming "psychical revolution" and theorized that "a new race is in the act of being born from us" (1961 pp.3, 318). Also, in the Phenomenon of Man (first published in 1955), Teilhard de Chardin proposed that "evolution is an ascent towards consciousness" and concluded that "it should culminate in some sort of supreme consciousness." He called this ultimate stage of evolution the "Omega Point" and characterized it as a "paroxysm of harmonized complexity...a conscious universe" (1983 pp.284; 287-288). These theories revolve around a human condition in which dualistic consciousness is transcended and individuals have a clear awareness of their profound connection with others, the world, and the fabric of being. To the person with "Cosmic Consciousness...the terms subjective and objective lose their old meaning" (Bucke, 1961 p.52). In a poignant phenomenological sense, "all things, man included, are part of one great whole" (Bucke, 1879 p.3). Other examples of this approach might include George Blewett's movement towards a society of "spiritual beings" (1912: Armour and

Trott, p.348); William D. Lighthall's unfolding of "underlying reality" (1933: Armour and Trott, p.383); and Henri Bergson's "road that leads to the life of the spirit...[in which] humanity no longer seems isolated" (1975 p.293).

Adapting a term of Haridas Chaudhuri's, philosophies which seek to articulate developments of non-dualistic consciousness, especially insofar as they are seen as human growth, may be termed theories of "integral" evolution:

> Supermind ["spiritual non-dualism"] is not only a profound spiritual potential of man, but also a dynamic potential of the evolutionary impetus in nature...In the view of integral philosophy, we stand today on the threshold of a new breakthrough in terrestrial evolution.
>
> Chaudhuri, 1975 pp.183-184

Such theories tend to have an underlying theme of optimism about the future of the human race. After all, in this "despiritualized age of ours" (Madison, 1988 p.5), as we face virtual self-annihilation in the fall-out of our adversarial dealings with each other, our abusive treatment of ourselves, and our exploitive attitude towards the environment, few things could be more positive than to develop a way of thinking and being that did not divide the world up into dualistic subject/object, us/them, and us/it oppositions. It is not, however, necessary to wait for coming developments in biological evolution to share the vision of a more integrated way of being in the world. It

is not necessary to speculate about the nature of ultimate reality. Such visions, and the effort they motivate, can be sustained by a simple hypothesis: that modifying the way we teach ourselves to see and act in the world might create prospects for a better future. Huston Smith, a philosopher at MIT, senses an historical movement in human consciousness. In fact, he points to a "genuinely new epoch in human thought" (1982 p.4). Succeeding the Graeco-Roman, the Christian, and the Scientific world-views, he sees another perspective emerging.[1] Not speculating about inexorable future developments, Smith urges us to cultivate an outlook which does not "forget the immensity of what it means to be truly human" (1982 p.104). He encourages a human presence in which experience "deepens to the point where the dichotomy between subject and object is transcended" (1982 p.19). He offers several reasons for working towards such a view and invokes what he calls the "argument from human health," or a variation of Pascal's Wager in which he points out that our healthiest move as a culture in transition would be to "ground our outlooks in our noblest intuitions" (1982 p.106).

It is not hard to find such "noble intuitions" about humanity, even in the west. If the prominent outlook of the Scientific epoch has been technical, dualistic, and objective, Charles A. Reich (1970) and Theodore Roszack

(1975, 1974, and 1969) have documented "counter-cultural" movements towards more holistic, non-dualistic ways of being. Such movements are often seen as extensions of the human potential trends of the sixties.[2] Currently, western culture is sprinkled with pockets of optimism about the coming of a "New Age" of higher consciousness (as described by the likes of Dane Rudhyar, 1970; Marilyn Fergusson, 1980; and David Spangler, 1991, 1988, 1981).[3] In their many manifestations, notwithstanding a confusing array of psychic claims, reawakened mythologies, and unorthodox healing techniques, such social phenomena may be approached as part of a growing orientation towards or search for a more integral way of being in the world. In addition to the New Age of popular culture, the signs of such a movement can be seen in science (the "new physics"), medicine (the resurgence of holistic health), and psychology (for example humanistic and transpersonal):

> It's a cliché, perhaps, but we are in an age of transition. Everybody says it, but this really is seriously true now. I think we've passed through something, and are at the beginning of something...there's a pervasive quest for values, and the new religious movements are one expression of that, but its all over the culture now...the wish, the need, the desire for what is higher, as an organic part of the human mind which has not been ackowledged by modern psychology.
>
> Jacob Needleman, 1987 pp.339-340

Admittedly, the various cultural phenomena and theories I have characterized as integral movements can also be seen as

diverse and only vaguely related. This is where philosophy, that perennial discipline whose alias is "love of wisdom," might help sort through the confusion and the essential themes. However, philosophy has been in a bit of a crisis lately. The task the discipline has set itself since Descartes, to provide metaphysical validity and epistemological certainty to human knowledge, has become a crumbling edifice. The academic philosophical community has been speculating about the end of philosophy. More accurately, perhaps, there has been concentrated dialogue focused on what philosophy should be; Taylor calls it a "struggle over the corpse of epistemology": (1987 p.485).[4] Meanwhile, those engaged in exploring a more integral paradigm of being in the world have either expressed dissatisfaction with the "patriarchal, logocentric tradition of philosophical discourse" (Levin, 1988 p.35), with the stale and objective philosophy of academic scholarship (e.g. Wilshire, 1990; Needleman, 1981; 1982; 1987), or abandoned customary universities altogether and called for a "new type of philosopher" (e.g. Rudhyar, 1970 pp.18, 24). As far back as Nietzsche the "barren spirituality" of universities has been pointed out (Twilight of the Idols p.61). The voice of academic philosophy in this time of human crisis and possible transition needs to be evaluated:

> We take it for granted that an important part of our job is to train people to think critically; concurrently, we assume that the university is an important custodian of civilization...What the university does not see is that the criteria for critical thinking it has adopted work against the high image of man that keeps civilization vital.
>
> Smith, 1982 p.97

On the fringes of this uncertain picture of professional thought is phenomenology, an academic movement whose philosophical roots are most often associated with Edmund Husserl in Germany. Although there are many varieties of and approaches to phenomenology, essentially this relatively new dimension of intellectual pursuit takes as its central theme the movements of felt human experience rather than linguistic analysis, logic, or scientific study. Yet the phenomenological method does not amount to a simple description of particular experiences as if they were entries in a diary. Phenomenology involves the rigorous articulation, conceptual exploration, and interpretive appropriation of experience which, in turn, can lead to a better understanding of our specifically human encounter with life and the world. In addition to making the roots and themes of our experience more explicit, phenomenology can help recondition our world-views by modulating the meaning given to experience. Thus, for example, a phenomenology *of* the various fields of "New Age" experience (such as personal power, unconditional

love, channelling, and non-dualistic awareness) might cultivate a neglected but potentially therapeutic dimension of our existence. Instead of relegating such experiences to the fringe because traditional analyses reveal nothing scientifically or logically important about them, phenomenological study can allow us to open ourselves to them in a different but equally rigorous way in order to better understand what they might touch upon in terms of our relationship with life and the world.

Phenomenological sensitivity and thought can be applied to any area of research and human endeavor. Beyond specific archeologies *of* various horizons of experience, phenomenology embraces a therapeutic orientation of openness to the felt disclosures of lived human relationship. It has been called a "revolution in man's understanding of himself and his world" (Gillan, p.61). In this deeper sense, Maurice Merleau-Ponty achieves perhaps the highest expression of phenomenology as philosophical investigation. In the course of his phenomenological interrogation of human presence and being-in-the-world, Merleau-Ponty can be seen to develop the foundation of a comprehensive paradigm shift away from objective scientific consciousness towards a non-dualistic orientation that explicitly recognizes the bonds between us, others, and the world. This is not done in terms of an

optimistic vision, ethical prescriptions, or a systematic theory of reality. Rather, it involves a reawakening awareness of raw encounter as we experience ourselves in the world. Always Merleau-Ponty's most basic theme, which is "ever-reiterated" and "untiringly enunciated," is that "the world is not what I think but what I live through" (PhP p.xvi). It is his profound phenomenological archeology of the *lived body*, or human organism as felt agency, that short-circuits mind/body and subject/object dualities. For Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology involves above all a process of "relearning to look at the world" and "rediscovering" the magic of our living presence:

> We shall find in ourselves, and nowhere else, the unity and true meaning of phenomenology...all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with philosophical status. It is the search for a philosophy which shall be rigorous, but it also offers an account of space, time, and the world as we 'live' them. It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian, or the sociologist may be able to provide.
>
> PhP pp.vii, viii

In terms of whatever evolution or transition period western culture may be experiencing, phenomenologically the important thing is to take a close look at ourselves as the eye of whatever changes are going on. Merleau-Ponty, in taking such a look, discovers Needleman's "organic part of the human mind" and can be seen to articulate a "thinking

which can finally leap and dance" (Levin, p.314). By phenomenologically exploring the integration of intelligence and rationality with the organic awareness of our bodies, he not only reconciles "extreme objectivism and extreme subjectivism" (PhP p.xix), but helps us understand what it might mean to transcend our analyzing, objective consciousness. More than that, he charts the course of a possible future. On the therapeutic horizons of his phenomenological reawakening of human presence can be projected a cultural transition from objectivity, exploitation, and adversarial relationship to creative participation, wholeness, and intimate relationship. In this spirit, David Michael Levin enthusiastically discusses the "therapeutic potential in the ontological disclosures of hermeneutical phenomenology" (1985 p.17). He alludes to "a new historical epoch on our horizon" (p.68), "the founding of a new and more essentially human community of self-fulfilled individuals" (p.32), and "the possibility for a planetary existence of which our civilization has long been dreaming" (p.3).[5]

However phenomenological a philosophy treatise may be, however, it is still by its very nature theoretical and there is more to healing than an intellectual shift of conceptual framework. True healing, and all fundamental change, must have sustained roots deep in the organic

intentionality of lived presence. This is where phenomenological psychology comes in, the rigorous *empirical* exploration of human experience and relationship. While philosophy works to break the ground of conceptual self-awareness, psychology investigates the lived dynamics of behavior and interaction. It would be as sad a mistake to feel smug in the acquisition of bare philosophical concepts as to reject philosophical articulation as irrelevant verbiage. Neither philosophy nor psychology is self-sufficient, and both fail to exist productively in isolation. Exploring a paradigm change is exploring a direction in which to structure perception and understanding *in concert* with lived being.

Teilhard de Chardin could not understand how anyone could call themselves a phenomenologist "without ever touching upon cosmogenesis and evolution" (quoted from a letter of 11/4/53 in Feys, p.82). Teilhard did not separate phenomenology (an account of the "internal aspect of things": 1983 p.58) from a therapeutic dimension of philosophical effort. On the other hand, Levin writes that "Merleau-Ponty misses the therapeutic significance of his own reflective revelations" (Levin, 1982 p.230). This "therapeutic significance" is part of what Madison, in a different vein, has called Merleau-Ponty's "great unthought thought" (1981 p.119). Perhaps it is the "principle of an

ethics" Merleau-Ponty projected would emerge from his work (PrP p.11) but which he didn't get sufficient opportunity to explicitly realize. In any case, it is up to Merleau-Ponty's successors to sense and expand upon these therapeutic horizons. Whatever the implications, Merleau-Ponty explores a way of relating to the world which is fundamentally creative, potentially healing, and filled with the magic of our specifically human presence. In psychology there has been growing discussion and empirical study of such powerful being in the world (e.g. Maslow 1968, 1964, 1954 and more recently Csikszentmihalyi at the University of Chicago 1993, 1990, 1988, 1982). This is surely a direction in which philosophy could make few greater contributions than to explore, and in which Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology indeed "merges with the general effort of modern thought" (PhP p.xxi).

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

At bottom, every human being knows very well that he is in this world just once, as something unique, and that no accident, however strange, will throw together a second time into a unity such a curious and diffuse plurality: he knows it, but hides it like a bad conscience - why? From fear of his neighbor who insists on convention and veils himself with it. But what is it that compels the individual human being to fear his neighbor, to think and act herd-fashion, and not to be glad of himself? A sense of shame, perhaps, in a few rare cases. In the vast majority it is the desire for comfort, inertia...the troubles with which any unconditional honesty and nudity would burden them.

Nietzsche, "Shopenhauer as Educator" quoted from Walter Kaufman's Existentialism From Dostoyevski to Sartre (N.Y: New American Library, 1975 p.122)

Nietzsche's assessment of western culture is not optimistic. Most people, he points out, are afraid to express the power of their true creative uniqueness. Why? He is bleak in his low opinion of mass humanity. Not that he despises humanity itself, but a certain "parasitical type" of individual (1969 p.333). It is an insidious, decadent, pretentious morality in which he locates the pathology of human culture: his lack of faith in humanity is betrayed only by his scorn for the "good-natured herd animals" that "find their narrow happiness in it" (1969 p.329). Nietzsche speaks of a morality that conditions us to "despise the very first instincts of life" (1969 p.332), devalues "our earthly reality," and substitutes "salvation of the soul" for "spiritual diet" (1969 p.334). He refers to the "pale, cold, grey conceptual nets thrown over the motely world of the senses" (1990 p.45). Nietzsche mocks the misguided obsession to attain "pure spirit and the good in itself," as if the "hidden god" of objective existence should transcend all human perspectives (1990 p.32). Most vehemently, Nietzsche impugns the "traditional faith of the metaphysicians... in *antithetical values*" (1990 p.34).

Fundamental antithetical values which characterize dogmatic Christian morality include "good" and "evil." Yet Nietzsche wisely tells us that "that which is done out of

love always takes place beyond good and evil" (1990 p.103). Love in this sense can be seen as the felt negation of antithesis. The separation of subject and object, of self and other, is overcome in love as for the "child who asks his mother to console *him* for the pains *she* is suffering" (Signs p.174). This project struggles to articuate a paradigm of relationship characterized by this kind of love; human relationship that takes place beyond antithesis in a dimension of felt connectedness.

In the philosophy of authentic presence articulated by Merleau-Ponty, it is not so much a decadent morality that keeps human beings from expressing themselves with all the power of their creative uniqueness. Rather, it is an alienating paradigm of relationship that conditions a weak manifestation of human being in the world. Specifically, Merleau-Ponty points out that most people live lives of objective relationship with each other, life, and the environment (e.g. PhP p.393; Sense p.91; Prose p.148). In the tradition of philosophy being explored and discovered in this project, love is characterized as a felt dimension of non-dualistic, non-alienated, *humanly true* relationship.[1] We will return to Nietzsche and the historical roots of this tradition later. For Merleau-Ponty, the philosophical and psychological exploration of *authentic presence* motivates a life's work and underlies a development of thought

that ranges from the organic roots of lived being to the intentional modulations of language and stretches in the end to address the metaphysical enigma of Being. Still, the phenomenological roots of this philosophy can always be traced back to the distinction between objective or constituted and authentic presence. With Merleau-Ponty, we will explore this felt polarity of being in the world and interrogate the effort of philosophy it implies.

. . .

What the hell was the matter with us? Why did we not join the rest of creation, and all have a great time on this glorious jewel of a planet together? No, nothing remotely like it. Why not? In God's name, why not?...

Liang, Wisdom, Madness, and Folly p.48

If, then, there is this basic unity between self and other... how have our minds become so narrow that we don't know it?

Alan Watts, The Book p.47

What we actually have to offer one another is the simple but daring contribution of our genuine presence.

R.S.Heckler, "A Holy Curiosity"
(The Whole Earth Review 82, 1994 pp.52-53)

"Our first truth...will be that there is presence," he writes. Relationship, that there is "something to which we are present and which is present to us" (Viz p.160), he takes as a fertile starting point. Certainly, Merleau-Ponty is not interested in the nature of existence independent of our participation in it. He strongly maintains that the "something to which we are present" cannot be fully encountered when we relate to it as an in-itself or objective reality. Instead, he urges us as situated human beings to *be present,* to be open to the bodily experienced encounter with the natural and social world which is the "familiar setting" (PhP p.53) of the "drama" in which our lives are actually "played out" (PhP p.198). Phenomenology is, after all, philosophical attention to what Kant designated in his grand metaphysical system the "phenomenal world," or the world of actual experience. In opposition to this "present world which waits at the gates of our life" (Viz p.157), which Husserl calls the "only real world" (1970 p.49), Merleau-Ponty sees the objective world as a "rationalization" (PhP p.409), an intellectually constituted or posited structure detached from the actual interaction of lived experience. The presence which is the productive first truth of his philosophy is the physically, socially and historically situated presence which is an "openness upon oneself" (Viz p.19) and an "openness to the world"

(Viz p.37). Merleau-Ponty is concerned with human presence, which is nevertheless always an ambiguous presence both "natural" and "manufactured" (PhP p.189), both physically organic and rational, both immediately lived and transcended in understanding. Objective rationality, while it may be an appropriate way to approach an objective, in-itelf world, fails to appreciate the lived world of experience in which human beings dwell. In an objective paradigm of relationship we are alienated from ourselves, each other, and the environment. We remain radically detached from the world and cling to a narrow intellectual perspective.

Exposing lived experience to intellectual analysis is to risk objectifying and alienating it from ourselves. Still, it is possible to rationally grasp and conceptually explore the significance of experience precisely because rationality, language, and understanding are part of our experience as human beings. Moreover, and most appropriate to such exploration, is rationality not in its formal objective but in its *organic* sense as bodily felt awareness: rationality that emerges as an integrated, spontaneous dimension of lived presence in the world. As a culture we have put a high value on rationality and have located the strength of this dimension of ourselves almost exclusively in objective rationality. For example, modern universities are

often veritable tombs of objective rationality (and although the sciences thrive unabashed in such an environment, the arts are suffering a diminished profile: hence the vicious circle in which modern philosophy strives to be an objective discipline). More fundamentally, organic and objective rationality are associated with the two existential styles of being in the world that are the focus of this project. The exploration of these two styles may help lead to a globally therapeutic paradigm change in the nature of human relationship. Rather than constituting a removal from lived experience, the conceptual exploration of experience may direct our conscious commitment to a neglected dimension of our humanity and deepen the felt organic roots of our presence in the world.

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, in a certain light, resonates like an oracle (to borrow a phrase from James it "scintillates with credibility": 1965 p.89). As Merleau-Ponty himself notes of other phenomenologists, his work does not so much say anything new as articulate an awareness which we in the west have been "waiting for" (PhP p.viii). With Merleau-Ponty as a guide, this project will try to articulate and give "philosophical status" to the distinction between a formal objective or constituted presence in the world and an organic or authentic presence.

Phenomenologically, constituted presence tends to be

experienced as deliberate and objectively calculated while authentic presence tends to be spontaneous and truly creative. For example, I may experience the world as a remote environment from which I am alienated by a foggy maze of tentative deiberation. I may exist according to some measure of adequacy which must be intellectually anticipated before expressing myself or taking action. At such times my presence may be more or less a deliberate effort and analysis will "interrupt the perceptual transition from one moment to another" (Signs p.69). At other times, my understanding of a situation seems to work itself out as I go, I function organically in response to my situation, and action issues as a spontaneous reaction to felt awareness. Presumably, we have all felt these poles of being. As a psychological description, the difference between them may be a reflection of fear or confidence, being prepared or not, anxiety, indecision, or simply personal style. On another level, these ways of being can be taken as lived instances of duality and non-duality, as the antagonism and the resolution of subject and object and mind and body. We can, after all, transcend the duality of subject and object by meditating on the "fusion of soul and body in the act" (PhP p.84: also pp.88-89). In spontaneity, "we *are* the compound of soul and body (PrP p.177). Encountering this dimension of holistic presence in the world spawns the

distinction's living philosophical significance and already contains the beginnings of a therapeutic impact:

> Nondualistic experience leads to compassion and love for all beings ...[and would not only lead humanity to treat all beings, human and nonhuman, with a profound respect, but would also free humanity from many of the cravings, aversions, and delusions that are responsible for wars and for productive methods that threaten to destroy the biosphere.
>
> Zimmerman, 1988 p.23

To act and relate to others with an authentic presence is to transcend in lived experience the alienation of oppositional dualism. It involves active union with the world and the *others* with which we share living in the world. Love is the felt awareness of communion in non-dualistic experience, which we can cultivate universally in human relationship. On the other hand, when we relate to situations, others, or "things" objectively, as if they were detached phenomena we had to make a blind judgement about, we miss the bodily felt truth of our living presence in the world. We become isolated from the lived flow of time in objective thought, and often get attached to ideas and expectations. As organic beings, we are already "a repository stocked with miraculous powers" (PhP p.215). Since "the mere presence of a living being transforms the physical world" (PhP p.189), often "deliberation is a mere parody" (PhP p.436). In the power of authentic presence we experience "spontaneous accord with the intentions of

the moment" (PhP p.22). Although "everything throws us back onto the organic relations" of life (PhP p.351), still we create those relations in the felt context of perception. In our habit of experiencing the world objectively we can be seen to block the openness of true relationship.

Creating the the experience of authentic presence is not just a philosophical effort. It is above all a question of our openness to others and our feeling of belongingness in the world. Working with individuals to dissolve the emotional patterns that undermine authentic presence is a psychological effort. Setting in place social structures that reflect and condition authentic presence is a practical political effort. Yet all of these can be seen as complimentary therapeutic activities in the tissue of human culture and not isolated disciplines. In his philosophical exploration of political development, for example, Jurgen Habermas acknowledges the importance of psychology as a way of uncovering the "systematically distorted communication" (e.g. 1981 p.332; 1973 p.27) that hinders the rational communication on which to him the highest stages of social development proceed (e.g. 1973 p.95). From this perspective, an exploration of authentic presence would be a critical exploration of how the "illusion of objectivism" (Habermas, 1968 p.316) manifests itself in our lives and how it leads to a form of distorted communication that distorts,

among other things, political activity.[2]

The theme of this project is not unique. Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, for example, is the story of Robert Persig's sometimes megaomaniacal obsession with articulating a "new philosophy" (p.323) that would transcend our "current modes" of objective rationality (p.102). His obsession made life at the university a struggle for him, and he ultimately experienced an emotional breakdown. For although he was disillusioned with the western ideal of objective rationality, he was paradoxically committed to deconstructing this tradition in its own terms. He attempted to establish an objectively rational system around the intuitive importance of what he called "Quality." In terms of phenomenological human presence, this involved for him an "inner peace of mind that isn't contrived but results from a kind of harmony with [one's] work in which there's no leader and no follower" (p.266). As far as he knew, there was hardly a precedent in western philosophy to follow in his task. If Persig had been aware of Merleau-Ponty he might have had an easier time of it, because Merleau-Ponty strives precisely to move beyond objective rationality and, more fundamentally, objective presence in the world. Still, Persig's dilemma is instructive. How do we move beyond objective rationality with rational thought?

Stephen Levine (1989 p.7) points to a distinction

between "wisdom," the actual experience and intimate acquaintance of understanding, and "knowledge," the objective positing of understanding. He gently tries to make us aware of the sense in which our experience is often "not of what's actually happening, but rather of the world of thought" and how "we don't experience our seeing so much as what we think about what we're seeing" (1989 p.11). Levine's work is less a strictly philosophical treatise than a practical introduction to mindfulness meditation. Still, he provides an articulation for us; what we are trying to achieve first of all is "wisdom" in this sense. The question is how to attain such wisdom, specifically about authentic presence, within philosophy without lapsing into objectification and mere analysis. The next chapter deals specifically with this question, and explores philosophy as a manifestation of authentic human effort. A comparison of eastern and western philosophy, with their relative strengths and weaknesses, will help to locate authentic presence at the heart of philosophical creativity.

The two chapters following will deal with the power and function of speech. After all, to express things in terms of language may seem already like a separation from spontaneously lived experience. In "Language and Truth," Merleau-Ponty's basic distinction between authentic and constituted language will be considered. Language will be

seen at the root of the "meaning-giving" event that allows us not only to create but to spontaneously call upon the temporal and linguistic horizon that makes our experience specifically human. The work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, who shares with Merleau-Ponty an interest in spontaneous presence and its relationship to rationality, will be used to illuminate this aspect of Merleau-Ponty's thought. Authentic language will be seen not merely as an example but a conditioning instance of authentic presence, and objective theories of truth will be compared to what truth might mean from a perspective of authentic being in the world. In the "Horizons of Presence," the "horizon latent in all our experience" (PhP p.92) will be expanded upon. With Merleau-Ponty, authentic language will be characterized as spontaneous play in a field of significance while constituted language will be seen as deliberation between discrete units of formal meaning. This distinction will then be deepened to characterize the metaphysical context Merleau-Ponty develops for authentic presence as a way of being in the world. It is from this perspective, characterized as an actively experienced awareness felt as love, that the therapeutic implications of authentic presence will be explored in the final chapters.

Although this project is not explicitly concerned with the "interrelations of historical doctrines" (PrP

p.32), the remainder of the present chapter will attend to some historical considerations. Questions of historical influence and chronological development are interesting and add contours to the interpretation of philosophical texts. Most vitally at the heart of any philosophy, we must remember however, is a project of living intentionality. The first and last thing of enduring significance should be the felt movement of awareness at the root of a philosophy. Paramount in a spirit of communicative solidarity rather than adversarial disputation is to honor whatever truth a philosophy may be struggling to articulate. This is to appreciate the "existential manner" (PhP p.179) of a philosophy and be attuned to its unifying "idea of the whole" (Kant Bxiiv). Historically, authors can be related to each other who, in Spiegelberg's sense (1972 p.xi), corroborate each other in the emerging tradition of their fundamental projects. "Philosophy as a whole is at certain moments in each philosophy," writes Merleau-Ponty (Signs p.128). In respect of each "moment," the development of the author's own texts, rather than being analyzed for their point-by-point correlations and discrepancies, are perhaps best read in terms of how they corroborate and augment each other in their "guiding principle."

In the course of his great "critique of modernity," for example, Frederic Nietzsche can be seen as the

grandfather of the postmodern period. Nietzsche opposes many things "of which our age is proud": most notably, its "objectivity" (1969 p.310) and the "despiritualizing influence" of the scientific ideal (1969 p.62). The strength of Nietzsche's rebellion, in fact, is matched only by his penetrating insight into human behavior and patterns of self-limitation. It would be a demanding but revealing and worthwhile project to explore a philosophy of authentic presence in terms of the germinal formulations of Nietzsche's work. Still, in terms of the tradition of philosophy whose efforts revolve around a therapeutic conception of truth and human being, Nietzsche is a role-model of insight and dissent more than positive formulation. In fact, Taylor traces a currently vogue nihilistic trend in philosophy (which he opposes to this tradition) back to a "certain reading" of Nietzsche. A trend, that is, which in reaction to the objective paradigm "attacks the very aspiration to truth" as if the collapse of the objective epoch left no direction for philosophy (1987 pp.481-482). Yet Neitzsche believes that philosophers will continue to "love" the truth (1990 p.71). He also maintains that "true experiences...lack words" because in attaining them we have "already grown beyond what we have words for" (1969 p.83). For Nietzsche, language can only "speak of antitheses" (1990 p.55). So when Merleau-Ponty

articulates a dimension of language that goes beyond antitheses, language as it characterizes authentic presence, we can take Neitzsche's caveat about staying "free from the seduction of words" (1990 p.46) without demeaning language and the philosophical interrogation of truth. As Nietzsche points out, it is not necessary in our critique of modernity "to get rid of the soul...but to "reinvent" it (1990 pp.43-44). Above all, such a philosophy will embrace truth not in the sense of the "boring and sophorific" moral philosophy of the objective tradition (1990 p.157), not truth that is formulated "deliberately," but truth rooted in the "great health" of humanity and the "overflowing power" of human being (1974 pp.346-347; 1969 p.299).

Nietzsche points to Immanuel Kant as a prime figure in the tired old tradition of philosophy he wishes to overcome. Yet Kant is the western philosopher who most rigorously exposes humanity's lack of encounter with the objective world. Kant, however, explores human experience as a structure of conceptual organization rather than felt relationship. He formulates a distinction between noumena and phenomena, between things in themselves and things as they are experienced. He maintains that noumena are unknowable, and that speculation about the nature of things in themselves is a form of unproductive folly. Still, rather than focusing his attention on phenomena (or the world of

actual experience), he constructs a grand speculative system accounting, among other things, for the relationship between noumena and phenomena. Instead of embracing lived experience as the arena of human life, in establishing "our unavoidable ignorance of things in themselves," Kant feels he "has limited all that we can theoretically know to *mere* appearances" (e.g. Bxxvi; Bxxix pp.28; 29). Kant relegates lived experience to a context of formal rationalism and claims he is interested in "nothing save reason itself and its pure thinking" (Axiv p.10). Kant, in effect, turns from speculative foundational metaphysics to rigorously theoretical foundational epistemology:

> This critique is not opposed to the *dogmatic procedure* of reason in its pure knowledge, as science, for that must always be dogmatic, that is, yield strict proof from sure principles *a priori*... which, as science, must necessarily be developed dogmatically, according to the strictest demands of system.
>
> Bxxxv-Bxxxvi, p.32

That Kant's philosophy remains alientated from human experience in its adherence to an intellectual ideal of objective scientific thinking limits Kant from the realization of his own project (or, in Madison's terms, cleaves him from his own "unthought thought"). Those who reject the orientation of the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant says insightfully, "can have no other aim than to shake off the fetters of science altogether" (Bxxxvi, p.33). Yet Kant sees in science more than the operational constraint of

empirical reference. Although he sees the folly of aspiring to the objective world as the world in itself, he does not overcome the need to establish formal structures to objectively ground human truth. As Kant himself says of Wolff, however, the "blame for his having failed to do so lies not so much with himself as with the dogmatic way of thinking prevalent in his day" (Bxxxvi, p.33). Kant defines dogmatism as "the dogmatic proceedure of reason, *without previous criticism of its own powers*" (Bxxxv, p.32). Yet Kant proceeds in what may be seen as the darkness of a different dogmatism: a fundamentally objective ideal of scientific thinking.

Still, Kant's brilliance in the history of philosophy can be associated with the insight that it is the world as it is experienced rather than the objective world to which humanity can productively and intelligently relate itself. We can allow ourselves to recognize and appreciate this genius when we realize with Nietzsche that "although the structure [of a philosophy] can be destroyed," it can "nevertheless retain its value as building material" (1969 p.176). Too often, Kant is seen only as a paradigm of all that philosophy should not put on the pretense of being: an ahistorical framework that grounds human knowledge in formal epistemological structures.[3]

Nietzsche belittles Kant and his formal "table of

categories" (1990 p.41). But Taylor points out that at the heart of Kant's system is an epoch-launching concern for the "lines of intentionality" that relate humanity to the world (1987 p.475). The radical formalism of Kant's philosophy does not degrade the value of the "Copernican Revolution" he initiated in philosophy. Merleau-Ponty's work, in fact, can be seen as a radical phenomenological development of Kant's fundamental insight. If humanity encounters the world only in terms of its experience of the world, and the objective world is not, as a thing in itself, accessible to human experience, then it makes sense to to embrace a relationship with the world that is not lived as though reality had to be approached objectively. Human presence in the world gives birth to a human world which we cannot encounter when we relate to the world as if it were objective. Merleau-Ponty's thinking revolves around a human presence that does not model itself on relationship with an objective world.

More concrete than the distant roots of Merleau-Ponty's theorized tradition of philosophy, in any case, are the immediate influences at work in his thought. In this regard, Edmund Husserl is unquestionably Merleau-Ponty's greatest inspiration. Yet Merleau-Ponty does not interpret Husserl's work as if it was a truth in itself. Rather, he projects what he takes to be most valuable in Husserl and explores it in his own way, always

appearing to "consider himself the executor of the ultimate and best inspirations of the master" (Spiegelberg 1969, p.517). Probably the best way to appreciate the relationship between the two philosophers is to read Merleau-Ponty's essays "Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man" (PrP pp.43-95), in which he tries to make his interpretation of Husserl clear to undergraduate students, and "The Philosopher and His Shadow" (Signs pp.159-181), which corresponds with his later work and puts the "unthought of element" (p.160) of Husserl into that context. Whether Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on Husserl's later works is justified or not is another issue. The point here is that what he interprets from Husserl is his starting point, and a very important philosophy does this inspire. Probably the most critical difference between the two philosophers is that Husserl never gave up on the idea of philosophy as a "pure science of the spirit" (1965 p.155). While others, for example, try to uncover in Husserl elements of Merleau-Ponty's type of negative ontology (e.g. Fuchs, 1976), the important thing in the context of this project is how Merleau-Ponty pursues in his own way the "great and distant human future" (1965 p.192), the "new age" (1970 p.14) to which Husserl alludes.

True to the theme of lived presence in the world underlying his work, Merleau-Ponty also draws heavily on the

insights of psychology, in particular the gestalt tradition. Kurt Goldstein's Human Nature in the Light of Psychopathology and Wolfgang Kohler's Gestalt Psychology, in fact, almost give the impression of being companion volumes to the Phenomenology. Freud's theories about the unconscious element of experience also make themselves felt in Merleau-Ponty's work, particularly in its later stages, although Freud's patriarchal and egocentric concept of personhood is expanded by Merleau-Ponty to embrace bodily being in the world and fundamentally interdependent social and environmental relationship.[4] Both the Freudian and Gestalt traditions, moreover, have an underlying theme of scientism which Merleau-Ponty deconstructs. William James, with lines of direct influence through his textual impact on Husserl, reads like a philosophical compatriot of phenomenological exploration and insight.[5]

The American psychologist Abraham Maslow draws a distinction between the "coping" and "expressive" modes of day-to-day existence, describing how the latter is much closer to the optimal state of the human organism (e.g. 1954 p.180; 1968 p.39). In doing so, he is following Kurt Goldstein and his distinction between "actualizing" and "self-preservation" behavior (1940 p.141). Consistent with this tradition, Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between a constituted and an authentic relationship with the world.

He then goes on to elaborate on the phenomenology of each state and develops a philosophical context around the distinction that articulates a bodily felt awareness of unity between self and other, humanity and environment. It is his exploration of authentic relationship and creative, self-actualizing agency that marks Merleau-Ponty as a beacon in the constellation of interdisciplinary efforts to discover a truly human and globally therapeutic paradigm of relationship with the world.

There are many historical convergences insinuated in a study of Merleau-Ponty's work. Martin Heidegger's central theme, for example, that our culture has "forgotten" the question of Being, and his subsequent attempt to formulate the "meaning of Being" (e.g.1962 pp.2, 24), is strongly reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty's contention that rational western culture has lost touch with a fundamental element of its existence. The approach the two men take to this forgotten element is different, however, and in this regard David M. Levin tries to consolodate Heidegger's "exceedingly formal ontology" (1985 p.16) with Merleau-Ponty's "intensive phenomenological meditation" (1985 p.62). In his later work, Heidegger maintains that we must "free ourselves from the technical interpretation of thinking" and liberate "language from grammar" (1977 p.194). Even more interesting, in terms of his philosophical relationship to

Merleau-Ponty, he claims that "if man is to find his way once again into the nearness of Being" he "must first let himself be claimed again by Being" (1977 p.199). Of course, the degree to which the two philosophers would agree on the meaning of these statements is a matter of complex textual interpretation. The statements themselves, on the other hand, resonate with Merleau-Ponty's project to re-discover our intimate relationship with the world through the organic roots of lived presence rather than theoretical speculation. Being, in this sense, represents a dimension of pre-ontological groundedness and immanent relationship. Above all, Being should be seen not as an occult entity or transcendent reality to which we must mystically relate ourselves, but a felt "open dimension of meaningfulness" (Levin, 1989 p.5) that spiritually informs conscious existence.

We must not forget Merleau-Ponty's philosophical relationship with his political compatriot Jean-Paul Sartre. Their thoughts touch each other's in intricate ways, and perhaps they understood each other better than we understand them (Sartre as an "existentialist" and Merleau-Ponty as a "phenomenologist"). Yet they do not rigorously put each other's thought in the context of their own, nor am I aware of any secondary study which considers the sweep of their ideas together. Certainly such a project is beyond the

scope of this project. Yet it would be a vast over-simplification to say that the main difference between them stems from the fact that Merleau-Ponty thinks Sartre opposes "being" and "nothingness" too radically (Viz p.66). For Merleau-Ponty, absence or negativity is not opposed to presence but is an integral part of the experience of presence. Spiegelberg makes an interesting point when he compares Merleau-Ponty's phrase "we are condemned to meaning" with Sartre's "we are condemned to freedom" (1969 p.520). Sartre, that is, separates a meaningless world sharply from a human consciousness that brings to it whatever meaning it autonomously decides. For Merleau-Ponty, the world and the individual insinuate each other, with meaning as the felt visceral sense animating engaged awareness. Merleau-Ponty finds Sartre's philosophy much too "antithetical" (Sense p.72).

Perhaps the most relevant connection between the two French philosophers in the context of this paper arises from Sartre's statement that "consciousness is afraid of it own spontaneity" (quoted in Barnes p.xii). Merleau-Ponty would agree with this whole-heartedly, stopping short of the implications Sartre draws from this about the extent of human freedom. Merleau-Ponty would also be sympathetic with Sartre's views about the secondary nature of the constituted ego, the "thetic or positional self-consciousness...[that]

deliberately reflects upon its own acts and states."[6] Merleau-Ponty insists that it is pre-analytical embodied consciousness operating in the world that is the primary manifestation of human presence. In this regard, Merleau-Ponty might say that western culture's most pernicious form of "bad faith" is its tendency to function from constituted, posited consciousness rather than its organic source of aware spontaneity in relationship with the world. Sartre might not agree with this; he might say that authentic presence is itself a form of bad faith because it seeks for individuals to coincide with themselves as if they were things (Being and Nothingness p.58). This would be an example of Sartre's "antithetical" opposition of the in-itself and the for-itself. Authentic presence does not imply that our destiny is fixed; authentic presence refers to a living relationship of truth with ourselves. Merleau-Ponty acknowledges that "all our actions have several meanings"; that they are "overdetermined" in Freud's terms (Sense p.37). Still, in the present moments of our relationship with the world we as organic beings act in a spontaneously unique vector of conditions. The question is the sense in which reflection and rationality can be part of our spontaneous legacy of relationship with the world. Any seeming paradoxes, Merleau-Ponty tells us, are "overcome in the act of movement" (Signs p.39). In any case,

Merleau-Ponty locates the "merit" of Sartre's thought in the fact that it tries to "find a way of thinking about our condition" in the world (Sense p.72).

A critical point in the internal development of Merleau-Ponty's thought also needs to be clarified. Remy Kwant refers to it as Merleau-Ponty's move from phenomenology to metaphysics (1966); Madison characterizes it as the "turning point in his philosophy" in which phenomenology "begins to change into an ontology" (1981 p.90; see also pp.167, 204). Bertram goes so far as to call it a change in the very "paradigm of his philosopy" (1988 p.275). Yet, as these authors acknowledge, Merleau-Ponty retains in all his work lived experience not only as a starting point but as his central animating theme. It is the *ground* he sets this experience within that changes, its articulated context that grows more comprehensive as it develops.

Merleau-Ponty tells us that his later work "takes up again, deepens, and rectifies" his earlier work (Viz p.168). He tells us that his early works contain a "bad ambiguity, a mixture of finitude and universality, interiority and exteriority" (PhP p.11). Yet there is, in any work of art including a philosophy, always more meaning than the author consciously "put into it" (Signs p.24). This "unthought thought" (Themes p.114), which Madison calls "the invisible

life, the inner movement of the work" (1981 p.xxxii), unifies the texts of an authentic philosopher as he or she works not only to articulate a particular issue but to be true to the movement of philosophical intentionality growing within them. Already the Phenomenology contains much of the "good ambiguity" contained in the studies of expression that follow. The critical development that marks his more mature work is that the ground he gives to pre-objective, lived experience changes from radical subjectivity to a kind of engaged holism more consistent with his over-all project.

Although one of his most important tasks as a phenomenologist is always to overcome subject/object duality (e.g. PhP p.xix; 174), in the Phenomenology of Perception Merleau-Ponty paradoxically grounds pre-objective experience in "ultimate subjectivity" (PhP p.404). He proposes the existence of a "silent consciousness embracing the world" (PhP p.403). In the work in progress when he died, however, Merleau-Ponty declares that what he had called the tacit cogito is "impossible" (Viz p.171). Instead, he reformulates the silence of this "silent cogito" (PhP p.402) into the "pregnancy" of the very "depths of being" (Viz p.149), into the "invisible of this world" which he characterizes as the Being of this being" (Viz p.151). Yet in this mystic-sounding formulation Merleau-Ponty does not overturn his original phenomenological project. Rather, he

explores the metaphysical context of a perspective that "discloses subject and object as two abstract 'moments' of a unique structure that is *presence*" (PhP p.430). The subject and the object become "two orders hastily constructed with a total experience" (Viz p.20). In the field of this total or holistic experience, it is difficult to "distinguish between what sees and what is seen" (PrP p.167), and there is "a reciprocal insertion and intertwining" (Viz p.138) of self and other, human being and the world. It is this total experience Merleau-Ponty embraces in his philosophy, as well as the nature of relationship that this experience can be seen to condition.

In the Phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty writes that we do not experience a "participation in the One but concrete acts...a *participation in the world*" (PhP pp.394-395). By the Visible and The Invisible, however, he develops a perspective in which authentic participation in the world already involves, in a sense, participation in a "primordial One."[7] The charge that Merleau-Ponty may, in developing such a ground, be falling back into speculative, constituted, "God's Eye view" metaphysics may disturb some postmodern philosophers who would otherwise approve of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach. In order to alleviate such concerns, these charges will be considered in some detail in the chapter on "Metaphysics Itself." First

of all, Merleau-Ponty will be cleared of Jacques Derrida's charge that Husserl's phenomenology belongs "to the history of metaphysics" (1973 p.5). Derrida thought "the whole of phenomenology" was implicated in his charges (1973 p.9), yet he once explicitly stated that it was hard to say whether Merleau-Ponty was guilty of what he called "logocentric metaphysics" or not (quoted by Holland, p.111).

Actually, postmodernism as a philosophical trend has been so reactive against the old, speculative tradition of metaphysics that most of its formulations are purely negative and devoid of any clear human significance. In this sense, Merleau-Ponty can be seen to consummate postmodernism's desire to avoid such an "over-arching" metaphysics in the development of an ethically meaningful type of humanism. At any rate, this claim will be further developed in the final chapter partly in response to Richard Rorty's charge that phenomenology may be guilty of continuing the "tradition" of old-style metaphysics:

> Much recent philosophy - under the aegis of "phenomenology" or of "hermeneutics," or both - has toyed with this unfortunate idea...a successor subject to epistemology which will do for reflection what the tradition did for "objectivising knowledge."
>
> 1979 pp.379-380

Rorty maintains that his own work is "therapeutic" rather than "constructive" (Mirror p.7). That is, like all

good "edifying" philosophy, seeks to deconstruct old philosophical problems while maintaining that philosophers ought to stop trying to establish objective theories along the lines of the "Mirror of Nature." It often seems, however, while guarding against this type of philosophical positivism, that Rorty and postmodern "neo-Nietzscheans" like Derrida (Taylor, 1987 p.484) effectively cut philosophy off from the pursuit of meaning in humanity's relationship with the world (they "throw the baby out with the bathwater: Putnam p.xi). What is left for edifying philosophy is, as Rorty acknowledges, negative and "parasitic" (Mirror p.366). For example, although Rorty ackowledges the importance of culture's "self-image" (e.g.1991 I p.3), and goes on to describe philosophy's function as "recontextualization" (1991 I p.94), he does not for all that want to give philosophy a positive role in the formation of culture's self-image. Again, he assigns philosophy a strictly reactive role as he advises us humbly and not a little enigmatically not to "underestimate the utility of merely 'deconstructive' writing" (1991 II p.6).

Yet philosophy, especially therapeutic philosophy, does not have to "exhaust itself" in "sterile protest" (Madison, 1988 p.118). Merleau-Ponty would heartily agree that philosophy should give up its quest for "objective truth" (as in Rorty, 1979 p.370). He encourages

philosophers not to "attempt to escape from history" (Rorty, 1979 p.9). Still, philosophers can continue without presumption to rigorously articulate, conceptually explore, and consciously develop a context of nourishing encounter, that is to formulate a therapeutic "experience of the world" (Sense p.28). This is precisely what Merleau-Ponty has done with his articulation of authentic presence. There is no claim of approximation to absolute reality, and no hint of ahistorical principles. Merleau-Ponty is interested, simply, in developing and adopting a therapeutic paradigm of human relationship in the lived world.

It is interesting to note that some people so blindly live the kind of spontaneous being Merleau-Ponty explores that it is hard to get them to reflect or rationally examine what may be self-defeating aspects of their existence. At the same time, there are others more or less blocked into a narrow, rational sense of being in the world who might not so much be convinced of, but perhaps opened up to, a more holistic paradigm of relationship precisely through their rationality. Western philosophers, of course, tend to be the latter type. In fact, this entire project may be characterized as a feeble attempt to reawaken a personally non-defensive perception of truth and felt communion through rationality. Merleau-Ponty reminds us that we cannot "keep the world, or situations, or others at the length of our

gaze like a spectacle" (Signs p.28). Just as cultural biases are woven into the philosophies we adopt, the psychological idiosyncrasies and neuroses that draw us to the work we do may be an even more intimate dimension of our interpretive perspectives.[8]

Merleau-Ponty discusses the danger of trying to "bypass our natural and social situation by refusing to take it up" (PhP p.456). He tells us we have "unlearned how to see, hear, and generally speaking, feel" in our tendency to experience the world from an objective perspective (PhP p.229). Our personal pathologies may only put us in a more acute relationship with the therapeutic element of Merleau-Ponty's thought developed and explored in this project. After all:

> the ring of truth never resounds so long as when the author calls upon his life for it...not only through his profundities but also through his manias and tics.
>
> Signs p.128

CHAPTER TWO:

AUTHENTIC PRESENCE and PHILOSOPHY

There is nothing more profound than experience which passes through the wall of being...Those who go by way of passion and desire up to this being know all there is to know. Philosophy does not comprehend better than they are comprehended; it is in their experience that it learns about being. Philosophy does not hold the world supine at its feet. It is not a "higher point of view" from which one embraces all local perspectives. It seeks contact with brute being, and in any case informs itself in the company of those who have never lost contact.

Signs p.22

When we are authentically present we do not feel confronted with objectively occurring ideas and events which we must analyze and deal with. We are *present*, rather, in a world of meaning which we sustain precisely with the energy of our responsiveness and the power of our clearly flowing actions. We may not know which is the right or most advantageous course of action for us, but we are in touch with what "comes naturally" (PhP p.436). Biologically, psychologically, and politically there are many dimensions of structure associated with the emergence of authentic human presence, which is "as weak when it wishes to convert itself into theses" (Viz p.13) as it is strong when spontaneously expressed in our lives and relationships. Yet there is much not only of which to cultivate awareness but to embrace in bringing to light this style of being. If philosophy does not rationalize itself into stale academic impotence it can help us explore this powerful manifestation of existence and relationship. In this and the following chapter we will consider the meaning and importance of philosophy not inasmuch as it is an objective discipline but, pointing to Merleau-Ponty, as it is an authentic human activity. Starting with an awareness of bodily felt discernment between constituted and authentic presence, this polarity of being in the world will be treated more in a

philosophical effort to overcome objective prejudice than in detached academic formality.

In the Phenomenology of Perception Merleau-Ponty introduces his readers to Gelb and Goldstein's brain-damaged patient Schneider in order to make the lived distinction between authentic and objectively constituted presence clear. When it is authentic, for example, a "friend's speech over the telephone brings us the friend himself, as if he were wholly present" (Signs p.43). On the other hand:

> When I have the feeling of dealing only with *words*, it is because expression has failed...We [should] no more think of the *words* that we are saying or that are being said to us than of the very hand we are shaking. The hand is not a bundle of flesh and bone, it is the palpable presence of the other person.
>
> Prose pp.116-117

It is this "palpable presence" we encounter in authentic presence. In considering the hand that is extended to us as a "bundle of flesh and bone," we remove ourselves from the dimension of communicative solidarity to which we have spontaneous access and from an objective perspective which we can only make judgements and inferences. To take another example, we may call the attractive person we met at a party the other night, reduce them to a potential sexual partner (or again a certain "bundle of flesh"), and not encounter their "palpable presence" as human beings. We may not in a fundamental

sense *see* them or *hear* them. The point is, for Schneider this dimension of true human encounter is not just lacking as a limitation manifested under manipulative or stressful conditions. For Schneider it is a fundamental privation of his very "power of existing" (PhP p.134). Schneider's own body is for him a "geometrical outline" (PhP p.108) rather than an intimate, lived space. He can speak only if he has "prepared his sentences" (PhP p.196). His relationships with others and with the world are not palpable or real to him but result from a kind of "decision made in the abstract"; he never performs an "authentic act of thought" (PhP p.157). For him the world always remains a bare objective setting:

> The thought of others will never be present to him, since he has no immediate experience of it. The words of others are for him signs which have to be severally deciphered, instead of being, as [can be the case] with the normal subject, the transparent envelope of a meaning within which he might live. Like events, words are for the patient not the theme of an act of drawing together or projecting, but merely the occasion for a methodological interpretation.
>
> PhP p.133

In short, for Schneider not only the word but the "world no longer has any physiognomy" (PhP p.132). Instead of reacting organically from moment to moment within a context of lived experience, the world for him "poses itself as a problem of calculation" (Hamrick, 1982 p.191). As is the case with all of us at times, he narrowly perceives

himself as an isolated subject that must cope with and manipulate objective ideas and situations through some "explicit process of deduction" (PhP p.109). Interestingly, professional philosophers seem to take pride in reducing the world to terms such as these and words typically become the focus of attention rather than any felt intersubjective meaning. In any case, Schneider's disability can speak to us on a powerful bodily felt level, specifically about the miracle of ourselves in the world. Although bodily presence is "only the barest raw material of a genuine presence in the world" (PhP p.165), the effects of Schneider's shrapnel injury for one thing should emphasize the respect and care we should have for the miracle of our bodies. It should give us pause to stop taking for granted that in authentically lived experience we can find ourselves in an environment with which we are profoundly integrated through spontaneous living energy and towards which we can continuously relate ourselves through the power of bodily felt creative expression. It is a miracle the depth of which the philosophy of authentic presence explores. At any rate, Schneider's pathology highlights a less magical presence very effectively. Yet Merleau-Ponty points out that as a culture we have been "obsessed with objective thought" (PhP p.393); that we tend to "idolize objectivity" (Sense p.91); and that the "objectivist illusion is firmly

implanted in us" (Prose p.148). Most dramatically at the institutional levels of western civilization we tend to limit ourselves to a mode of existing that does not recognize our intimate relationship with each other and the world. In this regard, Charles Taylor notes the "modern norm" of "manipulative" individuals who "look on the world around them as a task zone." Clearly in the wake of Merleau-Ponty, Taylor attributes this weak manifestation of human being to the objective epistemology associated with the "scientism...ultimately bound up with the atomist, utilitarian bent in our civilization" (1985 I, pp.135-136). At any rate, in pointing to the "depth to which the [objectivist] prejudice is rooted" in us (Signs p.47), Merleau-Ponty can be seen to have put his finger on a cultural malady, and his remedy is to "reinstate" the experience of authentic presence in all its "dignity" (Prose p.117).

In the way words are transparent to communication and bodies are transparent to the presence of a person when they are seen authentically, so the world is transparent to meaning when we are authentically present. Not only the immediate significance of specific interactions with the world and others, but a field of meaning that Merleau-Ponty calls Being in his later work. It is this felt dimension of existence, perhaps, that Abraham Maslow explores as the

"cognition of Being" in the "peak experience" (e.g.1968 p.73) and later characterizes more fundamentally as a "plateau experience" of non-alienated, spontaneously powerful being in the world (e.g. Journal of Transpersonal Psychology 1972 p.114).[1] The thing is, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, this underlying and unformulated dimension of meaning is not "handed down in stone." Rather, this meaning evolves as we grow, as we mature in experience, responsibility, and understanding, just as we will see that truth grows on itself in the spontaneously responsive expression of truth. We will discuss truth and Being more in following chapters. The point here is, in its own style of exploration, philosophy can help us with the development of this field of meaning. Yet philosophy as raw logical or linguistic analysis can inform us but little. Philosophy as an objective discipline is not "living" but "official and pompous" (Signs p.62). The only true way to experience Being is to be authentically present as a being in the world, and only philosophy as an expression of authentic human truth can help heal humanity with the comprehension and interpretation it seeks to develop.

Merleau-Ponty not only draws our attention to the miracle of authentic presence, but develops a comprehensive world-view that puts it in a philosophical context (gives it an "appropriate ground": Prose p.117). This "ground," in

turn, is not an appeal for metaphysical validation or a logical or linguistic foundation. It is, rather, an overture of creative articulation in which human beings move towards new dimensions of comprehension and understanding. Comprehension and understanding are, after all, very real human needs. It is only when such intellectual needs retard the powerful flow of felt, living relationship that they become barriers to, rather than holistic elements of, life. This is something like another philosopher's paradox, the fine line between healthy activity and unbalanced obsession.

Still, the distinction between constituted and authentic presence has been presented as an experienced, phenomenological distinction. It may be asked how such a descriptive characterization of experience becomes philosophy. Yet to Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology is already philosophy because it is reflection upon that bodily "spontaneity which teaches me what I could not know in any other way except through it" (Signs p.93). This is not to say that we know automatically all there is to know. We must reflect, after all, and comprehension involves a certain effort. What Merleau-Ponty is saying, and what we will explore further in the next chapter, is that our power as organisms to integrate awareness spontaneously far surpass our deliberate attempts to objectively understand. "Phenomenology envelopes philosophy" because it is

reflection upon that bodily experience which Merleau-Ponty tries to show is the "initial situation" of all subsequent knowledge (PhP p.xiv). Phenomenology is for him part of an effort to reawaken the "basic experience of the world of which [objective] science is a second-order expression" (PhP p.viii). It is "making explicit or bringing to light the pre-scientific life of consciousness" (PhP p.58), a focusing of attention on the fundamental "soil of the sensible and opened world" (PrP p.160). Phenomenology is a technical term for the *philosophical* exploration of experience, the experience of actual presence in the world. It is almost as if "phenomenology" should be an alternative name for true philosophy rather than the designation of a relatively obscure branch of philosophical investigation.

Certainly, phenomenology is not simply description in the sense that witnesses are required to describe the scene of an accident. Phenomenology, as philosophy, is attention to the fundamental experience of being in the world and, rather than developing systems to put it in order, embracing the flow of experience with an intention to articulate. Phenomenology is the intentional cross-fertilization of experience with the creative power of language. In this, phenomenology is different from other forms of creative linguistic expression insofar as it explicitly "holds forth" as philosophical articulation; for Merleau-Ponty, insofar as

it attempts explicitly to "formulate an experience of the world" (Sense p.27)." For example, a writer of pure fiction does not explicitly "hold forth" on the human condition; they make dimensions of subjectivity present indirectly.

Just what is it to be "philosophical"? What is philosophy? Essentially, it involves "a love or pursuit of wisdom" (Webster's 1966). What motivates the effort of doing philosophy is the urge to discover truth and meaning. Most fundamentally, philosophy is an intention to comprehend our existence and ourselves even if, as in the east, what it strives to understand is that there is no need to explicitly understand. As a discipline in western universities, philosophy is done in explicit formulas by means of rigourous conceptual articulation. In the east, although philosophical awareness is cultivated beneath conceptual levels of understanding, it nevertheless proceeds as an effort to articulate meaning.

The philosophical nature is one that obtains fulfillment from an active intelligence, not so much in terms of problem-solving but rather the interrogation of meaning. It is committment to what James calls the "Sentiment of Rationality" (1965 p.4).[2] In the west, philosophy has developed into a discipline in competition with science for subject-matter. Moreover science, with its phenomenally effective empirical methods, has tended to make

philosophy seem obsolete. Thus philosophers have scrambled to bring the certainty of science to the discipline of philosophy. Philosophy in the west is quite defensive about itself and not confident in its unique role; that of exploring meaning in existence, interrogating our notions of truth, and penetrating beliefs with a rigorous effort of articulation. The question for us is, if the west suffers from an "obsession with objective thought," how can philosophy, in particular when it is striving to be rigorously objective, be therapeutic?

When Merleau-Ponty's *Magnum Opus*, the Phenomenology of Perception, was first published in English the reviews were unenthusiastic. It was even charged with "failing to be a genuine contribution to philosophy" (Kruks p.xi). When I was in graduate school, the general consensus about Merleau-Ponty was that his philosophy consisted largely of excessive pontification around familiar and essentially simple points. Yet this compatriot of Jean-Paul Sartre was the youngest man ever to hold the prestigious Chair of Philosophy at the College de France (once held by Henri Bergson). Although he didn't get sufficient opportunity to explore the therapeutic implications of his own philosophy, the literature generated by his work has been growing steadily since his death. For many, Merleau-Ponty has served both as a model and an inspiration to do the work of

philosophy without the deliberate and overbearing orchestration of objective intellectual rationality.

It has been observed that "when we read Merleau-Ponty's works we are allowed to witness the birth of a philosophy" (Kwant, 1966 p.229). Madison notes that "Merleau-Ponty seems embarked upon a search to discover and master his own thought" (1981 p.153). Merleau-Ponty's philosophy can be taken as a living example of the distinction between constituted and authentic philosophical activity. His texts are searching, growing organisms of articulation rather than logical formulae of objective thinking. They are best taken as an articulation of experience formulating itself, at the same time linguistic bootstraps and footprints that allow us to be present at the "birth of a way of thinking" (Signs p.160). As Irving Singer points out, philosophy that searches for meaning and significance in human life is "always precarious" and its results are "often unforeseeable" (1992 p.xiii).[3]

It has also been noted that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is not just a "collection of theses" (Madison, 1981 p.145). Indeed, it is possible to be disturbed precisely by Merleau-Ponty's lack of arguments (e.g. Bertoldi, 1985 pp.2-3). Yet we must be careful not to reduce original and important work to the kind of "analytical lexicon" (Viz p.4) Merleau-Ponty explicitly

maintains philosophy is not. Taylor, perhaps in response to the dizzying rhetoric of certain post-structuralists, does not seem to recognize the validity of a non-argumentative tradition of philosophy. He identifies one of the "major drawbacks" of theories that have tried to undermine modern scientism and objective relationship in the fact that they have tended to be "underdemonstrated" and "rather impressionistically argued for" (1985 I pp.6-7). Whether or not and to what extent he includes Merleau-Ponty in his indictment is not clear. In any case, it is articulating a neglected dimension of human being rather than adversarial defenses and proofs that concern Merleau-Ponty. This issue will be considered further in the discussion of truth that follows. What concerns us here is that appreciating Merleau-Ponty's kind of philosophical effort involves "feeling one's way into its existential manner" (PhP p.179); that is, cultivating a certain openness to a style. Those who block their receptivity to this style may not logically be convinced of what they do not see or appreciate.

Merleau-Ponty once declared that he was lucky to "have his passion as his profession" (1963 p.4). As a young and increasingly disillusioned philosophy student, I found this inspiring. What made doing philosophy a passion for Merleau-Ponty? It was certainly not establishing the

"interelations of historical doctrines" (PrP p.32) or analyzing the arguments of "past philosophers" (Husserl, 1970 p.181):[4]

> to philosophize is to seek, and this implies there are things to see and say. Well, today we no longer seek. We "return" to one or the other of our traditions and defend it.
>
> In Praise of Philosophy, 1963 p.41

Merleau-Ponty's passion involved seeking. Perhaps as a philosopher he would accept "responsibility for the true being of mankind" (Husserl, 1970 p.17). His work is not, however, the search for what Richard Rorty has called a "general theory of representation" (1979 p.30). The formulations of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy explicitly do not seek "some kind of miraculous adequation or correspondence between them and reality" (Signs p.10). His is not the philosophy of the "God-like survey" (Signs p.21). He does not endeavor to provide, from some "higher" point of view, epistemological, metaphysical, or logical foundations for human knowledge. Instead, he maintains that we must "plunge into the world instead of surveying it" (Viz pp.38-39). "We must not wonder whether...that which is self-evident for us might be illusory in relation to some truth-in-itself" (PhP p.xvi), he insists. At the same time, although he is "not asking if the world exists," he does explore "what it is for it to exist" for us (Viz p.96). Merleau-Ponty wants to

discover "how things become things, [and] how the world becomes a world" (PrP p.181). At the risk of becoming unbearably repetitive, the world Merleau-Ponty is interested in is not the in-itself world of scientific consciousness, nor is it the intellectually projected world of objective consciousness. It is the phenomenological world of human experience, being in the present, the dimension of actual human "commerce" with the world (Signs p.110). "True philosophy," he writes, "consists of relearning to look at the world" (PhP p.xx) without reducing "perception to the thought of perceiving" (Viz p.36). The first task of philosophy for Merleau-Ponty is to "reawaken perception" (PhP p.57).

Always Merleau-Ponty's intention is to "reawaken primordial experience" (PhP p.179), to re-invigorate our "experience of the world" (PhP p.viii), and to focus on the possibility of a fresh encounter with the world and others that cannot be "further clarified by analysis" (PhP p.xviii). More, he describes the stifling isolation of living in an "objective" world and seeks to return to the "things themselves" (PhP p.ix), that is the spontaneously felt encounter with the world "at the very heart of our experience" (PhP p.171). He tries to invoke a sense of the "oneness" of human co-existence (Sense p.98) and the "close-woven fabric" (Viz p.6) of the world in which we live

and breathe. "Philosophy is a reminding of this being" (Signs p.22) he tells us, and like art "draws upon this fabric of brute meaning" (PrP p.161).

Merleau-Ponty's passion involved the articulation of an engaged, organically spontaneous, bodily experienced communion-in-action with others, the self, and the world. Merleau-Ponty wanted to get at the truth of being in the world, since "no doctrine could prevail against the things themselves" (any more than military suppression could be turned into victory for Marxist political thought: Signs p.11). "Meaning" at this level of experience becomes a bodily felt movement of significance rather than the heady analysis of definitions. It becomes awareness of the current of lived intentionality that animates our relationships, our passions, and our being in the world.[5] Meaning in this sense is more like Sprung's "vivial sense" (1994 p.152) than any kind of logical formulation. Philosophers tend to forget this current of meaning when they think about the world in a way which "caricatures" experience (Signs p.175).

Reaching the level of creativity and the depth of relationship implied by authentic presence is a passion Merleau-Ponty's style initiates. It can be a frustrating passion. The times we most deeply feel this level of intense and spontaneous awareness we feel most powerful,

free, and confident in the world. Yet as philosophers we may feel cursed with a need to articulate, explicitly grasp, and further comprehend this way of being. The more we try, the further we may seem to remove ourselves from it. How, then, can we bring this creative level of presence into "philosophical consciousness" (Signs p.111)?

Joseph Campbell thinks that as a culture we are desperately seeking the "experience of being alive" (1988 p.5). He studies myth and mythology as ways of awakening the "rapture" and "bliss" (p.118) of this level of experience. Richard Moss has dedicated his life to running workshops designed to "transform" people to a heightened way of experiencing the world which he calls "radical aliveness." In his book The Black Butterfly (1986), which he calls "an invitation to inquire more deeply into our own experience" (p.3), he shares many of the insights developed in these workshops. There are innumerable techniques, therapies, and practical exercises which seek to directly enhance our bodily presence and ability to deeply experience (e.g. Gunther, 1986; Hay, 1984; Houston, 1982; Masters and Houston, 1978). Indigenous American Indian philosophy, in this regard, has much to teach us. On the other hand, when we try to philosophize about this level of spontaneous experience and intimate presence we may feel left with only "a bit of verbal material in our fingers" (Signs p.89).

Merleau-Ponty himself warns against seeking a "verbal substitute for the world" (Viz p.4), and warns that that which "one too deliberately seeks, one does not achieve" (Prose p.112 [83]).

So what of philosophy? Merleau-Ponty's work is not primarily that of psychotherapist, guru, or story-teller. Is it not a sad paradox to seek brute experience through rational western philosophy? This is, perhaps, the phenomenological paradox, and a state of affairs that does not go unnoticed by Merleau-Ponty's peers:

> M.Bréhier: your doctrine, in order not to be contradictory, must remain unformulated, only lived. But is a doctrine which is only lived still a philosophy?
>
> Merleau-Ponty: Assuredly a life is not a philosophy. I thought I had indicated in passing that description is not the return to immediate experience; one never returns to immediate experience. It is only a question of whether we are to try to understand it. I believe that to attempt to express immediate experience is not to betray reason but, on the contrary, to work towards its aggrandizement.
>
> M.Bréhier: It is to betray immediate experience
>
> Merleau-Ponty: It is to begin the effort of expression...
>
> PrP p.30

Philosophy as phenomenology is not best taken as an attempt to go back and analyze or describe immediate experience. Immediate experience is lived through and cannot be relived in order to be further thought about. In a literal way we can "go back" to immediate experience using explicit memory in order to put words to it in a secondary,

backward-looking way. On the other hand, we can attend to the "silence of primary consciousness" (PhP p.xv) and bring expression to the very "emergence of being." It is in this way we consciously animate the development of meaning "at the very center of our experience" (PhP p.71). For example, Merleau-Ponty tells us that "no valuable painting ever consisted of simply representing" (Signs p.48). When we see a tree, we are not simply confronted with one object among others, or a naked objective thing (although this is what an illustration may strive to bring us). Rather, we encounter a "certain nature," the meaning of which we "actively evolve" (PhP p.370). The experience of the tree emerges from and is animated by a field of significance, a "number of unperceived elements" (Others p.55). If a painting is authentically done it will retain within itself the tissue of invisible significance which motivated it. In the movements of its own style, the painting will be the vortex of a certain opening onto Being (PrP p.179). In authentic painting, the artist expresses the primordial "genesis" of meaning "through the offices of an agile hand" (PrP pp.165-167).

The philosopher, in his own style, can express the "originating realm" (PhP p.174) of meaningful experience in the medium of rigorous conceptual articulation. The *authentic* expression of the philosopher need be no more

removed from the moment of lived experience than the "writer's or the artist's" (PhP p.197) and yet still be rigorous because that is the nature of its effort. In this way, both philosophy and painting, as well as any form of creative expression of which our bodies are capable, can be seen as "Being speaking within us" (Viz p.197). What makes philosophy unique, already because it is linguistic expression, is that it is also a "new articulation" (PhP p.30), a "reintegration of Being" (Viz p.197) that transforms human truth. Although the style "of his maturity eminantly contains the feeble accents of his first works" (Signs p.52), each expression of the painter is a new effort. Linguistic expression, on the other hand, goes beyond stylistic development and "tries to gain possession of itself and conquer the secret of its own inventions" (Signs p.80 [99]). In other words, language builds on itself as an available field of meaning and knowledge. Philosophical expression works explicitly with this integrating and elaborating power of language; this is what makes philosophy such a strongly historical tradition.

The most poignant questions of philosophy are questions of the meaning of human presence, which we can characterize with Merleau-Ponty not as attempts to determine an objective meaning but as a "meaning in genesis" (Signs pp.69; 41-42; 82). Above all, the point here is that the

activity of philosophy need not be a removal from authentic presence. When Rorty, for example, refers to the "comic" reputation of philosophy in its attempts to detach itself from culture in the name of clarifications and rationalizations (1982 p.169), he is referring to philosophy as a modern objective discipline. Postmodern philosophies, on the other hand, often tend (like Rorty's) to be reactive and deconstructive with little clear human significance to offer on their own. Taylor, in another vein, speaks of postmodern philosophies in which insights are more "parodied than articulated"; yet he points out that philosophy opens upon a "genuinely interesting frontier to be explored" (1985 I p.11). As a living interrogation of the meaning that animates human relationship in the world, philosophy can be a powerful expression of and door upon human being. The specific role of rigorous conceptual articulation will now be discussed in the course of comparing eastern and western philosophy.

We witness every minute the miracle of related experiences, and yet nobody knows better than we do how this miracle is worked, for we are ourselves this network of relationships.

PhP p.xx

Analytic thought interrupts the perceptual transition from one moment to another...And as our body guides us among things only on condition that we stop analyzing it and make use of it, language is literary (that is, productive) only on condition that we stop asking justifications of it at every instant and follow it where it goes...

Signs pp.69, 78

CHAPTER THREE:

PHILOSOPHICAL HUMAN BEING and WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Thinking about it led him into doubts and prevented him from seeing what he should and should not do. But when he did not think, but just lived, he unceasingly felt in his soul the presence of an infallible judge deciding which of two possible actions was the better and which the worse; and as soon as he did what he should not have done he immediately felt this. In this way he lived not knowing or seeing any possibility of knowing what he was or why he lived in the world, and he suffered so much from that ignorance that he was afraid he might commit suicide, while at the same time he was firmly cutting his own particular path through life...

Leo Tolstoy, Anna Karenina

Admixed with various degrees of "personalism or abstraction" (Ross, p.8), probably the most essential element in eastern philosophy is that it attempts to provide a path through which to "directly experience" (Kapleau, p.xiii) what James, for example, characterizes as "primal reality" (1985 p.31). That is, our relationship to the dimension of reality that underlies our bare perceptions of the world and imbues them with meaning; what James calls the *divine* (1985 p.38). Merleau-Ponty philosophically encounters this dimension when he discusses Being in the later stages of his thought. Along these lines, Being can be characterized as the depth of meaning we experience when we are authentically present in the world. This idea will be explored further in the next chapter. The present task is to consider the relationship of eastern and western philosophy as attempts to relate ourselves to existence.

Husserl, noting the "practical theme" of eastern thought, thought it was a "mistake" even to call these orientations philosophy (1965 pp.170-171). He referred to them as "merely...anthropological" (1970 p.16). Huston Smith tells us that Heidegger, on the other hand, once exclaimed that Zen Buddhism expressed what he had been "trying to say" in his philosophical texts (Kapleau p.xi). The nature of eastern thought, Buddhism for example, is not easily

characterized:

> The expression "religious philosophy" would hardly account for the depth of the Buddhist experience, for which neither "religious" nor "philosophical" would seem to be a fully satisfactory epithet. Though there has been much philosophical speculation among various schools of Buddhism, the basic insight of Buddhism goes beyond speculation and denounces it. Sakyamuni (Buddha) himself refused to answer speculative questions, and he would not permit abstract philosophical discussion. His doctrine was not a doctrine but a way of being in the world...His philosophy was not a world view but a significant silence, in which the fracture implied by conceptual knowledge was allowed to heal.
>
> Merton p.79

"Nevertheless," Merton goes on, "the basic insights of Buddhism are philosophical and metaphysical: they seek to penetrate the ground of Being and of knowledge" (p.79). Merleau-Ponty, for his part, refers to the disclosures of eastern thought as "inarticulate" and "muted contributions to philosophy" (Signs p.140). He notes that as ways of comprehending our relationship to the world eastern philosophies "do not try to think about but simply render present" the primordial or "immemorial" world of pre-conceptual presence (Signs p.135). He readily acknowledges that there is something valuable in eastern philosophy for western culture to learn:

> Indian and Chineese philosophies have tried not so much to dominate existence as to be the echo or the sounding board of our relationship to being. Western philosophy can learn from them to rediscover the relationship to initial being and initial option which gave it birth, and to estimate the possibilities we have shut ourselves off from in becoming "Westerners" and perhaps reopen them.
>
> Signs p.139

Of course, it would take a series of volumes to adequately explore the relationship of eastern and western thought. It is interesting to note, however, that the rigorous articulations of western physics are bringing western scientific consciousness to interpretations of reality that closely parallel those of eastern philosophy. Much work has been done on the striking similarities between eastern thought and the emerging cosmologies of modern physics (e.g. Heisenberg, 1958 & 1974; Capra, 1975; Zukav, 1979; Pribram, 1979; Powers, 1982; and Margenau, 1987). Both perspectives tend to interpret reality as a "dynamic, inseparable whole" (Capra, p.93) that transcends the categories of traditional language and reasoning (Capra p.161). Both tend to "affirm the organic unity of things" while they break down "any hard and fast distinction between the observer and the observed" (Powers, p.161).

These emerging similarities do not escape Merleau-Ponty. He reminds us, however, that western physics does not include an attempt to grasp in its experience of the world the implications of its interpretations. Thus Husserl writes that "Einstein does nothing to reformulate the space and time in which our actual life takes place" (1965 p.186; also 1970 p.15), and Merleau-Ponty points out that science in the west continues to operate within the "same classical ontology of the object" (Viz p.17) as if its

developing revelations "should in no way affect our manner of conceiving its action upon our body" (Viz p.25). In short, the west at this point needs to expand its focus from the objective assessment of findings to the meaningful dimension of lived experience in order to effect a transformed presence in the world. Although science may be breaking down the duality between the subject and the object, Merleau-Ponty makes it clear that we still live our lives and operate in the world as if we were isolated subjects in an objective world. At the same time, the comprehensive and rigorous grasp of the world of modern science expands our horizon of being incredibly. If the rigour of western scientific thought has itself taken us to the edge of an appreciation of Being that echoes the east's, it has in the process forged a path with exciting possibilities. Beyond respite from the raw struggles of survival, for example, the communicative technologies spawned by scientific effort make global co-operation possible. It is only as a prominent paradigm of being that science, as a model of objective relationship, begins to miscarry. The language of typical eastern and truly therapeutic western philosophy is not quantitative or objectively analytical. Such language does not facilitate the expression of humanly nourishing meaningfulness. What sets western philosophy apart as a unique and powerful voice

in the dialogue of philosophical human being is the rigorous conceptual articulation of its insights.

It has often been noted that eastern philosophies are "non-progressive" (e.g. Hearnshaw p.293). In the east "thought does not feel called upon to extend previous efforts" (Signs p.133). For Merleau-Ponty, this is because "the attempt to conceive and the rigor of the concept" (Signs p.138) that characterize rationality in the west bring to it an ever more comprehensive self-understanding which broadens the horizon of its "belongingness to the world" (Viz p.27). Typically eastern orientations often seek to transcend rationality, yet the rationality they seek to transcend is, perhaps, the same objective positing "mistaken rationality" (Husserl, 1965 p.179) that Merleau-Ponty himself seeks to overcome. Merleau-Ponty, although an integral part of the western tradition that embraces rationality, seeks a less strictly intellectual, bodily felt, "organic" thought (PhP p.77). For him, "a culture is judged by its degree of transparency, by the consciousness it has of itself and others" (Signs p.138), and he sees the west as the highest expression of attaining self-consciousness. This may seem paradoxical, since after all western philosophy is often objectively intellectual, antithetical in terms of revolving around dualistic opposition, adversarial, and speculative, while eastern

philosophy is already concerned with being authentically present in the world. Yet, along with physical science, western philosophy is moving towards an explicit awareness of authentic presence just as its rigorous articulations are forging a path along which an ever more comprehensive awareness of being in the world is likely to develop. The very self-consciousness of authentic presence Merleau-Ponty articulates, with which eastern philosophy may be meditatively concerned and western physics can be seen to imply, is itself an example of the way western philosophy has uniquely "opened up the way of truth" (Signs p.138). Again, who knows where this process may lead, or at least help guide, humanity?

As with other human endeavors, Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between "analytic" reflection (PhP p.44) and "authentic" or "true" reflection (PhP pp.41;44;452). Although he is concerned with articulating the nature and also proceeding in the spirit of authentic reflection, this should not be taken as a wholesale rejection of analysis. After all, as any other activity, acting in a play for example, involves stages of preparation that require analytic effort, Merleau-Ponty tells us that "it takes work for the magic of expression to occur" (Others p.54). Analytic work in philosophy may be a necessary element of preparation for the moment of authentic philosophical

expression in which true creativity and the event of "reintegration of Being" occurs. Western philosophy, however, tends to identify philosophy almost exclusively with objective analytic thought.

In Merleau-Ponty's case, articulating authentic relationship with the world was a passion, and there may be no further justification needed for his task. Yet a philosophy which seeks to articulate a dimension of relationship at the same time creates a path to the very dimension it seeks to articulate:

> We will miss that relationship - which we shall here call the openness upon the world - the moment the reflective effort tries to capture it, and we will then be able to catch sight of the reasons that prevent us from succeeding, and of the way through which we would reach it...The philosopher therefore suspends the brute vision only in order to make it pass into the order of the expressed: that vision remains his model or measure, and it is upon that vision that the network of significations which philosophy organizes in order to reconquer it must open.
>
> Viz p.36

Philosophy, then, helps bring about the *recognition* that is essential in defeating our barriers to being authentically in the world. Rigorous conceptual articulation can be seen as a specifically western way of reaching within ourselves the deep organic presence in the world human culture seems to be crying out to experience. Moreover, through the very "effort of expression" such articulation calls forth, the dimension of relationship in

which we are present evolves in significance:

> It is true we discover the unreflected. But the unreflected we go back to is not that which is prior to philosophy or prior to reflection...the unreflected comes into existence *for* us only through reflection.
>
> PrP pp.19; 30

Merleau-Ponty is not here falling into metaphysical idealism. "There is a determinate reality" (PhP p.330), he reassures us. What interests the phenomenological philosopher, once again however, is not the reality in itself but the significance and meaning we give it and within which this reality is experienced. Already in our perception of it and especially in our reflection upon it, this reality is converted "into its truth" for us (Viz p.30). Philosophy is not, then, a matter of seeking a truth in itself, or of analyzing experience to discover truth; "the true dawns through an emotional and almost carnal experience" (Viz p.12) of encounter. Authentic expression is the growing fruition of the original event which "infuses meaning" (PhP p.34) into the world. Authentic philosophy, as a mode of this expression, is "like art, the act of bringing truth into being" (PhP p.xx). On the other hand, the bare "logical activity of drawing a conclusion" (PhP p.33) is a kind of mental exercise which when given too much importance diverts us from the true terrain of life. The strictly "scientific" reflection which seeks to establish

"proof" and introduces "the concepts of subject and object" (Viz p.28) is only a "retrospective construction" that can go on to remove itself from the "experience...of the true which [consciously or not] it seeks to render explicit" (Viz p.45):

> Between the self which analyzes perception and the self which perceives there is always a distance. But in the concrete [authentic] act of reflection, I abolish this distance...It is, then, true in the last resort that analytical reflection entirely rests on a dogmatic idea of being, and that in this sense it does not amount [like authentic reflection] to an act of self-discovery.
>
> PhP p.44

The point here is that without philosophical reflection, and in particular the philosophical disclosures of authentic reflection, not only would one path of reawakening be unavailable, but human life might "dissipate itself in ignorance of itself or in chaos" (PrP p.19). We have seen that analytic objective philosophy, like science, has a part to play in this awakening. Yet it would seem that the critical precondition of philosophically exploring authentic presence is an openness to the ongoing moment of creative relationship with the world that we usually experience most recognizably as a profound sort of "productivity" (PhP p.196). Yet we seem, often as individuals and generally as a culture, to have lost touch with this intimate relationship and strive to achieve it objectively somehow, and philosophy seems to have become

more of a block than an aid.

While authentic reflection is always a further expression, a further discovery of truth in terms of the awareness it gropes towards, secondary or constituted reflection can only be an attempt to specify an idea again, or prove it, or hold it at arm's length and judge it, and as such will tend to treat, for example authentic presence, as another philosophical problem and not yet, at least officially, *recognize* it. Meanwhile the most powerful experiences of felt meaning in our relationship with the world

> offer themselves...only to someone who wishes not to have them but to see them, not to hold them with forceps, or to immobilize them as under the objective of a microscope, but to let them be and to witness their continued being - to someone who...lets the perceived world be rather than posits it.
>
> Viz pp.101-102

The history of western philosophy is a dialogue of rigorous articulation starting with the ancient Greeks. Yet western philosophers can be culturocentrically arrogant when they question whether different styles of philosophy are valid by the traditional objective standards of their own discipline. Husserl's attitude toward eastern philosophy is a case in point. African philosophy, another non-adversarial, non-analytic primarily oral tradition of philosophical human being, has its status and validity as

philosophy more often questioned by western academics than digested as a voice in the *open dialogue* of philosophical human being. Certainly, eastern culture does not contain the only tradition that is content to be "a sounding board of our relationship to being." Indigenous North American philosophy, for example, is no more heard as a voice in the dialogue of philosophical human being than indigenous North Americans themselves are typically respected for their way of life.[1] Yet Jerry Mander (1991) believes that indigenous peoples are the principle guardians of "an idea that is subversive to Western society and the entire technological direction of the past century." This "idea" embraces a philosophy of spiritually felt communion with the world. For example, this response by Chief Seattle to an 1854 treaty offer provides an eloquent statement of philosophical orientation:

> If we sell you land you must remember that it is sacred, and you must teach your children that it is sacred and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tell of events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of our father's father...
>
> Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of earth. Man did not weave the web of life, he is simply a strand of it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.
>
> see footnote one

Mander quotes an excerpt from A Basic Call to Consciousness, the Hau de no sau nee [Iroquois] Address to the Western World, which was delivered at the 1977 UN

Conference on Indigenous Peoples:

> The way of life known as Western Civilization is on a death path on which their own culture has no viable answers. When faced with the reality of their own destructiveness, they can only go forward into areas of more efficient destruction.
>
> The air is foul, the waters poisoned, the trees dying, the animals are disappearing. We think even the systems of weather are changing. Our ancient teaching warned us that if Man interfered with the Natural Laws, these things would come to be. When the last of the Natural Way of Life is gone, all hope for human survival will be gone with it...
>
> We must consciously and continuously challenge every model, every program, and every process that the West tries to force upon us...The people who are living on this planet need to break with a narrow concept of human liberation, and begin to see liberation as something that needs to be extended to the whole of the Natural World. What is needed is the liberation of all things that support Life - the air, the water, the trees - all the things which support the sacred web of Life.
>
> The Native People of the Western hemisphere can contribute to the survival potential of the human species.
>
> Mander, 1991 pp.192-193

Indigenous North American philosophy is best characterized, with eastern philosophy, as a cultural tradition concerned with bringing ourselves into harmonious and holistic relationship with each other and the world. Western philosophy, on the other hand, tends to be a defensive, fundamentally self-referential technical dialogue. Western philosophers must take to heart emerging insights which suggest that there is no objective universal cultural yardstick.[2] Solidarity is based on a situated perspective of the world shared on a vocational, geographic, political, or religious level. But solidarity can be shared most fundamentally by all of us as a global

community of *speech empowered* human individuals. We must guard against arrogance in the application of our cultural ideals as if against some objective standard of truth. Truth can animate the horizon of any perspective. The critical thing in terms of communicative solidarity is "fusing horizons," or the non-defensive sharing of truth and humanity's dialogue of relationship with the world.

Western culture is characterized by objective relationship (and as E.F.Schumacher notes, "the whole world is now in a process of westernization": 1974, p.10). Western philosophy, if it is not to be a mere reflection of this impoverished perspective, has a therapeutic role to play in overcoming the barriers imposed by this paradigm. Objective relationship involves alienation, fear, exploitation, and on many levels not explored in this project, pathology of human presence. Constituted being tends to lose touch with the "creative genius" (PhP p.43) of the body and its roots in the world. Therapeutic philosophy in this sense becomes an effort to articulate and explicitly grasp a spontaneity that ever seems "a bit beyond" our grasp (Prose p.116). Poetry or dance may seem more appropriate to such a quest, yet for a western philosopher (by a decision that was "already there": PhP 436) this will involve an effort of rigorous conceptual articulation.

A child may express in a simple gesture what philosophers

may struggle to articulate. Yet consciously discovering something for itself, philosophy's effort of articulation continues. Not, that is, primarily articulation in the sense of making the parameters of an objective philosophical position explicit, but in the sense of creative articulation. As Merleau-Ponty notes of the Phenomenology, such philosophy "is not a certain set of ideas." It is, rather, an endeavor in which we "struggle blindly on until, miraculously, thoughts and words become organized by themselves" (PhP p.369). This kind of articulation embodies the experience of truth emerging in philosophy. We lay this truth before ourselves most genuinely as it emerges from ourselves, and as bodily felt meaning it resonates with the formulation in which it becomes conscious.

In contrast to this, Western academic philosophy often seems little more than the adversarial confrontation of objective ideas. Almost like a pianist who becomes adept at playing a series of notes and forgets what it is like to be truly musical, western philosophy often proceeds in the technical glory of its own objective parameters. Philosophy is "musical," on the other hand, when it revolves around the formulation of human truth; truth, that is, as a felt meaning of existence that resonates deep within our being.

The philosophical impulse is an essential part of human being. Poetry can be profoundly philosophical. We are all

philosophical whenever we feel questions around the contours of human self-image and being in the world. Professional western philosophy, as a style of rigorous conceptual articulation, is already a form of human expression valuable in itself. While some philosophers are only interested in philosophy as an historical discipline, or in logic and analysis explicitly for their own sake, or in debate and argument for the sake of argument, yet in its vital, authentic sense philosophy is an expression of interest in truth and being. Professional western philosophy provides an opportunity for firm committment to this expression and provides a forum for the rigorous work of its unique style of articulation. We have seen a sense in which rigorous conceptual articulation plays a role in the development of human being.[3] When philosophy becomes an esoteric mystical or academic language, however, it may seem like a laughable waste of effort in the currents of practical work and living. "Popularization," from this elitist perspective, may be seen in a pejorative sense (this attitude can also be seen as a consequence of philosophy's insecure effort to establish itself as a discipline with the certainty of a science). Yet the real value of a philosophy lies precisely in stimulating and engaging human culture in the creative interrogation of self-image. The oral traditions in this sense are more participatory and

associated with "elders" rather than "experts." The long, explicit, discursive articulations of western philosophers may only be "showing the work" of coming to more comprehensive insight about ourselves in the world. There are other ways than pleonastic articulation to express the philosophical impulse even in the west - for example Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations.

The western style of philosophy, to use another metaphor, may reflect something like the period of confusion in which the rational mind struggles to comprehend a Zen koan. At any rate, language is the western philosopher's path of invention, which may seem already like a removal from authentic presence. Rollo May, for example, talks about the widespread "suspicion of words in our day" (1965 p.303). Of course in life we must ultimately "walk the walk rather than talk the talk." On the other hand, for human beings the "walk," the practical path of life and growth, inevitably involves "talk"; intersubjective linguistic expression that makes not only representation and communication possible, but facilitates growing awareness. We must not over-generalize the saying "talk is cheap." There is a sense in which the existential distinction between authentic and constituted human presence is not only manifested as, but can be seen to be fundamentally rooted in, the effort of our linguistic expression.

CHAPTER FOUR:

LANGUAGE AND TRUTH

Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world, but on it depends the fact that man has a world at all. For [human beings] the world exists as a world in a way that no other being in the world experiences. But this world is linguistic in nature...Who will deny that our specific human possibilities do not subsist solely in language?... Language [however] is not its elaborate con-conventionalism, nor the burden of pre-schematisation with which it loads us, but the generative and creative power unceasingly to make this whole fluid.

Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth pp.401, 495, 498

The "thoughts" which weave speech and make a comprehensive system of it, the fields or dimensions of thought which the great authors and our own labors have installed in us, are open wholes of available significations which we do not reactivate. They are the wake of thought which we do not retrace but follow along in. We have this acquisition as we have arms and legs. We make use of it without a thought, just as without thinking we "find" our arms and legs...it is a fact that given our corporeal and linguistic equipment everything we do ultimately has a meaning and a name.

Signs pp.19, 20

Merleau-Ponty, in a poetry of phenomenological articulation, lays before his readers both authentically lived and objectively constituted human experience. He relates this existential polarity to our encounters with nature, space, time, other people, our bodies, and (in terms of freedom) ourselves. From the perspective of authentic presence the world is not a "system of objects" which have to be negotiated, analyzed, and coped with. It is a gestalt of relationships "towards which we project ourselves" (PhP p.387). In this spirit, Merleau-Ponty's most critical exploration involves the distinction between authentic, originating, active, fertile, constituting, true, transcendent speech and on the other hand secondary, empirical, stereotypic, constituted language.[1] With Merleau-Ponty, in this chapter we will contrast language as a source of truth from language as formula and caricature. Constituted language, we will see, is drawn from and constructed with the deliberate effort of objective thinking and being. Authentic language, on the other hand, "instantaneously emerges" from what Merleau-Ponty calls a tacit cogito which "speaks as we sing when we are happy" (PhP p.404). In the Phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty characterizes this tacit cogito as a *"silent* cogito," a "retreat of not-being" (p.400). However, he also tends to

define it as the "core of subjectivity" (p.405), thus radically polarizing rather than "moving beyond" subject/object duality.

In the following chapter we will see how Merleau-Ponty comes to characterize authentic language not only in terms of the embodied spontaneity of its formulation, but more fundamentally in terms of the silence that reaches beyond itself animating true expression. We will also explore Merleau-Ponty's philosophical relationship with Jacques Derrida, who has historically related insights about the nature of silence in language and who, like Merleau-Ponty, rejects objective philosophy. Derrida, however, in whose work the phenomenological spirit is not readily found, suspects phenomenology of its own objective bias. In confronting this criticism we will find the philosophy of authentic presence, and to this extent Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, to be less of an academic school of objective thought and more like the creative interrogation of human self-image. We will go on to apply the vision of fundamentally inter-connected silent relationship to our encounter with the world. This, in turn, will lead to the metaphysics of presence and the ethical dimensions of authentic presence in the final chapters. Let us begin with the phenomenology of language and its relationship to human being and human truth.

First of all, Merleau-Ponty draws our attention to words. Words, that is, not only as the objective labels of things and ideas but as powerful gestures, as the organs of a certain "articulatory and acoustic style" (PhP p.180). This is not simply to invoke the difference between words in the dictionary and words as they are used. It refers, rather, to two dimensions of the way words are used. It does not simply reflect the fact that sometimes we are dull and sometimes exciting speakers and writers. More than that. It points to the sense in which words are not just the objective names of things and ideas but the actual integers of conscious meaning. For example, sometimes we search for a word as the best descriptive term for a pre-existing idea. At other times, we grope for a word in order to finally *say* something. At such times, we reach out (or in, or around) in order to bear certain fruit. There is profound frustration when we do not "satisfy" (PhP p.180) our need for expression. At such times, not finding the word means we have come up short not just of a label, but of presence to a certain manner of truth. There is often more at stake with a word on the tip of the tongue than simply coming up with an an apt designation or proper name. We find ourselves in search of the *sense* that a certain word brings. The word is not an empty label; the *word has a meaning* (PhP p.177).

Merleau-Ponty's chapter on "The Body as Expression and as Speech" (PhP pp.174-199) embodies some of his most eloquent writing and foreshadows the direction of future work. In this chapter he tries to overturn both "intellectualism and empiricism" (idealism and materialism) by showing they only recognize the word as a label or the "external sign of internal recognition" (PhP p.176). Merleau-Ponty tries to show the more profound dimension of words as they are the vehicles of meaning in thought. At this point in his work he notes paranthetically the distinction between authentic and "second-order" or constituted speech, pointing out that only the "first is identical with thought." He then refutes any philosophy that only recognizes or operates in terms of the constituted dimension of words, and goes on to point out, more fundamentally, that "most of the time" as a culture "we remain within the bounds of constituted language" (PhP p.188). Insofar as Merleau-Ponty's philosophy revolves around the interrogation of human experience it is phenomenological. As it strives to re-establish the roots of authentic language, it is therapeutic.

The phenomenological discrimination (that is, the felt awareness of distinction as opposed to the intellectual categorization) of these two fundamental dimensions of the word can lead to the recognition of the "inner power" (PhP

p.176) of words. Not their secondary function as designation, but their "true" function as the actual "vehicle" (PhP p.178) of meaning for consciousness. Too often only the secondary function of words is recognized. Abraham Maslow, for example, tells us the only way to really know something is to experience it. Merleau-Ponty would agree with this whole-heartedly. Maslow goes on to tell us that language can only label or give a name to experience (e.g. 1954 p.288). He notes that language is a "screen between actual experience and the human being" (1954 p.284). Merleau-Ponty, under certain conditions, would agree with this as well. In fact, Merleau-Ponty himself warns us to be wary of the "detour of names" (Viz p.162). In the context of his own system of thought, however, Merleau-Ponty is warning us specifically about pre-occupation with the secondary manifestation of language, which in the last chapter we began to explore in relation to philosophy. Certainly, a problem arises when we become fixated on the secondary level of language and reduce our experience of the world to this objective level. Don G. Campbell writes that in "the rapid process of clothing thoughts in words, it is a challenge to observe what brings the thoughts themselves into being" (1989 p.58). Merleau-Ponty gives phenomenological attention to this originating process. He refers to it as the "genesis" of meaning, and sees language,

in its *authentic function,* as a uniquely human and powerful vehicle of this first expressive awareness.

This originating, "meaning-giving" function of language applies, of course, not just to the words themselves, but the act of linguistic expression itself. Whenever we objectively possess an idea (that is, have it already in mind) and merely kick around to put the understanding explicitly into words we are operating in the context of secondary language. Some people are very skilled in applying this form of expression (which is related to "knowledge" in Levin's sense). On the other hand, for example when we have the feeling that an idea is eluding us, we may we commit ourselves to the organic process of expression and manifest meaning in the creative articulations of our total organism. Such expression does not call for the deliberate effort of intellectual control. Rather, it "streams forth" from us (Viz p.152), following on a certain effort of directed intentionality and openness (that Bhuddists call effortlessness). When expression is spontaneously drawn from the roots of being in the world it is *authentic,* an instance of originating language:

> To speak is not [always] to put a word under each thought. If it were, nothing would ever be said. We would not have the feeling of living in the language and we would remain silent...we sometimes have, on the contrary, the feeling that a thought has been spoken - not just replaced by verbal counters but incorporated in words and made available in them.
>
> Signs p.44

Taking this phenomenological discrimination farther in its explanatory implications, Merleau-Ponty suggests that the secondary, designating function of language always rests on or presupposes the originating act. The constituted use of language, that is, for him "assumes that the decisive step of [originating, operative] expression has been taken" (PhP p.194; Signs p.44; Viz p.153). On this account, we can begin to appreciate the extent of Schneider's disability. His organic inability to draw on language's creative power limits his acquisition of meaning, and in this sense flattens his world. He is biologically limited to the word as a designation of experience rather than being able to animate experience with the meaning authentic language can bring into consciousness. Whereas Schneider is present on the plane of concrete thinking and association, he does not have conscious access to the ever-expanding network of creative meaning, to the "immense mental domain" (Polanyi p.62) that further enriches most of our lives and situates us in a world of complex awareness.

Of course, Schneider is a member of the human community and shares the human world from his own perspective. However, he suffers from a limitation. He may not be capable, to take a trivial example, of driving a car because he cannot transform the many discrete subordinate tasks involved smoothly into the complex focal

awareness of "driving".[2] At the same time, there are "normal" people not capable of driving, or flying a plane, etc. because their constituted style removes them too far from the full power of their organic presence. This is often associated with the initial fear of a new task. When such behavior becomes a way of life, it may be associated with minimal brain dysfunction (learning disability) or, more dramatically, gross brain dysfunction. In this sense, Schneider provides us with a clear instance of constituted thinking and secondary language. But this limiting mode of relationship is not only associated with the physical structure of the brain. The objective paradigm of relationship with the world itself tends to employ constituted thinking and secondary language as modes of approaching reality. For example, in a social context, Schneider is incapable of participating fully in the kind of authentic discussion that has a "spirit of its own" (Truth p.345). Such conversations often generate ideas the participants did not know themselves "capable of" (Viz p.13). Meanwhile in the west our "normal" and generally constituted style of being often blocks us from this kind of authentic presence with each other. In particular, the "adversarial" [Truth p.350] interaction of the typical philosopher comes to mind. This, Merleau-Ponty points out, is inconsistent with the way healthy people go about relating themselves to the world.

Certainly, language animates, empowers, and endows human being with transcendence in relation to its environment. Human beings share a world they animate with their comprehension. For Merleau-Ponty, to stop the flow of language would be in a sense to "cut off perception" (Others p.56) since, as he once wrote, the human "landscape is overrun with words" (Viz p.155). Still, Merleau-Ponty does not deny that human beings can experience prelinguistic awareness. He refers to it as a "comprehensive and inarticulate grasp upon the world" (PhP p.404) and an "as yet unspeaking intention" (Signs p.88). Polanyi advises us "not to disqualify all ineffable mental processes as lacking the character of thought" (1958 p.93). Even Gadamer, who maintains that "man's relationship to the world is absolutely and fundamentally linguistic" (Truth p.433), acknowledges a "prelinguistic experience of the world...which is no longer language but which looks to an ever-possible verbalization" (Truth p.496). Yet for Merleau-Ponty this dimension of the "purely lived through" (PhP p.337) "waits to be won back" (PhP p.404); in Gadamer's terms "made communicable, and hence dealt with" (Truth p.411). For these thinkers, language is

> that moment when the significative intention (still silent and wholly in act) proves itself capable of incorporating itself into my culture and the culture of others - of shaping me and others by transforming the meaning of cultural instruments.
>
> Signs p.92

In this context, the degree to which truly prelinguistic experience is meaningful is an interesting speculative question, since to have meaning for a member of a linguistic community is largely to perceive things in the context of a "linguistic horizon" of meaning. How often do we really exist entirely outside language (say, in sex or meditation) and how often do we come quietly into organic equilibrium with the acquired culture of meaning we have already generated, and continue to generate, around ourselves with language? Of course, we always have an option to formulate experience explicitly. Yet when we are advised to stop the "incessant chatter of the mind" (Levin p.122), or to "shut off" the "internal dialogue" (Castenada, 1987 p.130) we are being told not only to be quiet but to let go of the secondary function of language. For Merleau-Ponty, the reason we do not generally recognize that the resulting silence is itself "alive with words" (PhP p.183) is because the "perfection of language lies in its capacity to go unnoticed" (Prose p.10). In this regard, Gadamer notes that it is the nature of language to "disappear behind" the meaning it brings into consciousness (Truth p.358). Michael Polanyi also discusses the "transparency" of language (1958 p.57). But this applies only to what Merleau-Ponty calls authentic language. Phenomenologically, secondary language imposes upon the

present moment of experience the resolution of labels and the chatter of words.

Sometimes when I am thinking I flow along in a reverie of evolving significance. My body tingles with excitement and realization, and I feel light and powerful in an experience of growing awareness. The difference when I begin to put such organic movements of thought explicitly into words is dramatic. The whole process slows down. I begin to trudge along in thought, and consciousness feels all in my head instead of being a passionately felt event. Not only that, but I am likely to lose touch with the original source of growing awareness...

To argue that the organic process of understanding ultimately involves language may justifiably strike the layman as a form of philosophical self-indulgence: useless theoretical speculation. Yet an entire tradition of rational-emotive psychology (including Logotherapy and Neuro-Linguistic Programming) are based on the insight that language use conditions human being. Still, it may be fair to speculate that the source of awareness is not language at all. But what would we mean by "source"? The world perhaps, or maybe some more fundamental level of being? Here we experience one of the philosopher's greatest perils: the danger of losing ourselves in a search for something ultimate. The critical thing to note is that identifying

human potential with the explicit, posited level of language is downright dangerous, and a big part of western culture's characteristic block to authentic presence.

In any case, there are times when it is hard to imagine the application of language as anything but deliberate and empirical. Specifically, Merleau-Ponty associates the power of language in human culture with its ability to "settle into a sediment" (PhP p.190). "Sedimentation occurs, and I shall be able to think farther", he notes (Signs p.92). In this way language, more than any other form of expression, seeks to "conserve its past" (Prose p.99). For Merleau-Ponty, the process of sedimentation makes the growth of understanding and awareness possible. We have seen that the original, creative expression of an idea in authentic language presupposes the secondary formulation of ideas already at our disposal. This can be seen to imply that the growth process of sedimentation essentially involves secondary language; that authentic presence is only an initial phase of growth to be followed by the restatement of ideas in the hard, *deliberate* work of cataloguing and integrating already acquired meanings. Perhaps, even, that secondary language is the most integral part of cultural evolution. Yet the process of sedimentation, of containing previously acquired meaning in subsequent expression, does not necessarily

involve secondary language. We do not comprehend our past merely by going back and designating it in analytic formulas. Rather, authentic language already implies in its very nature an integrative function. After all, "thought does not bore through time, it follows in the wake of previous thoughts" (Signs p.14). Merleau-Ponty points out that we "follow along" in this horizon of acquired meanings "without a thought, just as we have arms and legs" (Signs p.18). In the Phenomenology he points out that the past stays with us as an "incontestable acquisition" (PhP p.419). In the flow of the authentic present, he tells us, each moment "holds a past and a future within its thickness" (PhP p.275). The "living present" embraces a "past which it takes up and a future which it projects" (PhP p.333), and previous accomplishments are "dovetailed into the present" (PhP p.140). Experience itself is "grasped in the present" (PhP p.69), and the learning of the past becomes part of the "infinite horizon" (Sense p.28) of "unperceived elements" (Others p.55) that animate authentic presence in the world (see also Signs p.172). Merleau-Ponty points out, however, that this horizon could never be accomplished by "distinct memory and explicit conjecture" (PhP p.68). Husserl also recognizes a silent horizon in perception (1970 p.159), and points out that

> all cultural acquisition which arise out of human accomplishment ...remain objectively knowable and available without requiring that the formulation of their meaning be repeatedly and explicitly renewed. On the basis of sensible embodiment, e.g. in speech and writing, they are simply apperceptively grasped and dealt with in our operations.
>
> 1970 p.26: also p.105

The process of sedimentation is, then, an automatic function of authentic language. The explicit formulas and objective designations of secondary language are not an essential element of sedimentation. The process of sedimentation that is so important for cultural development does not necessarily involve sacrificing authentic presence. For example, when as a philosopher I am excited by the insight of a discussion I do not have to excuse myself to get a pencil or remove myself from the present moment of interaction. Rather, I can trust that the awareness I experience will animate my future writing and re-emerge in authentic philosophical expression at the keyboard. There is no need to pull into myself in order to cement explicit formulas in my mind. In fact, spontaneous sedimentation provides a better model of how true learning occurs. It is indeed the "noble" form of memory (Signs p.59).[3]

On the other hand, progress in the development of an idea or viewpoint often takes a lot of effort, a lot of systematic, hard work. Yet the analytical deliberation that seems to accompany taking understanding farther may be likened to the fumbling, deliberate early attempts involved

in learning a new physical skill. We have probably all experienced how fixating on our deliberate early efforts will block us from our best performance. In fact, when we become fixated on deliberate attempts we block ourselves from whatever organic expression of a role we are capable of. When this happens, we do not allow ourselves to grow more powerful in the role we have chosen.[4] James points out that it is natural for the deliberate effort behind a physical movement to disappear when the organic expression of the movement becomes possible after sufficient practice (1983 p.1127). This is common sense born out by experience. Yet we should recognize that the initial deliberate intentions to master a technique or function in a role need not translate into a deliberate scheme of action.

Phenomenologically, practice need only be experienced as the growing grace of organic effort, rather than an awkward progression of constituted attempts that will hopefully transform into organic effort in the future. Similarly, we don't necessarily need to grope for constituted words until a magic formulation of authentic expression is possible. Authentic and secondary language are not simply phases of expression. Rather, they can each be seen to condition different paradigms of being in the world. Secondary language draws on and adds linearly to a limited horizon of explicit objective constructions.

Authentic language plays on and augments an expansive, fluid horizon of unformulated culture and relationship in a spontaneous context of past and future. The former use of language yields primarily discrete caricatures of human being in the world. Authentic language, on the other hand, with its deeper roots in lived culture and personal aliveness, can be said in this sense to be provide the most genuine source of human truth. Not only that, but committment to an authentic paradigm of human being embraces a non-objective conception of truth.

For Merleau-Ponty, truth is an event which we experience "through an emotional and almost carnal experience" (Viz p.12), an illumination almost like "the turning on of a new light" (Truth p.442). This is in opposition to any objective conception in which truth is determined intellectually (through correspondence or coherence for example). Closely related to truth is the event of originary awareness associated with authentic language, which involves our "deepest essence" (PhP p.196) and first of all "grips" our body (PhP p.235). We may term this event the "truth of awareness", and it may be what Gadamer means by "immediate understanding" (Truth p.359). At any rate, once this first expressive genesis of meaning takes place it naturally insinuates itself into our being in the world by taking up a place in the totality of meaning

available to us (in other words it expands our linguistic horizon). Still, the awareness may not get a chance to express itself through the body as behavior. We may be afraid of the truth, it may not be to our advantage, we may not have faith in it; we may choose not to allow it physical expression. More typically, we block it when we try too deliberately to determine it and when we fixate too intensely upon the constituted understanding of awareness. In turn, by blocking the expression of truth in the awareness and behavior of our organism we "draw life away from its spontaneous course" (PhP p.455).

James, in his beautiful common-sense phenomenological wisdom, tells us that spontaneous impulsive power is inherent in ideas (1983 p.1133). Perhaps this insight should be qualified to include only "ideas" in the sense of originary awareness rooted in the bodily organism. The analogue of action for secondary "ideas" is objective commands for movement and Victorian "will power." At any rate, James goes on to say that what blocks the spontaneous manifestation of an idea in the body is "contrary" or "inhibitory" ideas working against it. Reformulated in terms of authentic presence, it is not so much a matter of conflicting ideas as of inhibitory distractions from the truth (such as attachment to a course of action or image, fear of taking a path alone and accepting responsibility,

etc.). Yet the path of action ought to be clear from the organic truth of the present moment, and to follow another course would be to violate that truth. This may not always seem to be the case. For example I may want to go to bed and yet have an opportunity to stay up and talk to a friend. The former may seem like an awareness in the body and the latter an emotional or intellectual desire, yet neither seems to take natural precedence as a course of action. Still, if I violate my truth I may not be able settle into sleep or may resent my friend for keeping me up. Which course represents the highest organic truth? Which impulse or "idea" should I honour to remain authentically present? Yet to ask which possibility represents authentic presence is to make a constituted decision about what has become a detached objective truth. All we need to do is be aware of our experience of truth, the vector of authentic presence in the moment of experience. The emergence of truth involves all sorts of factors, but as long as they remain factors, and we do not attach ourselves so strongly to one that we constitute our reaction according to the energy of that factor (such as fear), the course of action will be clear and the awareness of truth spontaneous.

We may also block this awareness with our power to formulate the awareness explicitly in our minds and analyze it. When we do this we attempt to return to the lived

moment of experience to gain control of it. Under these conditions, contrary ideas *do* develop. Options present themselves and a "decision" is demanded. This is the block of secondary or objective language, which blocks bodily awareness from realization and spontaneous expression by bracketing the organic truth with intellectual deliberation. Our intentions and responses are transmuted into a detached intellectual holding pattern. The truth of awareness becomes only a possible objective truth, and truth is experienced in its posited form. Let us consider these phenomenological encounters with truth more closely.

The truth of awareness is open to development. It is never dogmatic; there is no pretext of being absolute. It is a felt event of lived presence and open relationship. Truths of awareness change and develop intersubjectively through open communication, listening and sharing, or "fusing horizons." Objective truths, on the other hand, are defended as right or wrong. They may give the illusion of providing an unconditional perspective or resting absolutely on objective "facts". As operative cultural ideas, objective truths tend to involve people in adversarial confrontation, defensive argument, and dogmatic contention. This is often characteristic of academic philosophy, even amongst those philosophers who "contend" that truth is not objective. Taylor, for example, counts it a drawback that

post-objective philosophies tend to be "impressionistically argued for" (1985 I p.7). Yet in the business of overcoming antithetical thinking, to proceed in terms of argument is to embrace antithesis in the very procedure of philosophy.[5] It is surely more appropriate for a philosophy which attempts to move beyond antitheses to adopt a non-argumentative, non-adversarial approach (an argument by definition tries to prove itself right at the expense of other positions being wrong). Merleau-Ponty, in this respect, is often criticized for the lack of argument in his later work. Even Rorty's texts are often considered "too literary" (The Guardian, 03/13/'92 p.25).[6]

In this regard, although Madison is correct when he tells us that "truth is inseparable from solidarity," he refers primarily to a pragmatic criterion of truth by which an assertion or interpretation is true to the "precise degree" that it allows us to "get a better purchase on our experience" (1991 p.23). This external criterion of truth leads him to further claim that the "argumentative rules" of a discipline are what provide the constraints necessary in order "legitimately to lay claim to truth" (p.24). If we adopt a communicative perspective of felt truth, on the other hand, solidarity becomes even more inseparable from the truth. "Fusing horizons," or non-defensive sharing, rather than objective confrontation will become the process

by which cultural truth emerges.

Of course, the truth of awareness is relativistic in an important sense - the emerging truth of situated being cannot be seen from a universal perspective. Who still claims that human understanding can possibly be an understanding of reality in itself? Still, although truths of awareness originate in the events of personal experience, Merleau-Ponty tells us that "what is mental" is not necessarily "individual" (Consciousness and the Aquisition of Language p.98). The truth of awareness has roots tacitly but firmly in the social world - in humanity's horizon of shared collective history, shared interests (the most immediate of which is its survival as a species), the fundamental impulses of spiritual yearning,[7] and in the intersubjective structure of linguistic transcendence. In the unified world technology has made possible, isolation from the rest of the human community is increasingly rare. Truth develops intersubjectively and even globally. The authentic truth of awareness not only has roots in the social world but in our biological structure, our relationship to the environment, and our spiritual being. All of these elements of existence come together through expression in the moment of authentic human presence. There is no claim that the truth of awareness is objective. It is, rather, a product of genuine engagement

with the world and communicative solidarity.[8]

The authentic truth of awareness is an awareness of the emergence of felt meaning in consciousness. For both Merleau-Ponty and Gadamer this is a fundamentally creative phenomenon involving a crystalization of our linguistic horizon. Truth, in other words, can be seen as an event of expressive awareness in the socially rooted interpretive environment made possible by language. When awareness is experienced as truth, it is experienced in the body and manifested organically as behavior in the world. As "true perception" involves the apprehension of an "immanent sense in the sensible," awareness of the true is an "immanent sense" in the body "before judgement begins" (PhP p.35). Yet in the west we tend to focus so much on judgement that we often lose touch with the feeling of awareness. Not only that, but our focus on understanding is distorted because it is typically deliberate and constituted. It can become an obsession which arrests true awareness and blocks the flow of organic physical expression. Meditation is at least partly a discipline in which we let go of our attachment to judgement and constituted understanding in order to experience awareness again in our bodies.

A recognition of the power endowed upon human beings by the organism of language can be therapeutic. We must not lose sight of the true gift, however, which is the miracle

of lived presence and the web of relationships we find ourselves in. To best honor this gift, we must be aware of the times in which we find ourselves in an alienating self-referential prison of constituted words. If we become aware of a self-defeating pattern in our behavior at such times, we retain for ourselves an important choice. We may let go of the constituted behaviour, which may require an initially difficult leap of intentionality, and attend more openly to the authentic movements of felt ongoing relationship. For when we block the flow of truth and awareness in relationship (through rationalization, anger, fear, defensiveness, denial, or clinging), we start to dwell in the terms of secondary expression. We tend to be constituted and dwell on the horizon of secondary language. We over-ride authentic presence, and the first step in breaking through this blockage is to be aware that constituted presence is not our most powerful expression of being in the world. This again can take the form of a practical exercise of consciousness and can be nourished, among other things, by meditative practice. The preliminary aim of *Vipassana* (or mindfulness) meditation, for example, is to detach oneself from reactive and particular habits, thoughts, emotions, and rationalizations in order first of all to see things undefensively. More fundamentally, the aim of the practice is to cultivate

awareness of our embodied present without explicit attachment to ego mechanisms. From this Zen-like perspective, constituted patterns of thought and emotion may well be characterized as ego mechanisms.

Again, Merleau-Ponty does not characterize the distinction between constituted and authentic language simply as the difference between spontaneous and deliberate expression. Spontaneous expression should be seen, rather, as the phenomenological manifestation of authentic linguistic activity. Neither would Merleau-Ponty want us to have the impression that authentic presence is a "mere psychological depiction" (Signs p.93). Certainly the number of unhappy, neurotic, and repressed people in western culture make authentic presence a topic of psychological interest. The phenomenological power of authentic presence makes it a topic of personal relevance. The environmental damage we cause treating the world as a bare object makes it a topic of ecological importance. In view of the way we intimidate, manipulate, and defend ourselves against each other it is a sociological puzzle. Yet it is also a philosophical issue because the nature of our presence in the world is a function of the implicit or explicit paradigms that provide a context for our encounter with the world.

Throughout this project I have tried to invoke a paradigm of authentic presence. I have tried to show how

the traditional dualistic paradigm of objective detachment leads to alienation, fear, and constituted presence. Throughout, I have been meditating on a holistic paradigm that reflects authentic presence. Both styles of being have roots in the interpretive superstructures upon which we organize experience, and we shall call the exploration of these superstructures "metaphysics." According to Merleau-Ponty, the study of expression will lead us to "metaphysics itself and...at the same time give us the principle of an ethics" (PrP p.11). In the next chapter we will see how metaphysics develops for Merleau-Ponty from the further characterization of authentic and constituted language. This will lead us to an exploration of this metaphysics, a further exploration of philosophy itself, and a very preliminary look at the humanly therapeutic ethics that can be seen to emerge.

CHAPTER FIVE:
THE HORIZONS OF PRESENCE

To a Child at the Piano

Play the tune again; but this time
With more regard for the movement
  at the heart of it,
and less attention to time. Time falls
curiously in the course of it.

Play the tune again; not watching
your fingering, but forgetting, letting flow the
sound till it surrounds you. Do not count
or even think. Let go.

Play the tune again; but try to be
nobody, nothing, as though the pace
of the sound were your heart beating, as though
the music were your face.

Play the tune again. It should by easier
to think less every time of the notes, of the
  measure
It is all an arrangement of silence
  be silent, and then
Play it for your pleasure

Play the tune again; and this time, when it ends,
do not ask me what I think. Feel what is happening
strangely in the room as the sound glooms over
you, me, everything.

Now,

Play the tune again.

Alastair Reid (in Man in the Poetic Mode:
The Book Society of Canada, Agincourt 1974)

All of us at times experience the powerful flow of authentic presence as well as times when our relationship with the world is strained and constituted. What makes this proverbial psychological observation philosophically interesting is its bearing upon the paradigms that drive our culture. In exploring the distinction between authentic and constituted human being we begin to move from descriptions of experience so familiar they often seem like "mere psychological depiction" to descriptions of experience involving greater degrees of creative interpretation. This will bring us to Merleau-Ponty's apparent metaphysical turn and the culturally relevant ethical implications of this metaphysics in the final chapters. Now we will explore in more detail why Merleau-Ponty's tacit cogito can be better defined as a silent dimension of being than simply the "core of subjectivity." We will begin to see how a powerful, comprehensive insight into the human condition can be further articulated from the characterization of language as a dynamic network of relationships as opposed to a primarily static landscape of discrete objective meanings.

The importance of an *organic* domain of tacit experience can be illustrated by psychological research (cited in Andreas 1989). Two groups of rats were given sweetened water spiked with a chemical which causes nausea

and supresses the immune system. The control group of healthy rats, as expected, did not drink the mixture after initial exposure because of its unpleasant side effects. The experimental group differed systematically from the control only in terms of their artificially induced over-active immune systems. Despite the nausea caused by the drink, these animals continued to ingest the fluid. The researcher concluded that the unpleasant experience associated with drinking the fluid was overridden as a motive of behavior by the suppressive effect of the water on the over-active immune system. This despite the fact that, in terms of human experience at least, the chemical balance and functioning of the immune system is "unconscious." Yet in this study the rats' immune systems seemed to be acting as sensory organs affecting behavior. Are we as humans as sensitive and aware of the feelings and processes going on inside our own bodies? Can we cultivate such an awareness?

Without going into a critique of the methodology or the statistics of this study, it tends to demonstrate how behavior may be influenced by the subtle messages generated in the physical structures of the body. The rats in the experimental group seemed to "know" the unpleasant water in the cage was "good" for them. One might say that organic intelligence determined their behavior, that their action was not initiated by "decision" or "taste" but active

response to physical awareness. In his first major work, The Structure of Behavior (whose major goal was to explore the relationship of "consciousness and nature": p.3), Merleau-Ponty seems to have used the terms "physical" and "organic" interchangeably (e.g. p.160). A consciousness in active attunement with the physical organism, what Merleau-Ponty also calls "here and now consciousness" (Structure of Behavior p.164), is something human beings most dramatically in the modern age have lost contact with. The first task of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is to re-establish "the roots of the mind in its body and in its world" (PrP p.3).

The authentic experience of truth emerges from the organic awareness of *linguistic* beings. Merleau-Ponty would agree with Gadamer that "language is not just one of man's possessions in the world, but on it depends the fact [that]...for man the world exists in a way that no other being in this world experiences" (Truth p.401).[1] The truth of awareness described in the previous section is not only a phenomenological description of the organic genesis of truth. It is also a discussion of the sense in which language provides the formulating structure of truth. Yet language not only makes the explicit awareness of discrete meanings possible. The true power of authentic language is that it *opens us up to an infinitely greater tacit domain*

of awareness than non-linguistic beings have access to. Recognizing this authentic function of language gives us insight into the real power of language. It gives us a key to the horizon of human presence.

True awareness emerges organically, and the soil from which it emerges is fertilized by the structure of perception. Recognizing the power of language can make us more aware of the paradigms we formulate to characterize our encounter with the world. In his early work, Merleau-Ponty demonstrates the close relationship of language, thought, and perception, showing how language is integrally related to the "constituting mind" (PhP p.37); that is, how language spontaneously animates perception with "possible meanings" (PhP p.131). The way language structures truth marks the condition of our presence in the world, and an exploration of language becomes the foundation of an existential evaluation of human being in the world. In agreement with Merleau-Ponty, this project maintains that western culture in general, and philosophy in particular, have modelled their perceptions of the world (at least their "official" perceptions) on the basis of constituted language. Examining the paradigm of presence implied by authentic language may germinate a new paradigm of being in the world. It may provide us with the "principle of an ethic" and a more holistic ideal of human presence.

We have seen that authentic language is "identical with thought" (PhP p.178) and that constituted language is the "second-order" expression of deliberately imposed structure. That is, constituted language explicitly *represents* thought while authentic language "passes unnoticed" *as* thought. In his early work, while Merleau-Ponty draws a distinction between the authentic and constituted language, at other times he also seems to be proposing an authentic model of language to replace the constituted model. He could be taken as saying that language operates according to the authentic model and not according to the constituted model at all. The way he distinguishes Schneider's pathological use of constituted language from a healthy person's ability to use language authentically, however, makes it seem more appropriate to say that he advocates authentic language as a neglected dimension of fundamentally creative being and expression. The phenomenological distinction between authentic and constituted language does not necessarily represent antithetical "theories of" language. This becomes even clearer in his later works:

> The empirical use of already established language should be distinguished from its creative use...Speech in the sense of empirical language - that is, the opportune recollection of a pre-established sign - is not speech in respect to an authentic language.
>
> Signs p.44

This is again affirmed in the text he was working on when he died. The following passage should not be taken to imply that authentic and constituted language imply any kind of theoretical form/content relationship:

> Why not admit - what Proust knew very well and said in another place - that language as well as music can sustain a sense by virtue of its own arrangement, catch a meaning in its own mesh, that it does so without exception each time it is conquering, active, creative language, each time something is, in the strong sense, said?...This does not mean that musical notation and grammar and linguistics and the "ideas of the intelligence" - which are acquired, available, honorary ideas - are useless, or that, as Leibniz said, the donkey that goes straight to the fodder knows as much about the straight line as we do. It means that the system of objective relations, the acquired ideas, are themselves caught up in something like a second life.
>
> Viz p.153

It is the organic experience of this "second life" which Merleau-Ponty encourages us to recognize and explore with authentic language, and it is in the context of authentic language that words "have a meaning." Rather than the alienated meaning of objective definition, however, words in authentic language are true linguistic gestures of organic expression. This is what Merleau-Ponty means by "bringing meaning to life...in an organism of words" (PhP p.182). At any rate, given this insight, it is not a radical development to embrace Ferdinand de Saussure's insight that "language is a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others" (1959 p.114). This may

at first seem inconsistent with the claim that "the word has a meaning." In adopting this model Merleau-Ponty seems to be saying precisely that words do *not* have a meaning; that any meaning they have comes from their relationship to the words around them. This, however, is more of a statement about the nature of meaning words have than a logical difficulty. Merleau-Ponty calls this kind of meaning "gestural" in the Phenomenology of Perception; in his later work he characterizes it not in terms of discrete units but in terms of "co-existence":

> in the heart of the spirit, it is not analysis which makes communication possible. At every moment, beneath the system of official grammar which attributes a given signification to each sign, one can see another expressive system emerge which is the vehicle of the signification but proceeds differently: expression in this case is not suited point by point to what is expressed; each element is not specific and obtains its linguistic existence only from what it receives from the others and the modulation it introduces to the rest of the system. It is the whole which possesses meaning, not each part.
>
> Prose, p.28

To a certain extent, this idea is already implicit in the Phenomenology; in authentic speech the word is described as a "certain location in my linguistic world" (PhP p.180). Still, it is only in his later thought that this idea is fully articulated and we see the complex web, the fabric of unspoken relationships from which the manifest content of creative expression emerges. In fact, Merleau-Ponty tells us that

> all language is indirect or allusive - that is, if you wish, silence.
>
> Signs, p.43

Gadamer also notes that "every word carries with it...the unsaid" (Truth p.416). In a practical sense, this means we can always read more into expression than the speaker or writer "put into it." Philosophically, it points to the difference between language which seeks to technically formulate objective meaning and language that "brings a totality of meaning into play" (Truth p.416). Yet in the above passage, it may again seem like Merleau-Ponty is proposing an alternative theory in which all language takes its meaning from this kind of organic vortex. It is significant that Merleau-Ponty tells us that we can "rid our minds of the idea that our language is the translation or cipher of an original text" (Signs p.43). Yet it is only if we "rid our minds of this idea" that "all language is indirect or allusive." In fact, much of our language is formulated out of words chosen for their discrete meaning; "most of the time we remain within the bounds of constituted language" (PhP p.188). Merleau-Ponty tells us that our perception of humanity and the world will "remain superficial...so long as we fail to find, beneath the chatter of words, the primordial silence" (PhP p.184: also Prose p.43).

It is important not to formulate this insight as a merely philosophical theory lest we miss the phenomenological power of the distinction between authentic and constituted language. But Merleau-Ponty does not mean to suggest that we can or should let go of constituted language entirely. Rather, the distinction between authentic and constituted language allows us to be explicitly conscious of the separation language can impose between us and experience. The "detour of words" Merleau-Ponty warns us about is a phenomenon of constituted language. When we are operating in this mode inappropriately as a pattern of fundamental relationship (rather than instrumentally in technical analysis, for example) we may feel masked behind a cardboard cut-out putting experience into words. At the same time, we are not left to attribute awareness to some "mystical power" (Others p.45). Merleau-Ponty insists that authentic language, which he also calls speech, is the *"vehicle of our movement towards truth"* (italics not in the original: Prose p.129).

Merleau-Ponty would agree with Saussure that "thought - apart from its expression in words - is only a shapeless and indistinct mass" (Saussure, 1959 p.111). However, Saussure does not distinguish between language as the transparent vehicle of thought and language that explicitly attempts to represent thought. Rather, he considers speech

to be the natural expression of language (1959 p.24) and writing to be merely a representation of language (1959 p.23; 45). Saussure talks about the "undeserved importance of writing" in culture (1959 p.25), and with this Jacques Derrida takes strong exception. Derrida is a French philosopher who like Merleau- Ponty develops Saussure's insight about the diacritical nature of language. He wants to "rehabilitate" the concept of writing. "It has sometimes been contested that speech clothed thought... but has it ever been doubted that writing was the clothing of speech?," he asks. Yet for Merleau-Ponty this is not even an issue. For him, authentic thought or awareness is already linguistic, and what makes it authentic is the creative event of its realization, not whether this awareness is realized in the form of speaking, writing, performing, or just thinking to oneself. On the other hand, expression deliberately formulated, or imposed on originary awareness, whether this takes the form of explicitly spoken words, writing, or numeric code, Merleau-Ponty characterizes as constitued.

Yet by "writing" Derrida does not simply refer to the physical act of writing down. Rather, he is really concerned with "reforming the concept of writing" entirely (Of Grammatology p.55). For while Merleau-Ponty warns us against "God's Eye View" metaphysics, Derrida wants to

direct philosophy away from what he calls "logocentric metaphysics." Specifically, Derrida directs our attention to a form of this philosophical anthropocentrism which he calls "phonocentrism," the belief that speech is an expression of the *"present* or *presence* of sense to a full and primordial intuition" (Speech p.5). That is, the "immediate presence of the signified" (Speech p.77) and the absolute presence of the organism to itself. He identifies logocentrism in this sense with the "epoch of full speech" (Of Grammatology p.43), and directs his attack at Husserl's phenomenology. It is beyond the scope of this project to examine the details of this charge, but it is safe to say that Merleau-Ponty, since he attaches no privleged status to spoken language, is not guilty of phonocentrism. However, for Derrida the real error lies in thinking there can be any direct expression of absolute self-presence at all, which authentic language may seem to involve. Rather than phonocentrism, Merleau-Ponty could be charged with a kind of "bio-centrism," a kind of holistic variety of objective metaphysics.[2] Derrida's reformulation of the concept of writing is specifically designed to avoid any such illusions. Is the deep rootedness in self and world which authentic language seems to provide an illusion?

Following Saussure, Derrida sees language as a system of differences. He goes on to characterize each

element or *trace* of the system as deferring its original source of self-present meaning, combining "difference" and "defer" into his own clever term *différance*. He tells us that the "trace is the differance which opens appearances" (Grammatology p.65), and calls writing on this model of language *arche-writing*, which is the "movement of differance" (Grammatology p.60). Arche-writing, moreover, is an ironic neologism. It plays on the traditional model of writing as a derivative form of full speech; while writing is derivative, arche-writing is derivative *and* original. More accurately, for Derrida there is no original. In other words, what is derivative *is* original, and each trace of the system defers its supposed self-present source of meaning indefinitely so that language becomes a closed system of differance. Derrida tells us *"there is nothing outside the text"* (Grammatology p.158). That is, no objective referent and no transcendental signified.

For Merleau-Ponty as well, "language always refers back to language" (Prose p.43). We have already seen that Merleau-Ponty rejects what Derrida calls logocentrism, and is careful to avoid the "illusion of going beyond all speech to things [in] themselves" (Prose p.42). However, Merleau-Ponty also maintains that humanity would "lose consciousness of itself if [language] were to shut itself up

in itself" (Prose p.43):

> Signs do not simply evoke other signs for us and so on without end, and language is not like a prison we are locked into or a guide we must blindly follow.
>
> Signs p.81

What language "evokes" in the context of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, however, is neither the absolute presence of things in the world nor the absolute presence of consciousness to itself. "All inner perception is inadequate" (PhP p.383), he tells us, and it is not the case that "my existence is in full possession of itself" (PhP p.382). After affirming that "what we *mean* is not before us, outside all speech, as sheer signification," Merleau-Ponty tells us that authentic meaning, rather, is simply "the excess of what we live over what has already been said" (Signs p.83).[3] In other words, language provides us with the reality of the lived world and authentic language is constantly expanding the horizons of that world. We do not have to theorize about an objective reality "behind" the lived world, nor lapse into a kind of drab skepticism when we realize that language gives us no access to such a reality (either "inner" or "outer").

Derrida and Merleau-Ponty are very different in their approaches to philosophy. Derrida writes very densely with lots of self-styled technical terminology, yet what he seems

fundamentally to be saying is relatively simple once it is deciphered. Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, writes in a basically simple style and what he means is not only difficult to fully comprehend but touches our being in the world profoundly. Merleau-Ponty wants philosophy to "bring to expression" the "things themselves" (e.g.Viz p.4), while Derrida concentrates on a scathing critique of the logocentric epoch that charges (primarily Husserl's) phenomenology with importing traditional metaphysical presuppositions (e.g. Speech and Phenomena p.4). Still, the philosphical distance between the two philosophers makes the similarities between them even more striking. In this regard Cook (1985) discusses the relationship of philosophy and literature in the two thinkers; Barry (1986) points out that both philosophers recognize "the fundamental nature of differance" (p.16); Holland (1986) notes that Merleau-Ponty's ideas seem to "echo Derrida's own texts before their time" (p.112). Flyn (1984) even sees elements of deconstruction in Merleau-Ponty's work and claims that "some of the most important ideas in the thought of Derrida are already adumbrated in the late work of Merleau-Ponty" (p.164). In all of this work, however, probably the most fundamental difference between the two thinkers seems to be largely overlooked. Derrida maintains that:

> the fundamental *unconsciousness* of language (as rootedness within the language) and the *spacing* (pause, blank, punctuation, interval in general, etc.) which constitutes the origin of signification...cannot occur *as such* within the phenomenological experience of a *presence*. It marks *the dead time* within the presence of the living present, within the general form of all presence. The dead time is at work...[and] will never be merged with a phenomenology
>
> Of Grammatology p.68

Merleau-Ponty, in fundamental opposition to this, adds that "absence is itself rooted in presence" (Signs p.172), and tells us that we may encounter in our experience

> *a movement toward what could not in any event be present to us in the original and whose irremediable absence would thus count among our originating experiences.*
>
> Viz p.159 (italics the original author's)

Derrida at one point talks about "opening up living to differance" (Speech and Phenomena p.69). By this he means that we should recognize in "the pure immanence of experience" the divergence and "differance" that condition it. It is hard to see how this would be possible if the dimension of differance could not in any way be experienced. At any rate, as Derrida discusses the "play" of differance (Of Grammatology p.50; p.71), Merleau-Ponty can be seen to have explored phenomenologically how this play relates to living and how it can animate our lives. If this is not "philosophically interesting," it seems to me, then philosophy is doomed to a theoretical purgatory isolated from the functional context of being in the world. At any

rate, the more deeply Merleau-Ponty explores this the deeper he seems to entangle himself in a metaphysical manner of speaking. Still, everything relates back to the distinction between authentic and constituted presence, and our use of language is a key both to understanding this distinction and expressing it:

> It is by considering language that we would best see how we are to and how we are not to return to the things themselves. If we dream of finding again the natural O-point which we see yonder, or to the pure memory which from the depths of ourselves governs our acts of recall, then language is a power for error since it cuts the continuous tissue that joins us vitally to the things and to the past and is installed between ourselves and that tissue like a screen. The philosopher speaks, but this is a weakness in him, and an inexplicable weakness: he should keep silent...yet everything comes to pass as though he wished to put into words a certain silence he hearkens to within himself. His entire "work" is this absurd effort. He writes in order to state his contact with Being; he does not state it, and cannot state it, since it is silence. Then he recommences...
> One has to believe, then, that language is not simply the contrary of the truth, of coincidence, that there is or could be a language of coincidence, a manner of making the things themselves speak - and this is what he seeks. It would be a language of which he would not be the organizer, words he would not assemble, that would combine through him by virtue of a natural intertwining of their meaning, through the occult trading of the metaphor - where what counts is no longer the manifest meaning of each word and of each image, but the lateral relations, the kinships that are implicated in their transfers and their exchanges. It is indeed a language of this sort that Bergson himself required for the philosopher. But we have to recognize the consequence: if language is not necessarily deceptive, truth is not coincidence, nor mute...
>
> Viz p.125

CHAPTER SIX:

METAPHYSICS ITSELF

Merleau-Ponty announces an intention to develop what he calls "metaphysics itself," which he thinks will provide the "principle of an ethics." In a report on the development of his own philosophy, he tells us of his work on a dimension of human spontaneity that "gathers together the plurality of monads, the past and present, nature and culture into a single whole" (PrP p.11). We have seen that this spontaneity is not just a topic of theoretical speculation but can be seen to be rooted in a fundamentally creative human presence in the world. Yet in his later work, presumably getting closer to his projected goal of "metaphysics itself," Merleau-Ponty seems to lose touch with the phenomenological immediacy so powerfully evoked in the majority of his writing. He begins to sound, not unlike Heidegger, both technical and mystical. In the wake of Merleau-Ponty's untimely death, we are left with what looks like a system of metaphysics with limited apparent phenomenological relevance or ethical significance. In this chapter we will take a look at Merleau-Ponty's "metaphyical turn." We will discuss the nature of metaphysical thought and provide, against the critical backdrop of Richard Rorty, an interpretive characterization of the metaphysics

Merleau-Ponty was working to articulate.

This chapter is about metaphysics itself: essential metaphysics, the intentional activity of "formulating an experience of the world" (Sense p.28). We will further discuss Merleau-Ponty's encounter with metaphysics by drawing on the insights of George Herbert Mead about the importance of the *present moment* of lived experience, and Richard Maurice Bucke about what he calls "Cosmic Consciousness." In the final chapter we will explore, not exactly the "ethical implications" of Merleau-Ponty's "system," but the therapeutic dimensions of authentic presence. We will begin to see how working to animate the present moment of relationship with love, love as a felt sense of oneness and engagement, provides the most poignant "principle of an ethic" emerging from Merleau-Ponty's work. Let us begin, as always, with the phenomenological distinction between authentic and constituted presence.

Constituted presence embodies objective thinking just as objectivity is the intellectual ideal of a felt paradigm of objective relationship with the world. As elements of aliveness these styles of experience tend to shift human perspective away from lived engagement into disengaged isolation. When objectivity underlies perception as a radical prejudice, consciousness finds itself outside its

own world trying to overcome self-imposed alienation. Yet no distance can be bridged if it is created at the same time. No strategy of objective thinking overcomes it's fundamentally dualistic implications. No constituted effort rises above an attempt to manipulate discrete objects. Ultimately, people become objects to each other. Isolated peak experiences of powerful, spontaneously responsive aliveness, like the "fixes" obtained with drugs, the "highs" obtained at human potential workshops, or the intense physical "flows" experienced during intense activities, cannot animate human being when such experiences diverge extraordinarily from settled patterns of relationship with the world. A fundamental realignment of human experience is called for, a critical transformation that will rehabilitate humanity's relationship with itself and its environment. In this sense, the present discussion revolves around a paradigm shift away from the kind of thinking in which "I" relate myself to "it"; in which "we" oppose "them"; in which "mind" manipulates "matter"; in which "knowledge" approximates itself to objective "reality"; and in which "out there" is an alienated state of affairs to be coped with from "in here." We are discussing a fundamental paradigm shift, that is, away from objective thinking towards the kind of engaged organicism Merleau-Ponty develops in his philosophy.

We have seen the importance of attending in lived experience to the undefensive moment of emerging truth and meaning throughout this project. In this way, with Merleau-Ponty, we have formulated an experience of the world that transcends the alientation of subject/object duality, conditions a state of open relationship, and allows our profound roots in the world to manifest themselves through us. Yet the context Merleau-Ponty frames for this experience in his later work seems to go beyond the interpretive formulation of experience as it lapses into a systematic "crowning metaphysics" (Madison, 1988 p.3). For example, in the often protean terminology of this period Merleau-Ponty tells us that Being is the fundamental ground and constitutes the interconnected fabric of existence. This Being, he assures us, is neither a projection of the human mind nor an objective something "out there" to which we must conform our understanding. Human presence, on this account, can be thought of as a dimension, a "deflagration" (PrP p.180) and a "general manner" (Eye p.147) of Being. What Merleau-Ponty calls the "flesh" is this human "element" (Viz p.139), an element or dimension which, as temporal and historical, is always emerging and not objectively given. Merleau-Ponty tells us the flesh can be seen to form a "close-bound system" along the lines of a "style of visibility," a "texture which returns to itself and

conforms to itself" within the infinite horizons of Being (Viz p.146). Yet the emerging meaning of flesh within the folds of Being is necessarily ambiguous, or overdetermined, and the attempt to objectively determine a positive characterization of its essence tends to block the emerging expression of Being in the dimension of flesh...

Such, at any rate, is the language in which Merleau-Ponty's later works, as "impenetrable" (Bertoldi p.1) and "enigmatic" (Greene, 1976 p.605) as they seem, are written. Still, they refer to a fundamental experience, an originary experience of profound relationship that transcends the alienation so typical of dualistic perception and western thought. This dimension of experience is not to be found in the text of an objective metaphysical system. It is implicit in the present moment of experience, in the very moment of creative emergence that characterizes open relationship with the world. Merleau-Ponty's later works are in this way consistent with the spirit of "radical reflection" (PhP p.xxi) he sets out with, as well as his desire to "leave behind" dualistic subject/object thinking. Fundamentally, Merleau-Ponty can be seen to be formulating a synthesis of mind/body and subject/object cleavage when he says that these seemingly dualistic terms represent not opposing polarities but "indices of an order of existence" (PrP p.176). They are like the "inspiration and expiration

of Being" (PrP p.167). Accordingly, what makes a human being is the process of being both "virtually visible" (there to be seen) and visible for oneself (PrP p.168). The "reversibility" of these "two phases" (Viz p.138), he tells us, is not due to the fact that they are two substances somehow interacting but to their complementary emergence as flesh. That is, to the double manifestation of being *there* and being *aware*.

In "Eye and Mind" Merleau-Ponty explores the process of painting explicitly in the context of the metaphysical framework of Being. We should not make the mistake, however, of taking Merleau-Ponty to mean that "painting is a unique mode of experience that the metaphysician must consider" if he wants to discover the intentional framework of Being (Bertoldi, 1985 p.2).[1] Rather, painting is the most vivid example of the living style Merleau-Ponty is trying to invoke for "all culture" (PrP p.161). He compares "profane" vision with a "voracious" vision which "opens upon a texture of Being" (PrP p.166). He tells us how the visible world "gives itself as the result of a dehiscence of Being," which refers to the sense in which what is visible has a "layer of invisibility" which "makes itself present" (PrP p.187). Present in perception at the moment when "vision becomes gesture" (PrP p.178). Present when we live as an expression of authentic presence. He tells us this

process actively transcends the subject/object dichotomy in that "it becomes impossible to distinguish between what sees and what is seen" (PrP p.167).

Merleau-Ponty is careful to specify that Being is not an absolute substance. In other words, Being is not an entity *in itself* (Viz p.250). Rather, the "Being of this being" is the "invisible of this world" (Viz p.151). By this is not meant a "de facto" invisible, as in something simply not visible. More fundamentally, Merleau-Ponty is referring to the "invisible framework" (Viz p.215) of the visible world. This is Merleau-Ponty's "negative ontology" (Viz p.179). He describes an "unconscious" not to be found "behind the back" of consciousness but before it as a "divergence" and a "transcendence" (Viz p.180). At one point he tells us that Being is the "amorphous perceptual world" of the painter (Viz p.170). At another point he likens Being to the silence of "speech before speech" (Viz p.201). In this sense Being can be taken as the invisible horizon of the visible world, as the open dimension of interwoven significance sustaining the world as we perceive and act in it. This does not mean that Being is given only a subjective significance. It suggests that language, as authentic language which gives us access to a vast silent horizon of meaning in awareness, may be the instrument by which human beings can relate themselves to Being. It means

that Being comes to be an effective reality for us (whether or not we cloak it in mystical descriptions) only when we formulate an awareness of it and participate in the world with this awareness.

Gary Madison (1973 p.211) points to the difference between what he calls the concept of "circularity" in Merleau-Ponty's early works and what Merleau-Ponty calls "reversibility" in his final work. The former is a "dialogue" (PhP p.214) between subject and object, while the latter accomplishes a more intimate relationship by making subject and object "abstracts from one sole tissue" (Viz p.262). Merleau-Ponty tells us, in this regard, that his early work is not radical enough because it takes the subject/object distinction as its starting point (Viz p.200). Thus he moves from grounding pre-objective awareness in a tacit cogito to a more fundamental source: the "silence" and "common tissue" of Being. Madison goes so far as to characterize Merleau-Ponty's later work as a "kind of" monism (1973 p.210). Yet "monism" is an overarching metaphysical term traditionally referring to the ultimate presence of only one substance in the universe. It is probably far more appropriate, and more relevant in terms of drawing out ethical implications, to characterize Merleau-Ponty's metaphysics as a kind of holism.[2] That is to say, all is not one substantially but in terms rather of a perceived interconnectedness.

A paradigm of authentic presence can be seen to involve an intimately felt awareness of unity with the environment of life and unrationalized participation with the infinite horizons of lived meaning (which Merleau-Ponty comes to call Being). In the terminology explored and developed in previous chapters, "objectivity" as an intellectual ideal might be replaced in a philosophy of authentic presence with an intention to be clearly and undefensively "aware." The struggle to establish some kind of objective truth might be replaced with closer attention to the truth of awareness. We may lend ourselves to the lived unfolding of creative responsiveness and felt relationship rather than existing defensively feeling called upon to make a never-ending succession of deliberate decisions. Indeed, the expression of these ideas almost seems to necessitate sounding like a mystic, which special technical terminology and dense structure may be an attempt to avoid. The thing to keep in mind is that whatever interesting questions the authentic/ constituted distinction brings up to be considered philosophically (and philosophical questioning is funamentally characteristic of human being), above all the distinction points to a manner of being in the world embracing such power that constituted words seem only to hold one's organism back from growing intimacy with life. This is not to demean language, which

would betray great power. It reflects, rather, the authentic and constituted bearings of language; the authentic and constituted practice of philosophy; and most fundamentally authentic and constituted being in the world.

The way of peace, healing, and power in the world does not follow from authentic presence, in the sense of creative organic spontaneity, alone. On the other hand, it is common folk wisdom that constituted strategies and decisions seldom effect change in the fundamental patterns of life. The critical factor in living with undefensive power, love, and positive care for the world lies with the intentionality we animate authentic presence with. This project has concentrated on authentic presence in itself so far, the way George Herbert Mead's work concentrates on the present moment of experience in itself. This chapter goes beyond the experience of authentic presence in itself to a certain metaphysics of presence, a working interpretation of life's significance in the context of felt questions about existence and what it means to be human.

Kant teaches us that humanity can only relate itself to the phenomenal world, or reality as it is experienced by the situated structure of our being. The felt truth of creative engagement with the world in this sense is authentic presence. Still, we tend to cling to our objective world-views and we dwell in a culture of

constituted institutions in a state of global spiritual and environmental crisis. The authentic practice of philosophy, as the linguistic articulation of experience discovering itself, can help shape the structures through which we relate ourselves to the world. Metaphysics, specifically, has traditionally stood for philosophical exploration at the level of our largest and deepest questions about existence. There is without question a desperate need for such a philosophy to address humanity's present situation.

We do not "do metaphysics" in an attempt to reveal the pre-existing Truth, or as an historical exercise, or to develop academic formulas. Authentic presence is explored metaphysically to provide it with a context of intentionality towards the world. An intentionality which when experienced (not simply considered but integrated and felt) can embrace the world not only with creative human spontaneity but healing truth and living respect. An intentionality, that is, grounded in an awareness of unity, self-transcending grace, and love; an intentionality expressed as healing behaviour towards the world.

Metaphysics in this sense is the articulation of a framework of intentionality. Not metaphysics as speculation or historical problem-solving, but metaphysics itself; metaphysics as meditation on the meaning of ourselves in the world. If we were to ask the place of metaphysics in human

endeavor we might best characterize it as carefully articulated creativity at the most intimate and comprehensive levels of being in the world. Metaphysics, in other words, not as the simple expression of what it is *like*, but rather the creative comprehension of what it *means* to be in the world. Such a metaphysic is naturally grounds for the principle of an ethics, just as it is a drawing board of human perception. Yet the contemporary study of philosophy often sees metaphysics as synonymous with academic fantasy and constituted system-building. Metaphysics has fallen into disrepute, to the point of the "disasterous and dishonest pretense that *our* metaphysic is no metaphysic at all, but the universal reign of scientific clarity" (Grene, 1976).

The first thinker to make a critical impact on the present author's disillusioned image of constituted philosophy was Richard Rorty. Rorty did not so much say anything radically new as to clearly articulate disillusion with the academic tradition of western philosophy. In fact, his book Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature powerfully (and briefly it seems) intrigued, challenged, and even disturbed philosophy departments all over North America when it first came out in the late seventies. Indeed, Rorty had some interesting things to say, and had a critical eye, in particular, on metaphysics.[3]

One of the occupational hazards of philosophy seems to be the danger of involving one's comrades (or anyone that happens to be around) in lengthy and sometimes one-sided philosophical intercourse. One friend, however, put me effectively in my place by saying "it all means nothing you know; they've been doing it for two thousand years and philosophy still means nothing." Of course we went on to have a wonderful evening of dialectical diversion. Are philosophers kidding themselves to think philosophy can ever be more than that? I will always remember my friend's comment, and now realize he put himself in good company with his skepticism. Rene Descartes, often considered the father of modern western philosophy (1596-1650), himself noted the apparent inability of philosophers to generate truth:

> Philosophy...has been cultivated for many centuries by the best minds that have ever lived, and nevertheless no single thing is to be found in it which is not subject of dispute, and in consequence which is not dubious
>
> Descartes, 1969 p.111

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) made similar observations:

> So far, too, are the students of metaphysics from exhibiting any kind of unanimity in their contentions, that metaphysics has rather to be regarded as a battleground quite peculiarly suited for those who desire to exercise themselves in mock combats, and in which no participant has ever yet succeeded in gaining even an inch of territory...This shows, beyond all questioning, that the procedure of metaphysics has hitherto been a merely random groping, and, what is worst of all, a groping among mere concepts.
>
> Kant, Critique of Pure Reason Bxv

Descartes and Kant both set about to rescue philosophy from its apparent inability to make progress by setting it (in Kant's words) "upon the secure path of a science" (Pure Reason Bxxxi). Descartes did this by attempting to establish an indubitable proposition from which an accurate presentation of nature might logically be built up. Kant, on the other hand, sought to establish bounds within which reason should be limited in order to avoid that speculation by which it "precipitates itself into darkness and contradictions" (Pure Reason A viii). He postulated that reason could never reveal to us the "things themselves" as noumenal entities; thus we encounter the world in terms of, and our felt truths are associated with, the phenomenal realm of experience. Needless to say, neither Descartes nor Kant succeeded in establishing scientific certainty or objective ahistorical truth in philosophy. Their work *does* continue to resonate historically with western thought and its objective, dualistic orientation in awareness and relationship.[4]

Into this picture comes Richard Rorty, who maintains that the attempt to put philosophy on the "secure path of a science" amounts to just another maneuver on Kant's mock battleground. More fundamentally, Rorty sheds suspicion on the whole philosophical enterprise:

> Since the time of Kant, it has become more and more apparent to non-philosophers that a really professional philosopher can supply a philosophical foundation for just about anything. This is one of the reasons why philosophers have, in the course of our century, become increasingly isolated from the rest of culture. Our proposals to guarantee this and clarify that have come to strike our fellow intellectuals as merely comic.
>
> Rorty, 1982 p.169

In short, Rorty tells us the practice of philosophy should be thoroughly re-evaluated. He thinks we should learn from the failed attempts of history to give up the notion that human knowledge (or the search for human salvation) can be formulated in terms of positive, more or less "truthful" representions of "objective" reality - a lesson we can learn well from Kant's philosophy. Rorty also tells us that philosophers should stop grasping for an ahistorical (Merleau-Ponty would add disembodied) perspective from which to construct frameworks for future inquiry - which is the underlying theme of Kant's whole enterprise. Fundamentally, Rorty's philosophy can be seen to contain a germ of insight that for Merleau-Ponty is only the beginning of a positive, ecologically healthy, therapeutic metaphysical attitude: that philosophical consciousness deludes itself in the pursuit of scientifically positive, objective truth. In his Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics, Kant acknowledges that giving up metaphysical contemplation for human beings was "as little to be expected as that we, to avoid inhaling impure air, should prefer to give up breathing altogether"

(1982 p.116). Rorty would like to see what he calls "edifying" philosophy replace "sytematic" philosophy:

> One way of thinking of wisdom as something of which the love is not the same as that of argument, and of which the achievement does not consist in finding the correct vocabulary for representing essence, is to think of that practical wisdom necessary to participate in a conversation. One way to see edifying philosophy *as* the love of wisdom is to see it as the attempt to prevent conversation from degeneration into inquiry, into an exhange of views. Edifying philosophers can never end philosophy, but they can help prevent it from attaining the secure path of a science.
>
> 1979 p.372

Rorty puts philosophy in the context of a conversation and argues eloquently for this context against its traditional mandate to establish some kind of truth value in relation to an objective reality. He does this, in fact, without trying to characterize the conversation he takes philosophy to be. Rorty is obviously unhappy with the way the conversation is going in the west, and he articulates what is making him uncomfortable. Yet he only offers the vaguest of suggestions as to what direction the conversation should take for the good of humanity. Rorty's questionably ethnocentric western perspective,[5] however, along with his conservative political orientation (that philosophers should stop "adopting a radically critical attitude towards society's institutions": Guardian March 13 1992), serve to reinforce the perception that although he initiates a critical attitude towards

philosophy, he does not himself seem interested in what may be the revolutionary social implications of this critical attitude.[6]

In any case, Rorty certainly succeeds in making a strong initial critical impact on the academic community and the objective epoch's characteristic grip on western philosophy. In fact, judging from the popularity of his early books and their effect on philosophy departments across North America, Rorty may be responsible for disturbing the "dogmatic slumber" of quite a few westerners (including the present author). It is unfortunate, then, that his philosophy is often found to be weak in terms of its "positive significance" as a contribution to human thought (e.g. Madison, 1988 p.107) and may not receive deep attention. Seeing philosophy as "therapeutic" rather than "systematic" or "foundational" does, after all, allow one to appreciate certain trends in philosophical thought that take this, before further investigation takes place, as the nature of philosophy. Certainly, Rorty sees his favorite philosophers as "therapeutic rather than constructive" (1979 p.5). The problem is, Rorty takes "therapeutic" only in the reactive sense of "getting [philosophy] out from under a lot of bad questions, of bad, scholastic answers to such questions, and of misleading rhetoric based on such bad answers" ("Contemporary Philosophy of Mind," 1982 p.373).

Rorty's favorite philosophers, on the other hand, are already working with, or working towards, the articulation of a therapeutic philosophy for the good of the human community.

Rorty wants to "replace the desire for objectivity" with a "desire for solidarity" in the human community (1991 I p.39). Still, he is convinced that all philosophers do is take hard-fought social and scientific knowledge (the "real work"), "jack it up a few levels of abstraction," and then announce they have "grounded it" (1982 p.168: see also 1991 I p.178 and footnote 3 to chapter 3 below). Certainly, Rorty is right to be suspicious of this kind of philosophy. It is clearly what we have been calling "constituted". Yet the authentic practice of philosophy does not simply translate ready-made views and practices into intellectual jargon. True philosophy does the work of reality framing by helping to create the very ideas and styles of thinking that characterize the age of a culture.

For Merleau-Ponty, philosophy begins at the very moment of comprehension and interpretation (Signs p.100). As a phenomenologist, he characterizes philosophy as a return to the "living sources of knowledge" (Sign p.110). More fundamentally, he refers to philosophy as a kind of "vigilance" that attends to the "movement by which our lives become truths" in the "dimension of co-existence" (Signs

p.112). The philosopher "assigns himself the task of formulating an experience of the world" (Sense p.28). For Merleau-Ponty, metaphysics is not a "construction of concepts" (Sense p.95). Metaphysics is "communication with a way of being" (Sense p.93). It is a creative and important dimension of participating in the world:

> Metaphysical consciousness has no other objects than those of experience: this world, other people, human history, truth, culture. But instead of taking them as all settled, as consequences with no premises, as if they were self-evident, it rediscovers their fundamental strangeness to me and the miracle of their appearing....Understood in this way, metaphysics is the opposite of system.
>
> Sense p.94

For Merleau-Ponty, metaphysics is ontology in the sense that the interrogation of experience brings being to light. That is, being for us is not objectively "out there" but experienced as it is interpretted, as it is animated in the context formulated by philosophical activity. Professional philosophy does not have privleged access to any "peculiar domain of its own" (Signs p.110). "Professional" philosophers simply make their committment to philosophical activity their main focus and, if they're lucky, their livelihood. What is most valuable about Rorty's philosophy is that he exposes the game, the self-important pursuit of academic philosophy as an adversarial, esoteric, and technical "subject."

One of Richard Rorty's biggest philosophical heroes is John Dewey, who wrote that "most philosophical thinking is done by means of following out the logical implications of concepts" (Mead, 1980 p.xxxix). Merleau-Ponty, in this regard, would maintain with Dewey that we cannot "make the world and human life understood by an arrangement of concepts" (Sense p.27). At any rate, Dewey praised George Herbert Mead as a "seminal thinker" because of his "sense of the role of subjective consciousness in the reconstruction of objects as experienced." Dewey located the source of Mead's philosophy as "his own intimate experiences," and noted admiringly that Mead "was talking about something which the rest of us did not see." Dewey wrote all of this in a preface to the published version of Mead's 1930 Carus Lectures to the American Philosophical Association (Mead, 1980). The title of these lectures, and the subject of Dewey's interest, was "The Philosophy of the Present," a carefully articulated phenomenology of the present moment in human experience.

For us, "reality exists as a present," Mead tells us (p.1). He adds that "reality exhibits itself in a present" (p.11), and that "the present is the seat of reality because its character [as] a present sheds light upon the nature of reality" (p.32). Mead sees human reality as an "infinite scroll" of present moments (p.32). Moreover, he notes that

the "social nature of the present arises out of its emergence" (p.47), and that "social character can belong only to the moment at which emergence takes place" (p.48). These insights may help shed light on Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, which can also be read as an exploration of the moment in which presence in relationship emerges for human beings - and the magic that happens when human beings live as an ongoing expression of this authentic present. Mead concludes his lectures with observations that ring with social implications:

> We live always in a present whose past and whose future are the extension of the field within which its undertakings may be carried out. This present is the scene of that emergence which gives always new heavens and a new earth, and its sociality is the very structure of our minds. Since society has endowed us with self-consciousness, we can enter personally into the largest undertakings which the intercourse of rational selves extends before us. And because we can live with ourselves as well as with others, we can criticize ourselves, and make our own the values in which we are involved through those undertakings in which the community of all rational beings is engaged.
>
> Mead, 1980 p.90

Mead notes that the "metaphysical question" arising from his consideration of the present is whether we can indeed know the thing itself when all we are presented with are various perspectives in passing experience. He invokes the appearance/reality distinction, and resolves it not by saying that the real thing lies behind these experiences, but proposes instead that we "accept passage as the

character of reality" (Mead p.79). To this extent, Mead indulges in the kind of metaphysical speculation Rorty refers to as the "Mirror of Nature" and Merleau-Ponty calls "God's Eye View" metaphysics: groundless conjecture about the ultimate nature of the universe. Yet Mead does not dwell on this characterization of reality. He does not defend it, but offers it as a possible way to conceive of reality implied by his approach to experience. The critical theme of Mead's philosophy is its focus on the phenomenological present and the effect of this present on the character of human being. As in what Merleau-Ponty would term the authentic present, in contrast to the constituted present of objective relationship, here lies the character of creative emergence; that is, the "occurrence of something which is more than the processes that have led up to it" and which "adds to later passages a content they would not otherwise have possessed" (Mead, 1980 p.23).

Still, bare attention to the present moment of experience, while it roots us firmly in the world, is not necessarily therapeutic. An evil dictator may find power in a present moment of sadistic activity. As human beings it is also within our power to animate the present moment with an intentionality of our own formulation. In this sense, the paradigm of authentic presence we have been discussing goes beyond raw spontaneity in its animating ideal of open

relationship. Richard Maurice Bucke points to this dimension of openness when he describes his own originating encounter with a dimension of universal love. Love, that is, as an awareness of oneness in relationship that transcends subject/object duality. Bucke describes this experience in his "philosophy of the birth of Cosmic Consciousness," which he began to formulate after a powerful experience of mystical insight changed his life:

> All at once, without warning of any kind, he found himself wrapped around as it were by a flame colored cloud. For an instant he thought of fire, some great conflagration in the great city, the next he knew that the light was within himself. Directly afterwards came upon him a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination quite impossible to describe...Among other things he did not come to believe, he saw and *knew* that the Cosmos is not dead matter but a living Presence, that the soul of man is immortal, that the universe is so built and ordered that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all, that the foundation principle of the world is what we call love and that the happiness of every one is in the long run absolutely certain.
>
> 1961 p.8

Although manifested dramatically in this episode of mystical experience, Bucke tells us that Cosmic Consciousness must not be thought of as supernatural or supranormal (1961 p.9). Above all, it is an experience in which love and openness rather than fear and alienation characterize our relationship with the world. In Cosmic Consciousness, "the terms subjective and objective lose their old meaning" (1961 p.52), and "all things, man

included, are part of one great Whole" (1879 p.3). Bucke spent the rest of his career developing a philosophical context within which to characterize the "Brahmic Splendor" revealed to him in this originary experience. He came to view his "flash of illumination" as the glimpse of a different, emerging sort of consciousness which would, in the course of biological evolution, eventually transcend the alienation of objective self-consciousness, just as the latter had come to transcend the simple unreflective consciousness of animals (1961 pp.1, 5, 19).

Bucke distinguishes the "intellectual nature" from the "moral nature" and thinks that as the intellectual nature corresponds more and more closely with the "facts and laws" of the universe through science, so the "same thing must be true for the moral nature and its correlative in the external world" (1879 p.199). Thus Bucke asks in Man's Moral Nature (1879) whether the "Central Fact" of the universe justifies "fear and hate, or love and faith, or neither" (1879 p.40). His answer is that "the *real* nature of the universe is such that it warrants on our part unlimited love and absolute trust" (1879 p.199). He declares optimistically that man's "moral nature" is evolving towards "love and faith" (1879 p.199) and the awareness of reality as an unalienated "loving presence"

(1961 p.61).

Bucke and Merleau-Ponty both focus on an orientation of human being that leaves behind the alienation of subject/object duality in our relationship with the world. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy does not, however, revolve around the fall-out of a mystical experience. Rather, his is a body of work consciously moving towards a dimension of experience that transcends the dualistic source of fundamental alienation. Merleau-Ponty does not ground this experience in the objective nature of the universe. Rather than an explanatory, speculative metaphysics, Merleau-Ponty's is an interpretive, "hermeneutical" metaphysics that formulates an alternate paradigm of relationship with the world. It is not in the objective state of the universe and biological development that Merleau-Ponty projects this non-dualistic state of consciousness, but in the fundamentally creative nature of living beings and the true freedom of human being to choose its fundamental "manner of being in the world" (PhP p.438).

A certain threshold of biological complexity presupposes authentic presence, but Merleau-Ponty invokes an existential choice that confronts us at every moment. He is not talking about "abstract decisions" that function in terms of the "classical conception of deliberation."[7] Rather, he seeks phenomenologically to discover the

fundamental intentionality "beneath these noisy debates and these fruitless efforts to construct ourselves" (PhP p.438). He speaks not of biological processes or objective strategies or intellectual mandates, but "a conversion involving our whole existence." He tells us we can moderate our experience of the world in terms of the way we project ourselves "towards the world" (PhP pp.405, 443). He tells us we discover our true freedom by "plunging into the present and the world" (PhP p.456). He can be seen to challenge us to make a *leap of intentionality* in which love, love as a felt sense of non-dualistic oneness and openness, comes to animate the present moment of our relationship with others and the world.[8]

CHAPTER SEVEN:

PRINCIPLE OF AN ETHIC

Phenomenology has a great deal to contribute to the contemporary confrontation between those who demand a *detached* critical *morality* based on *principles* that tell us what is *right* and those who defend an *ethics* based on *involvement in a tradition* that defines what is *good*... [A] phenomenology of moral experience...which begins on the level of spontaneous coping...would be a step towards righting a wrong to involvement, intuition, and care that traditional philosophy has maintained for 2,500 years.

Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus, "What is Moral Maturity? Towards a Phenomenology of Ethical Expertise" (in Ogilvy, 1992 pp.111, 113, 131)

Phenomenologically, therapeutic authentic presence manifests itself in the present moment of lived relationship. If we attend to the felt character of our encounter with the world we can cultivate an important awareness. Are we open and responsive in the present moment of lived relationship? When we are constituted, afraid, controlling, or oppressed we are typically subjects of a fundamentally dualistic paradigm. What "principle of an ethic" can we look for?

Merleau-Ponty notes that love is an "identification that goes beyond solipsism" (Signs p.175). Love in this sense can be seen as the felt dimension of openness to intersubjectively emerging truth and meaning that transcends the barriers of alienation rooted in dualistically objective relationship.[1] It becomes a challenge for each of us, if we choose to live by a philosophy of authentic presence, to *cultivate and nourish an awareness of love as undefensive openness in the ongoing present of our felt relationship with the world.* This is difficult if we suppress the creative emergence of our felt responsiveness beneath constituted patterns, deliberate roles, and little white lies. If we manage to cultivate an awareness of love in the felt immediacy of our own experience, we may react

defensively and hide behind constituted roles less frequently. Perhaps we will manage to share the emergence of our responsive truths more openly with each other.

Constituted relationship is the cultural norm in the west. Control, exploitation, objective disengagement, and defensiveness are typical of the relationships that form in the context of a dualistically alienated paradigm. It is up to philosophers in all walks of life who are not happy with this state of alienation to articulate and promote something healthier. This we have called authentic presence, which is characterized by open relationship. In authentic presence and open relationship we live in an ongoing process of truth and creative responsiveness as we overcome duality in the felt orientation of conscious awareness.

The paradigm of authentic presence explored in this project revolves around an existential posture which would be therapeutic for dualistically alienated objective western consciousness to assume. It explores the perception of truth as a dimension of felt relationship. It articulates a paradigm of felt relationship that embraces the creative expression of open undefensive responsiveness. Like feminism, it seeks to return to the values of partnership rather than domination (e.g. Riesler, 1992). Like Robert Bly in the men's movement best-seller Iron John, it calls for a return to the wild being that "represents our own brilliance, bounty, wildness, greatness, and spontaneity"

(Addison-Westly, New York 1990 p.34) In the name of a humanism more fundamental than gender intensive men's and women's movements, it reminds us of the universal humanistic challenge to be "more deeply ourselves" (Kipnis and Hingston, "Ending the Battle Between the Sexes," Utne Reader #55 1993, pp.69-76).[2]

Merleau-Ponty, as a pioneer in what Taylor calls the "culture of authenticity," invites humanity to embrace the roots invoked by all these formulations. He points to a fundamentally creative dimension of openness in relationship and brings our attention to the neglected soil nourishing our self-aware *presence* in the world. He articulates the phenomenological and metaphysical contours of a holistic perspective that conditions us to transcend dogmatic ideological positions, objective formulas, "destructive" logical analyses, and the alienation of dualistic relationship. What Merleau-Ponty presents does not amount to an ethical prescription but a therapeutic vision of ourselves that acknowledges what western culture has dramatically forgotten: that humanity is a species of intelligent organism with great creative powers whose expression of authentic truth emerges in the context of its felt ties with the world and its sense of the unfathomable horizons of existence.

If we perceive ourselves as isolated subjects in an

objective world we tend to band together defensively into camps from which we exploit each other and the environment. On the other hand, if we perceive the depth of our intimate relationship with each other and appreciate the organic roots of our co-existence, the truth of humanity will tend to embrace a mutual level of shared aliveness and respect for the environment that sustains it. By responding undefensively in the *ongoing moment* of emerging truth and felt meaning, we fuse "soul and body in the act" with the world (PhP p.84).[3]

Ethics do not need to be drawn from this perspective as a set of constituted rules and regulations that must be rigidly adhered to. Ideally, everything follows from the intentionality of relationship we cultivate in our self-image. In this sense authentic presence, with its over-riding value of responsive openness in relationship, can be seen to represent a kind of ethical anarchy. Indeed, to those disenchanted with the burocratic entanglements of unresponsive objectivity, anarchy may seem to provide an ideal social context for authentic presence. Anarchy in this sense is a social situation in which imposed objective structure is minimal and affairs proceed for the most part in terms of the openly shared co-existence of individuals working and expressing themselves according to their own felt truths. This is not a spirit of anarchy in which no

structure at all is tolerated. The policies and procedures of our social institutions can facilitate and support an environment of non-dualistic relationship and open responsiveness while they allocate and mobilize community resources and mediate disagreements. If we value a paradigm of authentic presence, we must not lethargically allow open responsiveness in human relationship to be displaced by a dehumanizing adherence to objective rules. It may be that contemporary western society is heavily rooted in a dualistically objective paradigm of consciousness. Reflecting this alienating orientation, our social institutions may be characterized by rigidly established positivistic structures with little room for the creative flexibility of responsive interaction. The social policies of a democracy, however, in a precious climate of political freedom, are always open to challenge and revision if they are not found to facilitate the values we wish to encourage in our communities. Political involvement is in this sense an important part of conditioning the personal freedom of authentic presence.[4] There are many roles to play in a humanly nourishing process of therapeutic social change.

We are each responsible for our lives and behaviors in the world and must come to terms with the sheer magnitude of that responsibility. Yet true "response-ability" (Levin, 1989 p.43) does not have to involve a constituted force of

will. Spontaneous responsive energy we may not often allow in our lives can draw us towards the realization of our highest intentions. We should note that allowing authentic freedom in the expression of our lives does not necessarily lead to narcissistic or irresponsible behavior. Indeed, the "fundamental narcissism" of perception (Viz p.139) has much to teach us. For as Merleau-Ponty points out early in his career, we *find ourselves* in the world, and the world "continuously speaks to us of ourselves" (Others p.37). When we are authentically present in the sense discussed in this project, rather than becoming self-absorbed, we are profoundly sensitive to the fact that we all exist "against a background of belonging to the same world" (Signs p.175: which may be expressed "metaphysically" by saying Being intimately connects us in a profound sense). From the perspective of authentic presence, the best thing any of us as members of our community can do is attend fully as our paths creatively unfold according to our own embodied truths and socially situated perspectives. In authentic presence and open relationship we bring the force of our uniqueness to the development of culture and fulfill our chosen social roles with dynamic energy, truth, and awareness.

I may want to work with people to consciously bring authentic presence into their interaction with the world. This may take the form of practical philosophy or, more

traditionally, "clinical psychology." Yet I defeat my intention if I assume a constituted role with the people I am working with. When I "try" to help others they only sense my "act," my strain to objectively fill a role, and they pull away in response. It may seem like a strange existential paradox:

> all life is the invention of a role which exists only through the expression that I give to it. Vocation always consists in this free decision to lose oneself in a role...Insincerity exists only for those who do not lose themselves completely in their roles. Authenticity involves devoting oneself entirely to the role that one has decided to play.
>
> Others pp.54-55

Authentic presence may seem like an impossible ideal since life constantly demands that we play roles. In this regard, we may consider with Merleau-Ponty the stage actor, whose art is an "extension of the art we all possess" (Others p.53). On the stage as in life, the art lies in transforming the body and our being so we are no longer like a thing used instrumentally in an objective situation. "The magic of the drama," Merleau-Ponty tells us, "consists in raising the actor's body and everything else" to what he calls in <u>The Visible and the Invisible</u> a "second life" of energetic significance. This "magic," in great performance as in spontaneous play, originates phenomenologically "in the intentionality that links us with the world" (Others p.53). In a relationship of responsive harmony, both the

theoretical and technical elements involved in the interpretation of one's role become "truly assimilated" in behavior (Others p.49; see also Truth p.360). The role becomes the embodied expression of our authentic presence and as invisible as the individual notes of music. The key to full involvement in one's chosen role involves detachment from the role as a task. It is the wooden actor who constitutes his role as an objective to be accomplished.

We may be reminded of the waiter in Being and Nothingness who is "playing at being a waiter" (p.59).[5] Sartre is infamous to first-year philosophy students for characterizing humanity as a "being which is what it is not and which is not what it is" (Being and Nothingness p.58). This might mean simply that we do not coincide with the roles we play. Yet Sartre goes on to apply this to our emotional being. Sadness, he points out for example, is not a state of being but a *conduct*, a role with which we do not coincide (Being and Nothingness p.61). Why else do we stop crying when a stranger walks into the room? Here Merleau-Ponty points out that feelings, which seem to encompass our whole being when they are felt, are always open to deeper interpretation and change. Our experience of ourselves and our world is achieved "only in the sphere of ambiguity," he tells us (PhP p.381). Certainly, authenticity does not consist in coinciding with our

feelings or our roles. Still, authenticity is lacking if we stop crying when a stranger walks into a room just because we're not supposed to cry in front of strangers. To be "constituted" is to "live in accordance with the emotional categories of the environment" (PhP p.380). Or, alternatively, to live according to some rationalization of what ought to be or is expected, or strictly according to the social conventions of our work. Authenticity involves living out our feelings and our roles powerfully - in the fullness of our beings as they are present in the "real here and now" (Signs p.167).[6]

Joseph Campbell advises us to express values of spontaneity and creativity in every aspect of our lives. He tells us to "follow our bliss" (e.g. 1988 p.118). Part of the Buddhist eightfold path is "right livelihood," or integrating awareness and creativity with the work we do. The Bible tells us that those who do work for which they feel no passion earn wages "to put into a bag with holes" (Book of Haggai 1:5). Any activity in which we express authentic presence is an activity in which we express our spontaneity, creativity, and passion. Furthermore, we are not likely burn out because, as Gadamer points out, in authentic presence the effort of work is "experienced subjectively as relaxation" (Truth p.94).

Karl Marx differentiates between labour as

"spontaneous activity" and labour as alienated "self-sacrifice" (1978 p.74). He believes economic factors condition the social environment as they determine the prominent style of work that will emerge in a culture. Yet his system does not have to be interpretted on the basis of its deterministic implications. Like Marshal McLuhan's theories on the relationship of social consciousness and the media,[7] Marx's work can add a dimension to our perspective of ourselves and the cultural environment we have created around us. If we value freedom as an ideal, we can work with these and other insights as we work towards a paradigm in which humanity will find itself most powerful and truly free. If we cultivate a paradigm of authentic presence in our lives, in our educational, economic, and political institutions, in our health care system, in the work we do, and most fundamentally in our relationships, we can begin to have a therapeutic impact on our world.

What is philosophy in this context? It is certainly more than a department at the university. As a traditional craft, it involves attending to and articulating the possibilities of awareness and facilitating this dimension of dialogue. For a true philosopher, this work is nothing less than a passionate activity.[8] For a professional philosopher, it is also a full-time committment. Yet philosophy, as the "detour of words" it often becomes in

academic circles, can also be a thorn in the side of flesh. If "doing philosophy" is the social role we find ourselves playing, it behooves us to articulate a characterization of truth, a paradigm of relationship, and most fundamentally a human self-image that conditions authentic being in the world and points humanity in a positive direction. In this sense we need to "revision" the discipline in terms of a "new exuberance to replace the stale old fossils of academic argumentation" (Ogilvy, 1992 p.xii). With Merleau-Ponty, we can begin by seeking the "sense of exhilaration" that "comes from the retrieval of lived experience" (Taylor,1989 p.460).

The ultimate question is whether I, whether each of us, is living life as if it were an objective, logically formulated statement in the context of an alienated reality, or whether we are living in spontaneous accord with the responsive truth of our physical and cultural situation. In spontaneous accord, that is, not with our greatest pleasure but in responsive harmony with an authentic sense of relationship with the world. As an effective therapeutic force, authentic presence must resolve into more than philosophical and psychological studies. Ultimately, to invoke the traditions of Kierkegaard and Tillich, it comes down to a matter of faith. Honest, creative, authentic faith in an ideal of love as the possibility of open relationship and truly peaceful co-existence.

In contemporary western society we live in a culture that "objectivises everything." This, in turn, conditions an "addictive society" as our relationships with the world are alienated and distorted (Schaef, 1989 p.41; 1992 p.202; see also Peele, pp.151-152). Alcoholics Anonymous may have been the first institution that recognized this and took steps to deal with the situation. The cultural recognition of alcohol addiction soon generalized to an awareness of other substance and process addictions and more recently to so-called "relationship addictions," in which individuals have a syndrome of troubles dealing with objectivised others (perhaps this is partly what Gestalt theorists were trying to articulate with the terms "we-crippledness" and "we-insufficiency": Ellis, 1938 pp.363; 366). In all of these addictions, the original twelve-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous has proved a phenomenally successful treatment tool. However, twelve-step programs can be limited in their adherence to a disease model, which locates addiction in sick or dysfunctional individuals rather than fundamentally limited patterns of relationship that may be creatively transformed. Still, it is interesting that six of the twelve steps refer to the recognition of a "power higher than ourselves"; higher, that is, than the isolated objective ego that we tend to identify ourselves with. Merleau-Ponty's metaphysics can be seen not only as an

attempt to overcome the objective paradigm of relationship that breeds addiction, but as an attempt to characterize such a higher power. In this sense, Merleau-Ponty can be interpretted with a certain spiritual significance (although he reminds us his metaphysics "cannot be reconciled with the manifest content of religion and with the positing of an absolute thinker": Sense p.96).[9]

We can perceive ourselves as isolated subjects that must physically and socially manipulate our environment, or as integrally related organisms in the context of an interconnected reality. We can cope with the world, or allow ourselves to be the center of a creative vortex and be "born by a wave of Being" (Viz p.136). We can, in a dualistically objective sense, deliberately manipulate and control the expression of our being in the world, or we can be like the performer whose presence is "absence circumscribed" and who feels him or herself to be "at the service of the sonata" (Viz p.151). We can locate ourselves in an objective world where "an infinity of options" confronts us or allow ourselves to flow creatively in the context of a silent horizon of latent and emerging meaning:

> A camera once recorded the work of Matisse in slow motion. The impression was prodigious, so much so that Matisse himself was moved, they say. That same brush which, seen with the naked eye, leaped from one act to another, was seen to mediate in a solemn and expanding time - in the immanence of a world's creation - to try ten possible movements, dance in front of the canvas, brush

> it lightly several times, and crash down finally like a lightning stroke upon the one line...called for in order that the painting might finally be that which it was in the process of becoming. By a simple gesture he resolved the problem which in retrospect seemed to imply an infinite number of data...
>
> Signs pp.45-46 [44-45]

To be authentically present is to live creatively in "ontological power," the very cells of our body working harmoniously to open a true path on which the world is experienced. Living by a pardigm of authentic presence involves a natural movement. It follows a personal flow of truth in responsive harmony with the world. We tell our children from an early age they must decide what they want to *be*, and it is constructive to help them be aware and support them in the kinds of activities in which they find themselves authentically participating. Existential questions we would do well to consider carefully include: "What am I doing and what are the conditions when things become a strained, deliberate effort? What am I doing and what are the conditions when I am creatively engaged with life?" For in authentic presence both work and play are experienced as powerful, spontaneous expressions of our being. We are like the "performer [who] is no longer reproducing the sonata." The stage becomes a metaphor for our relationship with life. Just as "the sonata sings through" the singer, and the music "cries out so suddenly [the violinist] must 'dash on his bow' to follow it" (Viz

p.151), we lead our lives as an unfolding drama of creative responsiveness.

Gadamer discusses the manifestation of authentic presence in play. The object of play, he says, is to lose oneself in activity. To lose oneself in the sense that "the identity of the player does not continue to exist" (Truth p.100), and in which organic expression "plays over" the constituted self. One for whom play is not "being played" (Truth p.95), that is for whom play is not "experienced as a reality that surpasses him" (Truth p.98) is a "spoilsport" (Truth p.92). Play in this sense is "sheer fulfillment" (Truth p.101). Interestingly, this powerful dimension of human existence is being explored at the University of Chicago as a theory of "optimal experience" (which is "based on the concept of *flow*, or a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter": Csikszentmihalyi, 1990 p.4). For Gadamer this creative "mode of being," which manifests itself in "aesthetic consciousness" (Truth p.92) and in our relationships as a dimension of "communion" or "fusing horizons" (Truth p.341), is also a fundamental dimension of the linguistic nature of our beings. Not language, that is, in the sense of its "elaborate conventionalism" (Truth p.498), but in the truly creative flow of language that animates, for example, "fundamental conversation" (Truth

p.345).

In what may be seen as a related formulation of constituted and authentic presence, Henri Bergson distinguishes between the "closed soul and the open soul"; the "static" and "dynamic" sources of culture (1956 p.63). He locates this distinction in the context of "closed" and "open" societies (1956 p.266), and optimistically tells us that western society is "on the way to becoming an open one" (1956 p.288). Merleau-Ponty, working to make this prediction come to pass, tells us morality is not adherence to constituted rules but "actively being what we are" in the context of "respect for others" (Sense p.40). Before undertaking the organization of more humane institutions or perhaps some form of social revolution, we must ask ourselves about the state of our own souls. Are we living authentically in the responsive integrity of the truth in open relationship, or are we acting in a fixed pattern of constituted rigidity or defensive alienation? Are we giving ourselves completely to the present moment of emerging truth and awareness, or are we operating in terms of a "transition from first person existence to a sort of abstraction of that existence" (PhP p.83)? Merleau-Ponty calls this latter pattern repression, which he says "lives on a former experience." We may, for example, become angry and self-destructive when a harmless comment brings us back

to an earlier moment in which we felt ourselves threatened. Another barrier to authentic presence is attachment, which involves living precariously on the expectations of a possible future. We may, for example, see ourselves as potentially great or dismally mediocre philosophers and not do our work with the simple motivation of responsive dialectical engagement. There are a million psychological patterns and political strategies that tend to undermine authentic presence. It is not as simple as providing ourselves with a new paradigm of thought. If I have implied that the expression of authentic presence does not involve struggle it has been in weighted attention to the experience of authentic presence itself, which Gadamer points out is experienced as the "absence of strain" (Truth p.94). Yet, paradoxically, there is continual struggle.

Despite a miraculous potential for genuine presence in the natural and social world we kill each other, pollute and destroy the very environment that sustains us, and remain lonely in the company of other people. It is not just a question of happiness, but the very survival of the human species. We must call upon ourselves to re-discover the magic of our relationship with the world. This, at any rate, is the essential therapeutic theme of Merleau-Ponty's transformative philosophy,[10] as well as the fundamental insight of an emerging philosophical tradition that seeks to

overcome the dualistic alienation of objective typically patriarchal modernity.

As for this project, it leaves much to be said. Yet nothing blocks the completion of a project more than not realizing there is no "complete expression" (Signs p.43).

(This detour of words has been long enough...)

To be radically alive requires no formal religious belief or code of ethics. What is required is the continuous rediscovery of the consciousness that gave birth to these beliefs. To me this involves awareness, endless self-examination, creative relationship, and growing love for the truth of ourselves.

Richard Moss, 1986 p.185

EPILOGUE: THERAPEUTIC PHILOSOPHY

David Michael Levin refers to "the emerging of a new body of understanding" through which he hopes to contribute to the greater "freedom, justice, and democracy" of human culture (1989 p.4). Charles Taylor hopes to articulate "a certain definition of agency" and "background of worth" that will represent a basic difference in "spiritual outlook" from naturalism (1985 I p.12). Taylor points out that the "reigning model" of objective relationship associated with naturalism "cuts us off from the sources of community, creativity, and human feeling" (p.133). This project, in a vein of philosophical alignment with such therapeutic texts, revolves primarily around the sense in which Merleau-Ponty seeks to reawaken our openness in relationship with the world (or at least focuses attention on human "openness" if only in relation to "something": Viz p.162). All this work is along the lines of an emerging tradition of philosophy that makes therapeutic overtures towards a more genuinely human possibility of relationship. Truth in this tradition is not formulated on the model of disengaged objectivity but in a context of communicative solidarity. It is associated with the fundamental creativity and communion of human being in the world. Speaking phenomenologically with felt

meaning beyond logically reducible parameters, true philosophy is best characterized in this work not as an objective discipline of adversarial proofs and defenses but as a humanly self-conceiving effort of dialogue and articulation.

The background of values or moral fabric associated with the objective epistemology to be overcome is not seen as "wrong and misguided," nor is it to be logically "repudiated" (Taylor 1985 I p.7). The ability to disengage, to objectify behavior in order to see clearly from a detached perspective, is an integral characteristic of human being. It is the prominent paradigm of modernity, the self-defeating cultural malaise of fundamentally objective relationship, that this tradition of philosophy strives to move beyond in its deconstruction and realignment of typically antithetical western thought.

Gregory Bateson tells us it was an "epistemological mistake" that made western culture lose its sense of "aesthetic unity" in relationship with the world (1979 p.19). A sense of aesthetic unity is precisely characteristic of authentic presence, while objective detachment and alienation characterize constituted presence. Perhaps this distinction is partly behind Henri Bergson and his contrast between the "closed and open soul" and the "static and dynamic sources of culture" (1956 p.266). In any case, Bergson optimistically believes that western

culture is on its way to becoming a more "open" society (p.288).

In this sense, while close examination of each text reveals a unique perspective, it is precisely a cultural movement towards greater openness that animates books like Morris Berman's The Re-enchantment of the World" (1981), Riane Eisler's feminist tome The Chalice and the Blade (1987), and Marianne Williamson's A Return to Love (1993). The "New Age" of modern culture contributes prodigiously to the literature of hope and optimism that humanity - and each of us - can cultivate a sense of aesthetic unity in our relationships with each other and the world. Gary Zukav speaks of moving towards an experience of "authentic power that has its roots in the deepest source of our being" and in which we are "joyously and intimately engaged with the world" (1989 p.26). James Redfield points to a "way of consciously relating in which everyone attempts to bring out the best in others rather than having power over them." He feels optimistically that this will be a "posture the entire human race will eventually adopt" (1993 p.219). The quasi-religious "New Age" may sometimes seem like a modern cult of utopian optimism and eyebrow-raising mythology, but the spirit of a new age inspires a broad tradition of therapeutic philosophers.

Madison (1988) at first seems typical of western

academia in his apparently unsympathetic attitude towards the post-objective, non-dualistic thinkers that "everywhere abound" in culture today. He maintains emphatically that Merleau-Ponty is "in no way a prophet of...the man who seeks to dwell in dream and desire and who is at last liberated from the tyranny of self-consciousness" (p.63). Yet rather than dismissing these trends summarily as part of some naive "utopia," Madison productivly explores the therapeutic "figures and themes" of the movement. Indeed, dwelling in terms of self-indulgent dreams and desires, or again perhaps self-gratification, is clearly not in the spirit of open solidarity so fundamental to the therapeutic drift of this philosophical movement to authenticity. Madison clearly points out it is not self-consciousness as a dimension of human being this tradition properly seeks to overcome, but rather the "tyranny" of a *dualistically objective* self-consciousness. He cautions us we must not entertain the demise of philosophical reflection, which amounts in the movement towards authenticity to the rejection of an objective, adversarial, purely academic philosophy divorced from human interaction and lived meaning.

Madison's work celebrates an emerging therapeutic philosophy that he is (cautiously) optimistic will find a way of "escaping from the unhappiness which is the result of the rupture between the subjective and the objective, the

self and the world" (1988 p.58). In this sense he speaks of "a new era in the history of thought." It is no small contribution in this effort to adopt a critical attitude towards the various themes that often characterize the movement. In particular, he correctly advises us pointing to Merleau-Ponty not to adopt an uncritically optimistic "utopianism." Charles Taylor (who Rorty counts among "the dozen most important philosophers writing today:" 1991), provides a similar caution and adds a further caveat:

> I suggest in this matter we look not for the Trend, whatever it is, up or down, but that we break with our temptation to discern irreversible trends, and see that there is a struggle here, whose outcome is continually up for grabs...
>
> Condemnation of the culture of authenticity as illusion or narcissism is not a way to move us closer to the heights. As it is, an alliance of people with a disengaged scientific outlook, and those with more traditional ethical views, as well as some proponents of an outraged high culture, unite to condemn this culture. But this cannot help. A way that might change the people engaged with this culture (and at some level, this includes everyone, even the critics, I want to claim), would be to enter sympathetically into its animating ideal and try to show what it really requires.
>
> Taylor, 1991 p.79

Taylor thinks that it is crucial to respect the "ideal" of the "culture of authenticity" even as we locate the self-defeating aspects of "trivialized" and "deviant" expressions of this tradition (1990 pp.23, 55). For Taylor, authenticity in the "powerful" sense means "being true to oneself" and "true to one's own originality" (pp.15, 29).

He encourages us to do the work of "retrieval" in this dimension rather than affiliating ourselves with either uncritical optimism or nihilisic pessimism (1990 p.23; see also Putnam, 1993 p.141; Merleau-Ponty himself includes optimism and pessimism among the antitheses our culture must dissolve: Signs p.225). Taylor thinks taking up defensive antithetical positions will cloud the growing awareness and explorations that most fundamentally characterize this therapeutic movement of philosophy.[1]

Professional western academia can best characterize this emerging therapeutic tradition in a context of hermeneutical phenomenology. Its effort can be seen to revolve around interpretation, around the formative articulation of fundamental human experience. With or without explicitly therapeutic elements, the roots of this approach lie primarily in re-discovering the fundamental creativity of an authentic relationship with the world. For example, in Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy (1958), Michael Polanyi constructs a strong response against the objective paradigm of western science and typically objective relationship. He insists again and again that the "ideal of personally detached truth" must be "reinterpretted to allow for the the inherently personal character of the act by which truth is declared" (p.71). He speaks of the "ultimately tacit

character of all our knowledge" (p.95), and of the manifest illusion that humanity can possess a purely objective consciousness as if the world were composed of discrete things-in-themselves. In this view it is not explicit attention to objective particulars, but rather a sensitivity to dynamic relationships that most poignantly characterizes human awareness. Polanyi also tells us authentic presence involves abandon to a "focal awareness" of being in the world that can only be analyzed into subsidiary elements and objective formulas after the fact, or on pain of losing "the pattern which they jointly constitute" (p.57).

It is precisely alienation from dynamic patterns of life and relationship that characterizes modernity and motivates an emerging therapeutic tradition of philosophy that strives to reorient or recontextualize experience.

The most paradigmatic instance of losing the "joint pattern" of relationship that characterizes human being in the world is the estrangement of subject and object. Madison points out correctly that "the result of dualism is alienation" (1988 p.58), and indeed that the "notion of the objective enemy" (1981 p.309) is the most radical product of dualistically alienated consciousness. In this sense, Richard Moss points out that war is "the epitome of subject/object consciousness" (1986 p.263). This boils down to the

felt moment of relationship in our interactions with each other. Whenever we react in a situation from the constituted perspective of defensive alienation, rather than the awareness of open relationship associated with authentic presence, we root ourselves in conditions of war. It may only lead to conflict on a small scale, but it is fundamentally self-defeating and potentially violent. It is human being expressing itself in a pattern of fear and isolation. Perhaps this is a learned pattern, or a strategy held over from more primitive stages of growth. The thing is, humanity can work to let this pattern go. It does not condition the collective power of its highest expression, and is in fact contrary to its very survival. Still, we must not simply take up an adversarial position to the ideology that embraces war In the following passage we may read "paradigm" for "religion," "dualism" for "separation," and "authentic presence" for "Oneness:"

> We must stop condemning those for whom the religion of war remains the path of greatest aliveness. From the perspective of wisdom, it would appear that the religion of war grows from the primordial mist of emerging human consciousness. It has orchestrated the maximum energy available to humanity within the presumption of separation. It is the thrust of this energy that has helped lift us to the possibility of Oneness...
>
> Richard Moss, 1986 p.263

Moss is not talking about the interpersonal war of constituted and authentic being in the world. He is talking

about the bloody taking up of arms and human beings killing each other. He is saying that war will not come to an end on any level if all we do is protest and take up a position against it. A fundamental "realization" is necessary, a shift in our orientation towards the world and each other in which the values of war (alienation, manipulation, and exploitation) are no longer nourished:

> The immense psychical energy of war, which accelerates scientific and social progress, which catapults hundreds of thousands of individuals into actions where they are totally at the edge of themselves, risking all and moving with an aliveness that few had ever touched before, is not democratic. It is autocratic. [Yet] we learn to rely on others to such a degree that the sense of camaraderie in war can exceed any former experience of love or friendship...
>
> With great intelligence, not merely aspiration and idealistic thinking, we must ask the question: Is humanity now ready to move beyond war?...Do we now have a new religion that has greater capability of unifying mankind and lifting us to a higher energetic potential than warfare? The answer I believe resides in whether we can generate as much transformative energy in our embrace of life as that engendered from our conquest of it.
>
> Richard Moss, 1986 pp.261-262

It is clear that a change in the way we relate ourselves to each other and the world is called for. We must work out and cultivate a philosophy which conditions felt oneness rather than separation in the lived moment of relationship. A paradigm shift is indicated, not only in terms of the ridiculously large proportion of neurotic, unhappy, fearful individuals in western society, but even more dramatically in terms of the defensive,

adversarial relationships we experience with each other and the deteriorating state of our exploited environment. Yet it is difficult even to begin moving on from this history if we continue to insist on maintaining adversarial defensive positions with each other. In this sense, forgiveness is a critical dimension of the cultural transition this tradition of philosophy works to facilitate. Significantly so, if forgiveness is seen as a "process by which our thoughts are transformed from fear into love" (Williamson p.93). Again on a personal level, we can monitor the energy of our presence in the world. Are we embracing life or are we sinking deeper into separation, buying into the intimidation game as a player or a victim?

Neil Evernden tells us it was "Merleau-Ponty who most thoroughly explored our misconceptions of man-in-world and elaborated the most detailed alternative" (1985 p.57). Various authors have tried to relate the hermeneutical phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty to environmental awareness (Abram 1988), politics (Whiteside 1988), and law (Hamrick 1987).[2] Yet Merleau-Ponty is not cited in this project for his status in the statement of an objective philosophical position. Rather, he is cited for the powerful insight he provides. With Merleau-Ponty as a guide, we have tried to work out a paradigm of non-antithetical relationship through a philosophy that

"leaves behind" duality in existential orientation. We began with an intense phenomenology of the distinction between authentic and constituted presence. From there the distinction was expanded into a paradigm, beginning in the context of human linguistic endowment and extending to the metaphysical orientation of philosophical consciousness. Much work, of course, remains to be done. In this sense, I have tried to indicate the manner of philosophy that seems suited for the task.

The rhythm of human life necessarily involves both the creative flow of authentic presence and the hard courageous efforts of stressful constituted coping. Psychologically speaking, authentic presence "resists direct seizure" (Prose p.115) and comes on like a muse in our most powerful moments. Still, we can cultivate a soil that nourishes the values of authentic presence in our personal life, our community, and our environment. Not primarily through constituted thinking or deliberate strategies, although these are certainly part of our repertoire, but more actively in the creative projection of ourselves in the world. If we are committed to expressing our felt relationship with life exhuberantly, in the truth of our uniqueness without having to defend ourselves from an alientated world, we begin to witness a process of therapeutic personal and cultural change:

> You make a difference. Know that the very thing that disturbs your mind's peace offers an opportunity to generate clear mind and transform patterns of disturbance for all. Replace your anger with care; diffuse potential destructive energy by clarifying conflicts in your own mind and relationships. By the force of resonance that clarification will expand through your individual relationships to your family and neighborhood, to the nation and planet.
>
> Ywahoo,1987 p.27

The present project, and much contemporary philosophical effort, struggles to articulate a philosophical call for creative truth and undefensive openness in existential orientation and human relationship. The ethical thrust of this emerging philosophy is associated with a challenge to cultivate and facilitate an awareness of truth and love in the felt presence of living human relationship. How to conceive, respect, and build authentic presence into our lives and institutions is either pioneering work or is itself missing authentic presence in the constituted or purely theoretical effort to achieve it. In this sense philosophy may seem redundant, for it is not the conceptual awareness but the very aliveness of authentic presence which we must ultimately to seek. Yet conceptual awareness, even when it is implicit and "subsidiary," provides much of the context of human experience.

Perhaps we were not biologically capable of authentic presence until a certain point in our evolution. Perhaps we are still struggling to come to terms with it as a recently

emergent organic capacity. On the other hand, the graceful flow of authentic presence seems humiliatingly evident in the simple consciousness of animals. Getting aquainted with our authentic presence as intelligent organisms, in this scenario, we bring to it the intricate horizons of language and truth. Castenada's Don Juan relates a myth of empowerment and recovery along these lines:

> He said that ancient man knew, in the most direct fashion, what to do and how best to do it. But, because he performed so well, he started to develop a sense of selfness, which gave him the feeling that he could predict and plan the actions he was used to performing. And thus the idea of an individual "self" appeared; an individual self which began to dictate the nature and scope of man's actions.
>
> As the feeling of the individual self became stronger, man lost his natural connection to silent knowledge.
>
> Castenada 1987 p.169

"As I have already said to you," Don Juan went on, "sorcery is a journey of return. We return victorious to the spirit, having descended into hell. And from hell we bring trophies. Understanding is one of our trophies" (1987 p.179). Castenada tells us that the myth of the Garden of Eden sounded to Don Juan like "an allegory for losing our silent knowledge" (1987 p.122).

In the midst of all this myth and speculation, another sobering and thought-provoking idea is that we can undertake the "awesome responsibility" of placing ourselves consciously "at the cutting edge of evolution on this planet" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993 pp.3,4). The author in

question suggests the collective guidance of a therapeutic "Fellowship of the Future," and encourages us to "consider what makes a society good" (p.266). He also points to the committed work needed at all levels of society in order to "share the goal and help implement it in concrete, manageable steps" (p.293). In this sense, practical philosophers from all walks of life, committed to an effort of personal and social reorientation along the lines discussed in this project, with their over-riding values of free communication, creative solidarity, non-defensive awareness, non-adversarial relationship, and openness to the felt movements of emerging truth, can be helpful and productive members of any community.

Whether authentic presence is considered the emergent quality of an evolutionary event, the renewed spiritual awareness of being creatively and spontaneously alive, the phenomenological cornerstone of a non-dualistic intellectual paradigm, or more pragmatically simply a matter of psychological well-being and growing maturity, western philosophy can help articulate and explore this powerful dimension of human self-image. A therapeutic philosopher is, above all, interested in nourishing life.

Spontaneous activity is one way in which man can overcome the terror of aloneness without sacrificing the integrity of his self; for in the spontaneous realizations of the self man unites himself anew with the world - with man, nature, and himself. Love is the foremost component of such spontaneity; not love as the dissolution of the self in another person, not love as the possession of another person, but love as spontaneous affirmation of others.

Eric Fromm, Escape From Freedom (N.Y: Anon 1969) p.287

In the act of union I know myself, I know everybody - and I "know" nothing. I know it in the only way knowledge of that which is alive is possible - by experience of union - not by any knowledge our thought can give...In the act of loving, of giving myself, in the act of penetrating the other person, I discover myself, I discover us both, I discover humanity.

Eric Fromm, The Art of Loving (N.Y: Bantom, 1956) pp.25

APPENDIX:

PHENOMENOLOGY and the NEW PSYCHOLOGY

This project is Freudian in the sense that it articulates the phenomenology of a neurosis. The fundamental neurosis at the root of western culture's general malaise: that is, the overwhelming despiritualization of reductive objectivity and the associated poverty of constituted relationship. In fact, a movement to overcome the alienation of the dominant objective paradigm can be discerned at every level of western society, from the grassroots spirituality of the "New Age" to the discontented fringe of highly regulated professional disciplines. The practice of medicine, for example, is complimented by a growing population of holistic healers who operate outside the mechanistic philosophy of their AMA colleagues. This threatens the power monopoly of the objectively-oriented status quo, and it is interesting to follow the different control struggles and lobbies that result. Like feminism, sometimes considered the central phenomenon of this cultural drift, all these manifestations of a more holistic or integral living paradigm are struggling to understand themselves in the context of dualistically objective western culture. The field of psychology, insofar as it revolves around human personality and relationship, provides a particularly poignant example of this effort to reform the

established objective orientation.

As an undergraduate I had a professor who was fond of announcing the immanent demise of behavioral psychology. This made him seem eccentric to his students (who were after all working hard toward their degrees in the area), and less than popular with his colleagues. In fact, I remember being shocked by the cold resistance and even outright anger his views provoked at a departmental seminar. Yet looking back, all he had in mind was the redemption of the very ideal most psychologists trained in the west take for granted: that of psychology as a rigorously objective science, a "truly scientific discipline" (Eysenck, 1983 p.393).[1]

As Merleau-Ponty has pointed out, psychology had "wished to constitute for itself its own domain of objectivity" and "believed it had discovered it in the structures of behavior" (Viz p.20). Based primarily on various critiques of psychology's statistical research methodology, Dr. Akram insisted that if psychology was ever going to contribute more to humanity than archives of behavioral correlates it would have to develop a stronger research program. He also speculated, in disillusion after twenty years as a practicing psychotherapist, that if psychology was ever going to help people change it would have to operate on a physiological, rather than a behavioral, basis.

Although he was the odd man out at my own university, there were certainly other psychologists voicing doubts about their profession during the same period (for example Stones 1985; Mancias and Secord 1985; and Fergusson 1983). K.J. Gergen, in fact, provides dozens of references to articles expressing such discontent (1981 p.190). However, in accounting for this trend Gergen does not conclude that psychology will have to become a "harder" science to finally mature as a discipline. Rather, he proposes that a critical psychology must not only examine its status as a science, but more fundamentally participate in the essential re-evaluation of the strictly objectivistic ideal of science it has all along been trying to emulate:

> To conclude, during the past century the sociobehavioral sciences have participated in one of humankind's greatest intellectual adventures...Early in this century, it appeared that the means had been discovered for gaining certainty in the behavioral sciences. Yet subsequent examination has found such means sadly wanting. The search for certainty is a child's romance, and like most, one holds fast to even the most fragile shard attesting to continued life. The question that must now be confronted is how to pass successfully into the maturity of a second century. A new romance is required to extinguish the old, and it appears that the overtures are at hand.
>
> 1981 p.209

Gergen mentions hermeneutics as one of the overtures toward this "new romance" and provides a psychological theory moving in this direction: the "ethnology" of Harré in England. One history of psychology textbook refers to this

emerging body of work as the "Gergen-Harré school of thought," and acknowledges that "phenomenology has at least contributed to the new movement" (Hearnshaw 1987, p.237). It is refreshing to hear these philosophical schools being invoked, for perhaps psychology's most critical weakness as an aspiring hard science has been its avoidance of philosophical reflection:

> In its one hundred years of existence, psychology has changed a great deal without changing at all. In declaring its independence of philosophical investigations, and thus suspending all further analysis of its fundamental assumptions, it rendered itself totally dependent upon the philosophical assumptions (about the nature of the world, people, and the doing of science) which were current at the time.
>
> Shotter, 1975 p.69: see also Koch 1964 p.5

Psychological research generally proceeds by comparing the magnitude of a result to a baseline of probability. The result is said to be significant if it exceeds the probability that it could have occurred arbitrarily by at least the margin of a standard, pre-determined "level of significance." In this way, a significant result is said to overcome the "null hypothesis"; that is, the initial assumption that the effects being tested for are insignificant. Designing adequate controls so the effects can validly be attributed to the experimental variable adds validity to the conclusions of the research. Yet the over-dependence of psychology on such statistical methods is the basic problem

posed by, among others, Spielman (1978), Lykken (1968), and Baken (1966). It is here that the place of hermeneutics in these "new" trends in psychology becomes apparent, for hermeneutics articulates a self-image of humanity that does not invoke the image of a passive observer in an objective world. Rather, it articulates a self-image in which human beings are active agents constantly interpreting the world and giving it meaning. Thus Gadamer, for example, notes the "countless research projects" and the "ever more perfect indexes" of gathered data and points out that

> what is established by statistics seems to be a language of facts, but which questions these facts answer and which facts would begin to speak if other questions were asked are hermeneutical [or interpretive] questions.
>
> Gadamer, 1977 p.12

Going on to blame the prevalence of such purely statistical methods on society's over-dependence on objective techniques in general (i.e. its "methodological self-consciousness"; Truth p.xiii), Gadamer articulates a philosophy in which active living participation through the meaning-giving horizons of language replaces the image of man as a passive observer. This would suggest a research program in which the psychologist was in active participation with his or her "subjects," through interviews, self-reports, observations of social responses, and cultivating the insight that comes with familiarity

rather than relying blindly on detached mathematical techniques of achieving objective certainty. Translating idealistic movements of philosophical insight into the rigours of psychological practice is an ongoing challenge. Fundamentally, however, given his claim that "understanding is never subjective behavior towards a given object" (Truth p.xix), and especially since psychology deals with people, Gadamer would agree with Merleau-Ponty that

> The crises of psychology result from reasons of principle and not from some delay of research in this or that particular domain...The failure of "objective" psychology is - conjointly with the failure of "objectivistic" physics...a call for the revision of our ontology, for the re-examination of the notion of "subject" and "object."
>
> Viz pp.20, 23

Merleau-Ponty often refers to a "new psychology" that reflects the felt, dynamic spirit of what is otherwise known somewhat pretentiously as "hermeneutical phenomenology." He discusses behaviorism, psychoanalysis, and gestalt and shows the senses in which they progressively expand the frontiers of introspective psychology. He shows how each reveals deeper roots in the world, deeper layers of ourselves, and deeper immersion in the felt dynamics of perception. He also tells us that each retains an objective framework that belies what he takes to be the essence of psychology; that is, above all, to explore the *meaning* of lived experience and to ask "how it functions

in human life and what purpose it serves" (Sense p.53).

Although behaviorism recognizes the importance of our bodily involvement in the world and sees it as "directly manifest to us as behavior" (Sense p.53), still it studies behavior "taken objectively" (Viz p.20). Still it has "abandoned the lived world for the one which scientific consciousness has succeeded in constructing" (Sense p.54). Although psychoanalysis understands that "neither symptom nor cure is worked out at the level of objective or positing consciousness" (PhP p.163), and although it recognizes the "latency" (FREUD p.71) of human experience, still it involves a "scientistic or objective ideology" apart from which Merleau-Ponty thinks it must be reformulated (FREUD p.67). Even Gestalt psychology, which concerns itself with the lived holism of perceptual experience, is "still imprisoned within the 'self-evident truths' of science" (PhP p.49). It still perceives itself as an objective "science of direct experience" (Kohler 1947, p.147). Reflecting on the relationship of these three theories, it may seem that either approach as an interest in understanding ourselves represents a valid dimension of human life. Perhaps it is when we put forth an insight into ourselves as an objective theory to be tested as scientifically "true" or "false," or that we hope will displace all other theories, that we begin to remove ourselves

from the complex flow of living relationship. Traditional ego-based psychologies, moreover, remain "firmly grounded in subject/object consciousness" (Moss p.81) and tend to remove us from the visceral responsiveness of lived awareness.

Although Merleau-Ponty draws most heavily on the gestalt tradition, especially on the research of Kurt Goldstein, he shows how each approach deepens our understanding of ourselves from a certain perspective that its proponents usually try to advance as a scientifically objective, or exclusively correct, paradigm. The "new psychology," on the other hand, would be eclectic, combining many perspectives in a comprehensive context of lived human being. It would be concerned not with putting human life in the reductive context of objective scientific theory and procedure. Rather, it would be concerned with life as we live it and the dimensions of meaning that we bring to it in a holistic context. Whereas ego psychologies tend to focus on the consciousness of an objective personality alienated from the world straining to cope, the new psychology as a psychology of authentic presence would focus on accessing the spontaneous aliveness of the organism, while at the same time exploring and facilitating the transpersonal dimension of relationship. Operating on a strongly "actualizing" model, therapeutic intervention would proceed according to individual need, drawing from whatever tradition was deemed

appropriate, always respecting the meaning-world and the emotional processes of each unique client and their felt relationship with life.

In Phenomenology in Psychology and Psychiatry, Spiegelberg mentions the "third force," a term coined by Abraham Maslow in 1957 for the growing Humanistic Psychology movement. Maslow (who dedicated one of his most important works to Kurt Goldstein; 1968), said that psychology ought to be "holistic and phenomenological" (1970, p.xviii). Fritz Pearls, the founder of humanistic Gestalt Therapy, at one time called his system a "phenomenology of awareness" (1951, p.viii). Both men refer to their attempts to explore and focus in therapy on our actual experience of ourselves in the world, rather than on trying to come up with objective, scientific explanations and theories. This is certainly phenomenological in spirit, although Spiegelberg points out that it will take "much more time and effort before the...European ingredients have been critically absorbed" by the American movement (1972 p.168).

Since the publication of Spiegelberg's study, a proliferation of phenomenologically spirited therapies and therapists have sprung up at the grassroots "New Age" level. The briefest examination of a Common Ground-type publication (put out in most major cities) makes this evident. Often these systems are "dismissed as irrelevant" by the

mainstream profession and considered "rather dubious alternative psychologies" (Hearnshaw, 1987). Yet there is an interest great enough to create both a large number of practitioners and an appreciative clientele.

On a more organized level, a "fourth force" has emerged in psychology that aims both at addressing pre-objective lived responsiveness and also focuses on the spiritual dimension of oneness in experience. In terms of this perspective, a state of relationship that transcends subject/object duality is grounded in the "transpersonal dimension of human consciousness" (Wilber, 1987 p.278). Transpersonal psychology, again with Maslow as one of its motivating figures, has its own publication and has been lobbying the APA for membership.[2] Operating on a model of consciousness in close affiliation with various eastern orientations, its principle theme is that an individual is more than an isolated subject (or ego), and that the felt recognition and lived application of this perspective can be a powerful healing force:

> Transpersonal psychology emerged in the sixties in response to a concern that the previous major models, the first three forces of Western Psychology - behaviorism, psychoanalysis, and humanistic psychology - had been limited in their recognition of the upper reaches of psychological development...It recognizes the potential for experiencing a broad range of states of consciousness in some of which identity may extend beyond the usual limits of the ego and personality...This is a relatively recent development in Western psychology, for although William James laid the ground-work for a psychology of consciousness at the turn of the century

> there followed a period of some fifty years during which Western psychology shunned anything suggestive of introspection in an effort to secure its recognition as one of the objective hard sciences.
>
> Walsh, 1980, pp.16,18,22

Transpersonal psychology, being a relatively new development in the west, is in need of philosophical foundations. That is, no kind of objective epistemological foundations but simply the articulation of a rational context within which it can be conceived and integrated into western thought. Working out such a transpersonal orientation in psychology must retain the traditions that have come before it and integrate them within a more comprehensive therapeutic context. It is difficult to understand why professional philosophers, who typically love to articulate just about anything, have been slow to respond:

> The rise of transpersonal psychology in our present day amounts to the discovery of a new frontier in our psychological knowledge ...It is realized that without an understanding of what Abraham Maslow has called "peak experiences," including the esthetic, the romantic, the ethico-religious, and the mystical, there would be no possibility of gaining an adequate insight into the mystery of the human psyche in all its richness. Such experiences transcend the subject-object dichotomy.
>
> Chaudhuri, p.183

Beyond Ego (Walsh, 1980), which claims to be Transpersonal Psychology's first textbook, tells us the "transpersonal model is not...expected to replace or

challenge earlier ones but rather to set them within an expanded context of human nature (pp.17, 18). Ken Wilber (a so-called "pundit" of transpersonal psychology)[3] has called an awareness of being in which duality is transcended - in particular the dualities of mind/body and subject/object - "no-boundary awareness" (1979, pp.45,46). He describes how ultimately healing such transpersonal awareness can be (p.131), and has worked out a spectrum model of consciousness in which each level of psychological theory is related to a specific level or aspect of consciousness. Psychoanalysis, for example, involved primarily with the "ego" level (1979 p.9 figure 2; 1977 p.223), provides only a certain limited view of the human organism.

It would be a fruitful project to put transpersonal psychology in the context of a phenomenological philosophy. For example, in an article on the "Philosophical Foundations of Transpersonal Psychology" (Rothberg, 1986), the author fails to take the insights of phenomenology into account at all. This is unfortunate, especially in the case of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, because transcending the artificial barriers of subject and object is a central theme of his life's work, and in particular his later work. On a phenomenological level, transpersonal and "mystical" experiences that immediately present the world to us in a way that transcends dualities are forms of human experience

and as such demand to be explored (a point made by R.D. Laing, for example, again and again: 1967; 1982). Actually, Merleau-Ponty thought it was very important for us to to inquire into "the fact of mystical experience" (PrP p.35).

Perhaps western philosophers have not rallied to the new therapeutic frontier opened by transpersonal psychology because of its eastern orientation. Perhaps all its talk of meditation, gurus, and spiritual practices makes it seem inaccessible to rigorous articulation. Hermeneutical philosophers, moreover, may be disenchanted by the typically eastern vagueness of it's terminology. Transpersonal psychology unreflectively employs ontologically-loaded phrases such as "the essential nature of being" (Walsh, 1980 p. 16), and refers to "higher levels of reality" (Rothberg, 1986 p.3). An eastern orientation, however, seems to be the preferred context within which transpersonal psychology locates its insights and associates its therapies. Devoid of these mysterious eastern associations, a phenomenological psychology associated with Merleau-Ponty's kind of creative articulation, one that explores philosophically how we can go beyond subject-object duality in our lived experience, may be easier for the western tradition to integrate.

Both humanistic and transpersonal psychologies have been charged, despite their expanding conceptions of self and personality, with retaining western culture's

fundamental objective orientation in their research and practice (e.g. Rudhyar, 1980 p.156; Schaef, 1991 p.214). In trying to be accepted by the mainstream community of scientific psychology, in other words, these disciplines have had to "sell their souls" to conform with the objective paradigm. On this account, these new "forces" in psychology do not represent as radical a break with the objective paradigm as would a phenomenological psychology rooted in the tradition of Merleau-Ponty. We in the west do not so much need a different theory or a new set of techniques that try to emulate another culture's selective insights. We must be wary of academic and political lobbies that throw their support behind some dogmatic position in order to alter the balance of power within the objective paradigm. What we need, more fundamentally, is an effort individually and collectively to adopt at heart in the spirit of our awareness and in the energy of our relationships a felt intentionality that transcends the alienation of subject/object duality. This is what makes a philosophy of authentic presence therapeutic; it tries to condition and facilitate such a transformation.

It is interesting to take note of two additional ongoing efforts to develop what we may identify as a "new psychology." Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's work at the University of Chicago focuses on a "psychology of optimal

experience" that revolves around the "phenomenology of flow," a state which "feels like being carried away by a current, everything moving smoothly without effort" (1993 p.xiii). Dr. Csikszentmihalyi starts by observing painters at work, noting how spontaneous and absorbed they are in their work and how fulfilling they find it. He also notes how artistic products done in this way are "never random or abitrary [but were] true to something deeply sensed or felt within the person" (1993 p.62). Using an ingenious technique of self-report in which participants carry a beeper and answer questions about what they are doing and how they are feeling at several randomly chosen times during the day, Dr. Csikszentmihalyi explores the factors associated with such "flow" experiences in order to help us structure our lives to condition them. However, this work falls short of a true psychology of authentic presence. Its underlying philosophy is fundamentally dualistic and it takes the constituted approach of deliberate strategies and techniques. Csikszentmihalyi, as a behaviorist in the tradition of objective scientific psychology, thinks we must take deliberate "control" of the contents of consciousness in order to "master the external environment" (1990 p.9).[4] He believes we must have a constant supply of external goals and complex tasks on which to focus our psychic energy in order to avoid "the shadowy phantoms that intrude on the

unstructured mind" (1990 p.171). Although he encourages us to adopt the belief that we are "part of everything," and speaks of merging with "the universal flow" (1990 p.240), he does not seem to have room in his psychology for the felt spirituality of this attunement as it is "deeply sensed...within the person." For Csikszentmihalyi, "spirituality" amounts to an "attempt to reduce entropy in consciousness" and a "mental process" that helps integrate us with the "external world" (1993 p.239).

Anne Wilson Schaef believes a "radical paradigm shift" is necessary, not only in the discipline of psychology but in objective western culture itself. Pointing like old Dr.Akram to the impotence of traditional psychotherapeutic techniques, she sets her own work in the context of what she calls the "Living Process Paradigm." She adopts this Living Process Paradigm as a personal call to live "in integrity with herself" and "by the seat of her pants" (1992 pp.10, 11). She is talking about a paradigm of authentic presence in which we try to align ourselves "in spontaneous accord with the intentions of the moment" (PhP p.22). It is her own version of "optimal psychology" based on a spiritual phenomenology of flow, a holistic experience of the world that enables us to "participate in the oneness" and "approach the world through enfolding wholeness in our consciousness and thus act with love" (1992

pp.300, 301). She tells us to take time out from focusing on constituted external goals in order to "flow" with the authentic processes of our unique individuality in open responsiveness with the world. We can heal ourselves, she tells us, if we honor these processes and allow them full expression.

Providing a safe environment for the expression of deep personal processes is the focus of her work, and she has great faith in the therapeutic value of the Living Process System. Of course, ideally the healing process goes beyond the workshops she has designed in which "deep process" work can occur. The larger goal of facilitating such expression is to remove the blocks to honesty, self-esteem, and environmental sensitivity that prevent powerful flow from being experienced on an ongoing basis in our lives. Dr.Schaef believes the deliberate techniques and attempts to control experience emerging from mainstream psychology only contribute to the "escape from intimacy" we seek in the addictive patterns and constituted relationships that tend to be associated with the objective paradigm. She seems to reject any place for technique in facilitating a transformation, as if she would have us ignore the valuable insights of work like Csikszentmihalyi's.

Along the lines of a "new psychology," there is fascinating grounds for discussion embodied in the diverse

elements contained in these two approaches. That is, if we value open communication rather than competitive defensiveness between theories. Both aim in their work at a psychology that will facilitate the healthy emergence of the human species, or in Csikszentmihalyi's words, a psychology for the "third millennium."

In terms of current trends in the mainstream objective discipline of psychology, Hearnshaw (1987 p.274) notes that cognitive processing, including studies of language and visualization, are becoming dominent trends in the field. Such approaches recognize that patterns of being in the world do not necessarily change with insight or behavioral conditioning, but must ultimately be associated with some degree of perceptual restructuring. He notes in this regard that "the formal study of grammar needs supplementing by the study of the expressive functions of language" (p.289), and that there is "an undoubted gap in contemporary psychology" when it comes to the domain of "feeling-value" (pp.296-297). The phenomenology of constituted and authentic presence, along with the empirical studies this formulation may generate, should in this sense have much to contribute to the growing maturity of psychology as the "science" of facilitating the productive healthy emergence of the human species. One can only speculate, from this perspective, the degree to which

philosophies in the tradition of Merleau-Ponty may help bring about an appreciation of the therapeutic and non-dualistic "transpersonal" dimensions of authentic human being and relationship. Perhaps such an appreciation will gradually open the door for a paradigm shift.

FOOTNOTES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

and

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Some of the following footnotes provide acknowledgement and documentation. Others relate incidental information or make underlying themes explicit. Many reflect an open-ended interest in possible future work.

The bibliography is comprehensive and divided into headings: philosophy, psychology, and general. Care has been taken to ensure that references in the text do not relate to more than one entry. Books and articles are listed separately: this may make the references more useful for research in the library. Bibliographical information is provided in the text when passages cited are not from books integral to the research and development of the project.

FOOTNOTES

PHENOMENOLOGY and a NEW AGE

[1] Huston Smith tells us this "new perspective" will emerge out of the postmodern period; an epoch in which man lives with "his world out of focus" (1982 p.15).

[2] Gary Madison tells us the entire history of western philosophy can be seen to take place in a tension between two basic perspectives (1981 pp.291-295). He calls the mainstream tradition "rationalism," the belief that humanity must correlate its reason and streamline its efforts with a noumenal, objective reality. On the other hand, the counter-tradition has always held that humanity experiences reality according to the creative magic of its own perception, and that the detached pursuit of "objective" knowledge is an alienating endeavor. Madison locates Merleau-Ponty within the counter-tradition.

Perhaps the consciousness-raising and protest movements of the sixties, and more recently the "New Age," can be seen as cultural manifestations of this counter-tradition. Work that has been done relating popular cultural movements with traditional counter-rational philosophies includes Daniel Bell, The Cultural Contradictions of Captitalism (N.Y: Basic, 1976); Marshall Berman, All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity (N.Y: Simon and Schuster, 1982); Morris Dickstein, Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties (Basic, 1977); and Frank Musgrove, Ecstasy and Holiness: Counterculture and the Open Society (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1974).

[3] The "New Age" and the "New Thought" that preceded it are popular terms for a cultural tradition that seeks to cultivate a healing awarness of communion in relationship and being. Rather than argue for a theoretically possible interpretation of reality, it struggles to articulate the context of a personal and cultural challenge to transform dualistic alienation, adversarial relationship, and the exploitation of nature. Seen in loose relation to a persistent counter-tradition in western academic philosophy, this movement calls for an openness in relationship more profound than a dualistic paradigm of objective thinking can embrace.

The "New Age" is something of an umbrella term for many approaches and philosophies that share an optimistic faith in the spiritual possibilities of humanity. Certain underlying themes inform the movement, for example in its

various mythologies of spiritual guidance from beyond the rational mind and "critical mass theory," in which a decisive number of pioneering individuals will be capable of spontaneously transforming global awareness (Keys, 1982).

The "New Age," as a popular trend often in the form of a more or less dogmatic religion, also tends to be associated with various cult activities, psychic phenomena, imported eastern ideals, and often curious cosmologies (many of which are explored and deconstructed in Schultz, 1989). For David Spangler, however, the New Age is most fundamentally a living form of idealism (and he acknowledges "it is not considered sophisticated to be an idealist": interview in The Light: A Magazine of the Heart 1991, p.38). Spangler, bringing to mind J.G.Fiche, calls idealism in contemporary western society a "repressed emotion." He attempts to distinguish the trendy and sensational elements of the "New Age" from the felt energy of relationship at the heart of a therapeutic cultural movement:

> The new age is simply a symbol representing the human heart and intellect in partnership with God building a better world that can celebrate values of community and wholeness. It is a symbol for the emergence of social behaviour based on a compassionate and creatively stimulating world-view; it has very little to do with the emergence of psychic phenomena.
>
> 1988 p.29

And again in his book Reimagination of the World:

> New Age spirituality at heart is not a set of beliefs or dogmas but a way of perceiving and experiencing the world with compassion, honoring its deep connectedness and wholeness.
>
> 1991 pp.127-128

4 David Michael Levin locates current philosophical thinking "very precariously on the boundary of modernity and the dawn of a different age" (1988 p.26). Postmodernism might be seen as a period of transitional dislocation associated with the "struggle over the corpse of epistemology" (which Taylor points out later in the same passage is "far from over"). The skeptical nihilism Gary Comstock refers to as the "current hype" of postmodernism (1989 p.189) may be less of a doctrine to be rejected than an understandable response to the radically objective scientism of modernity. Then again, Ronald McKinney laments that the "one certain truth about postmodernism is that, whatever definition is proposed to express its difference

from modernism, it will be immediately challenged" (he goes on to suggest "radical pluralism": 1988 p.306).

5 Also in this tradition, Charles Taylor is "fiercely committed" to finding a rational ground upon which to assess "basic differences of spiritual outlook" (1985 I p.12). He speaks emphatically of the cultural urgency of questions revolving around the "large scale cultural mutation taking place in our civilization" (1985 I p.132). Gary Madison refers to an "emerging global civilization (1993 p.40) and clearly shares Merleau-Ponty's "hope" that we may be at "one of those moments when history moves on" (Signs p.23).

Merleau-Ponty's work explores the power of truth at the moment of creative emergence. He tells us that "philosophy finds its surest evidence at the moment of inception" (Signs p.2). Most poignantly, he cries out against the cultural blight that characterizes the human landscape. He points to the "extraordinary disorder" of industrial society and sees the "classical forms of the human establishment" ailing dramatically (Signs p.4). As Nietzsche strikes out against Christianity, Merleau-Ponty locates Capitalism at the decadent root of a cultural pathology. Both philosophers, revealing their allegiance to a therapeutic dimension of human tradition, vehemently reject modernity's antithetical orientation and lament the despiritualization of humanity's relationship with the world.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

[1] Not so much truly human in any ultimate sense of what humans "most truly are," perhaps, but *humanly true* in the phenomenological sense that we are "in the truth when we are true to ourselves" as intelligent organisms and agents (Madison, 1988 article pp.22-23: See footnote 4, chapter two below).

[2] In this sense, the project can be seen as "a contribution to the postmodern discourse of critical social theory." As David Michael Levin characterizes the relationship of critical social theory to his own philosophical work, "whereas the authors of critical social theory do not consider the history of Being when they consider our present historical situation, we shall" (1988, p.16).

[3] Anticipating the negative, reactive projects of such postmodern philosophers as Richard Rorty, Kant feels "the first and most important task of philosophy [is] to deprive [speculative, foundational] metaphysics, once and for all, of its injurious influence" (Bxxxi, p.30). What Kant does not see, of course, is that this injurious influence extends to his own project of foundational epistemology. Kant teaches us an important lesson, however, by retaining a place in his philosophy for a "positive and very important use" (Bxxv, p.26). Kant realizes that metaphysical curiosity is fundamental to human being, and he does not lose touch with spiritual concern for such things as "God, freedom, and immortality."

[4] In this regard, it is also interesting to note that Habermas, in his theory of cultural evolution, has abandoned Kohlberg's psychology of social development primarily because of its limited conception of atomized personhood:

> according to Kohlberg's theory...the ego-self has achieved the highest, most mature stage of moral development when it has mastered the cognitive capacity to reason from principles (rather than norms), is demonstratibly an autonomous agent in the Kantian sense (i.e. the will is determined solely by its unconditional respect for moral law), and is capable of *abstract reversibility*, i.e. assuming the hypothetical, counter-factual standpoint of the generalized other...Habermas...has recently deemed it necessary to abandon the Kohlberian model. Before altogether abandoning it, however, he added a *seventh* stage of moral development, believing

this addition would overcome the major objections to the theory. What he added was a stage of "communicative ethics."

The commentator goes on that:

> This enables us to clarify a difference between the ego and the self. Unlike the self, whose form of identity consists precisely in its openness to processes of change, the ego is an essentially *fixed* identity structure which does not have a developed capacity for this kind of responsiveness. It is important to realize that the responsiveness in question, here, will often call for personal growth, a willingness to change.
>
> Levin, 1989 pp.124-125

5

The parallels between Merleau-Ponty and James are exciting. For example, as a pragmatist James "turns towards concreteness"; he sees it as a method of "settling metaphysical disputes that might otherwise be interminable" by setting them to "work within the stream of experience" (1964 pp.384, 386). In The Principles of Psychology (1983: originally 1890), James discusses the nature of words:

> Suppose we try to recall a forgotten name. The state of our consciousness is peculiar. There is a gap therein; but no mere gap. It is a gap that is intensively active. A sort of wraith of the name is in it, beckoning us in a given direction.
>
> p.243

This is reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty's important assertion that words, rather than being the objective labels of ideas, each manifest a certain "sense-giving intention" (PhP p.183). Further, James' psychological analysis of "interstitial thinking" (1983 pp.992-993), in which the unspoken and unformulated elements of thought come into play as the "negative conditions" of speech, can be seen as an undeveloped form of Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the silent horizon of authentic language. Overall, James' phenomenological explorations evoke a powerful feeling of the lived world that seems closely akin to Merleau-Ponty's. In his analyses of spontaneous "ideo-motor action" and the efforts of "action after deliberation" for example (1983 pp.1130-1156), James tells us that our thought's "essential consequence" is action (p.1134), but that we can block or inhibit this immediate action. Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, tells us that "we have recourse to an act of will only to go against our true decision" (PhP p.436). A comparative study of the two thinkers might prove very

insightful, especially in the present changing climate of psychological thought and practice:

> The history of William James' influence on American psychology is still being written because his influence continues to make itself felt in new ways. The recent increase of interest in James is itself an intriguing phenomenon and one that merits our attention because I think it indicates something about the present state of psychology...James' ideal for philosophical as well as scientific investigation was to remain radically open to the world, to be wary of our own conceptualizations.
>
> McDonagh, pp. 49-50

According to a first-hand report Spiegelberg relates, when Husserl first read James' Principles he had the "feeling that James had said what he wanted to say" (1969 pp.113-114). Although Spiegelberg goes on to point out some positive similarities between them, it may have been James' effect on the uncoalesced ("unthought-of") element in Husserl's work that found its way most profoundly into Merleau-Ponty's. In addition, not only is James discussed in various gestalt literature with which Merleau-Ponty was no doubt familiar (e.g. Goldstein 1940 and Kohler 1947), but Husserl's notated copy of the Principles is held by the Husserl archives where Merleau-Ponty spent much time studying (Spiegelberg 1969 p.114). The spirit of resemblance between their works is not surprising.

As a final note, although Merleau-Ponty is critical of gestalt psychology for, among other things, its "psychophysical isomorphism" (Kohler p.39), a similar criticism might not apply to James when the latter says, for example, that "every pulse of feeling which we have is the correlate of some neural activity" (1983 p.1134). For although Merleau-Ponty rejects the "constancy hypothesis" (or the point by point correlation of physiological stimuli with experience), he acknowledges that "there is not a word, not a form of behavior which does not owe something to purely biological behavior" (PhP p.189). Such an acknowledgement does not necessarily reflect an ultimately objective perspective. For the gestaltist, however, "experience is not a force which could interfere with the chain of physiological causation" (Kohler p.36). For James, on the other hand, "consciousness is *in its very nature impulsive*" (1983 p.1134). Moreover, James feels that through experience we can be "in communion with the Ideal" (1982 p.521), although he does not rigorously discuss the "metaphysical bearings" (1982 p.523) of such experience.

Gestalt psychology seems to have no room for such thinking.

6 Quoted from Hazel Barnes' introduction to Being and Nothingness (p.x). Referring to Sartre's essay "La Transcendance de l'Ego: Esquisse d'une description phénoménologique" (originally published in Recherches Philosophiques 6, 1936, pp. 85-123), she describes how Sartre makes the *"pre-reflective cogito"* our primary consciousness. In a full translation of this essay (Williams and Kirkpatrick, 1957), although he isolates this primordial consciousness from our awareness of lived selfhood, Sartre thinks his analysis provides "the only possible refutation of solipsism" (p.102), and has therapeutic implications:

> [This] absolute, impersonal consciousness...when it is purified of the *I* [as a constituted ego?], no longer has anything of the *subject*. It is no longer a collection of representations. It is quite simply a first condition and an absolute source of existence. And the relation of interdependence established by this absolute consciousness between *me* and the World is sufficient...as a philosophical foundation for an ethics and a politics which are absolutely positive.
>
> p.106

7

> We must conceive of a primordial *We [On]* that has its own authenticity and furthermore never ceases but continues to uphold the greatest passions of our adult life and to be experienced anew in each of our perceptions.
>
> Signs p.175

Gary Madison interprets *On* as "One" (1981 p.41). This passage was published in "The Philosopher and His Shadow" which was written in 1959, three years before Merleau-Ponty's death. It is this primordial "we," or the felt oneness of belonging "here and now to the same world," which does not so much refute solipsism as transform it into an impotent academic philosophical problem.

8 Exploring the theme that human knowledge should not fundamentally strive to correspond with an objective reality, Gadamer discusses the sense in which human understanding involves interpretation. Merleau-Ponty maintains not only that all explanation is "probable interpretation" (PhP p.115), but that perception itself should be"understood as interpretation" (PhP p.37). Both philosophers develop a sense in which understanding and interpretation transcend mere intellectual activity (Gadamer through the philosophical development of historical consciousness and Merleau-Ponty in terms of a phenomenology of human embodiment).

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER TWO: PRESENCE and PHILOSOPHY

1 For both Maslow and Merleau-Ponty an awareness of Being involves more than a cognition. For Merleau-Ponty it implies authentic presence. For Maslow it involves a "peak experience" of living in which the individual is most "here and now," "able to fuse with the world," at peace," and "fully functioning" (1968 pp.104, 105, 108). As Maslow's thought matured he began to formulate the "peak experience" in terms of a phenomenological dimension of powerful relationship natural in all but those people who "turn away" from this "plateau" of experience (1964 p.22). While Merleau-Ponty was primarily concerned with the philosophical articulation of authentic presence, Maslow (Chairman of the Department of Psychology at Brandeis University and President of the American Psychological Association 1967-68) wanted to initiate a psychology that embraced this powerful dimension of being in the world.

2 James likens rationality to a bodily function. As breathing when it is unobstructed provides no pleasure, so when breathing or our rational need for order and meaning are interfered with we become profoundly uncomfortable. James tells us that it is "hopeless" to look for universal agreement in philosophy (1965 p.21) because each personality will require a different combination of elements to satisfy his sentiment of rationality (1965 p.36). James would agree with J.G. Fichte that the "philosophy one chooses...depends on the type of man one is" (Fichte, The Science of Knowledge, Cambridge University Press, 1982 p.16). "The whole man within us is at work when we choose our philosophical opinions," says James (1965 p.24). Whereas Fichte, as an idealist, uses this insight to pass judgement on the personality of dogmatists and materialists, James aligns himself more with contemporary postmodernism by seeing that no "objective" philosophical position is possible and not adopting one. Unlike the nihilistic skepticism typical of postmodernism, however, James discusses two further elements of philosophical thought. He strongly maintains the "necessity of faith in our mental attitude" (1965 p.23) and notes that philosophy must "define the future congruously with our *spontaneous powers*" (1965 p.16). James does not despair that philosophy can provide no absolute formulas; he recognizes more importantly that philosophy helps "define the future" and that faith and belief are conditioning elements of human nature. For more

on James see footnote five of the Introduction above.

3 The results of a philosophical search for meaning are "often unforeseeable" due to the fundamentally creative nature of the process involved. In this regard, Taylor points out that discovering meaning for human beings depends largely "on our powers of expression" and is deeply "interwoven with inventing" (1989 pp.18, 22; see also pp.374-375, 493).

4 Jacob Needleman points to the disillusion of philosophy students when they find their discipline to be dry, purely academic, and seemingly unrelated to the pursuit of meaning in life. He thinks "real" or "authentic" philosophy should be concerned with "remembering" the "truth" about ourselves (1982 pp.4; 235: see also 1981 p.xii). The "magic of real philosophy is the magic of the specifically human act of self-questioning" (1982 p.13), he writes. On the other hand

> The "problems of philosophy" are only the tracks left by the questions of philosophy - something that has long since moved on, and is still moving within every serious human being.
>
> 1982 p.8

Gary Madison, to take another example of such an attitude towards the "problems of philosophy," refers to relegating at least one such traditional problem (the relationship of mind and body) to the "ash heap of history" (1988 article, p.3). He calls philosophy a "supremely human undertaking" that is concerned with the "humanness of human beings" (p.4). In this vein, Madison rightly recognizes language as something that conditions humanness. Yet when he goes on to say that "what we most truly are in our ownmost inner self is a conversation" (p.23), he characterizes human being in theoretical and seemingly reductive terms. Being "true to ourselves" means something more than our "narratives" containing a "significant amount of ongoing coherence." As Taylor (1991 pp.15, 29) and Nietzsche (p.12 above) would agree, being true to ourselves involves fundamentally more: it involves courage, continuous self-examination, and a strong commitment to being honest and open with others. Being true to ourselves must not be reduced to just one more philosophical problem, or formulated as if it were one.

5 Here I use the term "intentionality" not only to affirm that consciousness is "of" something, but in the broader sense developed, for example, by Rollo May in Love and Will. In this sense, intentionality is the living energy that structures perception and characterizes human "aliveness" (1969 p.243). To the degree that intentionality is volitional it is not so much a matter of deliberate effort as it is a committment of creative energy, the action rooted not in intellectual decree but the authentic orientation of the organism. Merleau-Ponty calls this "operative" intentionality (PhP p.xvii) and relates it not to "I think" but "I can" (PhP p.137). Intentionality is in this sense the "element of creative genius" in perception (PhP p.43). Coleridge (quoted in Taylor, 1988 p.379) calls this dimension of human being the "primary imagination," the "living Power and prime agent of perception."

True healing occurs as a result of a change in this authentic commitment of creative energy. Richard Moss calls this "consecration" and tells us it is a process that "recalls us toward the divinity of ourselves at every moment" (1986 p.41).

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER THREE: PHILOSOPHICAL HUMAN BEING AND WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

1 Attempts to listen to the philosophical voice of indigenous North American people include Mander (1991), Robert Persig in his latest book (1991), and J.D.Rabb in ongoing research and teaching at Lakehead University (1993). The quote from Chief Seattle is from his response to an 1854 treaty proposal by President Franklin Pierce. The words were translated and credited to Chief Seattle by Dr. Henry A. Smith in the Seattle Sunday Star, October 29, 1877 (and can also be found in an article by Clarence Bagley called "Chief Seattle and Angeline" in the Washington Historical Quarterly 22, 1931 pp.243-275).

2 Madison tells us that hermeneutical philosophy "seeks not to abandon philosophy's traditional commitment to universality" (1991 p.28). By "universality," however, he does not mean to invoke an objective universal cultural yardstick. One of the prominent themes of postmodern dialogue is precisely the hermeneutical insight that all human understanding involves interpretation and situated perspective. Another characteristic of postmodern philosophy is the relativism that seems hard to avoid when objective truth-in-itself is given up. Indeed, if humanity is seen as a diverse range of isolated local perspectives with no ground upon which to rationally arbitrate, the efforts of western philosophy may be perceived as seriously undermined. Addressing this dilemma, Madison believes that universality in philosophy must not be abandoned but re-conceptualized in a "geninely non-metaphysical [by which he means primarily 'non-antithetical'] way." This project attempts precisely to develop an articulation of truth and being in non-antithetical terms. Yet Gadamer might point out that rational arbitration is not as important as "fusing horizons" in the dialectical process of philosophical human being. In the emerging tradition of philosophy in which Merleau-Ponty is a central figure, the effort of universalizing human values is grounded not in some ahistorically objective standard but in the global solidarity of human being towards which we must work in the interests of human well-being and survival.

3 The important role of philosophy as conceptual articulation is not unanimously recognized even by western philosophers. Richard Rorty, for example, tells us that the "real work" of cultural growth is done by "the scientists"

and the people who develop the life of their society in "struggle and pain" (1982 p.168). All the philosopher does, on this account, is "take the finished first-level product" and "jack it up a few levels of abstraction." Nietzsche, similarly, speaks of philosophers who defend their prejudices with "reasons sought after the event" (1990 p.36). The creative potential of philosophy is belittled in such formulations.

At one point Rorty acknowledges that "liberal democracy" may need "philosophical articulation," and he rightly recognizes that such articulation is not best understood in terms of providing foundations or justifications, but still he clings to a mundane conception of philosophy when he maintains that the philosopher "puts politics first and tailers a philosophy to suit" (1991 I p.178). Indeed, Rorty expicitly thinks that philosophy "does not have a role to play as such in contemporary public life" (from an interview in The Guardian, March 13 1992 p.25). Yet Rorty believes that "our era is on the point of eliminating the problems inherited by the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries," and is perhaps thinking of reordering the world beyond the elimination of these problems when he says that "we will always need philosophers."

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER FOUR: LANGUAGE AND TRUTH

[1] In this paper we will use the terms "speech" and "language" interchangeably insofar as creative, originating speech is the authentic use of language and empirical speech is the constituted use of language (e.g. Signs p.44 [13]). In either case, "speech" is not just speaking; it is the active use of language "in the man who listens or reads, or in the one who speaks or writes" (PhP p.179).

[2] Polanyi puts his finger on an essential dynamic of authentic and constituted presence in his distinction between tacit, subsidiary awareness and explicit, focal awareness. He points to the self-conscious clumsiness that happens when we direct our focal awareness of an event explicitly upon the subsidiary events embraced in the gestalt of the "comprehensive activity" (1958 p.56). He uses the example of driving a nail and all the complex actions of balance and muscle tension, etc. that go with it of which if we were to become explicitly aware we would probably smash our thumb. He also, like Merleau-Ponty, discusses the blind man and his cane in an attempt to show how pervasive the dynamics of tacit awareness are in our daily being in the world. With practice, that is, the objective elements of perception by feeling with a cane (striking objects, determining distances and safe pathways, etc.) become tacit elements of a "second nature" to the organism in the focal context of being or dwelling in the world. How the "tacit co-operates with the explicit," Polanyi insightfully points out (1958 p.87), is a fundamental question which must be addressed not only in terms of practical activity but the dynamics of language and awareness in any philosophy attempting to overcome the objective paradigm of modernity. This idea will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

[3] Indeed, generating growing interest in cognitive psychology is "implicit learning," which focuses on the the silent learning processes that "antedate awareness and the capacity for conscious control of mentation" (Reber 1992; see also Sam Rakeover's "Empirical Criterion for Task Susceptibility to Introspective Awareness and Awareness Effects" in Philosophical Psychology 6, 1993 pp.451-467).

[4] The root of this paradox shows up most fundamentally in Merleau-Ponty's discussion of free will. He tells us that it is not within our power to fulfill a role in a way

that "comes naturally," and that we must not think we can fulfill a role merely through an act of will (PhP p.436). This would amount to constituted behavior. Yet he tells us we can "transform" our being in the world (PhP p.441) and make a choice about our "whole character and our manner of being in the world" (PhP p.438). How can we make such a decision? This is true choosing: by re-directing the volitional focus of intentionality. This is what I call a "leap of intentionality" (or less dramatically a "shift of intentionality") in footnote 8, chapter 6 below: see p.236.

5 Argumentation 9 (February 1995), with such insightful articles as Thomas Russman's "Postmodernism and the Parody of Argument," is an excellent source of current discussion on the issue of argumentation and the practice of postmodern (or perhaps "post-postmodern") philosophy. Several authors take differing views, but would probably agree that rigor of articulation in a context of communicative solidarity is more valuable in philosophy than the rigor of strict demonstration or defensive formulation.

6 Insofar as Rorty's work has been seen as "too literary," he may perhaps (with or without his consent and despite his philosophical modesty) be counted as one of the "poetic world-disclosers" for whose work "notions like argumentation and rigor" may be "innapropriate" (1991 p.124). In his powerful deconstructions of the objective epoch, after all, he can be seen as more than a brilliant commentator. His idea that philosophy should be therapeutic tends to burst through the seams of his strictly reactive outlook on the very strength of his polemic against the objective discipline. Still, especially at a meeting of poetic world-disclosers, Rorty would be a strong voice of positional argumentation and defensive rigor.

7 "God" will be discussed in the next chapter. Here it is appropriate to point out that human culture has tended to have a defensive attitude towards the objectified beliefs of historical traditions at the expense of communicative solidarity in the felt spiritual dimension of human experience.

8 Again, one of the main transitional postmodern problems has been how to reconcile the universal aspirations of philosophy with the relativism that emerges when knowledge is no longer grounded in an objective in-itself reality. In this sense Madison tells us that philosophy

deals with rationality and that rationality is universal (1991 p.28). This rather begs the question since the nature of rationality is one of the deepest questions of philosophy. Madison then goes on to characterize rationality as a process of dialogue ("communicative rationality") that extends to the "global" community (1991 p.33). Extends, that is, not in a sense of grounding any one perspective as fundamentally true in any absolute objective way, but in a sense of building in a "trans-cultural" context the most humanly supportive environment in which to dwell.

Michael Polanyi points out that the "personal coefficient" of human knowledge does not stop humanity from transcending individual subjectivity by "striving passionately to fulfill personal obligations to universal standards" (1958 p.65).

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER FIVE: THE HORIZONS OF PRESENCE

1 According to Merleau-Ponty, "Speech inaugurated a new world. We who are inside it...know what a Copernican revolution it introduced" (Prose p.42). Also, for Gadamer, speech "brings a totality of meaning into play *without being able to express it totally*" (italics my own). By the same token, for Merleau-Ponty, "the idea of *complete* expression is nonsensical" (Signs p.43 [37]). It is interesting to consider these ideas in light of Derrida's proposal that "there is no full speech" (Of Grammatology p.69).

2 The term "bio-centrism" was suggested to me by excellent comments made by Barry Allen at McMaster University in response to a graduate essay on the relationship of Merleau-Ponty and Derrida. A more appropriate term to apply to Merleau-Ponty as a therapeutic philosopher, however, arises insofar as this tradition explores the importance of "bioresonance": that is, the "mutual responsivity and responsibility of individual and environment" (Ywahoo, 1987 p.246). In this sense, the term "eco-centrism" (Argumentation 9, 1995, 203-233) would be more applicable in the context of therapeutic philosophy.

3 In this sense, as we have seen, authentic language is fundamentally creative whereas constituted language is more specifically formal. Michael Polanyi invokes this distinction (pointing to Piaget's distinction between *adaptation* and *assimilation*) when he tells us that the former use of language "represents the ideal of speaking impersonally according to strict rules; the second relies on a personal intervention of the speaker" (1958 p.105). He goes on to observe that to use what we have here called authentic language is to "modify the frame of reference within ourselves within which we shall henceforth interpret our experience; it is to modify ourselves."

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER SIX: METAPHYSICS ITSELF

[1] Eugene F. Bertoldi (1985) expresses the view that Merleau-Ponty's metaphysics in "Eye and Mind" (EM) is "basically misguided" (p.1). First of all, I find it incredible that anyone would attempt a serious discussion of Merleau-Ponty's metaphysics without taking The Visible and the Invisible into account. Moreover, although Bertoldi correctly recognizes that EM is more of a work on metaphysics than a "theory of painting," he goes on to ascribe to Merleau-Ponty the view that painting is the *only* "sphere of experience from which... significant metaphysical insights into the nature of the Visible can be developed" (p.2). This distorted interpretation misses the general therapeutic significance of Merleau-Ponty's work.

Bertoldi notes the "operationalism" (the "willful manipulation of concepts": p.7) with which Merleau-Ponty charges scientific thinking can also be found in painting. Of course, Merleau-Ponty would agree. "Operationalism" is a mechanism of constitited presence and as such characterizes an existential dimension of human being. It is primarily the intentionality, and not the specific activity, in question. Merleau-Ponty calls our attention to the moment of creative genesis in the flow of authentic activity. In this he points us to a neglected dimension of our relationship with the world, which the scientific paradigm in its orientation of dualistic separation tends to negate.

Bertoldi's article is well-written and contains many valuable insights, but at the same time is sweepingly unsympathetic with the style and developing metaphysical insight of Merleau-Ponty's thought. For example, when he asks whether the concept of flesh specifically "explains how the painter's vision 'gives rise' to the painting," does he really expect Merleau-Ponty to *explain* it? Furthermore, when he calls the flesh a "metaphysical category," Bertoldi is offering an inappropriate characterization. Merleau-Ponty, who tells us the flesh has "no name in any philosophy" (Viz p.147), would be least of all likely to explain anything in terms of "metaphysical categories."

[2] Ronald McKinney writes about a "paradigm conflict" between "holism" and "postmodernism." Holism, he points out, focuses on the "unity of the universe" and postmodernism on the "ultimate pluralism of all levels of reality" (McKinney, 1988 p.299). Yet this difference is not a source of fundamental conflict when holism is not blown into monism. Holism, we are further told, is primarily

concerned with "presence" while postmodernism attends to the quality of absense in experience. Merleau-Ponty's is a holism in which phenomenological presence is the ultimate concern but absense is the ultimate metaphysical "foundation." Most fundamental, it seems to me, are the different styles of experience in the world that holism and postmodernism can be seen to advocate:

> Postmodernists are skeptical of the mystic's claim that the difference and distance between subject and object can be transcended. The unity of the self and world is an illusion for postmodernists, while the reverse is the case for holists. The ecstatic certainty that comes from mystical intution is simply denied by postmodernists who are riddled by radical epistemological and ontologial doubt...If holists thus look forward to the ecstacy of mystical illumination, post-modernists anticipate the carnivalesque celebration of radical hermeneutical freedom.
>
> McKinney, 1988 p.309

In terms of these characterizations of experience, Merleau-Ponty would have to be classified as a "holist." However, he is not interested in some kind of mystical intuition; simply the actual lived experience of unity beyond subject-object duality. Merleau-Ponty provides an ideal resolution between holism and postmodernism, retaining the ideals of unity, optimism, and meaningful perception of holism while respecting the philosophical insights of postmodernism around the ambiguity of reality, the illusion of pursuing objectively true knowledge, and what McKinney calls "hermeneutical freedom."

3 Rabb thinks Rorty has shown that "metaphysics is impossible" from an antirepresentational perspective (1993 p.9), as if the search for meaning and truth could only take place in the attempt to "build an accurate picture of reality" (p.11).

4 The "Copernican Revolution" Kant initiated in western thought continues to make itself felt as a challenge to any dogmatic philosophical orientation (even though we may call him, as Rorty does, on his attempt to establish an ahistorical framework of inquiry, or what we may call his philosophical absolutism). Even though the fundamentally dualistic orientation established by Descartes also continues to make itself felt, Merleau-Ponty tells us Descartes takes up an "untenable position" of

dualistic alienation from the world (PhP p.375). Western scientists, along with popular culture, are increasingly coming to see the dualistic relationship conditioned by Cartesian philosophy as a "mistake": see for example Descartes Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain (A.R.Damasio, Grosset-Putnam 1994) and the enthusiastic review it receives in Omni (November 1994 p.10).

5 Rorty can be considered ethnocentric in two senses. Philosophically, he characterizes his work as ethnocentric in a defensive gesture against the uncommitted cultural relativism to which a lack of objective standards of truth might seem to lead. In other words, convinced that the democratic ideals of personal freedom and ideological tolerance are worthwhile cultural achievments, Rorty wants to avoid a position in which we "become so open-minded our brains fall out" (1991 I p.203). Thus he tells us we should not "pretend an impossible tolerance of every other group" and that we must "in practice, privlege our own group" (1991 I p.29). This is the "inevitable ethnocentrism to which we are all condemned" (p.31), and from which in contact with other cultures we can ground the process of "reweaving our beliefs" (p.26) in open communication:

> An antirepresentationaist view of inquiry leaves one without a skyhook with which to escape from the ethnocentrism produced by acculturation, but...the liberal culture of recent times has found a strategy for avoiding the disadvantage of ethnocentrism. This is to be open to encounters with other actual or possible cultures, and to *make this openness central to its self-image.*
> 1991 I p.2

However, ethnocentrism is more commonly used in a pejorative, culturally self-aggrandizing way, and Rorty also makes noises of this sort. Although he tells us that "preliterate natives have some ideas and practices that we can usefully weave together with our own," he also expresses his belief that "the vocabulary the western social democrats use is the best vocabulary the race has come up with so far." Moreover, he invokes images of cultural assimilation when he tells us that we in the west "should think of ourselves as part of a paegant of historical progress that will eventually encompass all of the human race" (1991 I p.219). This may seem like a noble aspiration in terms of western ideals like "the replacement of force by persuasion" and "free consensus." The trouble is that this assimilation also seems to include Rorty's typically western objective

concept of personhood (that psychologists will eventually do all their work with "cerebrescopes": 1979 p.122); the west's fundamentally materialistic naturalism ("every speech, thought, theory, poem, composition, and philosophy will turn out to be completely predictable in purely naturalistic terms: 1979 p.380); and the west's exploitive, market-driven, profit-oriented economic paradigm (there is, Rorty tells us, "no alternative to capitalism" in a democratic society: Guardian, March 13 1992).

6 Intimidated by the powerfully defensive and often evasive answers he typically gave to participants, I did at one point corner Rorty alone in an elevator during a series of seminars he gave at McMaster University (1985). When I asked him how he saw the relationship of his philosophy to the various therapeutic movements in general culture that also seemed critical of a dualistically alienated paradigm, his only response was "that's your project, not mine."

7 Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus distinguish between the "detached" deliberation of "deliberate judgement" and the "involved" deliberation of "egoless situation-governed comportment" (Ogilvy, p.122). Bucke, perhaps "carried away with the wonder of spontaneous coping" associated with the latter, characterizes Cosmic Consciousness fundamentally in terms of intuition (1961 pp.13, 15). He would agree with Merleau-Ponty that we cannot invoke a detached, rationally deliberate decision to become authentic in our relationship with the world. Bucke, however, equating all language with constituted language, feels that Cosmic Consciousness will transcend speech and articulation. He does not see the profound sense in which language animates the human landscape, or how authentic language is transparent to felt meaning and emerging truth. Thus, he does not see how language and articulation can provide us with the hermeneutical choice to cultivate authentic relationship with the world.

We must be careful here not to give *too* much importance to language, which provides the fertile soil of awareness in which choice becomes possible. The choice itself, which can be seen to confront us all, is not accomplished with speech. It always comes down to a personal, lived effort of intentionality.

8 It is such a leap of intentionality which is paradoxically effortless, in that it transforms our need for stressful exertions of deliberate will-power, and yet

calls for a challenging effort of fundamental re-orientation. We may undertake diet after diet, for example, in an effort to lose weight, but only a fundamental re-orientation of the energy we give to eating will permanently transform our body shape. This may seem like a matter of hard work and gradual change rather than some kind of leap, but it is a leap we must make over and over until the orientation it represents becomes habitual. Consider another example provided by William James in his "psychology of volition" (1983 p.1132-1133). We sometimes drag ourselves out of bed in the morning with a resentful effort of painful will power despite contrary wishes. At such times we have difficult mornings and often bad days. Yet we can also get up in the morning "without any struggle or decision at all" by simply rising to meet the day without giving energy to the sources of resistance which tend to overwhelm us. It is this kind of leap of intentionality we can muster in those moments we find ourselves giving energy innapropriately to constituted behaviour. We can re-orient ourselves to authentic relationship not by forcing ourselves at every moment but by consciously re-directing our energy from compulsion or resistance to open responsiveness. One of the most useful tools we can use to fascilitate this leap is detachment in awareness, whereby those sources of compulsion or resistance, rather than blindly overwhelming us, become an unattached consciousness of passing emotional events in our greater power to orchestrate according to our best intentions.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER SEVEN: PRINCIPLE OF AN ETHIC

[1] The relationship that fundamentally eludes western culture is precisely to be in love. Not to be romantically "in love," in a relationship of sweet intimacy and sexual involvement, but more fundamentally to experience love as a felt oneness in relationship. To be be in love with someone in this sense is to experience the flow of authentic presence with them. To experience the flow of authentic presence in relationship with the world is true love.

[2] There is a humanism that runs deeper than men's and women's movements, and from which the fundamentally therapeutic insight of these and other dimensions of social transformation emerge. A diverse and powerful voice of protest against the traditional objective patriarchy of western modernity resounds loudly and clearly at every level of society. Richard Moss attempts to articulate the nature and present the personal challenge of this humanism when he tells us it involves "endless self-examination, creative relationship, and growing love for the truth of ourselves. There is no judgement here," he assures us, "only an ever-deepening creative relationship to the immediacy of life" (Richard Moss, 1986 pp.185-186).

[3] It is this lived moment of emerging truth and creative human relationship that Merleau-Ponty refers to when he tells us that conscious experience, "though not atomized into instants, is at least haunted by the specter of the instant which it is obliged continually to exorcise by a free act" (PhP p.438). For Merleau-Ponty, it is in this dimension of awareness and creative relationship with the world that true human freedom lies.

[4] Politics has fallen into worse repute than philosophy in popular western consciousness. If we cannot facilitate new values within existing political structures, the only alternatives are apathy or some dimension of revolution.
See John Dewey's Education and Experience (N.Y: Macmillan, 1938) for the exploration of a humanly responsive paradigm within the institution of education.

[5] It is not easy to determine just what Sartre means by "authenticity." A more intense treatment of his position in this regard can be found in Linda Bull's "Loser Wins: The Importance of Play in a Sartrean Ethics of Authenticity" (Phenomenology in a Pluralistic Context pp.5-13).

6 Gabriel Marcel's notions of emodiment, participation, encounter, creative agency, and philosophy as "an aid to discovery rather than a matter of strict demonstration" (Marcel, 1969 p.2: see also Spiegelberg, 1969 p.43: "metaphysics as a matter of personal reorientation") resonate deeply with Merleau-Ponty's. In The Mystery of Being, Marcel calls the experience of the present moment, or here and nowness, "ecceity" (1969 p.216). It is not the isolated ecceity of the defensive ego we are interested in, however, but the present moment of felt oneness and open relationship that characterize *genuine encounter.*

7 McLuhan suggests that the "aspiration of our time for wholeness, empathy, and depth of awareness is a natural adjunct of electric technology" (1964 p.64).

8 Jiddu Krishnamurti not only warns us to avoid intellectual pretense in our philosophy, but goes so far as to say that "intellectual passion is not passion at all" (1972 p.61). Yet in the course of his many talks at western universities, he constantly urges his audience to "examine" (1973 p.339), "understand" (1973 p.335), be "aware" (1973 p.295), and "see the truth" (1973 p.350). Like Merleau-Ponty, Krishnamurti warns us to avoid the "detour of words"- as we seek a therapeutic transformation of felt awareness.

9 It would be interesting to consider the relationship of Merleau-Ponty's thought to religion. Bertram (1988), for example, claims that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, and in particular his later work, is "incompatible with Christianity" (p.275). Of course Merleau-Ponty's thought is incompatible with dogmatic, rigidly institutionalized, "constituted" religion. The question, I suppose, is whether Christianity is necessarily dogmatic. Gary Comstock (1989) asks whether "postmodern religious dialogue" is possible at all, and wonders what will be left of religion when there are no more "objective moral truths" (p.191).

10 Adopting a typically eastern perspective, Charles Taber tells us that transformative philosophy involves the idea that "ordinary experience is a dream" (1983 p.1). At the same time, he reminds us that what characterizes transformative philosophy has "nothing to do with the specific content" of a philosophical text (pp.96, 127). What makes a philosophy transformative, rather, is that it reaches beyond the objective logic and analysis of traditional states of consciousness and works toward "a transition to a new state of awareness" (p.1).

FOOTNOTES

EPILOGUE

[1] In his excellent archeology of modern western culture's moral orientation, Charles Taylor in Sources of the Self identifies three major "families" of what he calls "moral sources." He acknowledges as moral imperatives the "long-standing moral notions of freedom, benevolence, and the affirmation of ordinary life," distibuting these between those who ground such standards either in their "original theistic" sense, in the dualistic "naturalism of disengaged reason," or in some form of "Romantic expressivism" (1989 p.495). Taylor's own outlook is strongly critical of the modern paradigm of disengaged reason, which we have explored in the present project in the personally felt terms of constituted being in the world. Taylor (1989 p.85) points to the strictly "procedural conception ethics" that often accompany naturalistic theories and how they tend to occlude any felt sense of moral space (which in this project we tried to avoid by saying that "ethics do not need to be drawn from the perspective of authentic presence as a set of constituted rules that must be followed": p.xxx above). He notes the "curious blindness" of the "naturalist temper" to "qualitative distinctions" (1989 p.79). Although he acknowledges the "validity" and "power" of our ability to objectify experience "within certain bounds," he points out that out "much of the most insightful philosophy of the twentieth century has gone to refute [the] picture of the disengaged subject" (1989 p.514). Taylor encourages us to embrace a sense of what is good in our existence and to engage in open-minded dialogue around this critical and often neglected aspect of our being in the world. In particular, he warns us vigorously to avoid "polarized debates in which important insights get lost" (1989 p.514).

See Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 54 (March 1994 pp.185-213) for a précis of Sources of the Self as well as critical comments by Alasdair MacIntyre, Frerick Olafson, and Richard Rorty. Taylor replies to the comments with a compliment to Rorty that every philosopher can aspire to: "he has summarized the book so well that he has taken me to the boundaries of my thinking" (p.211).

[2] Merleau-Ponty's work, like other philosophers in this tradition, may invoke thoughts of Dworkin's (1986) concept of "legal integrity": or at least a legal community in which creative (and interpretive) human truth can openly emerge and society can help shape the way it wants to be.

FOOTNOTES

PHENOMENOLOGY and the NEW PSYCHOLOGY

[1] Rorty pokes fun at the "fetishism of old-fashioned, 'behaviorist' social scientists who worry about whether they are being 'scientific'" (1982 pp.198-199). Eysenck refers to Rorty as a "maverick" philosopher (1981).

[2] An historical description of the emergence of transpersonal psychology can be found in the first issue of the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology (Sutich, 1969). The statement of purpose originally carried on the masthead, after inviting empirical papers on such things as mystical experience, cosmic awareness, and transcendental phenomena, disclaims any committment to either a naturalistic, theistic, or supernaturalistic orientation. The board of editors included Medard Boss, Victor Frankl, Abraham Maslow, Huston Smith, and Alan Watts.

In 1992 transpersonal psychology, after years of lobbying, became formally recognized as Divison 32 of the American Pychological Association. The discipline continues be vital with the continued publication of the Journal and such works as Paths Beyond Ego: The Transpersonal Vision (Walsh and Vaughn, eds., Jeremy P.Tarcher 1993) and The Thirst for Wholeness: Attachment, Addiction, and the Spiritual Path (Grof, HarperCollins 1993.)

[3] Ken Wilber has also been located "on the cutting edge of the New Age Intelligentsia" (Groothius, 1986). Wilber, however, is "critical of most New Age trends" (Ingrim, 1987 p.49) and would protest being placed in this position.

[4] This is reminiscent of the popular philosophy of Dianetics, in which we are told we can "go clear" in our lives by "getting rid" of the "reactive mind" and turning control of our actions over to the "analytic mind." This is also the basic posture of Ayn Rand, who advises us to eschew "mystical intuition" and put our faith in "objective rationality." In terms of authentic presence, in which we seek to cultivate responsive openness in relationship with the world, such strategies may seem counter-productive. Yet there is a sense in which we may want to remove ourselves from conditioned patterns of self-defeating behavior in an attempt to grow as a person or become more productive in our work. Still, it is not that we want to put the spontaneous responsive dimension of our being under the deliberate control of objective analytic rationality: this is associated with constituted presence. Rather, we

want to cultivate a certain detachment from emotional and ideological reactivity in order to be clearly aware of the nature of our responsiveness. Under these conditions we can consciously motivate an intentionality of undefensive non-judgemental openness in relationship while we remain receptive to the emerging truth of felt human presence.

The believer in disengaged objectification, who sees the mastery of reason as a kind of rational control over the emotions attained through the distance of scientific scrutiny, the kind of modern of whom Freud is a prototypical example and for whom he is often a model...this disengaged agent has taken a once-for-all stance in favor objectification; he has broken with religion, superstition, resisted the blandishments of those pleasing and flattering world-views which hide the austere reality of the human condition in a disenchanted universe. He has taken up the scientific attitude. The direction of his life is set.

Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self pp.45-46

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"Motion Pictures"

The following creative works resonate with a philosophy of authentic presence and represent the visual media's most direct influence on this project.

Francis (directed by G.Clifford, written by Eric Bergen, Christopher Derise, and Nicola Kazan 1982): the idealized story of an outspokenly authentic personality. Portrays a confrontation of authentic and constituted presence in the world. Contrasts the possibility of creative truth and openness in human relationship with constituted relationship and defensiveness. Makes us wonder how therapeutic practical philosophy might be more helpful than clinical psychology at times of existential crisis.

The Mission (directed by Roland Joffé, screenplay by Robert Bolt 1986): contrasts love and fear, authentic and constituted relationship in the context of history, politics, and religion.

Jesus of Montreal (written and directed by Denys Arcand 1990): contrasts the authentic truth of creativity with constituted patterns of western culture in the context of dogmatic institutionalized Christianity.

The Emerald Forest (directed by John Boorman, screenplay by R. Pallenburg 1985): conjures the forgetfulness of western culture and portrays an indigenous perspective of modernity's environmental destructiveness.

Koyaanisqatsi (created by G.Reggio, cinematography by R.Frick, music by Philip Glass 1983): powerful images of western culture's alienation and loss of authentic relationship. Inspired by Hopi prophesy. *Koyaanisqatsi* means "life out of balance," "life in turmoil," "crazy life," "life disintegrating," and "a state of life that calls for another way of living."

How to Get Ahead in Advertising (written and directed by David Wimbury 1988): takes a cynical look at truth in the coroporate institutions of western culture and the associated exploitation of the Earth's environment.

Dead Poet's Society (directed by W.Schulman, written by Peter Wier 1990): resonates with the frustration of constituted western culture particularly in the context

of growing up and education. Pump Up the Volume (written and directed by Allan Moyle 1990) is a lighter film with a related perspective.

My Dinner with André (directed by Lovis Malle, screenplay by Wallace Shawn and André Gregory 1982): a powerful expression of enthuiastic life experience in the "New Age" - not only in its mythology but as it embraces authentic presence and love.

Joe vs.the Volcano (written and directed by John Patrick Shanley 1990): a postmodern fairy tale about the possibility of transformation from constituted to authentic presence.

Shirley Valentine (directed by Lewis Gilbert, screenplay by Wally Russel 1989): tongue-in-cheek about constituted and authentic presence in relationships.

Strictly Ballroom (directed by B.Luhrmann 1992): looks at the polarity of constituted and authentic human agency, expression, and relationship in the context of competitive western institutions.

Star Wars (written and directed by George Lucas 1977): with the battle cry "let the force be with you," creates a mythology of authentic presence. Provides a metaphor for the choice between two paradigms: one love, one fear; one good, one evil. Joseph Campbell points to Star Wars as an excellent example of contemporary myth (e.g. 1988 pp.18, 30, 144).

*Merleau-Ponty tells us artistic classics "have an expressive power which goes beyond their statements and propositions" (Signs p.11). He tells us "no such work is ever absolutely completed and done with" (PhP p.190). This open-endedness has as much to do with interpretation as the initial creation of artistic artifacts.

Ideally films, and all art, can help us attain an empowering notion of the "true nature of humanity and its fitting manifestations" (Rudolf Arnheim, Film as Art, University of California Press 1966 p.230).

Life, moral and physical, is not a completed fact, but a continual process, depending for its movement upon two contrary forces, the force of resistance and the force of expression. Dividing these forces into two mutually opposing principles does not help us, for the truth dwells not in opposition but in continual reconciliation.

Rabindrath Tagore, Sadhana (1913), in Real Philosophy (J. Needleman and D. Applebaum, eds.) p.228

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Our present problems are not primarily political or economic but are rooted in the inadequate use of our humanity...when thinking and doing are largely linear, analytic, and heirarchical, and when the self that does that thinking and doing is insular, fearful, and manipulative, is it any wonder that our best intentions and problem-solvings become a crazy-quilt patchwork of band-aids?

Jean Houston, The Possible Human pp.xv, xvi

We have to await the arrival of a new species of philosopher ...the philosopher as *we* understand him - we free spirits - as a [person] of the most comprehensive responsibility who has the conscience for the collective evolution of [humanity]... And to speak in all seriousness, I see such new philosophers arising.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)
Beyond Good and Evil pp.16, 67